



ISSUE 63 // FALL 2023

BY DESIGN

Excellence in Golf Design from the American Society of Golf Course Architects



MATCH MAKERS

ASGCA members explain their thought processes when designing with match play in mind

FRANK JEMSEK

The recipient of the 2023 Donald Ross Award talks about his family's life in golf

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Brit Stenson
President, ASGCA

Bringing people together

Recently, I spent time on a golf trip in South Dakota with my brother and six of his friends. Prior to the trip I only knew two of these friends, but by the end, I knew them all. And I learned quite a lot about their interests, their families, what kind of work they did, and how they are spending their days now, mostly in retirement. I learned about their character, what makes them tick, and whether I want to spend more time with them.

Which brings me to my point, something that we all know, but that perhaps needs to be reiterated from time to time – namely, that golf excels at bringing people together and developing camaraderie. No other sport or activity I know of does this as well.

Soon, many of us will come together to watch, rather than play, golf, as the US and European teams compete for the Ryder Cup. So what better time for *By Design* to consider how golf courses might be designed specifically with match play in mind? This might not be a common brief for a golf course architect, but it was a major consideration for the projects referenced in this issue's cover story. Turn to page 14 to read more.

There's a lot more to discover in this issue too, including a profile of the 2023 ASGCA Donald Ross Award recipient, Frank Jemsek, and his family. The Jemseks have certainly made a great contribution to bringing people together through golf. You can find out more about their story on page 22.

I hope you enjoy the read!

Brit Stenson

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CONTENTS

6 Digest

The issue begins with news of Sharon Heights in California, which is being renovated by Todd Eckenrode, ASGCA. We also report on a new muni course in Florida and a project at Hazeltine ahead of it hosting the 2029 Ryder Cup.



14 Match makers

While match play may no longer be the predominant format for golf, there are some course projects where it drives the design. Richard Humphreys finds out more.



22 A great golf family

By Design speaks with Frank Jemsek, the recipient of the 2023 ASGCA Donald Ross Award, and his family about their life in golf.



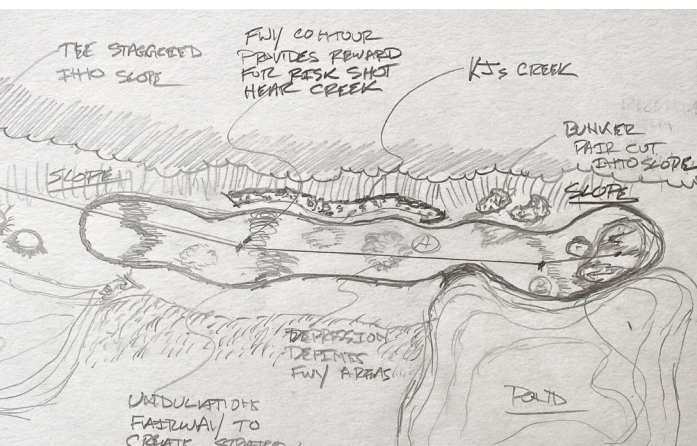
28 Building The Battlefield

Stacie Zinn Roberts discusses the new par-three golf course at Shangri-La Resort in Oklahoma, and the role of Tahoma 31 grass in its design.



32 Inspiring the next generation

Leann Cooper provides insight into the GCSAA First Green program and its positive impact on the golf course industry.



36 Sketchbook

Paul Albanese, ASGCA, shares a sketch of the fifth hole at Amber Hills in Vietnam, a newbuild that is under construction.

On the cover



Ohoopie Match Club in Georgia was laid out by Hanse Golf Design specifically for match play. Photograph by Jon Cavalier/LinksGems

ISSUE 63 // FALL 2023

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Sharon Heights set for \$20m revamp

Origins Golf Design has started a \$20 million renovation project at Sharon Heights Golf & Country Club in Menlo Park, California.

The plan – approved in 2019, around the same time that the club completed a \$23m recycled water plant project – covers all 18 holes with architect Todd Eckenrode, ASGCA, aiming to make the layout more playable and interesting,

improve course aesthetics and conditions, and adhere to the club’s sustainability initiative.

“Fairways will be expanded for added playability and strategic interest while greens will be redesigned and enlarged to offer an increase in hole locations and enhanced variety,” said Eckenrode, who is planning to connect fairways at the third and fifth, ninth and tenth, and fourth and sixteenth.

“All bunkers will be renovated, including new bunker locations to improve strategy, interest in play, and aesthetics,” said Eckenrode. Tees will be rebuilt into more natural shapes and expanded, with new tee locations for some holes.

Tees, fairways, chipping areas and greens will be seeded with new bentgrass varieties to ensure firm and fast playing conditions. All turf areas will be sandcapped,



Visualizations of Todd Eckenrode's plans for Sharon Heights in California. The course is expected to reopen in summer 2024

with subsurface drainage added throughout to enhance growth and facilitate better drainage.

Trees that do not align with the original 1962 Jack Fleming design will be removed. The planting of native species, such as California oaks and sycamores, aims to contribute to a reduction in water usage. Reforestation efforts will also showcase the existing native oaks.

Other work includes cart paths, installing a new irrigation system and expanding recycled water storage capacity by undertaking a project on the irrigation storage lake. Golf Projects International will be responsible for construction and project management.

The club expects work to be completed by late fall 2023, with the course reopening by early summer 2024.

Participation rises by a third since 2016, finds R&A

The number of nine- and 18-hole golfers has risen by more than 10 million since 2016, according to research by the R&A, which analyzes 146 countries in its 'affiliated markets'.

The data comes from a new 'Global Golf Participation Report' and covers Asia, Africa, Canada, the Caribbean, Central and South America, Europe, the Middle East and Oceania all together for the first time.

According to the R&A's research, there are 39.6 million people playing on, either nine- or 18-hole courses in the regions covered (which does not include USA or Mexico).

"Golf's popularity has surged in recent years, which is reflected in a significant increase in the number of people playing the sport in both traditional on-course and alternative formats," said Phil Anderton, chief development officer at the R&A. "Millions are now engaged in golf through many other alternative formats, such as driving ranges, which are so vital to the growth of the sport."

Download the R&A Global Golf Participation Report 2023.



Global Golf Participation Report.

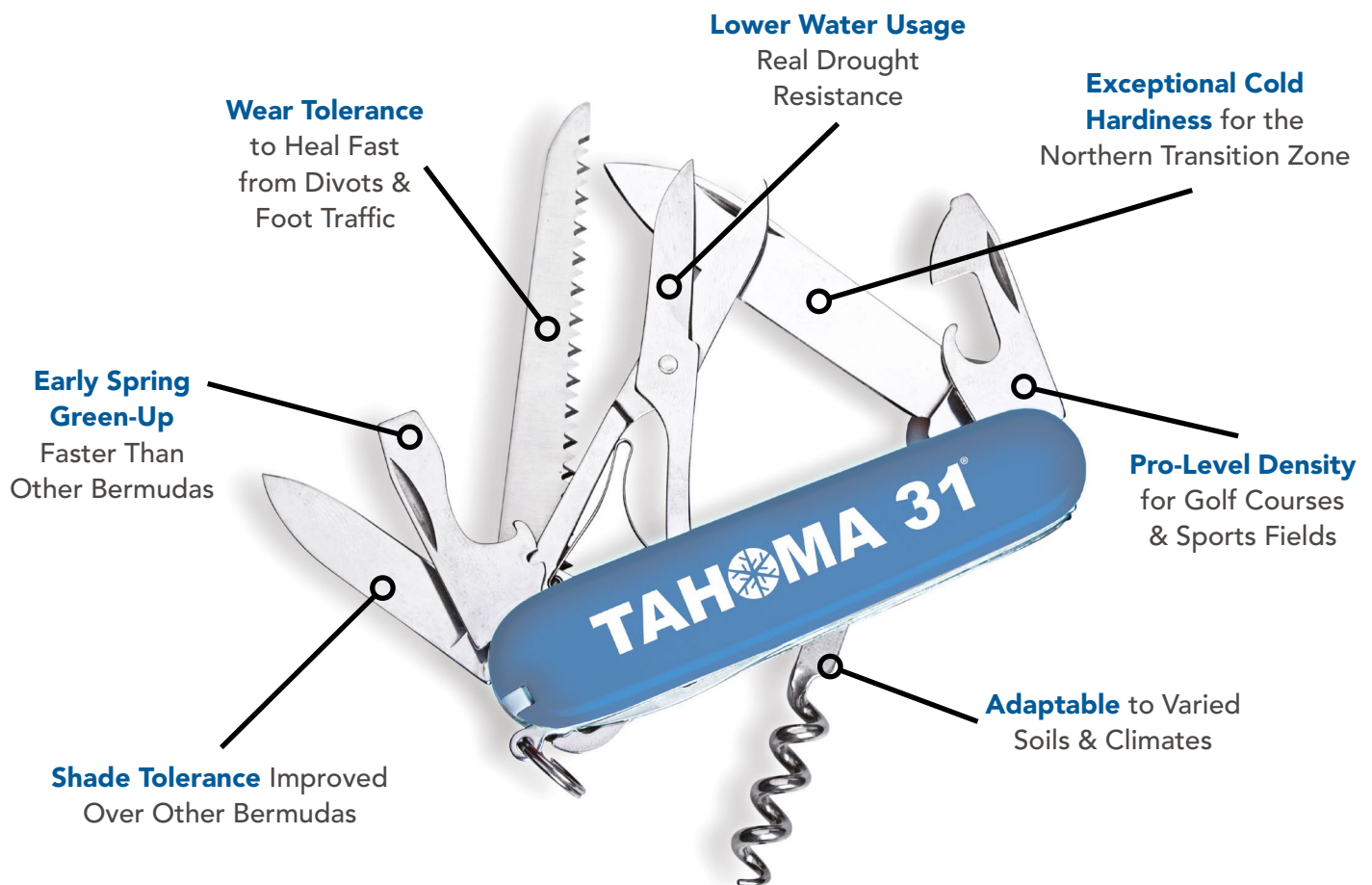
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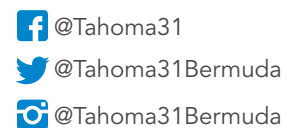
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Photo: Nicklaus Design

