

Fresh thinking

The American Society of Golf Course Architects elected five new Associate Members to join its ranks at the society's 2017 Annual Meeting in Jupiter, Florida, this May. *By Design* caught up with the five selected architects to find out more about their work and what becoming an Associate Member means to them.

How did you get into golf design?

Thad Bell, ASGCA Associate: I've always had an interest in golf, as I started playing from a young age and was involved in junior golf programs in South Carolina. Playing the sport got me interested in how golf courses were designed. While studying landscape architecture at the University of Georgia, we had some case studies on golf courses which furthered my interest in golf course design. I was fortunate to have a group of contemporaries

in my years at school, and we all started in golf course design around the same time after graduation.

Brandon Johnson, ASGCA Associate: Like a lot of kids, after being bitten by the golf bug I wanted to be a PGA Tour pro, but I missed that by a long shot! I blindly went into landscape architecture to pursue golf course design but quickly realized how interesting urban planning and design, historic landscapes, and large-scale master planning can be. Fortunately, my love and passion for golf, art and architecture won out. The internship

opportunities at the PGA Tour Design Services office, and the completion of my Bachelor of Landscape Architecture final project at the firm of ASGCA Past President Rick Robbins, ASGCA, while attending North Carolina State University, became my stepping stones into the profession.

Sean Quinn, ASGCA Associate: My dad was a golf professional and superintendent, so I grew up playing the game from an early age. I aspired to be a pro one day, and played junior golf into my early teens. Then there were too many other

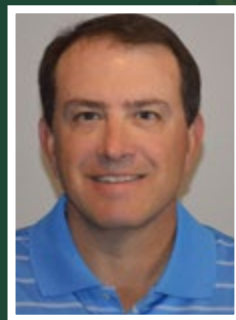
ASGCA's new associate members



Gene Bates
Bates Golf Design Group



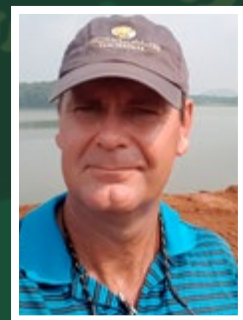
Thad Bell
Ernie Els Design



Mike Gogel
Mike Gogel Golf Design



Brandon Johnson
Arnold Palmer Design



Sean Quinn
Nicklaus Design



Photos: Arnold Palmer Design



distractions in terms of school sport so golf took a back seat.

Early in my working career, my dad introduced me to a design and build company called Golf Data. One of the partners, architect Mark Muller, was the first designer I was exposed to. After working with Mark for a period I knew what I wanted to do.

Mike Gogel, ASGCA Associate: I first got into design through golf course construction. While still in college, I wrote a letter to ASGCA Past President Bob Cupp, asking just that question. Mr Cupp responded with a three-page letter basically outlining what he felt was the best track for a person to follow to become a well-rounded designer. That track included a degree in something where computer graphics are utilized and to then go work for a construction company for '18 months to two years'.

I received my degree in Industrial Engineering with minors in Graphic Arts and Horticulture, and upon graduating I spent the next five years working for Paul Clute and Associates and Wadsworth Golf Course Contractors. My first job with Clute was installing greens drainage and spreading pea gravel and the choker layer on a course in Owasso,



Brandon Johnson, ASGCA Associate, has recently worked on the new Lakewood National courses near Sarasota, Florida

Oklahoma. From there I progressed through the ranks, learning how to operate any piece of equipment on a job site, as well as managing people. Ultimately, I ended up as a construction superintendent.

Following this, I was offered an opportunity to go to work with Tripp Davis, ASGCA, and his design firm. This is where I truly learned the most regarding golf course design. Tripp was patient enough to teach me all the ins and outs of design, from presentations to developing a comprehensive set of plans and project specifications. Tripp allowed me to be a part of each project in the field, as well allowing me to offer my design ideas, which helped me grow as a designer. I can honestly say I would not be where I am today were it not for the opportunity to go to work with Tripp Davis and his design firm.

