



**Donald Ross Society  
June 2 – 6, 2015**

**The Detroit Daily Diary  
by Jeff Heston**

**Monday, June 1**

Just checked into The Kingsley Hotel, the DRS home hotel for the week (looks like a great location to get to all the courses and I have a great room) and am really excited to begin playing these 5 fabulous, historic golf courses. I drove by each golf course on my way into town today and I can tell you that we all better bring our “A” games, from what I could see from the road. We are meeting in the lobby of the hotel at 7pm for dinner so am looking forward to meeting the other members of our intrepid group.

**Tuesday June 2 - Barton Hills Country Club**

*Weather – Sunny, high 75 – nice breeze blowing*

At 8:00am, the first foursome of Rosser’s, Mark Larson, Kelly Dodge, past Barton Hills Country Club President, Ron Whitten, golf course architect and Mike Tirico of ESPN and Network Sports announcing fame teed off at Barton Hills Country Club in Ann Arbor and officially kicked off the Donald Ross Detroit Week festivities. And what a great place to start out our week than playing this gem of a course that is ranked #17 in state of Michigan and getting to know other Rosser’s who had come to play for the week.

The course is a 1922 Donald Ross design that was restored by Ron Prichard in 2013. The land on which Barton Hills Country Club was built was originally land that was owned by the large power company, Detroit Edison. In 1919, the forward thinking Chairman of the power company envisioned building a golf course and housing community on this land. The golf course was built but the housing didn’t follow because of the Crash of the late 20’s. But Barton Hills has survived and thrived for over 83 years and was a great test, and well received by our group.

Just to illustrate the club's reputation, Barton Hills has recently hosted the 98<sup>th</sup> Women's United States Amateur and the 22<sup>nd</sup> US Women's Mid-Amateur.

I had the good fortune to be paired with a Chris from Delaware and Bob, the President of Barton Hills Country Club and we had a great day on a beautiful, classic Donald Ross design. Bob is a past President of the Detroit Power Company so he not only had extensive knowledge of the Club's history but he was also very generous in explaining the on-going restoration project /on-going strategic plan that the club is working from to continually take all aspects of the course back to the way Mr. Ross intended it to play, taking into account improvements in grasses, agronomy techniques, water useage and member playability.

The golf course was really fun and very visually and physically challenging. The land on the front nine is gently rolling and you can see how the land became gently sculpted to make really pleasing, well framed and positioned holes.

Take a look at the beauty of hole #5, a 148 yard par 3.



Barton Hills #7 - 2<sup>nd</sup> shot to top shelf on right



Barton Hills #8 - 178 yard par 3



The course continues to roll gently through a beautiful parkland setting with no houses visible from the course, just tree-lined views in the distance. The course, with its meticulously maintained fairways and roughs stays fairly flat until you get to holes #15 and #16. All of a sudden, you are standing on the tee of #15 and looking at a roller coaster fairway from left to right and a huge ravine which will have to be confronted in making a low score. The huge swales in the fairway tend to deflect distance off of the drive, leaving you a long 2<sup>nd</sup> shot from a side hill lie, up a 50ft by a deep ravine and a rolling fairway to deflect your tee ball, leaving a long 2<sup>nd</sup> shot, up a 35ft tall embankment to a green that slopes from front to back. Mr. Ross must have loved sculpting this beautiful and challenging hole.

2<sup>nd</sup> shot on #15 from 189 yard on a 396 yard par 4



After coming off the #15 green you walk to the left and #16 tee has you playing back over the ravine. This was a very intimidating shot for me.

Tee shot on #16, 188 yard



The last is a long 398 yard par 4 that plays uphill and back towards the beautiful clubhouse. A great finish for a great day.



Barton Hills also has a very unique feature on its 9<sup>th</sup> green that is called a “top hat” feature. In the middle of the green, there is a place that is probably 4 feet by 4 feet square where the hole was positioned. It looked like you were putting up to the top of a top hat. I was an interesting feature because if you missed your short putt from the top ledge, your ball would run down and you would have to putt again. It was fun.

The members of Barton Hills were so gracious and welcoming and one of the special things they did for our group was hosting a lunch cook-out for all the golfers as we came to their on-course turn/refreshment building which is located between the #10 green and #11 tee. It is a beautiful structure with outdoor seating where we all enjoyed items from their cook manned grills to the delicious selection of salads and vegetables for the lighter eaters. It was such good food in such a peaceful, natural setting.