Goetz focuses on fun for par-three course at Florida muni

A new eighteen-hole par-three course has opened at the municipal Sandhill Crane Golf Club in Palm Beach Gardens, Florida.

“The goal was to create a fun course with as much variety as possible,” said Chad Goetz, ASGCA, senior designer at Nicklaus Design, who led the project. “Combined with the

elevation changes, we mixed length, angles, types of shots, dry holes and wet holes to arrive at a very nice overall variety and flow between holes.”

The Nest offers four sets of tees with holes ranging from 100-to-256 yards from the back tees and 70-to-156 yards from the front.

The course is lightly bunkered for a

Florida course with five bunkerless holes and has been designed to be played in several ways depending on how players use the slopes.

An island-green nineteenth hole gives players a chance to settle bets, and practice facilities have been overhauled. A new 30,000-square-foot putting course has also been built.

Hazeltine set to be reimagined for 2029 Ryder Cup

Hazeltine National Golf Club in Chaska, Minnesota, has agreed to a long-term partnership with Love Golf Design that will see the firm reimagine the course for the 2029 Ryder Cup.

The design team, led by Davis Love III (pictured) and including architect Scot Sherman, ASGCA, will examine the course and surrounding property, including greens, fairways, playing distances, irrigation, drainage and routing, to create a masterplan that will also identify infrastructure improvements needed to deliver consistent championship playing conditions.

“We appreciate the opportunity to work on such a grand scale here at Hazeltine,” said Sherman. “Hazeltine is blessed to have plentiful land, which gives us the room to create some thought-provoking strategies, so we are excited to have the masterplanning process underway.”



Ron Kirby, ASGCA Fellow (1933-2023)



Photo: Kristopher Streek

as the Americas. His portfolio includes The International at London Golf Club in England, Dolphin Head in South Carolina, Sun City in South Africa, Old Head Golf Links in Ireland, and La Moraleja in Spain.

“Ron Kirby was one of a kind, or perhaps I should say Ron and Sally Kirby were two of a kind,” said ASGCA President Brit Stenson. “His positive impact on golf course architecture in countries around the world will serve as a professional legacy, but it was Ron’s enduring relationship with Sally that many of us will long remember.”

The couple’s travels together set the tone for Kirby’s autobiography, *We Spent Half Our Lives on the Wrong Side of the Road*, published in 2020. Sally died in 2021.

Kirby is survived by his children Faye, Ron Jr and Beverly.

Ron Kirby, ASGCA Fellow, passed away at age 90 in Copenhagen, Denmark, in August.

A native of Beverly, Massachusetts, Kirby initially worked as a design associate for Dick Wilson, and then served under ASGCA Founding Father Robert Trent Jones, Sr., before

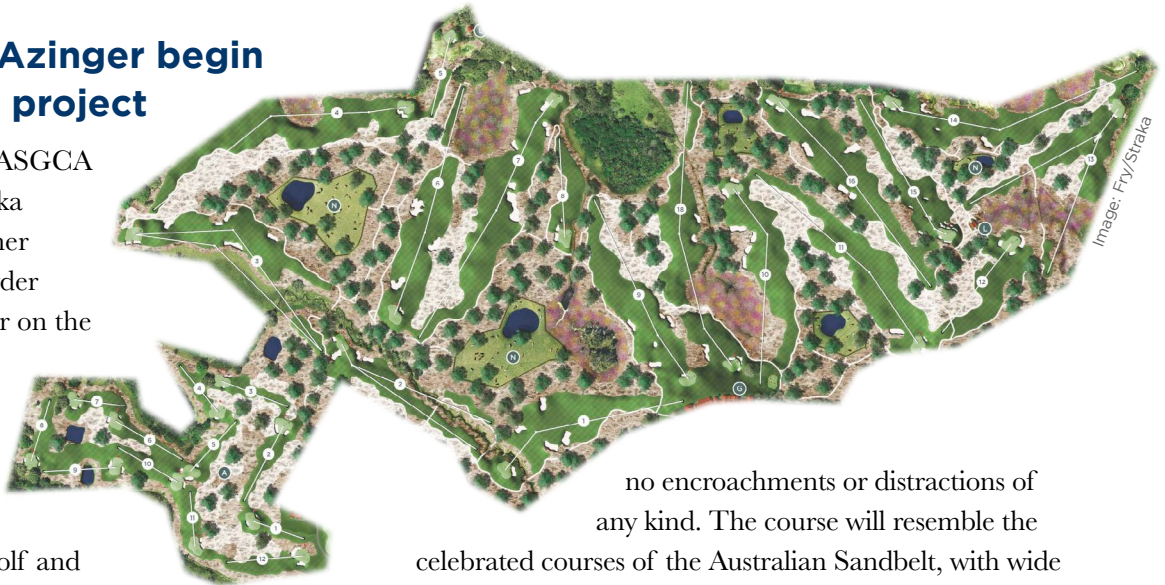
establishing his own firm in 1970, alongside Gary Player as a consulting partner. Kirby later sold the firm and joined the design firm of Jack Nicklaus, ASGCA Fellow, to oversee European projects.

Kirby’s career took him around the globe, designing courses in Europe, Asia and Africa, as well

Fry/Straka and Azinger begin work on Miakka project

Dana Fry, ASGCA, and ASGCA Past President Jason Straka have partnered with former PGA Tour player and Ryder Cup captain Paul Azinger on the design of an eighteen-hole course for the new Miakka Golf Club in Myakka City, Florida.

“This is one of the best natural sites for golf and one of the best teams we’ve ever been affiliated with,” said Straka. “The property has an incredible two miles of frontage along the Myakka River with hundreds of mature oak hammocks. Just the golf club and its facilities are being built on more than 1,100 acres. Miakka is going to be pure golf with



no encroachments or distractions of any kind. The course will resemble the celebrated courses of the Australian Sandbelt, with wide turf corridors, no rough, and distinctive bunkers and natural-area hazards jutting into the line of play.”

Miakka will also include a 12-hole par-three layout, a seven-acre short-game facility, a lighted putting course, and a performance centre. The short course is expected to open in 2024 with the main layout in early 2025.

Colligan and Kemp to redesign Fort Worth muni

Colligan Golf Design will oversee the redesign of Meadowbrook Golf Course in Fort Worth, Texas.

The city hired the firm's principal John Colligan, ASGCA, and his design associate Trey Kemp, ASGCA, to develop a masterplan in 2021. Their plans for the John Bredemus design include rerouting 15 holes to take advantage of the topography. The only holes that will not be rerouted are holes 10,

12 and 13. However, the twelfth will change from a par four to a par five and the thirteenth will go from a par five to a par four.

In addition to the rerouting and opening of corridors, the pair's plan includes work on greens, bunkers, lakes and cart paths. They will also address subsurface

drainage and work alongside irrigation designer Larry Rodgers to overhaul the existing system.

The course has been relatively untouched since ASGCA Past President Ralph Plummer renovated tees and greens in 1963.

