

Seminole Golf Course set to close in mid-August

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(Photo: Wayne McGahee III/Democrat)

Golfers are running out of days to play at The Don Veller Seminole Golf Course and Club.

The multi-million dollar renovation under the direction of golf legend Jack Nicklaus and his son Jack Nicklaus II is set to begin in mid-August at the Florida State University-owned public course.

A specific closing date for the course will be determined and announced in the coming week, according to FSU.

The par-73 course, located in southwest Tallahassee adjacent to Innovation Park and operated by Century Golf Partners, has 800 members and annually averages 42,000 rounds.

It also serves the Seminoles' men's and women's golf teams, in addition to the university's Global Club Management and Leadership program within FSU's Dedman School of Hospitality.

Tallahassee-based Childers Construction Company will oversee the \$8 million project. The course will be closed for play through Sept. 30, 2019. The closure includes the facility's driving range, pro shop and Renegade Grill restaurant.

"Nicklaus Design has created a course that will be one of the nation's best, further enhancing the experience of FSU golfers and the broader golf community alike," said Kyle Clark, vice president for Finance and Administration.

Photos: FSU golf course redesign press conference with Jack Nicklaus



Wayne McGahee III/Democrat

FSU men's golf coach Trey Jones is excited about the course's future, believing it will serve as a legacy for both the university and the community. It will be first Jack Nicklaus Legacy Course in North America, a designation given to courses designed by Nicklaus and his son Jack.

"From the time we initially talked about this three, four years ago to reach this point is amazing," Jones said.

"I am beyond excited that we have generous donors and a university and athletics administration that share this vision. There is a motto in golf that you leave the course better than you found it, and our new Nicklaus Legacy golf course will certainly do that for us."

Early renovation steps will include a spray-out to kill the course's grass, the removal of cart paths and the building of a new lake alongside the par-3, 199-yard eighth hole.

Golfers who must look elsewhere to play during the renovation include "The Squirrels" golf group.

The 100-member paid group plays Seminole three times a week and has accounted for more than 4,000 rounds annually the past two years, according to member Larry Tromly.

Still, Tromly is enthusiastic about the course's future. He commended Seminole's management team and price points for golfers of all ages.

"I would say to have a Nicklaus-designed course within minutes of our residents is exciting," said Tromly, whose group will move its game to Hilaman Golf Course on Blair Stone Road starting next Wednesday.

"I really believe Seminole had the business model right. For the type of members and demographics, they had it priced accordingly to where anybody could get what they wanted."

Member and Seminole Booster John Pellino is a former ranger at the course for eight years. Wanting to make the most of the remaining days the course is open, he booked a pair of tee times to play 18 holes next Tuesday.

Pellino, 67, could also serve as a historical footnote as the last player to card an ace at Seminole prior to the renovation. He carded his third hole-in-one (and first at Seminole) on the eighth hole en route to a 5-under par 68 on July 6.

Pellino praised the Nicklaus Design team but is upset about the renovation. He also cited the potential cost to play a Nicklaus-designed course.

"I don't believe it's a step that needs to be taken," said Pellino, who pays a monthly fee of \$39.95 for a Players Club Card. "Day in and day out, I think this is the best course in Tallahassee. It's in great condition."



FSU men's golf coach Trey Jones is looking to bring home the Seminoles' first ACC crown since 2008. (Photo: Taylor Jones/FSU Athletics)

FSU's golf course last underwent a major renovation in 2001, when FSU spent \$5.5 million to build a new clubhouse, pro shop and restaurant facility.

In 2004, it spent \$2.2 million to rebuild its tees and greens and install a new irrigation system.

The course is named for former FSU golf and football coach Don Veller, who passed away in 2006.

While the FSU women's team holds its annual three-day Florida State Match-Up on its home course - it also hosted an NCAA Women's Golf Regional Championship for the second time last spring - the FSU's men's team does not play any matches at the venue.

With the approaching closure, Seminole will lose its regional manager in Corey Hamlin. He will join Arcis Golf at LPGA International Golf Club in Daytona Beach after three years in Tallahassee.

"I think our local patrons are excited," Hamlin said.

"Anytime you have the opportunity to partner with Mr. Nicklaus, I think it's fantastic. It will amplify your golf course, amplify your community."

Nicklaus Design, a global golf course design firm founded by Jack Nicklaus, has designed nearly 420 courses open for play in 39 states and 46 countries.