Special THANKS to everyone at Barton Hills for their hospitality, especially Bob Buckler, Club President and PGA Head Professional Patrick Markley for their time and attention. Also, Thanks to Rick, our locker room attendant, who had a nice continental breakfast for us in the morning and a kind word for everyone. And extra special thanks to the chef for the unbelievable lunch served at the halfway house after we played to 10<sup>th</sup> hole. The cold fingerling potato salad was dynamic. Thank You Barton Hills for the wonderful day and for your dedication to your club and your commitment to continuing with the Ross restoration.

### **Wednesday, June 3 - Inverness Club**

Weather – absolutely gorgeous – no clouds, 75, with a breeze

This morning, we made a trip or pilgrimage down to Toledo, about a two hour drive, to a real Donald Ross masterpiece; Inverness Club, home to 9 major Championships as well as the US Amateur tournament and the NCAA Championship. The drive was well worth it.

My first impression when I pulled up to the Inverness Club was how “blown-away” I was by the beauty and majestic nature of the initial views you get of the golf course. As you pull into the parking lot and follow the signs to the bag drop, you see the rear of the clubhouse off to the left and as you approach a long low brick wall with the Inverness name on it and a sign to turn right and you can see the bag drop straight ahead. All you can see on your left now is the low wall and sky.

As you get closer the bag drop ahead, the road pitches lightly upward so I could now see over the wall to my left. And, what I saw just blew me away.

On the other side of the wall was the #1 and #10 tees, with a 3 hole putting area separating the tees and the beautiful tee shots for #10 going out to the left and #1 going to the right of an enormous fairway bunker complex. The view was so breathtaking to me, I could see why the Club has been chosen to host the number of major championships and competitions that it has.

The entire Inverness Club experience was overwhelming as I walked with my caddie and thought of all the greats of the game who had walked these same fairways and who had a hand in writing golf history. The club, built in 1903, has hosted 4 US Opens, 2 US Senior Opens, 2 PGA Championships, 2 NCAA Men's Championships as well as the US Amateur. Enjoy the a few pictures of a day spent battling a truly great, one of a kind golf course.

3 hole putting area between #10 and #1 teeing areas with the clock



Inverness range set-up with sticks at each position



Inverness #5 - 390 yard par 4 looking back from green



**HARDEST PAR 4, EVER - #1 Handicap Hole**

Inverness #7 - 2<sup>nd</sup> shot from 219 yards



Inverness #10 - 2<sup>nd</sup> shot from fairway



Inverness #17 - 2<sup>nd</sup> shot



Inverness #18 - 299 yard par 4 - a short approach to a very small green



Now look at this picture

1957 US Open Championship - 18<sup>th</sup> green area



NATIONAL OPEN  
U.S.G.A.  
GOLF CHAMPIONSHIP  
1957  
INVERNESS CLUB

After golf was finished, Rosser's sat on the stately patio overlooking the 18<sup>th</sup> and relaxed over delicious appetizers and snacks provided by the club as well as your usual after round libations. It is extremely intimidating to be trying to score well on #18 when you look up to your right and see all your friends and others staring down at you from the veranda with a cool drink in their hand eating appetizers. I can't imagine the pressure this short hole with a small green applies during any tournament. After everyone finished, there was a presentation given on the history of the club.

We had an absolutely amazing day at Inverness Club and are excited for more good weather tomorrow as we head for Franklin Hills Country Club and another classic Donald Ross layout.