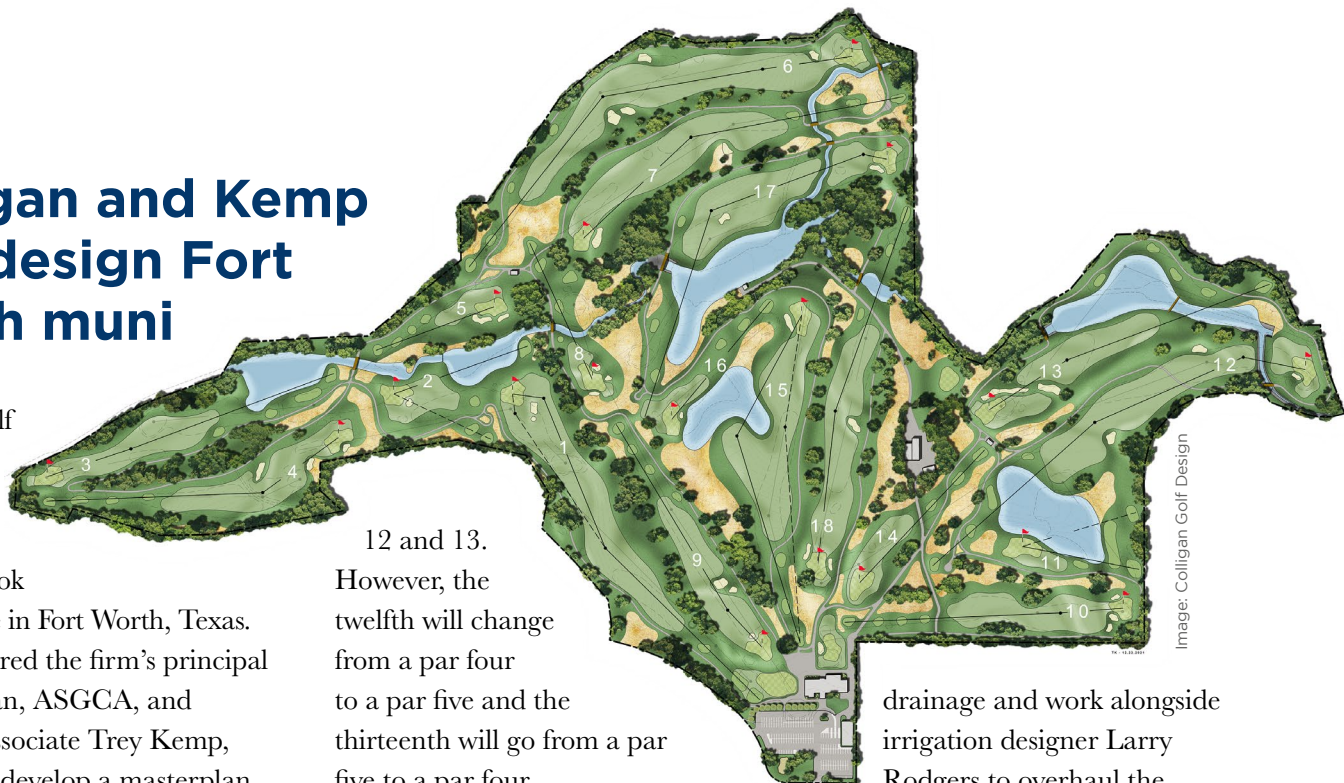


Image: Colligan Golf Design



“Public and municipal golf courses are very important to the game”

Mark Mungeam, ASGCA

In the latest podcast from *Golf Course Industry's* “Tartan Talks” series, Mark Mungeam, ASGCA, talks about his work on municipal golf courses, including George Wright and William J. Devine, both in Massachusetts and both designed by ASGCA Founding Father Donald Ross.

“A large part of work at George Wright is to clean it up and restore the features,” says Mungeam. “We’re

removing some of the overgrowth, re-exposing ledge areas, improving playability, fine-tuning it to how it was originally, and to also make sure that the changes bring it into the future. We’re doing tee expansions, cart path work, restoring and removing bunkers; all to make the layout more efficient to maintain.

“Public and municipal golf courses are very important to the game,” continues Mungeam. “I really

appreciate seeing these layouts receive a lot of play. Many are feeder courses, where people learn to play golf, so when I work at these places, I am ever more appreciative of the work I do. Doing this work lifts the course and the people up and they get a real sense of pride about their golf course.”

Listen to the full “Tartan Talk” at golfcourseindustry.com.

Here are links to other recent “Tartan Talks,” now featuring over 80 episodes:

- Rick Phelps, ASGCA, [had a terrific seat to witness and help guide golf development in his native Colorado.](#)
- David Johnson, ASGCA, [discusses his career and interests, including golf course architecture, coaching and hiking.](#)

New short course to debut in Michigan next year



Photo: Boyne Resorts

The Highlands at Harbor Springs, Michigan, is under way with construction of a new nine-hole par-three layout designed by Ray Hearn, ASGCA.

The short layout will be the eleventh course operated by Boyne Resorts, a ski and golf operator running resorts in Michigan, Maine and Montana. Boyne is also currently in development of several courses across its locations as it looks to press forward with a long-term vision for growth.

The new yet-to-be-named short course is located on the site of the former Cuff Links, which was also a nine-hole par-three layout. Hearn’s design values playability and fun – there will be two to three fairway options for each hole, forward tees to avoid some hazards, and it will be lit for evening play.

Construction is expected to be completed by fall 2023 with an opening planned for spring 2024.

Classic style returns to Colonial in Memphis

Nathan Crace, ASGCA, has completed a renovation of the South course at Colonial Country Club in Memphis, Tennessee.

Crace’s renovation plan for the South focused on greens and bunkers. “The goal at Colonial is what I call a ‘restoration,’” he said. “We’re restoring the classic feel of a classic layout that was once the longest course on the PGA Tour while making improvements for today’s game and modern players.

“Over the years, multiple contractors had been brought in to redo a green here or there and a few bunkers at a time, but not all of them. And none of the work



Photo: Nathan Crace, ASGCA

was done under the direction of an architect, so there was no consistency.”

Forefront Golf Construction began work on Crace’s plan in early 2023 and finished in late July, despite record-breaking

cold temperatures and rain in the spring, and summer storms that uprooted 14 large trees, including the oak in the middle of the seventeenth fairway.

The course is expected to reopen for play in October 2023.



Waynesville reopens following redesign

Waynesville Inn & Golf Club has reopened following a redesign by Bobby Weed, ASGCA. The course was designed by ASGCA Founding Father Donald Ross in 1926.

The club's original Carolina nine has been restored and now becomes the front nine of the new routing. The other nines, Dogwood and Blue Ridge, have been consolidated into a new back nine.

"Waynesville's new routing is compelling, memorable and avoids repetition," said Weed. "The design

variety should also provide different hole shapes, distances and shot options for the player to discern."

Weed's work on the par-35 'Ross nine' has included restoring Ross' smaller greens, short-cut surrounds and bunkers. On the back nine, the architect shaped the greens with soft slopes and falloffs to resemble the Ross nine.

Weed also revamped the facilities, including the introduction of a short course and an 18,000-square-foot putting green.

Forse, Nagle and Rae join ASGCA

Ron Forse and Jim Nagle, golf course architects at Forse Golf Design, and Tyler Rae, who is based in Delaware, have become members of the ASGCA.



Ron Forse graduated from West Virginia University with a degree in Landscape Architecture. In over 30 years as a golf course architect, he has worked on courses such as Nemaocolin Woodlands in Pennsylvania and Hyannisport Club on Cape Cod.




Like Forse, **Jim Nagle** is a Landscape Architecture graduate from West Virginia University. He has been with Forse Golf Design since 1998 and has worked at Concord CC, Lancaster CC and Philadelphia CC in Pennsylvania, Beacon Hill in New Jersey, and Kirtland CC in Ohio.



Tyler Rae started his career as a shaper for various construction firms and then worked as a design associate before setting up his own design firm in 2020. His current projects include Lookout Mountain Club in Georgia and Spy Ring Golf Club in New York.


SOCIAL UPDATE



 Jim Wagner, ASGCA
@JimWagner

Another productive trip across checking in on projects at Hann Reserve (Clark, Philippines) and BRG Golden Sands (Hue, Vietnam).



 Evan Schiller
@evan_schiller_photography

Beautiful days at Sahalee... enjoy the views.



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Challenging times are often the perfect time to start asking the right questions about your golf facility. @ASGCA has prepared a straightforward Q & A to help superintendents, club owners, et al. understand the benefits of Master Planning for golf courses.

<http://tinyurl.com/y8bosbbu>

Search ASGCA on the below channels for more posts:



MATCH PLAY

Match makers

While match play may no longer be the predominant format for golf, there are some course projects where it drives the design. Richard Humphreys finds out more.

In the 1920s, Dr Alister MacKenzie wrote: “Nine-out-of-ten games on most good courses are played in matches.”

This no longer holds true. Professional golf has brought with it a strong predisposition towards a scorecard, which has filtered down through the amateur ranks and into the game played by everyday golfers. That’s not to say match play isn’t popular, particularly for the casual golfer who struggles to keep high numbers off a scorecard.

