



ISSUE 71 // FALL 2025

# BY DESIGN

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



## GOING DRY

ASGCA members talk about how they create a desert golf course, while also minimizing water use.

## DAVID FAY

The former executive director of the USGA and 2025 ASGCA Donald Ross Award recipient talks about his career.

## ALSO:

// Interlachen CC  
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**Brian Costello**  
President, ASGCA

## Strengthening bonds

One theme that has shaped my time as ASGCA President is the value of working together. In recent months, the Society's spirit of collaboration has been especially strong.

Our work on the BIRDIE Act is a prime example. We have teamed up with the National Golf Course Owners Association, Club Management Association of America, American Golf Industry Coalition and Washington lobbyists in our efforts to expand the copyright protection that is provided to architectural work on golf courses.

ASGCA has also strengthened its bond with the Golf Course Superintendents Association of America, ahead of next year's Conference and Trade Show in Orlando. Among our activities at the show, ASGCA continues to host our Winter Meeting and networking breakfast, which provide great opportunities for our members and partner organizations to strengthen their relationships with each other.

Our members continue to see the value of collaboration, too. This issue of *By Design* has several examples of members teaming up with golfers, administrators, agronomists and each other on new projects. And, following the success of the ASGCA Foundation's first Design Boot Camp at Erin Hills, nine ASGCA members are working together in preparation for the next, which will take place in Pinehurst, North Carolina, in March 2026. They will teach aspiring golf course designers and architecture buffs the fundamentals of the profession, and guide them along the process of studying a site, routing a layout and designing holes.

As my year as ASGCA President comes to an end, I will close by saying it has been a pleasure to introduce each of the past four issues of *By Design*, and to share the stories of our members' work with you.



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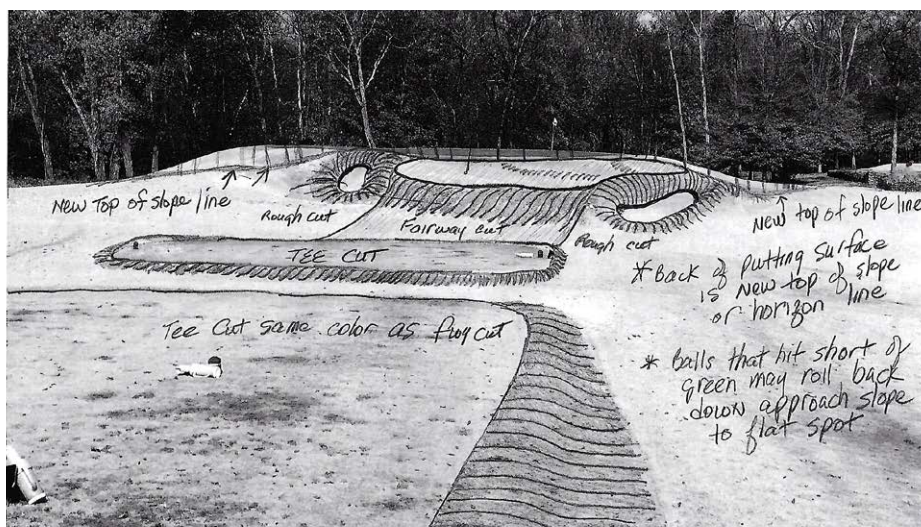
Fazio Design is undertaking a project to improve the playing experience of the Joe Lee layout at Interlachen Country Club.



## On the cover



John Fought, ASGCA, designed both courses at Gallery GC in Tucson, Arizona. Read more about desert designs on page 12.



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Billy Fuller, ASGCA, shares a sketch of the par-three fifteenth hole at West Haven GC in Tennessee, which he has renovated.

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DIGEST

# New Nicklaus course takes shape in Vietnam

*The view from the teeing area of the tenth, framed by mountains with 30-metre-high vertical faces*

Six holes are shaped on the North course at Legend Valley Country Club near Ha Nam, Vietnam. The layout is the club's second by Nicklaus Design following the opening of the South course in 2023.

Both courses have been built on a former quarry. "Much of the site was an environmental mess after years of aggressive rock breaking, but fortunately, many limestone outcrops within the course remain undamaged and fully vegetated, providing a visually striking canvas," said Sean Quinn, ASGCA, senior design associate at Nicklaus Design.

More than 400,000 cubic meters of fill was required to elevate the low parts of the North course

above the flood level and to cap all the rock prior to shaping. "The owner identified an off-golf area to excavate a deep lake, where most of the fill material was generated before the entire course was sandcapped," said Quinn.

