



WRESTLING WITH GOLF ARCHITECTURE

HOLE 15

by **COLTON CRAIG**

Colton Craig Golf Design, Oklahoma City, OK

As an amateur writer, there is great irony that in April of 2020 I have been asked to write for the sports issue of a magazine. Almost every sporting event in the world has been cancelled due to the global pandemic. I own a golf architecture business and attend different golf events regularly, but the last sporting event I attended was the Oklahoma High School Wrestling State Championships. It was the first time I had attended the event since I was a competitor. An former coach invited me, and I only live a block away from the stadium, so I figured, "Why not?"

As I sat and reminisced, my nostalgic state was interrupted by the announcer declaring, "Luke Ahrberg, 120-pound state champion from Cushing!" I knew that name! His father, Rick Ahrberg, was a client of mine. In November of 2019, my partner, Brain Ross, and I were commissioned to complete a bunker renovation and master plan for Buffalo Rock Golf & Venue in Cushing, OK. In fact, Luke helped me build the bunker on the seventh hole just a few months prior as he told me about his aspirations of becoming a state champion.

Although wrestling has largely shaped my work ethic toward my business, wrestling and golf could not be more opposite. Wrestlers compete against each other on a sterilized, circular mat, while golfers compete against

themselves on natural, undefined courses. Hearing the last name of Ahrberg was a coincidence I was not expecting as two totally separate parts of my life were coming together in one instance.

The project at Buffalo Rock was especially motivating for me because it was the first renovation for my business on a Perry Maxwell golf course. Perry Maxwell is a name that carries a lot of weight in the world of golf, and Oklahomans are lucky to call him one of our own. Perry Maxwell designed golf courses across the nation from 1919 until his death in 1952. Maxwell had arguably the most successful career in golf architecture history. Other than a handful of times, Maxwell worked primarily with small town communities in rural settings. Bristow Country Club, Henreyetta Country Club, and Perry Country Club are just a few of Maxwell's creations in Oklahoma. His minimalist design style efficiently used bunkers and natural hazards to make his golf courses simplistic yet charming.

Eager to study his body of work, I ventured across the nation on a pilgrimage where I visited and studied every Perry Maxwell golf course that still exists today. While they are all special and unique, Buffalo Rock has always been a Maxwell course that stood out from the rest.

During his initial site visit, Maxwell stated, "This is the prettiest canvas on which to lay a golf course in Oklahoma."

The bunker renovation at Buffalo Rock was crafted with the Maxwell style. However, it was not a pure restoration. According to Harry Ingram, the 92-year old previous golf course superintendent, there was only one bunker on the original 9-hole golf course, and that was the right-greenside bunker on hole number seven. The very bunker Luke Arhberg had helped me build before

becoming a champion!

We all worked hard together to produce a great renovation that we believe would make Mr. Maxwell proud. As Buffalo Rock is one year away from celebrating its centennial, we look forward to the next 100 years of enjoying Perry Maxwell designs. 🍷

Colton is the owner of Colton Craig Golf Design based out of Oklahoma City. He is currently writing a book titled, Miles of Maxwell.