The game’s top players like it too. During the pre-tournament press conference at Austin Country Club for this year’s sole match-play event on the PGA Tour, which has since been scrapped from the schedule, defending champion Scottie Scheffler said: “I love match play. I like the simplicity of it. All you have to do is go out there and try and beat the guy that’s in front of you and if you don’t, you lose, and if you beat him, you win.”

For MacKenzie and his fellow Golden Age architects, the dominance of match play afforded a degree of design freedom. A ‘scorecard wrecker’ of a hole might be unpopular in stroke play, but in match play there’s no scorecard to wreck. So MacKenzie and his contemporaries didn’t fear including a few of those in their designs. Golfers were fine with such holes too; knowing that a high score would lead to the loss of just



Match play is the preferred format on The Match course at PGA National Resort in Florida



At Ohoopsee Match Club, the design team pushed for heroic holes, with big risks and big rewards

one hole, rather than any hope of victory, while also enjoying the chance to pull off heroics in the face of difficulty.

But the shift to stroke play means it would be understandable then if today's designers were reluctant to include holes with a high tariff, to minimize the possibility of golfers coming away from the round unhappy.

There are, however, still occasions where match-play-led thinking prevails.

One of those was near Cobbtown, Georgia, where Mike Walrath asked Gil Hanse, ASGCA, to set out 22 holes of golf across a gently rolling and forested landscape. The result would be the highly regarded Ohoopsee Match Club.

“When Mike asked us to create a match play course, Jim Wagner and I talked a lot about what that might mean,” says Hanse. “It was the most liberating conversation – and design – we have undertaken because we were not burdened with the notion that holes would be evaluated based on what score someone shot.

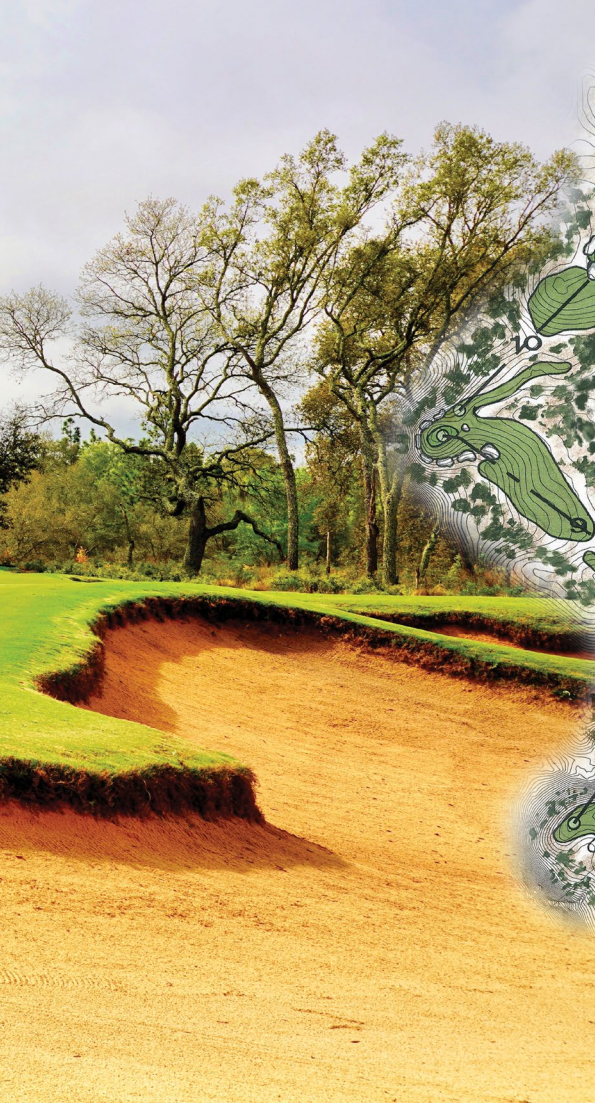
“We were able to push the envelope knowing that if someone made an eight on a hole, they were not going to have their round ruined; they would simply lose that hole and move on. As a result, we pushed for holes that fell more into the heroic school of design with big risks and big rewards. Depending on the status of the match and how the player was feeling, they could decide to take on those big risks, or play more



conservatively. These types of holes and ‘all in’ options might be a bit overwhelming if one were keeping score, but in a match the thought process is completely different.

Freed from par

Hanse and Wagner were also freed from the constraints of par. “The holes where match play is



Images: Jon Cavalier/LinksGems

most evident are those that play to a half par,” says Hanse. “For example, at the ninth, which is a drivable par four with a diabolical green that is divided into four significant quadrants. If you miss the quadrant where the pin is located, you may struggle to two-putt. This allows a lot of thinking on the tee because if you go for the

green and get out of position, you will be busy trying to make par. If a player is good with a wedge, they may lay back off the tee and use that club to their advantage to hit it to the correct segment of the green.

Hanse also obscured several landing areas, from the back tees, throughout

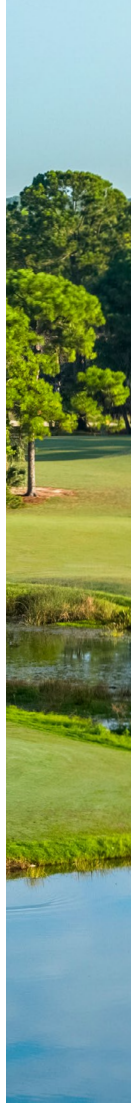
round. This means that players won’t be 100 percent certain about the fate of their, and their opponent’s, tee shot, adding another dimension to the competition.

“We generally design our courses with match play in mind, trying

MATCH PLAY



Photos: Evan Schiller



Andy Staples, ASGCA, says The Match was one of the most creative and fun projects he has worked on

to create holes that are interesting to play and provide different options for how to play them,” says Hanse. “We also spend a lot of time thinking about the sequence of holes and what might make for an interesting flow of holes from a match play standpoint. Sometimes this manifests itself in the closing stretch of holes offering opportunities for positive outcomes to decide matches, as opposed to having truly difficult holes where negative scoring might decide the contest.”

Breaking a mindset

When PGA National Resort in Florida decided to rethink the Squire, one of its five 18-hole layouts, match play was the

inspiration for a new design from Andy Staples, ASGCA. His proposal was to turn the first and last holes into a nine-hole par three layout, and then rework the remaining sixteen to become

evolved to explore ways to create offerings that are not exactly like the other courses at the resort. A course designed around match play was the perfect solution to creating an innovative golf experience on a

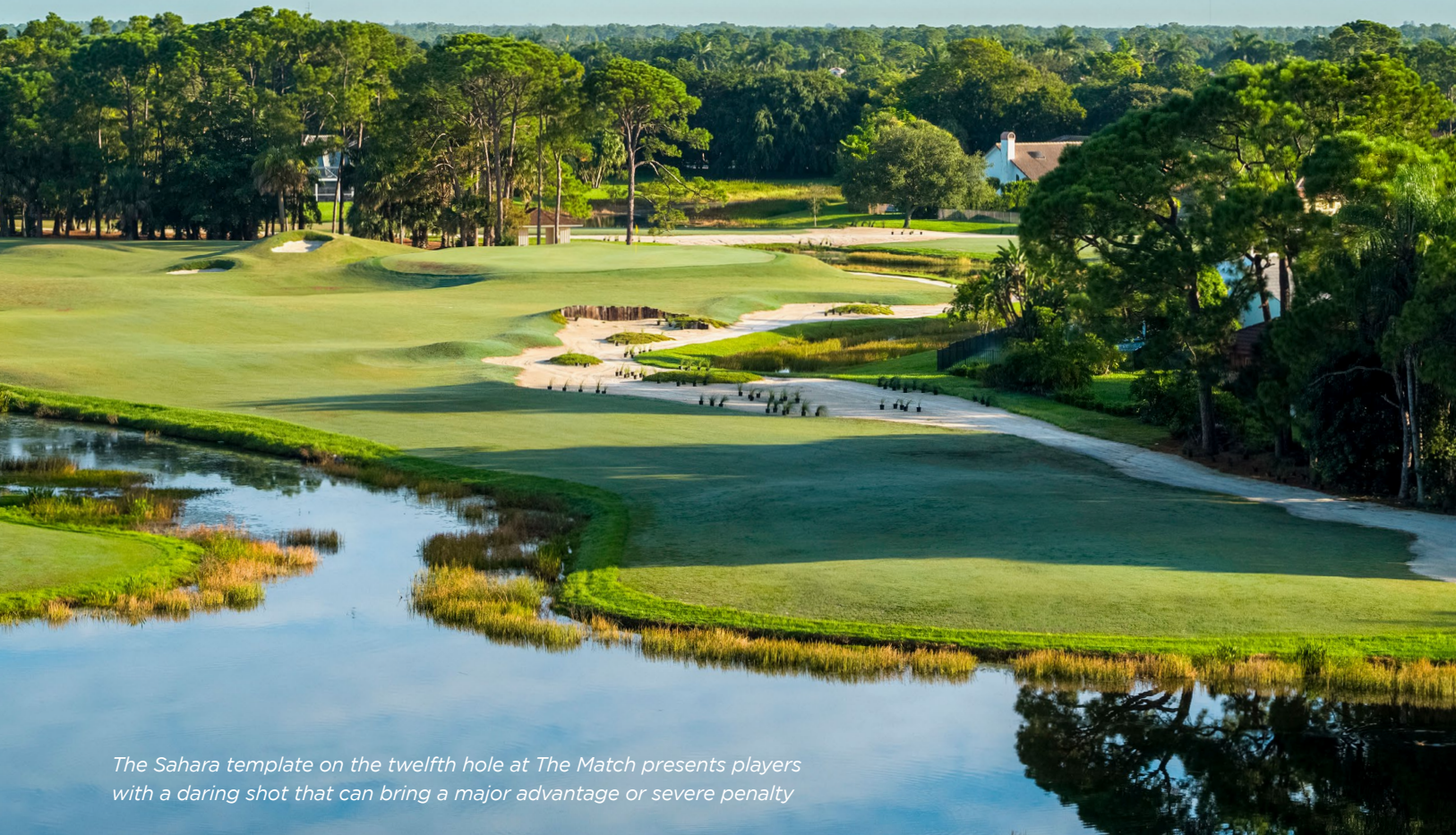
“Anyone that has played a match understands that it isn’t about making birdie or avoiding bogey”

