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Change has come to the Hampton Club.

Along with changes made to the course since its closing on April 1 for restoration, members of the club on the northernmost end of St. Simons Island will find a new name gracing the club Saturday when it reopens -- The King and Prince Golf Course, Home of the Hampton Club.

"The King and Prince (Beach and Golf Resort) has always been the owner of the golf course," said Hampton Club general manager and director of golf **Rick Mattox**. "After spending \$3.6 million (on the course) in the last year, we felt like it was important to tie the two together. Even though we're on different ends of the islands, we're owned by the same person and we wanted people to realize that hopefully they would get the same experience here that they had gotten at our resort for years."

The club and architect Billy Fuller approached the restoration with an eye to future golfers without losing the luster of course architect Joe Lee's original design. That meant coring all 18 greens and planting Mini-Verde, ultra-dwarf Bermuda grass, reshaping and replacing sand in all the bunkers and the construction of additional bunkers on certain holes.

"We did everything we could to enhance the original structure Joe Lee put together in 1989," Mattox said. "We really made sure we didn't do anything that would be different from what Joe Lee would have done had he still been with us."

Mini-Verde grass on the green is the same grass found on the greens at TPC courses and the East Lake Golf Club in Atlanta.

"It enhances the putting experience," Mattox said. "There's no grain, and you're able to cut it at basically any height you want to cut it at. It just makes it a much better putting surface. It's very tight and very dark in color once it matures. It's very pretty."

Bunker additions were made on hole Nos. 7, 10, 11, 12 and 16 at the suggestion of Fuller to help take the course to "the next level."

"We needed to address some areas where, I guess 20 years ago, they didn't have the technology to place some of these," Mattox said. "We strategically placed them to enhance the look of each hole we selected."

Medalist Golf of Cumming handled the construction, including a new, state-of-the-art short game practice area that matches the green conditions on the course.

"That's something that was needed for the future to enhance the club atmosphere and encourage people to spend more time here," Mattox said.

Members have been invited Saturday to christen the new course with Sunday serving as the official Opening Day -- assuming someone doesn't sneak onto the course before then.

"I may have to put a fence around it to keep them off until Saturday," Mattox said. "They're ready to play."

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