## **Thursday, June 4 – Franklin Hills Country Club**

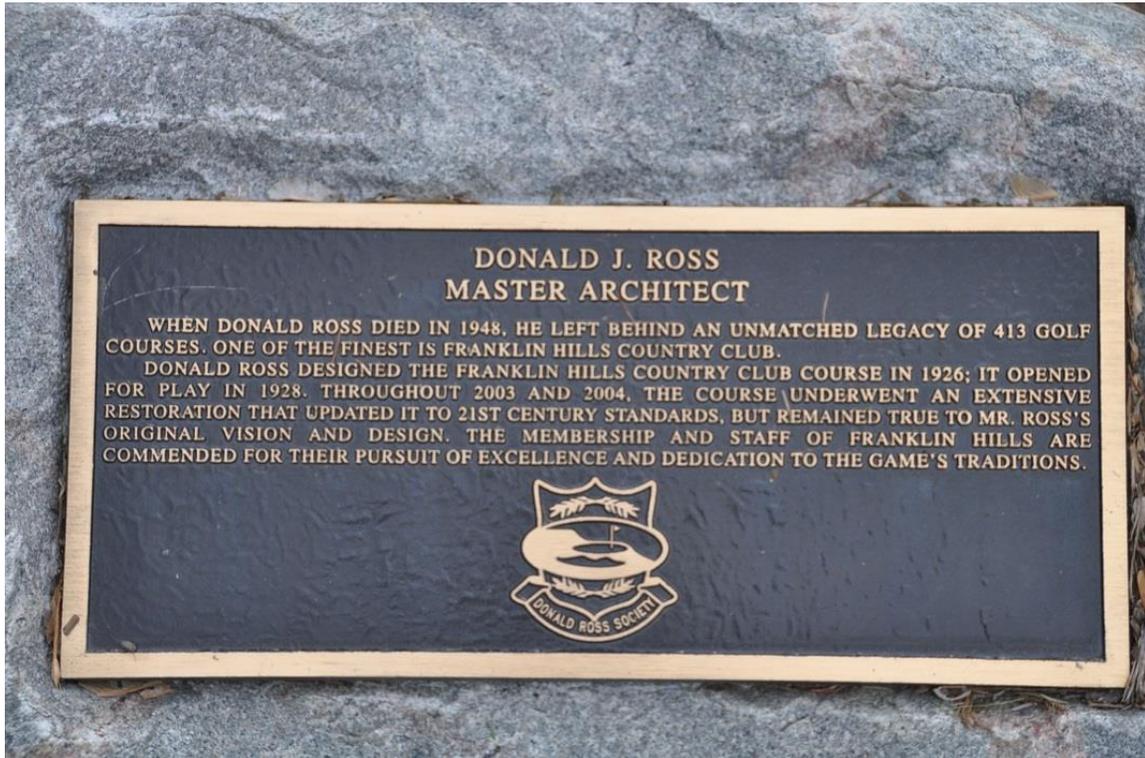
*Weather – Sunny, high 75 - nice little breeze blowing*

Franklin Hills was located only about a 10 minute drive from our hotel. FHCC has been nestled into this magnificently manicured hillside since 1927 and you can just feel “vintage Donald Ross” all around the course. The club entered into a complete restoration project with golf course architect Ron Prichard beginning in 2003 to restore the course and it’s playing conditions to Donald Ross’s initial vision. The golf course was in tremendous shape with green’s that rolled as true if not truer as any we played. And the back-to-back combination of a short par 4 #13 with the long uphill #14 was challenging and exciting at the same time. Thank you Mr. Ross. And if you want to play a beautiful yet fun par 3, try out #9, a 148 yard beauty that plays slightly downhill, heading back towards the clubhouse.

### Franklin Hills Country Club



Plaque located at #1 tee



Franklin Hills #2 - 385 yard par 4 - uphill with cross bunkering



Franklin Hills #2 – the 2<sup>nd</sup> shot to a fine green with subtle contours



Franklin Hills #3 - 165 yards par 3



Franklin Hills #9 - 148 yards par 3



Franklin Hills #13 - 293 yards par 4 – uphill approach to a very small green



Franklin Hills #14 – 198 yards par 3 – long shot up a gentle slope



After our round was completed, the Rosser's availed themselves of the very stylish and well appointed clubhouse. We had a wonderful dinner on the outside veranda of the club. The food for lunch and dinner was tremendous as everything from fresh salads and vegetables to ribs, chicken and grilled vegetables were freshly prepared by friendly staff. And let's not forget the scrumptious ice cream bar.

It was a real treat to spend the day at Franklin Hills, not just because of the great golf course, fabulous food and a wonderful welcome by the members but also to see a club that is so committed and honored to do all they can to further honor the legacy of the club and it's famed architect, Donald Ross.