“The Match’, an eighteen-hole course of 5,744 yards where match play would be the preferred format.

“The Match was one of the most creative and fun projects I’ve worked on,” says Staples. “When the idea came to split the site into two new layouts, the design brief

course of non-traditional length – and, quite honestly, as a means to break the ‘American golfer’ mindset of needing to post a score.”

The Match eschews specific tees (markers simply denote the back and front of the teeing area), so that golfers can choose where they play



The Sahara template on the twelfth hole at The Match presents players with a daring shot that can bring a major advantage or severe penalty

from. There is no designated par, and no course rating.”

“As we were building The Match, I was in the habit of describing its concepts with the motto ‘my six beats your seven!’ Anyone that has played a match understands that it isn’t about making birdie or avoiding bogey – it’s about beating your competitor in any way possible,” says Staples. “With this mindset, I feel we were able to capitalize on strategic risk-reward opportunities, and push the limits on preferred angles into greens, green contouring, and shortgrass runoffs, in a more heightened, dramatic sense.

“There is no doubt that the greens on The Match are what protect the course and serve as

the great equalizer against sheer length. We paired this concept with inspiration from the template holes of Charles Blair Macdonald and Seth Raynor, which provided great direction for tried-and-true strategic variety. The result was a set of holes that present unique options attainable for golfers of all skill levels. Every hole will allow you to attack or lay back depending on which ‘tee’ you choose to play from, as well as your game’s strengths and weaknesses, based on your standing in the match.

“I feel these concepts are perfectly embodied on the twelfth, a hole inspired by the ‘Sahara’ template, where players are presented with a daring shot over a large waste area that can bring a major advantage...

or a severe penalty. The conservative play is to lay up to the left into the widest, flattest part of the fairway, only 180 to 200 yards from the tee. This angle sets up a full swing short second into a green with two main ridges parallel to the line of play. However, the shorter overall hole length invites many to take their chances with the driver. The green can hold a well-placed drive, but a ball off line is challenged with a deep swale on the front, a gnarly coffin bunker on the back-left, and a severe roll-off behind... not to mention the carry over the Sahara waste!”

PGA National’s newest layout has been a big hit with ‘golf buddy’ groups since it opened in September 2021.



The short par-four fifteenth is one of many holes at the Ryder Cup's 2027 venue Adare Manor to offer distinct offense or defense strategies

“The fine line created by the risk-reward strategy of a hole is what I believe makes The Match, and match play in general, most exciting,” says Staples. “Par, slope, course ratings, and designated tees simply don’t matter. What matters is playing against an opponent in a fair, balanced way that engages

more creative, and less structured. We think it certainly has replay value... especially when it comes to a redemption match!”

Match play’s holy grail

When Tom Fazio, ASGCA, was appointed to redesign Adare Manor in Ireland, it was made very

“A good design for a golf hole should allow both fun match play and smart stroke play,” says ASGCA Past President Tom Marzolf, of Fazio Golf Design. “Yes, when it’s match play, the hole needs to taunt the player into offense or defense, depending on how the match stands.”

And perhaps these attributes come most sharply into focus on the closing stretch, when matches are won or lost. Marzolf highlights the fifteenth and eighteenth of his redesign of Adare Manor as great examples of offering distinct strategies for offense or defense. “The par-four fifteenth is a ‘pull the driver and go for the win’ hole, as well as offering the smart lay-up option to avoid losing,” he says. And while few matches make it all the

“The hole needs to taunt the player into offense or defense”

both your skill and decision making on each hole.

“What I might love most about The Match is that you can play it again and again, learn its subtleties, and come to realize how your game best fits the course; it is almost like a rewiring of your golf-brain to be

clear that the goal of the project was to attract golf’s most famous match: the Ryder Cup.

Nevertheless, knowing that was just one week, the Fazio team still had to ensure the course would appeal to all types of golf and golfer.

way to 18, his high-risk design is ideal for when the stakes are down.

“The eighteenth is the ultimate example of a par five, with players teased to go for the green over River Maigue in two to secure the win, or to tie the match,” says Marzolf. “The Ryder Cup has never had this level of idyllic setting for such a head scratching second shot option. The firm green perched atop a wall on the edge of the river is tough to hold with a wedge if you lay up. The smart play is to cross the river in two.”

Marzolf says that a good Ryder Cup hole needs a strategy that makes a player think, but also allows for options in course setup.

“Greens will need shapes that allow for a variety of pin positions so that different shot shapes can get close enough to win the hole. Everyone enjoys viewing a ‘sucker’ pin that is tough and risky enough to allow a heroic shot to win or the ultimate choke to lose the hole. The green at the par-three eleventh is one example. It is subtle enough that some may miss the virtues of shotmaking that exist there. A pin on the front half of the green requires a left-to-right ball flight. The back pin demands a draw, flirting with the river, to get close to the hole.”

There doesn’t need to be a Ryder Cup at stake for a match play-oriented design to make sense. Clubs that are looking to inject some variety, or have a site that might not accommodate a regulation eighteen, might find a match makes heaven. ●

Golf *is* match play

ASGCA Past President Greg Martin explains why he thinks the industry should focus its attention away from stroke play



Since the 1950s and 60s, golf has become a stroke play game, leaving the less-suited for television format of match play behind.

Protecting par governs the game.

But the game was borne on seaside links – golfer against golfer – it was a match.

Once upon a time, match play determined the best golfers. The golfer battled the opponent and ‘played’ the course. This was a duel played out across the landscape. The less able golfer had options and alternatives to combat the longer, more aggressive golfer. Match play golfers weren’t consumed with ‘fairness’, because the ‘rub’ affected everyone without prejudice. The opponent was the competition, not the golf course.

The submission to stroke play has shaped a generation of golfers and the entire industry. Fairness is now a prerequisite, and the result is soaring maintenance requirements, a round taking too long, and the sport becoming more expensive and less fun.

What if the golf industry forgot about length and its preoccupation of protecting



par? What if designers were encouraged to defend a golf course with strategy, not distance or hazards? What if golf courses were judged on the merits of its design strategies, shot values and with a match play perspective instead of maintenance?

Instead of slope values or length, golf would have a more wide-ranging appeal. If we reduce the impact of par, we can improve the pace of play, reduce the impact of hazards, and promote strategy, fun and creativity.

Match play would moderate the need for contrived beauty and emphasize naturalized environments. It would also lower maintenance expectations, celebrate the unique and diminish the need for fairness. This perspective allows for more freedom and to build interest without protecting par. A match play perspective produces beauty, variety and balance. Holes should be conceived to foster the strategic instinct – compelling match play, while allowing for an honest treatment of the land.

A great golf family

By Design speaks with Frank Jemsek, the recipient of the 2023 ASGCA Donald Ross Award, and his family, about their life in golf.

“I can’t think of a time when golf was not a central part of my day,” says Frank Jemsek, the owner of Illinois golf operator Jemsek Golf. “I believe that if you find work you love, it’s not really work. That’s what I found in the game of golf.”

In 1951, Frank was just 11 years old when his father Joe brought him into the family business, at St. Andrews Golf & Country Club in West Chicago. As Frank grew, so did the family’s club portfolio: to include Cog Hill and Pine Meadow in Illinois, as well as Summer Grove

greet golfers who come out together for the ‘Family Fun Golf’ nights,” says Frank. “I truly enjoy watching grandparents, parents and children golfing together and creating lasting memories.