While the landscape of the North is similar to the South, Quinn says the North serves up a more dramatic and diverse offering. "The front nine is subtle compared with the back nine," he said. "It plays outward toward an existing 15-hectare lake and then meanders back between a series of natural smaller limestone outcrops and internal lakes. The back nine holes are bold, exciting, yet penal for any wayward play – the tenth, for

example, sees players play through a canyon with 30-metre-high vertical cliffs on either side of the hole."

Quinn also highlights holes six, fifteen and sixteen: "The sixth is a very interesting short par four. Players have two completely different routes to the green. The low 'safe' right side fairway will be fully visible from the tee, but random rock outcrops will add an element of danger and require skill and a dose of luck to be carefully negotiated, however, the approach to the elevated green will be challenging with a bunker in front and a vertical drop behind the green that cannot be seen. Conversely, the high left fairway is perched on top of a 10-metre vertical cliff and



Photo: Nicklaus Design

requires a 240-yard carry from the member tee. The landing area is totally hidden and pitches steeply toward the green.

“Hole fifteen is a flattish par five playing between a mountain on the left and a lake to the right. A new back tee, not on plan, will extend the hole to 580 yards. The green is a peninsula and of good size, to encourage longer hitters to try reach the green in two.

“The sixteenth is another exciting par four that plays into a mountain amphitheater with 100-metre cliffs on two sides and a large waste area separating sixteen from seventeen. The tee shot required a 10-metre-wide slot to be excavated through a rocky area.”

## Design Boot Camp set for March 2026



Photo: ASGCA

The American Society of Golf Course Architects (ASGCA) Foundation will host its second Design Boot Camp at Pinehurst Resort in North Carolina on 9-13 March 2026.

The five-day session – a fundraising initiative of the Foundation – will provide aspiring golf course designers and architecture buffs with the opportunity to work up close and personal with nine renowned architects and hands-on field work.

ASGCA Past Presidents Jan Bel Jan, Jeff Blume, Jeff Brauer, Bruce Charlton, Steve Forrest, Mike Hurdzan, Tom Marzolf and Damian Pascuzzo will be involved and provide design insight over the course of the boot camp.

Bill Coore, ASGCA, will lead participants on a site tour of Pinehurst No. 11. Currently under construction at Sandmines, Pinehurst No. 11 is scheduled to open in fall 2027.

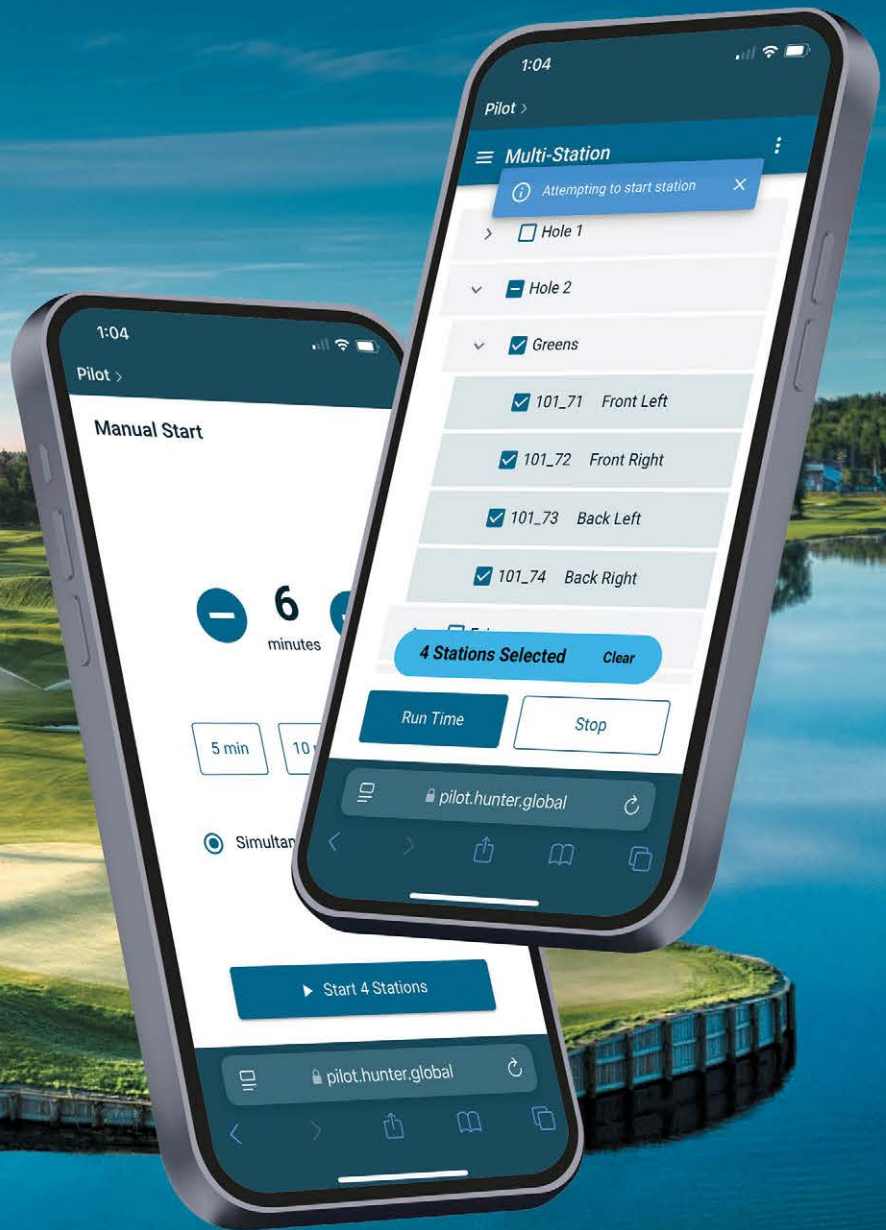
Inaugural Boot Camp attendee Rob Shults, who co-founded Honours Golf and is the managing partner at RLS Ventures, said: “We experienced what it is like to be a golf course architect and gained an appreciation for golf architecture that can only be done face to face with professionals. This was the ultimate golf trip for anyone who loves golf and appreciates the nuances of the game.”