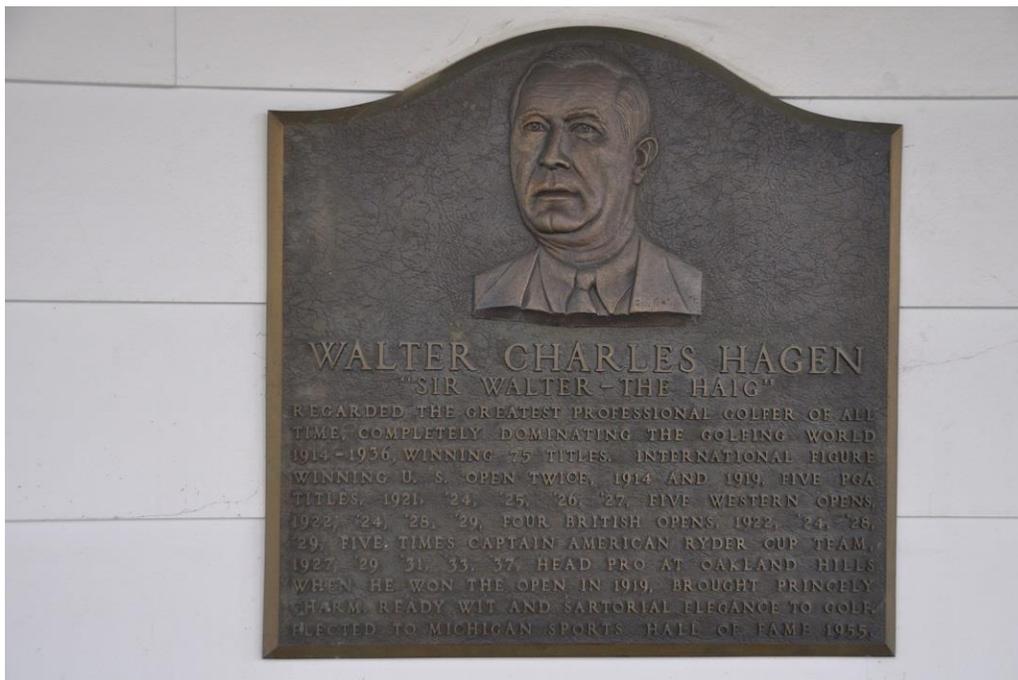
During our pre-dinner cocktail hour, a number of us had the opportunity to meet Brian, the Course Superintendent and talk about restoration projects and day-to-day golf maintenance challenges. We all really enjoyed meeting and talking with Brian.

I think I speak for the whole group in saying a big Thank You to everyone at the club for being such wonderful hosts to the Society. Franklin Hills is a very special place and they made us feel very special also.

**Friday, June 5 – Oakland Hills Country Club - South Course**

Weather – overcast – 71, a nice breeze

OHCC Head Pro Walter Hagen plaque on clubhouse wall



The South Course, designed by Donald Ross, opened in 1918 and hired as its first pro Walter Hagen. Since then, the South Course has gone on to host 16 Major Championships: six U.S. Opens, three PGA Championships, two U.S. Senior Opens, the U.S. Women's Amateur, the U.S. Men's Amateur, the 35<sup>th</sup> Ryder Cup, the Western Open, and the Carling World Open. Next year in 2016, the South Course will again host the U.S. Amateur making it 17 Major Championships. Arnold Palmer, Jack Nicklaus, Gary Player, and Ben Hogan have all won tournaments on the South Course. In 1936 A.W. Tillinghast was brought in for advice on improvements for the course in preparation for the 1937 U.S. Open. His response: "What it needs is to be left alone".

Meeting over lunch before playing the South course



Oakland Hills Country Club South #18 green from the chairs



Practice Range



Clubhouse Veranda



Clubhouse veranda and South Course #1 tee



South Course - # 1 419 yards par 4



Slope in South Course #9 green from #1 tee



Slopes in South Course #1 green



South Course #2 - 505 yard par 5



South Course #2 - 3<sup>rd</sup> shot from 105 yards



South Course #3 - 188 yards par 3



South Course #8 - 470 yards par 5



South Course #8, 3<sup>rd</sup> shot from 115 yards



South Course #9, 198 yards par 3



South Course #11, 348 yards par 4



South Course #11, 2<sup>nd</sup> shot from 185 yards



South Course #12, 526 yards par 5



South Course #12, 3<sup>rd</sup> shot from 135 yards



## South Course #18, 2<sup>nd</sup> shot from 225 yards



For the first time during our trip, the rains came about ½ hour before our first tee time and with lightening in the area, we waited in the clubhouse looking for the weather to clear. After a 40 minute delay, we teed off under an extremely cloudy sky with an occasional light, drizzly rain and it remained that way for the rest of the round. Luckily, the temperature stayed warm so our playing conditions were otherwise fine.