“Some of my fondest memories come from spending time on the golf course with my kids; I can remember how proud I was when my son beat me for the first time. I am also very lucky to be able to drive around the course with my grandchildren and relish in their excitement when they hit a good shot.”

“I truly enjoy watching grandparents, parents and children golfing together”

in Georgia. And, following in his father’s footsteps, Frank has devoted his life to the sport. Both men are now recognized in the Illinois Golf Hall of Fame.

“My favorite days of the week still start at dawn on Saturday when I greet the regular golfers as they tee off and on Sunday evenings, where I

Jemsek Golf is a true family business. Frank’s daughters, Katherine and Marla, are Cog Hill’s president and accountant respectively. His youngest, Joe, is a golf course architect. And son-in-law Kevin Weeks, Marla’s husband, is the 2023 PGA Teacher & Coach of the Year.



“Our grow-the-game initiatives are some of my proudest contributions to the game of golf,” says Frank. “My dad always stressed the importance of having great teachers. He believed that if golfers could play better, the round would be more fun, and they would play more often.”

Golf for all

Family Fun Golf followed a conversation with Leon McNair from the Wadsworth Foundation.



Frank Jemsek is regularly seen greeting golfers at clubs operated by Jemsek Golf

“It is a program where kids and adults play together from forward tees,” says Frank. “All I thought about is how much fun it was to play with my family and my uncles when I was young. All my facilities participate in the Family Fun Golf nights. I love seeing the excitement when a kid beats their father!”

Other initiatives developed under Frank’s watch include ‘No Embarrassment Golf Schools’ and ‘Youth on Course’, both designed at bringing new people to the sport.

Frank started the ‘Sizzler’ over 40 years ago, one of Illinois’ first junior events. “The Sizzler was first run opposite the largest junior event in Illinois to allow the waitlisted juniors an opportunity to play in an event,” says Frank. “We had the most participants of any one-day junior tournament in the country.”

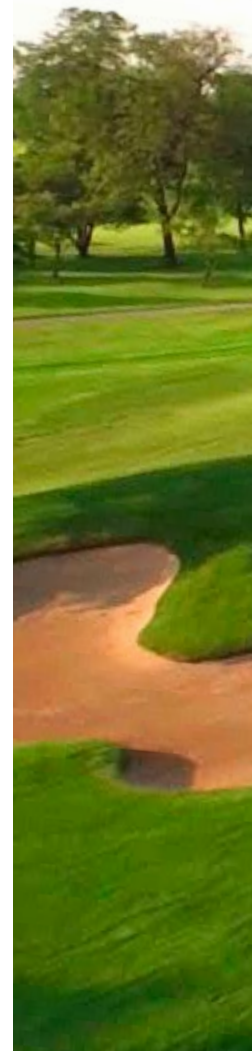
Cog Hill was also an early adopter of the PGA Junior Golf League. “My daughter brought me this program that I wasn’t so sure about, but I backed her,”

says Frank. “It is for golfers aged six to 13. In 2014, Cog Hill had 14 young golfers; in 2022 they had 343, which ranked second nationally. The All-Stars from Cog Hill have gone to the national finals a record six straight years.”

A design epiphany

Initially, Frank hadn’t paid much attention to course architecture, but that all changed following a visit to Olympia Fields. “I was excited by the different looks and strategies of

ASGCA DONALD ROSS AWARD



ASGCA Past President Rees Jones (pictured with Katherine and Frank Jemsek) renovated Cog Hill's #4 course, Dubsdread (pictured right), in 2008

the layout, and I wanted to learn more about how courses were designed," he says.

Frank was inspired to try his own small renovations at Cog Hill. On the par-three fourth at the #1 course, he added a green so play could be alternated. "However, the contour and shaping were too severe and golf outings were unable to use the new hole," says Frank. "These early experiments helped me see the value of professionals like ASGCA members and the importance of hiring the best people in the business."

Frank and Joe spent several million dollars to have Pine Meadow renovated by architects Joe Lee and Rocky Roquemore. "They used

picturesque hazards for average players but added back tees to increase length and to challenge the strong golfers," says Frank. "It was one of the first courses with four sets of tees... now we have six, allowing for 11 different combinations."

One of the biggest projects at his clubs was ASGCA Past President Rees Jones' renovation of Cog Hill's #4 course, 'Dubsdread', a PGA Tour site for 20 years, hosting the Western Open and BMW Championship.

"I started planning the Dubsdread renovation 10 years before a shovel touched the ground," says Frank. "I wanted to stay with a Dick Wilson style, and I knew Rees Jones was the best choice for an architect and

Wadsworth was the best company for construction. Getting them to work together took some time, but I was persistent, and the results were worth the wait.

"Now, 14 years later, I watch as Katherine and Joe continue to upgrade Dubsdread as they implement the Better Billy Bunker method. I enjoy working together as we make the course more enjoyable and easier to maintain. I can't wait to see how my children and grandchildren improve the facility."

Frank believes in variety. "When I was the manager at St. Andrews, we were having difficulty getting our regulars to show up at the end of the season," he says. "Against



the opinions of my father and my uncle, I introduced rotating tee times between the two golf courses. I couldn't believe some of our long-time customers had never played the other course. Within two seasons, no-show rates were down significantly, and we implemented the rotating system in at our other properties."

Continuing the legacy

"I always felt like my father and I worked together as a team," says Frank. "I don't really remember him passing the control over to me. It just happened. Control is hard to give up, but when it came time for me, I knew it was the right decision. When my daughter, Katherine,

stepped up and took on a difficult job that no one else wanted, I knew she would be the next one to run the business."

Katherine is now president of Jemsek Golf. "I didn't realize, until

to be willing to do the job you ask others to do. But one of the best things he taught me was how to make tough decisions that need to be made to keep a business running and successful for decades

"I started planning the Dubsdread renovation 10 years before a shovel even touched the ground"

after he died, the best advice my grandfather gave me," she says. "He told me not to worry about the things you can't change, only the ones you can.

"My dad taught me hard work, loyalty to others and that you need

to come. There are times to make a decision, and there are times to not make a decision. But when you do make a decision, make it and move forward."

Katherine has recently added Toptracer technology, lights, music



Photos: Cog Hill

Frank has passed on the running of the family business to his daughter Katherine, who is now the president of Jemsek Golf and Cog Hill

and a bar to the expansive range facilities at Cog Hill.

“Grandpa and my dad approached business differently,” says Katherine. “My grandpa was a risk taker, promoter and enjoyed seeing how

Katherine’s sister Marla, a former Curtis Cup player, explains Frank’s work to encourage women in golf.

“My dad, one of the only men who attended the first Women in Golf Summit in 1991, learned that

They found another instructor and years later she would shoot a 69 in a tournament at Cog Hill.

“He believed everyone has a place in golf,” says Marla. “I remember his excitement when he explained that he was starting the No Embarrassment Golf Schools so everyone could learn to play golf in a fun and safe environment. This program is loved by many to this day and continues to sell out.”

Frank’s work to broaden golf’s appeal continues. After attending a seminar from ASGCA Past President Jan Bel Jan at Pinehurst, he returned to Cog Hill convinced he needed to add more forward tees.

“My father has taken the customer experience to the next level”

many players he could get on the course in a day. My father has taken the customer experience to the next level. He is loyal to his customers and the game – the loyalty he receives in return is amazing. He is known for building long-term relationships with golfers and outings.”

most women quit golf because an instructor makes them feel stupid,” she says. “This brought back memories of what happened to his wife when she wanted to improve. She was told by a teacher that because she was a woman that could break 100, what else did she want?”



“He told me he knew what holes should get them, but my dad never does something without research,” says Marla. “He did a study of Cog Hill’s four ladies leagues. The ladies at Cog Hill have always entered their scores hole by hole – not as a single eighteen-hole score – and my dad collected a year’s worth of these scores and sat at his desk and figured out the average score on each hole per handicap group. Then he used this data to decide which holes would most benefit from forward tees.”

Frank is constantly learning, as his son Joe explains: “My father never met a golf course he didn’t like, he always felt you could learn

something from each golf course you saw or played.

“He picked me up from the airport during winter break from college. He asked if we could go see a golf course, he needed to rate for *Golf Digest*. Although it was barely above freezing, I agreed as it was nice to spend time after being away for the semester. The course wasn’t open, so we had to walk. After a hole or two it started to sleet. He told me he heard the sixth hole had revetted, stacked sod bunkers like those in Scotland; and after seeing that we could go. But by the time the day was finished, we had walked 45 holes over three courses, the last of which was across the road from a local prison!”

Enduring advice

“My father taught me the value and importance of listening to people and golfers to find the right ideas for the golf course,” says Frank.

“The foundation of my father’s business was great golf at an affordable price. But we needed to take that further, creating a course for every level of player. Golfers are people and are looking for variety. Some courses need to be forgiving to get people into the game. Most people are looking for fun and enjoyability, but others need the challenge and difficulty.