*For more information on Design Boot Camp 2026, visit [www.asgcafoundation.org/architects-boot-camp-2026](http://www.asgcafoundation.org/architects-boot-camp-2026)*

*To enroll or ask specific questions, email [bootcamp@hunter-pr.com](mailto:bootcamp@hunter-pr.com).*

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# Curley-Wagner completes bunker renovation at The Plantation

Curley-Wagner Golf Design has completed a bunker renovation at The Plantation Golf Club in southern California.

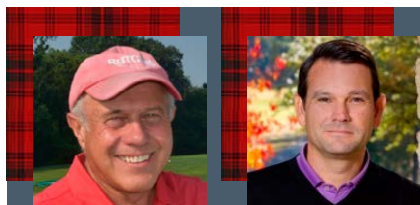
The project comes 30 years after Brian Curley, ASGCA, designed the layout, with input from professional golfer Fred Couples. The pair teamed up again on this bunker project, which has included

adjustments to address the demands of the modern game, enhance strategy and for aesthetic reasons.

Work has seen bunkers reshaped, while retaining the integrity of the original design. Drainage in all bunkers has been upgraded, along with the addition of Better Billy Bunker liners. Some bunkers have also been repositioned to better

defend against modern club and ball technology.

The most significant changes have come at the par-four fourteenth, which has seen palm trees removed to provide a better view of the fairway, green and distant mountains. Two bunkers have also been added on the left side of the fairway.



## “You need to be strategic when you think about trees”

Stephen Kay, ASGCA, and Scot Sherman, ASGCA

In the latest podcast from *Golf Course Industry's* “Tartan Talks” series, Stephen Kay, ASGCA, and Scot Sherman, ASGCA, talk about tree management.

“Trees are in every masterplan,” says Kay. “Their removal comes under a few categories. One is if they are shading greens and tees. Two is whether the trees are blocking a shot on a fairway – Donald Ross once wrote that if you are on the fairway, you should have a shot to the green. And third, the

double hazard tree – that’s a tree right in front of a bunker.”

Kay highlights the impact of Oakmont and Winged Foot tree removal undertakings. “It sort of gave permission to the golf industry that it’s OK to cut down trees,” he says. “However, while tree removal has a myriad of benefits, including opening vistas, a thorough analysis is needed first to make sure we’re not taking any out that would cause a safety issue. This is always the first consideration.”

Sherman adds: “You need to be strategic when you think about trees, mindful about how they will grow and, agronomically, they have been instrumental in teaching us how to think about turfgrass. I’m currently working on a treeless site that has a real estate element, so, we are going to add trees as a buffer. That’s another way that trees are important to golf.”

[Listen to the full “Tartan Talks” at golfcourseindustry.com.](https://golfcourseindustry.com)

Here are links to other recent “Tartan Talks”, now featuring over 100 episodes:

- [Ray Hearn, ASGCA, talks about Michigan's evolution as a golf juggernaut](#)
- [Bruce Mathews, ASGCA, discusses why Michigan is a booming spot for all types of courses](#)

## Renovation in progress at Tampa's Saddlebrook

ASGCA Past President Rees Jones is redesigning two 18-hole golf courses into a 27-hole layout for Saddlebrook Resort in Wesley Chapel, Florida, as part of a \$92 million redevelopment.

