

Jack Nicklaus celebrates family, FSU legacy at launch of Seminole Legacy Course

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Florida State has a home golf course once again.

It's been over 18 months since the Seminole Don Veller Golf Course closed for a major redesign.

Saturday, the \$8 million renovation was unveiled in the form of the brand-new Seminole Legacy Course just a few miles off FSU's campus.

The biggest star in attendance? Golf legend Jack Nicklaus, who along with his son Jack Nicklaus II led the redesign with their Nicklaus Design firm.

"I had the privilege of being part of what you've done here in the last year on this golf course," Nicklaus, who won a record 18 major championships as a pro between 1963 and 1986, said while addressing the crowd in attendance.

"We love the spirit here and then when we got involved with the golf course -- (FSU men's golf coach Trey Jones) got us involved -- I'm not sure Trey knew what to expect when we got going."

While FSU has been without a home course for over 18 months, it's a process that has gone on even longer than that.

"We're at the Smoky Mountain Shootout and (FSU golf coach Trey Jones) came to me and said, 'Look, our players, our men's and women's golf teams don't even play at home. We play at Southwood, we play at Golden Eagle, we don't have a home course and we've got to do something about that,'" FSU Chairman of the Board Ed Burr said.

"We went and talked to the president and he embraced it at that moment. That's the moment that led to this moment with us standing here today."

The redesign took FSU's course from one the men couldn't host the NCAA Tournament on to one of the best in college golf. Those in the know are hopeful the course is impressive enough it may even be able to host professional tournaments.

"There's a saying in golf: Leave it better than you found it," Jones said.

"While I'm hoping I'll be here for several more years, Mr. President, I honestly feel a great sense of accomplishment when I do depart that we've left it better than we found it."

<https://www.tallahassee.com/story/sports/college/fsu/2020/03/08/jack-nicklaus-florida-state-fsu-golf-seminole-legacy-course-trey-jones-seminoles-john-thrasher/4926785002/>

The yardage of the course varies from 4,880 yards to 7,800 across six different tee settings.

"President Thrasher mentioned that it wasn't too easy, it wasn't too hard. I think it's plenty hard," Nicklaus II said of the course.

"My dad was thinking I made it too easy, but let the verdict come in a year or two from now when everybody gets the chance to play the course."

Nicklaus, now 80, admitted he's rarely able to golf anymore. But he, along with his son Jackie, Burr and FSU President John Thrasher each teed off to signify the official opening of the course Saturday morning.

"It's just an example of what this course is going to bring to this community, bring to our men's and women's golf teams, all the things that that matter," Thrasher said when addressing the crowd.

"This whole area will be the center place of making this whole area, Innovation Park, a place where people want to come. A lot of good things are going to happen out here as a result of this course. Florida State is so excited to serve as the home of the first Jack Nicklaus Legacy Course in North America."

Added Burr, "It's a special moment, not only in the history of golf at Florida State University, but really in the history of Florida State University. One more thing to put us into the elite universities, the eminent universities in the country."

Most every FSU fan should know that Nicklaus is the grandfather of former FSU tight end Nick O'Leary. He wore an FSU hat Saturday that had 35 and "Go Nick" embroidered on the sides.

However, O'Leary is one of six children or grandchildren of Nicklaus who went to FSU. Another of his sons, Steve, played football at FSU from in 1981.

This made FSU, in his estimation, the perfect place to launch the new brand.

"Legacy Golf Course, that's the first legacy, Jackie and I have done co-designs of probably two dozen courses together. (This is) the first one to be called a legacy," Nicklaus said.

"I think it's a good name and I think it's a good place to start that name. You've got a good legacy here at Florida State and we're proud to be part of it."