“We need all kinds of courses for the golf industry to continue to thrive for generations.” ●

Building The Battlefield

Stacie Zinn Roberts discusses the new par-three golf course at Shangri-La Resort in Oklahoma, and the role of Tahoma 31 grass in its design.



Stacie Zinn Roberts

Stacie Zinn Roberts is an award-winning writer and marketing expert specializing in the golf and turfgrass industries.

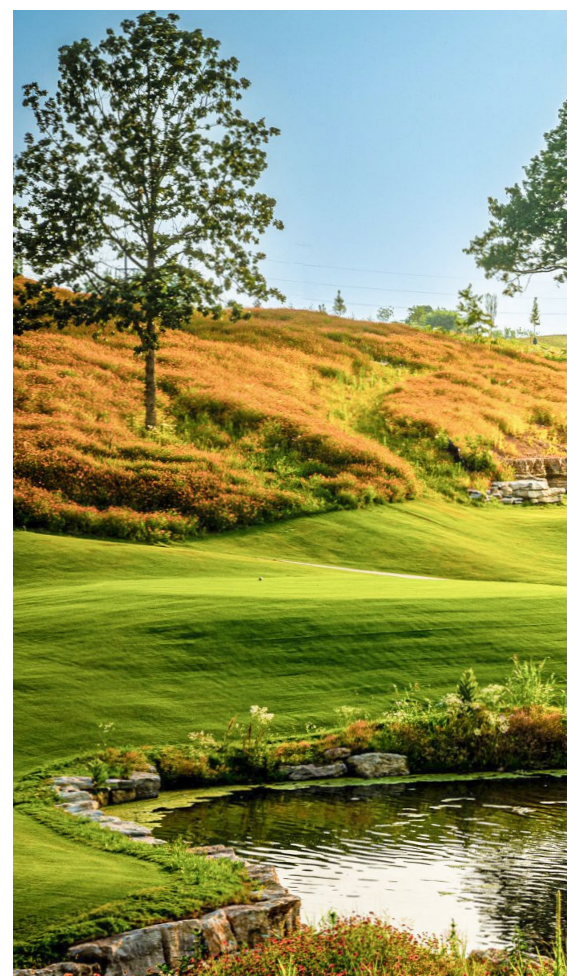
It's quiet now at Shangri-La Resort, save for the call of birds, the clink of an iron hitting a ball down a fairway, and the rush of water tinkling over a waterfall's boulders. However, for a while, the echoing boom of dynamite blasting through solid rock accompanied the construction of Oklahoma's first eighteen-hole par-three course, The Battlefield.

Grassed with Tahoma 31 bermuda on all playable areas except for the greens, which feature 777 bentgrass, the contrast between the rock features and dense green playing surfaces is stunning.

The Battlefield was designed by ASGCA Past President Tom Clark, who also oversaw the renovation of Shangri-La's 27-hole championship layout. A short course carved out of the native stone on Monkey Island, The Battlefield is bordered on three sides by Grand Lake O' The Cherokees, in the northeastern corner of the Sooner State.

To realize Clark's vision, developed in collaboration with resort owner Eddy Gibbs, the course was formed

not only with excavators but also with dynamite, due to the limestone bedrock. The dynamite's after-effects have made boulders a focal point of the course. Waterfalls, rock ledges and rock retaining walls, all crafted from native stone, help to create a signature look.





The Battlefield course at Shangri-La Resort has Tahoma 31 bermuda on all playable areas except for greens, which feature 777 bentgrass



Clark, with 52 years as a golf course architect, boasts over 130 new course designs and 240 renovation projects. Nevertheless, he considers The Battlefield to be a unique project.

The region's changeable weather helped dictate his design. Severe storms, tornadoes and flash floods can transform dry streambeds into fast-flowing watercourses. Clark integrated these natural channels into drainage systems and a water feature lined with native stone. Pumps maintain water movement through the property's ponds and over waterfall riffles for year-round playability.

The Battlefield is 3,000 yards, playing as a par 54, with holes from 110 to 245 yards and elevation



Tahoma 31 bermuda is mowed at one height of cut and blends between tees, fairways, approaches and collars, as seen at the twelfth hole

change of more than 100 feet. The layout is also a monument to Oklahoma's veterans. Each hole is named after an Oklahoman who served in the World War II. Clark says some out-of-play areas give visual cues to battlefield conditions, or the illusion of bombed-out buildings.

Designed with virtually no rough, nearly all the Tahoma 31 bermudagrass is mowed at one height of cut (.450-inch). Director of agronomy Justin May says by next year he expects to get the height of cut down to .350-inch.

Tees blend into fairways, approaches and collars. Clark and May both note that some of the back slopes of greens are cut slightly higher than the rest of the course to serve as a backstop for errant shots that might otherwise roll into waste areas. The versatility of the Tahoma 31 grass gives

May, superintendent Zach Roach and his crew the flexibility to raise or lower the mowing height as needed. Having the same grass on all surfaces except for greens makes for easier maintenance in that mowing equipment, irrigation and fertilization requirements are uniform across the course.

Bred by turfgrass scientists at Oklahoma State University, Tahoma 31 is known for its cold tolerance. May says while many other courses in the region lost huge swathes of bermudagrass this past winter due to extremely cold conditions, the Tahoma 31 at his course fared well. Only a nominal amount of grass on

“Having the same grass on all surfaces except for greens makes for easier maintenance”

Both Clark and May say the decision to sod the course with Tahoma 31 came from their personal experience with the grass: the front lawn of the clubhouse, the driving range and collars on all 27 holes of the resort's championship course are grassed with Tahoma 31.

the Champions nine showed some winter damage. “The Battlefield course did not lose a blade of grass,” he says. “There was no damage. It was planted even up into late October, so it didn't really have time to root down and mature. We had snow in early November, so some of it was on the ground for less than a



month, but we did not receive any winter injury to The Battlefield and its 26 acres of Tahoma 31.

“First and foremost, we chose it due to the density, the color and the ability to mow it to green height. We didn’t use it on greens, but there are folks out there who are tinkering with it. We haven’t seen the limits of mowing it too low yet. I wouldn’t be too nervous to mow it at green height, or at least at a chipping green height, or a croquet field, or something of that nature where it’s down around an eighth-of-an-inch.”

And then there’s the drought tolerance element.

“For areas that we struggle with – under trees and unirrigated areas – we have put some Tahoma 31 down, and it might go 30 days without water, yet it will still not be fully dormant where some of the other stuff either dies or fades away,” says May. “I also have it for

the front yard of the resort, where we always seem to have some sort of irrigation pump problem, and we’ve gone 15 to 20 days with 100-degree heat and no water... and it holds!

“Now, it’s not as green as if it’s getting water every day, of course. But it holds its color longer than any other grass that we have, and it bounces back, I don’t know if I can say twice as quickly, but it bounces back just after a couple of waters. The reaction that it has to fertilizer, water and the low mowing heights, where we can keep that same green color, were real selling points, in addition to its winter hardiness.”

Clark gives kudos to Gibbs, owner of Shangri-La, for his dedication to the project and willingness to invest more than \$100 million in the property to turn it around since purchasing it in 2000. Ten years ago, Gibbs hired Clark to create a plan for the then-36-hole golf facility, to

convert it to 27 holes, and to later add an 18-hole par-three layout.

The results speak for themselves. “Ten years ago, they had 60 members,” Clark recalls. “It has now climbed to 900.”

The club now supports upwards of 150 rounds per day. Clark says the intention was for The Battlefield to take some of the pressure off the other 27 holes to accommodate the resort’s popularity. But opening The Battlefield appears to only have created more demand for the resort. On opening day in June, Clark, even as the architect, couldn’t get a room at the hotel. It was sold out. “No room at the inn,” Clark says, laughing. Luckily, friends who own a house in the resort had a spare room.

Clark expresses gratitude and pride for his enduring connection with Shangri-La, stating: “I wasn’t kidding when I said they got the best of my 52 years.” ●

Inspiring the next generation

Leann Cooper provides insight into the GCSAA First Green program and its positive impact on the golf course industry.



Leann Cooper

Leann Cooper is a senior manager of GCSAA's First Green program and workforce development department.

The First Green program started in 1997 in Seattle, Washington, from a conversation between a golf course superintendent – who was also a high school golf coach – and a local teacher. They were talking about how students might understand the game of golf but not what goes into caring for a golf course. They decided to create some lesson plans and started organizing field trips to golf courses. With that, the First Green program was born.

Fast forward to August 2018, and the executive director of the nonprofit foundation that had been established to look after First Green, which mainly operated in the northwest, was about to retire. The board decided to contact the Golf Course Superintendents Association of America (GCSAA) to see if we could help keep the program going. We assumed responsibility for the program, with a view to not just keeping it going, but to grow it too.

