CONTINEO GROUP

THE HIDDEN BACKBONE OF GOLF RENOVATION:

Engineering the Santa Rosa Golf & Beach Club Transformation

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The comprehensive renovation of the Santa Rosa Golf & Beach Club (SRGBC), executed between 2019 and 2021, represents a paradigm shift in the modernization of legacy golf assets within ecologically sensitive areas. While the project is celebrated for its aesthetic "dune" transformation and the architectural vision of Bill Bergin, the successful delivery of these elements are supported by a complex civil engineering framework.

This white paper examines the specific engineering methodologies—from hydrological optimization to strategic permitting—that enabled the reimagining of this 1969 layout. It highlights the value in **The Contineo Group** (Golf Civil Engineer) utilized extensive golf course engineering experience to translate the architect's creative vision into a buildable, sustainable, and economically vibrant reality.

PROJECT BACKGROUND AND STRATEGIC CONTEXT

Established in 1969, the Santa Rosa Golf & Beach Club holds a unique position as the only member-owned golf course and private beach club on the prominent "30A" corridor. Located between the Gulf of Mexico and coastal dune lakes, the property possessed significant geographic distinctiveness. As the club approached its 50th anniversary, leadership identified a strategic opportunity to elevate the facility to meet the rising standards of the surrounding region and secure its long-term market position.

The Strategic Imperatives:

- **Hydrological Optimization:** The project aimed to resolve infrastructure challenges and modernize the drainage infrastructure to handle regional weather patterns more effectively, ensuring "firm and fast" playability year-round.
- **Agronomic Modernization:** The renovation sought to transition the green complexes to current championship standards, replacing legacy turf with next-generation varieties to improve consistency and maintenance precision.
- **Visual Unification:** The design objective was to extend the "dune aesthetic" of the coastal holes throughout the entire 18-hole routing, creating a seamless visual experience that harmonized with the natural white sand environment.

THE INTEGRATED PARTNERSHIP: ARCHITECT & ENGINEER

The success of the SRGBC renovation was predicated on the synergy between the architectural vision team at **Bergin Golf Designs** and the engineering and permitting expertise of **The Contineo Group**, a specialized golf course engineer.

Renovating golf courses in regulated coastal zones presents a unique challenge: municipalities often do not know how to apply standard regulations to such a specialized product. To succeed, the golf civil engineer must do more than design; they must act as a translator. By combining a deep knowledge of golf architecture with regulatory expertise, the engineer interprets the architect's shaping vision for officials, ensuring that permits are issued, and compliance is maintained without compromising the design.

- **Golf Course Vision:** Bill Bergin sought to highlight the site's greatest asset—the native white sand underlying the property—by utilizing it to create waste areas and dunes that would serve as both strategic hazards and aesthetic connectors.

- **Engineering Enablement:** The Contineo Group served as the "shield" and interpreter for this vision. Their role involved developing grading plans that balanced Bergin's shaping desires with the site's hydrological constraints, translating the master plan into a permittable set of construction documents, anticipating environmental issues, and negotiating with the municipality to ensure the schedule was met.

CIVIL ENGINEERING METHODOLOGIES AND APPROACHES

The renovation involved the permitted re-grading of 46 acres within the 125-acre site. The engineering team deployed several critical strategies to achieve the project's ambitious goals:

Strategic Permitting (The "Minor" Strategy)

One of the most critical aspects of the project was navigating the regulatory landscape. The engineering team successfully managed the Walton County Technical Review Committee (TRC) process by strategically scoping the project and informing the municipality on how best to apply ordinances to golf specific issues.

- **Development Order:** By classifying the project as a "Minor Development Order" focused on re-grading and landscaping, the team facilitated a smoother approval process and shortened the permitting schedule.

- **Concurrent Platting Negotiation:** To further protect the schedule, the engineer utilized their engagement with the municipality to negotiate the ability to complete the platting process concurrently with other approvals. This strategic approach eliminated a large schedule increase, ensuring that construction could commence on time to meet the critical agronomic window for the grow-in season.

- **Proactive Ecological Monitoring:** Prior to permitting issuance, the civil engineer worked closely with golf course operations personnel to periodically monitor and document the site. This process verified that regulated, protected flora and fauna were not migrating onto the course grounds. This proactive measure ensured that a schedule extension would not be required to wait for migratory habits to change seasonally, thereby securing the construction start date.

- **Timeline Management:** Securing approval in late 2020 was a decisive factor in maintaining the project timeline, allowing for contractor mobilization and material procurement during the winter months.

Hydrological Engineering: Enhancing Hole 7

Hole 7 presented a specific opportunity for significant hydrological improvement. To maximize playability and ensure the course remained open after rainfall, the engineering team implemented a comprehensive solution.

- **Gravity Flow Grading:** The fairway was reshaped to introduce positive slope. By elevating the centerline and sloping the roughs, the design harnessed gravity to move water efficiently off the turf.

- **Subsurface Density:** A dense grid of subsurface drainage was installed throughout the fairway corridor to manage soil moisture levels effectively.

