

PARRY'S 'HANDS-ON' APPROACH SET TO BOOST BAYVIEW

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IT'S not often you have golfing royalty doing the 'hard yards' on your links.

Yet that's what Bayview Golf Club has been enjoying in recent months while former US Tour star Craig Parry engineers several major changes on the Northern Beaches layout.

Indeed, Parry is so excited about the improvements taking place there that he has suggested Bayview's iconic 375m par four seventh might not even be the signature hole at the course in the near future.

Renowned as one of the best – and strongest – holes on the Bayview layout, Parry has restricted most of his improvements to the clubhouse side of the course and his 'hands-on' attitude has been welcomed by the members.

And the man who won the golfing world over with his famous six-iron into the hole to beat American Scott Verplank in a sudden-death playoff at Doral in the 2004 Ford Championship, is happy to suggest the new 15th at Bayview might even become the course's new signature hole.

"The best hole has to be 15 which is now just a great hole," he said.

"And 16 is pretty special too, where we've turned a par-three into a short par-four.

"As you walk along the ninth hole you look across and see the rock around the wall of the creek and it is a teaser-type thing – and I think it will be one of the better holes, for sure.

"This hole will be great for the good players as well as those that struggle with their games."

Parry had only played Bayview once many years ago, but these days sneaks out for a few holes whenever his two sons urge him on.

He always felt there was plenty of potential there.

"The setting was magnificent, and I always loved the cabbage palms here and the topography you play from – when you go



■ BAYVIEW'S 9TH.

up the hill, for instance, you're faced with different shots, forced water carries etc," he said.

"There a lot of interesting holes and when David Stone (Bayview Course Superintendent) called me up, he had seen what I had done at Teven on the North Coast of NSW, where we did six new greens and the club asked if I could do something similar here.

"We looked at a new ninth hole and we were able to do it without interrupting the members' play.

"Then we went and did the 15th hole and changed that and it now sits beautifully between two ponds."

While Parry doesn't play much golf these days, he admits that working on and improving golf courses has become his great passion – even more than playing.

"It's a totally different satisfaction – heck, I'd probably be doing this even if I wasn't getting paid," he grinned.

"I hate seeing golf courses that get butchered, leaving members stuck with a course they don't like.

"It's my name that will be associated with the changes at the end of the day and I want

people to say the golf course is better and more enjoyable to play.

"That's happening at Hawks Nest where I have been doing some work, and now here at Bayview."

Tuncurry is another course that Parry is looking at improving before it hosts the NSW Women's Open.

"Some golf course boards don't want to hear that their course only needs a bit of tinkering," he says.

"I won't go in there and make dramatic changes if they're not required.

"Some clubs have spent millions of dollars and their courses are not actually better for the members.

"Members join a golf course because they liked it; why would I go in and make dramatic changes to a course they love – and I always keep that in mind."

Parry says he doesn't practise these days and while he still had most of the shots to shoot round the par mark when he played, he would rather be doing the design work these days.

"I don't miss the Tour life. I only stay in touch with a few of the Aussies on our Tour here," he says.

And as for that famous shot at Doral that he played in winning there while at his golfing peak:

"It usually gets replayed a lot around the February-March time and gets spoken about on the radio by Ray Hadley or someone like that," he says.

Parry doesn't model his design work on anyone in particular and maintains that he gets a lot of his design ideas from his past playing days.

"The hardest shot in golf is to hit it straight – whether it be 40 yards or 400 yards, it's definitely the hardest shot," he said.

"So, in my eye, the penalties should be for the wayward shots that go to the sides – and that's where I'll have my hazards – so if you are straight you can always run your shot into the green along the ground.

"That's the way I think golf should be played.

"There are times, like the 16th we are doing here at Bayview, and if you cannot carry that creek, we'll have the fairway raised up a bit so your ball doesn't run into the creek. I'm mindful of who I've got to look after here.

"And we can always put a tee further up if we need to."

Both Parry's sons are more than handy players, and, like most dads, he loves nothing more than playing a few holes with them.

"Brendan gets me occasionally, Ryan has a great short game and he gives me a run for my money, too," he said.

"Playing golf with your kids is great fun – we often sneak out for a few holes around here, when we can," he said.

"I haven't really hit practise shots this year – so there's no expectations these days and I am quite comfortable with that. I still putt well but I am much happier doing the design work."

So, where does Parry see himself in 10 years' time?

Hopefully doing golf course design," he said.

"There a lot of courses that just need a little bit of time spent on them to help them get better." 



■ BAYVIEW'S 15TH.