We had a successful 2019, with over 40 field trips, before an understandable slowdown thanks to the pandemic in 2020 and 2021.

We began 2022 with renewed vigor, marketing First Green to our members and getting them to sign up their clubs for involvement. We've had over 10,000 students making field trips throughout the United States and Canada.

First Green really is a partnership between the GCSAA, golf clubs, and schools or youth groups. When we're working with a public school, we ask the students whether they have been to a golf course before. Typically, about two-thirds of them have never set foot on one. So it's great for the golf industry – especially in terms of awareness – for us to introduce children and their chaperones to golf courses and potential careers in golf.

A typical field trip will see children, usually from fifth, sixth and seventh grades, visiting a golf course where we have set up a number of learning stations, each covering a different subject matter. Say we have one hundred kids and four stations, we'll split them four ways and then rotate them every 20 minutes or so. We keep the students in smaller

groups so that they will have the opportunity to participate in the hands-on activities at each station.

One example of a learning station topic is soil science, the basis of so much of the work required on a golf course. Another is ‘cool tools on the green’, where we show the technology that superintendents and their staff use. The kids are into anything techie, so it’s a great fit! We usually do sessions on water conservation and quality, because water is so critical at golf courses. And there’s one titled ‘bugs’ that is always a big hit! We have a lot of flexibility regarding the learning stations offered. We encourage golf course superintendents to highlight what is unique at their golf course. For instance, if a facility has a pollinator garden, we can show things like an apiary and how a golf course can provide a good habitat for bees. We also have a learning station on math – the kids always say “seriously, I’m on a field trip and I have to learn about math!” But the teachers love it because it’s reinforcing that math is used every day.

We’ll always have a fun component – we’re not going to bring kids to a golf course without letting them play! Sometimes we host putting contests, which are always a lot of fun.

Our career exploration panel is a really important aspect of the visit. This could be a talk from the superintendent, a golf architect, or whoever else is available. We’ve had a local beekeeper, for



Photos: GCSAA



Since GCSAA took over First Green operations in 2018, over 10,000 students have participated in field trips to golf courses, learning the ins and outs of the golf industry



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While we are STEM (science, technology, engineering, math) focused, most of the time teachers are focused on STEAM, with the 'A' standing for art. I truly believe that a golf course architect brings the wonderful world of art into these field trips... but also math and science as well. Golf architects work with all the components of STEAM, so when they are available to host a station, it really helps engage the kids in multiple ways.

The environmental stewardship element of First Green is crucial. Field trips really open eyes and minds. There is sometimes a negative perception from those that are not interested in golf that courses are a big waste of green space. So, I think it is important for these field trips, as a true community outreach, to show that golf courses are of benefit, not only to the people who play golf, but to the entire community. Golf courses have many environmental uses, and it is vital we share these stories with our younger audience as they can see firsthand how a course can, for example, act as a filter for runoff or a wildlife habitat corridor.

Future plans for the program include building out lesson plans for high school students. Our members see the First Green as a way to give back and plant the seed with the next generation, and hope that a young kid is fired up for a future career in golf. They also would



Photos: Lyon Oaks Golf Club



Shawn Smith, ASGCA, and top, ASGCA Past President Steve Forrest, taught a golf course architecture lesson to 50 sixth grade students on a recent First Green field trip to Lyon Oaks GC in Michigan

love to find people to work at their golf course. Labor is such a huge issue, so a key question they have is how can we interact with young people that are old enough for seasonal work on a golf course? We're currently developing more curriculum to this level and that'll be rolled out in future.

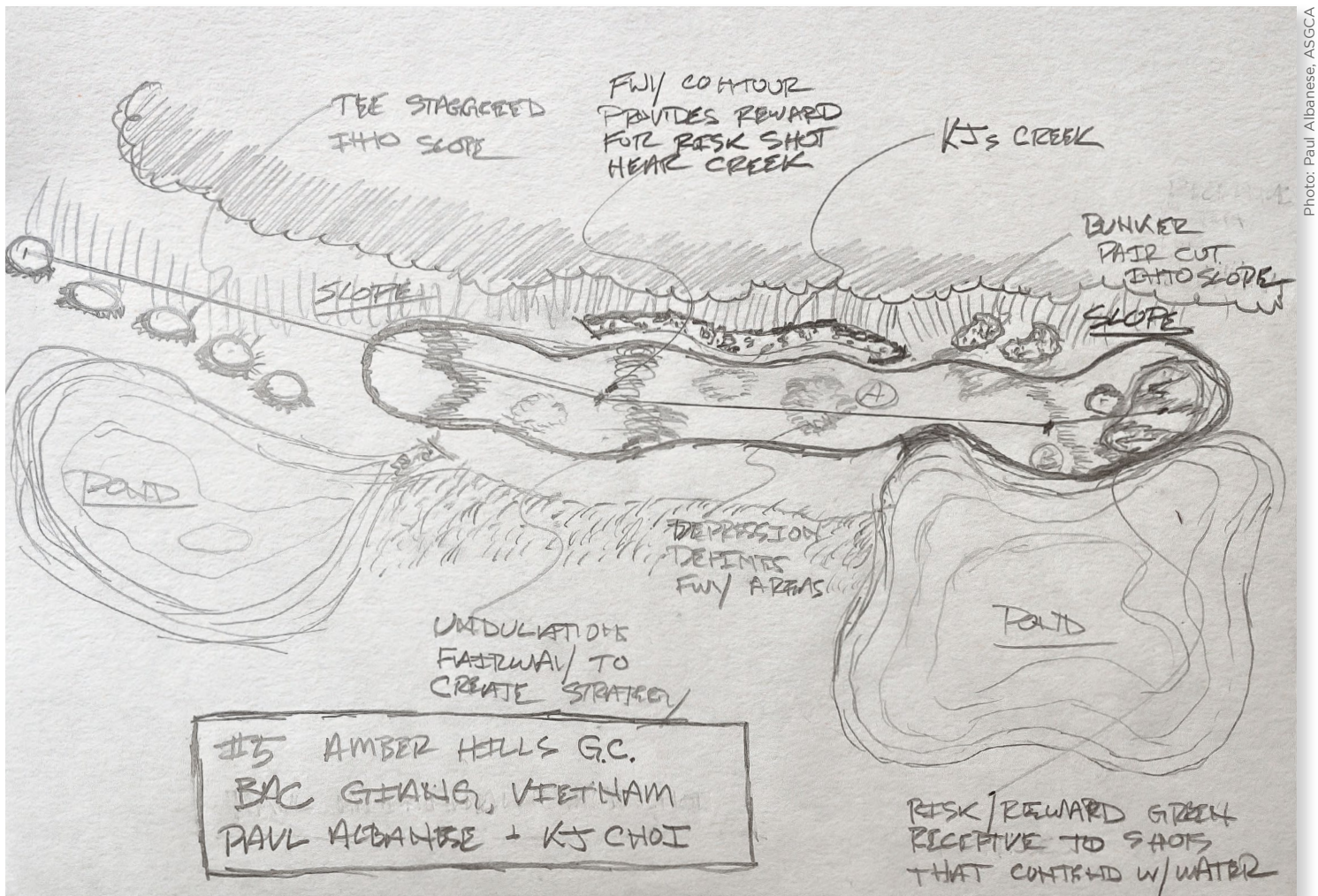
The GCSAA has just signed an agreement with The British and International Golf Greenkeepers' Association (BIGGA) and they

are working with schools to get our lesson plans converted to suit British students. We've also signed a memorandum of understanding with the Australian Sports Turf Managers Association (ASTMA) to have the First Green program presented over there. It is growing internationally and getting better and better. ●

To learn more about the First Green program, visit: www.thefirstgreen.org

Amber Hills, Vietnam

Paul Albanese, ASGCA



The fifth at Amber Hills Golf & Resort in Bắc Giang, Vietnam, a newbuild by Paul Albanese, ASGCA, and professional golfer KJ Choi, is a par five with a creek, hillside bunkers and subtle depressions on its fairway.

“The irrigation lake needed to be sited in this area, so we wanted to create a strategic water feature,” said Albanese. “KJ and I looked at a couple of different ways to have water come into play and landed on this idea.

“On the drive, we wanted golfers to have to play as close to ‘KJ’s creek’ as they dared, which would then enable a non-forced carry to either the second landing area or green. For approach shots, golfers again should try to play their shot as close to the water as they risk, as the green is contoured to receive shots better from that direction. The pair of hillside bunkers adds another aspect of having to think through the different options for where to lay

up based on the pin placement is that day.”

The hole will be built in the fall or early 2024, with just a few minor tweaks from this original sketch.

“We incorporated a lot of subtle strategy into the design,” said Albanese. “For example, the contouring on the green and the grass depression in front of the green make golfers think about how much risk they want to incur, for a proportional amount of reward.” ●



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