

REGIONAL CLUB OF THE MONTH >

Parkes Golf Club

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IT'S a finish to any round that could make Parkes Golf Club the envy of every golf club in the mid-west.

That's the view of renowned course architect James Wilcher, called in to redesign the Parkes course with a multi-million-dollar upgrade.

Wilcher's company Golf by Design was delighted to work on what he described as an impressive country golf course that could easily put its hand up to host an event like a NSW Open in coming years.

The reason for the upgrade came about as a result of the new Parkes bypass road.

That major roadworks brought about a necessity to redesign the course to remove the opportunity for golfers – or at the very least their errant shots – to finish up on the new road.

And the results are quite spectacular.

Parkes Golf Club now boasts 10 new USGA-standard greens and surrounds which provide amazing consistency and durability.

Indeed, Parkes is now one of the few courses outside of the Sydney metropolitan area to boast these green complexes.

The club took the opportunity to also add 10 new Bermuda tees, which feature four different teeing areas for each of the holes.

On top of that, the changes meant the course was increased from a par 71 to a new par of 72.



Parkes's new layout now features 10 par-4s and four par-5s as well as four par3s.

It will prove a sterling test for golfers of all abilities too as three of the par-4s can now be stretched out to more than 400m.

Wilcher and his team have also added four new water penalty areas and a new double green that measures 75 metres long and 25 metres wide, so there could be ample opportunity for the occasional three-putt as well.

"The three finishing holes are as good as any in New South Wales," Wilcher told Inside Golf.

"The first of those is a tough dogleg par-4, followed by a great drop-down par-three which has a marvellous backdrop to the mountains when you stand on the tee.

"Then there's the finishing hole, which is an interesting par-5, which is a potentially a'go for it in two' hole, which will certainly tempt most of the big hitters to give it a go [in two shots]."

While he boasts course improvements at a host of high-profile Sydney clubs like Pymble, Strathfield and Roseville and has also designed some impressive layouts like The Cut (WA) and Pacific Dunes (NSW), Wilcher relished

the opportunity to get out and get his hands on a country course with a reputation such as Parkes.

He quickly ascertained that the club didn't want to just look at erecting a massive fence to stop balls going on the road.

It was a course boasting several hundred members proud of a course that is such an important part of life in this country town made famous by its Elvis Presley festival every year.

So Wilcher was basically given the task or ensuring the course was altered to avoid balls going on the road.

Club president David Stevenson explained that the whole western side of the golf course had been rejigged.

"We've given the course a new lease of life and I suggest we have 10 of the best greens of any club west of Sydney," he said.

"The new design also provides cross-overs to both sides of the course for each nine."

The new par-5 finishing hole is positioned at the rear of the clubhouse enabling players enjoying the outdoor entertaining areas to watch players make or break their round at the 'last'.

Wilcher agreed a lot of courses in the region, indeed anywhere west of Sydney, will be envious of the finished product that Parkes Golf Club now boasts.

It's a course, unlike so many out west, that drains well and it doesn't take long for any heavy rains to drain away and within 24 hours is back to A1 condition.



"We've introduced some wetlands to help bed the whole thing in," said Wilcher.

The Sydney-based designer admitted it had been refreshing working in the country and he had enjoyed the challenge immensely.

"It's such a better course and the club expects people to come from far and wide to have a look and play there," he said. "This club has really embraced the changes.

"They have also secured some more land next door as there are preliminary plans for a driving range there as well.

"It's a big sporting town and there are some really talented juniors coming through their ranks as well.

"And it is a club that has worked hard over many years to make the Parkes Open a success.

"Certainly, they would relish the opportunity to host an event like a NSW Open sometime in the future."

Country golf clubs often struggle to attract enough social players seven days a week yet Parkes opens its restaurant three nights a week.

The food is first-class and a lot of the townspeople look forward to their fare.

Now they'll be queuing up for a game on one of country New South Wales best golf courses as well.

Parkes Golf Club

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Play the SCT Parkes Men's Open

IT'S the perfect opportunity to show off their new course.

So, this month's SCT Parkes Men's Open is assured of a big field of golfers from all over the state keen to have a look and give their critical appreciation of their new layout.

Registrations are now being taken for the first open tournament on its new championship course, following the \$2.9m redevelopment.

The Open weekend consists of three days packed full of golfing events, featuring the SCT Parkes Open (a 27-hole event for A and B and 18 holes for C division)) culminating in the final day on Sunday, September 17.

To register, visit the Parkes Golf Open <https://parkesgolfopen.com.au/> website.

All payments are to be completed on-line using the registration form.