- **Cart Path Integration:** A new cart path was engineered on the right-hand side of the hole to provide a stable surface for maintenance and play, further protecting the turf during varied weather conditions.

Site Engineering and Earthworks Balance

To achieve the "dune aesthetic" and optimize drainage, the project utilized a "substantial amount of fill dirt". The engineering approach prioritized a "balanced site" model to maximize efficiency:

- **Cut and Fill Strategy:** Material was harvested from pond expansions (cuts) and moved to low-lying fairways (fills). This approach minimized the need for imported material and reduced construction traffic on local roads.

- **Native Material Utilization:** The sandy nature of the site allowed the team to use the native white sand for bunkers and waste areas, ensuring materials were geologically consistent with the local environment.

Perimeter Defense: Managing Neighbor Relations through Bio-Swales

A critical component of the engineering scope involved managing the interface between the golf course and the "Urban Residential" zones that border the property. The civil engineer worked closely with neighboring property owners to mitigate concerns regarding potential stormwater runoff resulting from the grade changes.

- **The Technical Solution:** The team engineered and graded bio-swales along the edges of specific fairways.
- **Mechanism of Action:** These swales were designed to capture surface runoff and facilitate rapid infiltration into the site's native sandy soils.
- **Strategic Value:** This approach effectively contained water within the course boundaries, alleviating neighbor concerns without forcing the architect to compromise on the routing or visual character of the holes. It ensured the architectural vision remained fully realized while maintaining positive community relations.

STRATEGIC SYNERGY: BALANCING VISION AND COMPLIANCE

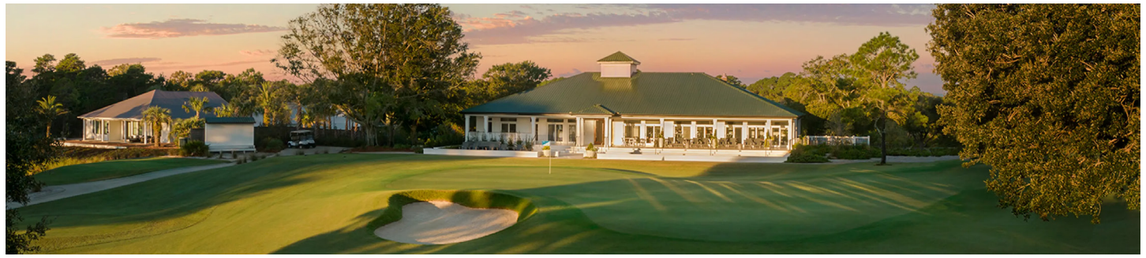
A defining element of the Santa Rosa renovation was the tight alignment between the civil engineer and the golf course architect, particularly in managing the delicate balance between architectural ambition and environmental constraints.

- **Realizing the Vision through Hydraulic Strategy:** The golf architect's vision for the inland holes required the expansion of existing water features to resemble natural "coastal dune lakes," significantly altering the visual and strategic character of the course. Achieving this required precise engineering to expand these ponds (cuts) without violating the strict runoff coefficients or flood storage requirements inherent to the region's high-water tables.
- **Preserving the Schedule via Regulatory Expertise:** By meticulously engineering the site grading to stay within the thresholds of a "Minor Development Order," the team successfully navigated the strict environmental protections of the "Urban Residential" zone. This approach avoided the extended public hearing timelines associated with Major Development Orders.
- **Outcome:** This integrated approach allowed the project to deliver on the golf architect's goal of "visual unification" and enhanced playability while simultaneously eliminating potential months of permitting delays, thereby preserving the critical Q1 2021 construction start.

AWARDS AND INDUSTRY RECOGNITION

The successful execution of the renovation has garnered significant acclaim within the golf industry, with specific distinctions assigned to the project by leading publications.

- **Renovation of the Year (Honorable Mention):** Assigned by **Golf Inc. Magazine** (July 2022). This accolade validated the project's quality against global peers and highlighted the successful modernization of the facility.
- **"Purest Golf in the Florida Panhandle":** This distinction is cited in the analysis as the definitive title the club has "earned" through the renovation. It reflects the successful marriage of art, engineering, and agronomy that fundamentally reset the club's identity in the region.
- **"Playability and Maintainability":** This design philosophy is attributed to **Bill Bergin** (golf course designer), whose vision for the course drove the engineering requirements for drainage and turf quality.



CONCLUSION

The renovation of the Santa Rosa Golf & Beach Club serves as definitive proof that the relationship between the golf course architect and the civil engineer is essential to realizing a project's full vision and value. While the Contineo Group successfully navigated the technical landscape of regulatory challenges, their role extended far beyond engineering drainage and earthworks. They acted as the project's **shield and champion**, interpreting Bill Bergin's artistic vision to the municipality and educating officials on how to apply ordinances to the unique nuances of a golf course. This project demonstrates that when a specialized golf course civil engineer bridges the gap between creative design and rigid regulation, the result is a facility that sets a new benchmark for the region.

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