Gene Bates, ASGCA Associate: It was totally by accident! I married the daughter of Ron Kirby, ASGCA

Fellow. Ron was doing some work in the Philippines and came home at Christmas 1978, and while he was back had an unfortunate heart attack. He had to go right back to the Philippines to meet some obligations. I came from the heavy construction industry but I played some golf—not anything of any great caliber but since I was a construction guy he asked if I could go back to the Philippines and oversee some of the construction activities and so I did. I got there and I got into the world of golf construction and design. That's when I decided to stick with this industry and I've been there ever since.

What does ASGCA membership mean to you?

BJ: While the journey to become a golf course architect has been long, unpredictable, and at times difficult, the vast majority of the trek has been filled with priceless memories and meaningful professional experiences.

Gaining membership into the ASGCA is not just the culmination of luck, hard work, support and inspiration from the work of members past and present, but marks a special point in my professional career where I fulfilled a personal goal, along with gaining the respect of my professional peers. I look forward to meeting all the members, talking architecture and hopefully continuing to learn and be inspired.

TB: Ever since I started working in golf course design, becoming a member of the ASGCA has been my professional goal. Being a part of the ASGCA golf course design legacy and having my completed projects recognized within the profession is something I consider to be a major achievement.

SQ: I've been in the industry for 25 years as a builder, project manager, design coordinator and now designer. I've been incredibly fortunate to have worked with and learn from some amazing architects

as well as countless other industry related professionals. When the opportunity to join the ASGCA presented itself, I did not think I would or could qualify.

To be recognized among such an esteemed group of individuals at the ASGCA as a South African is still surreal and far exceeds any expectations I ever imagined.

MG: Being a part of the ASGCA means being a part of something much larger than yourself. As friends and peers became members, they relayed their positive membership experiences to me. The more I learned about the association, the more I wanted to be a part of such a special and distinguished group. The opportunities available, from the collaboration and sharing of ideas with fellow members to working to highlight the golf industry and hopefully expel some of the myths linked to the game, can be a catalyst to growing both personally and professionally. I also feel being a member provides additional

credibility within the industry.

GB: ASGCA membership is a nice add on to what has been a long career. I had my arm twisted by my father-in-law and some other guys in the society who told me 'come on, it's time to get in and join this, you know everybody and you respect them and they respect you so come and be part of our organization'. They voted me in and I'm delighted they did so.

Tell us about one of your current projects.

BJ: Last summer I worked on the first of two courses at Lakewood National outside Sarasota, Florida. The second course is currently in design with construction starting in the not too distant future. While this course is being built on adjacent and identical property, our ability to create broad sweeping elevation changes will be limited so the fun factor, variety, strategy and interest will be created in different ways. I'm excited for the challenge of creating a second, distinctly different, yet complimentary course for the membership.

TB: Eco Park in Hanoi, Vietnam, is one of the more recent projects where we have just completed the Els

At Eco Park in Hanoi, Vietnam, Thad Bell, ASGCA Associate, helped to create a practice area, short game facility and nine-hole course. The next phase will be an 18-hole course.