Even though the weather didn't fully cooperate, the venerable South course was a really fun challenge. In honor of our group visiting the club, the Superintendent decided to treat us to the same hole positions that were used during the final round of the 1996 US Open, which was won by Steve Jones, besting Tom Lehman and Davis Love III by a single shot. The green complexes were very rolling and quite distinctive in their design and you have to be extremely careful of where you leave your approaches to the greens or you will put a lot of pressure on your putting throughout the round. I played the course from around 6,400yds and spent the majority of my day turning around to see how far back the Championship teeing area would be on each hole as the course plays a full 1,000yds longer than from where I was playing. That's an extra 55 yards per hole if you were playing this great course from the "tips".

Each of our groups consisted of Ross attendees and a member, which helped us greatly to know where to hit and likewise, where not to venture as we worked our way around this fantastic golf course. The member in my foursome, Tom Woods, was very gracious and spent a great deal of time showing us the famous shots, From Steve Jones's bunker shot to TC Chen's infamous double-hit chip shot, it was very special stuff.

It was also fun to hear Tom discuss what it was like to be a member of a club that hosts so many major championships as well as the Ryder Cup. You could tell when talking with members of the immense sense of pride they have for the club and how serious they are about expanding their legacy.

After the round, we availed ourselves of OHCC locker rooms facilities to freshen up for dinner at the club. While all the facilities and amenities are "major championship" in every sense of the word, if you visit in the future, plan some extra time to walk the top floor of the clubhouse and view the extensive collection of memorabilia, trophies, clubs of not only all the major championships but also of all the great players and champions who were and are OHCC members. I was fascinated by their large and diverse collection. And definitely check out the Donald Ross bust and display in the entry. This was a very impressive clubhouse.

### **Saturday, June 6 - Oakland Hills North Course**

Weather - Sunny & Beautiful - 72 with a nice breeze

Designed in 1922 by Donald Ross and opening in 1924, the membership made the commitment to enhance the North Course with a major renovation in 2013. Recently the North Course has twice been the site for the Michigan Amateur and will be a part of the 2016 U.S. Amateur. Golf Digest recently had the North Course ranked as the #11 course in the State of Michigan. Considering the great golfing venues that exist in Michigan and that the state is home to some 900+ golf courses, that is one lofty status.

Oakland Hills North #18 green and putting green area



Mark Larson - Ross Society co-chair for the event



To get to the North Course, you take the bridge up and over West Maple Avenue which is busy thoroughfare. Everyone said “don’t underestimate the North Course”, and I can say, after playing this gem, that as club manager Chris Berlin said; “pretty good for a 2<sup>nd</sup> course, huh!” We agree Chris.

Upon reaching the North Course, the short game area comes into view. This incredible practice area always seemed to have a number of members practicing. The area had every type of shot and grass conditions that you would encounter on the courses. And, after what we have experienced, to be a good playing club member, you would need to have a great short game.

#### Oakland Hills North - short game area



My group had the opportunity to play today with Chris Berlin. Chris told us stories about hosting Ryder Cup’s and other major championships and the on-going restorations and improvements they continue to make.

Back to the course; you get off to a solid start with solid medium length par 4’s and that’s just getting you ready for the #1 handicap hole #5, a 564 yard par 5, a great hole.

North Course #1 - 345 yards par 4



North Course #5 - 564 yards par 5 - #1 handicap hole



North Course #12 - 3<sup>rd</sup> shot from 138 yards - #2 handicap hole



North Course #15 - 308 yards par 4  
Beautiful short, driveable Par 4; used to be “a bog”



North Course #17 - 429 yards par 4



Both #17 and #18 were very strong finishing holes which required very accurate and somewhat long second shots. Great finishing holes to wind up our day on the North Course. As Chris Berlin said; “pretty darn good for a second course” and I heartedly agree.

## North Course #18, 372 yards



This was a tremendous week of golf with many new friendships made. Golf was fantastic, hospitality was unrivaled, and the food was exceptional. It was a great trip.

The event was very well planned by Society co-leaders Dave Jongleux and Mark Larson and the host members, committees, and club staff at each country club.

I certainly will never forget this trip and look forward to many more Donald Ross Society gatherings in the future.