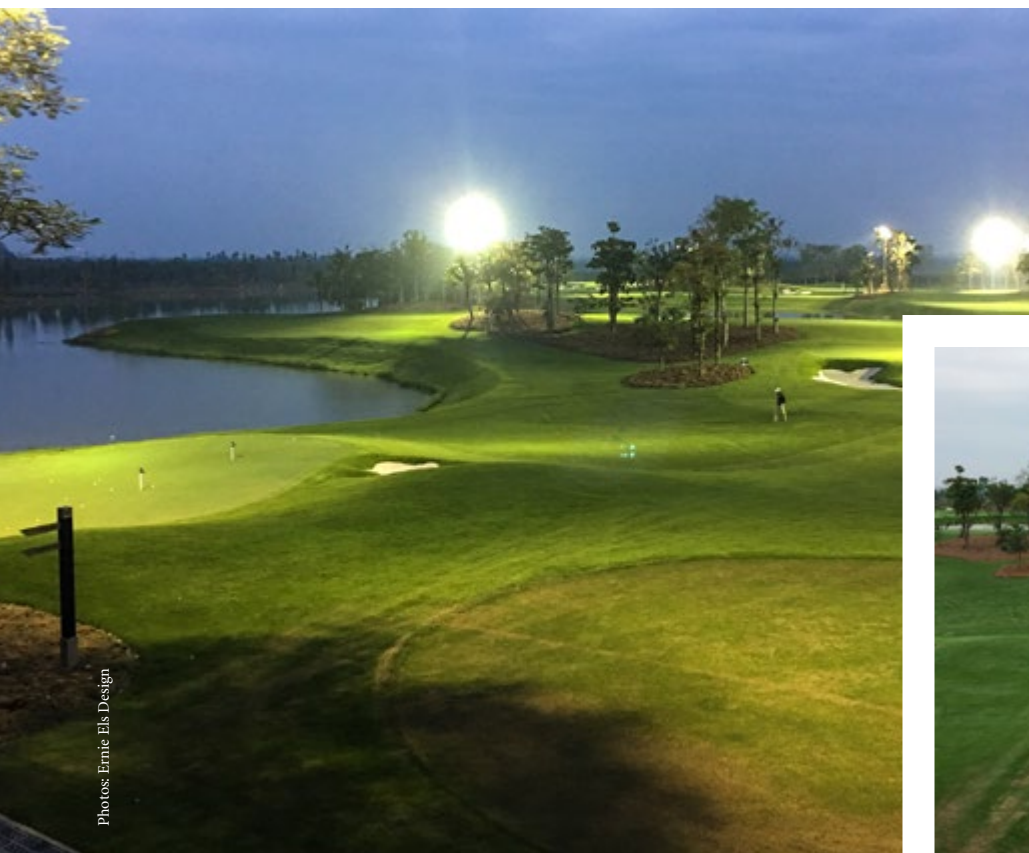




Photo: Mike Gogel Golf Design

The Ranch course at Tonte Verde Golf Club in Rio Verde, Arizona, was renovated by Mike Gogel, ASGCA Associate

Performance Golf Academy as part of the first phase of raising the profile of golf within Vietnam. The practice area and short game area are open for play and the nine hole par three course will open for play September 2017. The next phase will be the 18 hole golf course, which is routed along interior waterways of the site to create a parkland setting. We are working with the developer to fulfil their vision of integrated golf and resort living, which will make Vietnam one of the next exciting phases in the development of golf course design.

SQ: The Kings Course is a Jack Nicklaus II, ASGCA, signature and is one of four projects I am busy with currently that's under construction. The site is located an hour's drive west of Hanoi, Vietnam. The new course will be the third course at Kings Island, with nine holes located on the edge of a large lake and the other nine playing through a forest. Planning for the project commenced a year before

construction began in mid-2016. We have a great team of both expat and local shapers on site, however I will still personally paint all the bunker lines and float all the green cores and surfaces, which I love to do. Given my construction background, I find it incredibly fulfilling being involved in a project from the conceptualization right through to the last stages of implementation.

MG: I am currently finishing a bunker renovation for a club here in Phoenix, Arizona, and I am working on a full renovation at The Jayhawk Club in Lawrence, Kansas. The Jayhawk Club is a course that is very near and dear to my heart. I think we all have dreams of being able to go back 'home' and transform a course from our childhood or college years. The Jayhawk Club is that course for me. My family lived in Lawrence during my early years, and we grew up as Jayhawks. My parents played the course while they were at the University of Kansas

and again when we moved back there in the mid-70s. To be able to go back to the area I consider home and have the opportunity to redesign and update the course as a part of a major upgrade to the entire development is very exciting. Having the opportunity to design a course that will challenge future generations of Jayhawks is clearly a once in a lifetime experience.

GB: I've spent the last four years here in Park City, Utah, building an 18-hole golf course at the Canyon Resort and I honestly have to say, due to the terrain and geology of the site, and the constraints of working in a ski resort, this is undoubtedly the most difficult golf course that I've ever designed and been a part of. I'm really proud of the results though—the golf course looks magnificent and it adds a four season component to the ski resort. It's been quite a challenge so I'm happy that it's over, but the results are very satisfying. ●