The 480-acre destination was acquired in 2022 by Mast Capital, a real estate development and investment firm, and Amzak Capital Management, an asset manager and private equity investor. They brought in Jones to reimagine the golf experience, Troon Golf to oversee golf operations, membership, sales and marketing, and architecture and design firm EoA Group to transform the resort and guest areas.

The courses will be renovated to create three distinct nine-hole routings that will rotate daily to



Photo: Curley-Wagner Golf Design

form different 18-hole rounds, ranging from 6,600 to 7,005 yards.

Construction began in 2024 with greens being rebuilt to USGA specifications and bunkers reshaped, repositioned and filled with new sand. Tees are also being rebuilt

along with adding new ones; and a new irrigation and drainage system is being installed.

The first nine is expected to open in late 2025, the second in early 2026, and the third will be renovated in spring 2026.

### Beebe adds three holes to Florida's Blue Cypress course

Blue Cypress Golf Course in Jacksonville, Florida, has become a 12-hole facility following the opening of three new holes designed by Michael Beebe, ASGCA.

Blue Cypress has named the original nine holes as 'Big Blue', the new three-hole loop as 'Little Blue' and the full 12-hole layout as 'The Dozen'. The three holes play between 55 and 125 yards depending on which tee is used. Children aged 17 and under can play Little Blue for free when accompanied by a paying adult, or Big Blue or The Dozen for \$10.



Photo: Troon

# Stonycroft Hills begins Wilczynski renovation



Photo: C. W. Golf Architecture

Stonycroft Hills Club in Bloomfield Hills, Michigan has approved a renovation plan by Chris Wilczynski, ASGCA.

The project includes tree management, tee renovations, green expansions, new and

renovated bunkers, fairway realignments and a revamped ninth green. "Our goal is to elevate the golf experience while preserving the charm and integrity that have always defined this club," said Wilczynski.

## Tamarack reopens renovated West course

Tamarack Golf Course in East Brunswick, New Jersey, has reopened its West course following an 18-month renovation by Mark Mungeam, ASGCA.

Work began in fall 2023 with the aim of enhancing Hal Purdy's original layout.

Greens have been rebuilt to USGA specifications and seeded with bentgrass; fairways have been reshaped and regrassed with creeping bentgrass; and 75 new tees have been added with existing tees laser


levelled and regrassed with Kentucky bluegrass. Upgrades also include a new irrigation system, new drainage lines, and CapillaryFlow bunker drainage and liners.



Photo: Ross Mungeam


## SOCIAL UPDATE



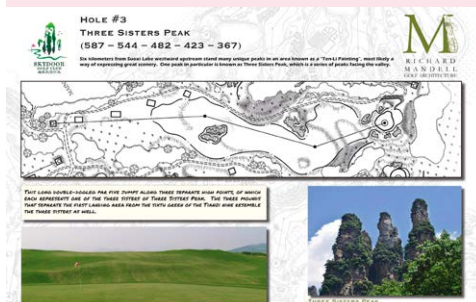
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"It stands alone in scope, size, location and first impression," says @bergingolf on The Keep at @mclemoreresort.



 @ASGCA

How did your college experience prepare you for your future? For ASGCA Past Presidents Tom Marzolf and Steve Forrest, their Virginia Tech experience made all the difference.



 LinkedIn  
@Richard Mandell

Reflecting back on one of my favorite projects, Skydoor Golf Club. Every hole was designed and named after a specific landmark surrounding Zhangjiajie, Hunan, China...

**Search ASGCA on the below channels for more posts:**



# Going dry

When working in desert environments, how do golf course architects create an enjoyable playing experience, while also minimizing water use? Richard Humphreys speaks with ASGCA members to find out.

**W**hile staying at Palm Springs' Desert Inn in the early 1920s to recover from a respiratory illness, California oil pioneer Thomas O'Donnell would spend time pitching a golf ball around the property. At that time, no-one had thought to lay out a golf course in the desert. O'Donnell, together with fellow oilman Capt. John Lucey, would go on to formalise nine

holes on land alongside the Desert Inn at the base of the San Jacinto Mountains, creating what is widely thought to be the first golf course in a desert environment.

That course at O'Donnell Golf Club was routed among existing rows of tamarisk trees, supplemented with drought-tolerant plantings that doubled as shade and windbreaks. Bermuda turf was

overseeded with rye or fescue during winter, a maintenance practice still common across the Southwest United States.

O'Donnell's layout set the stage for others to explore the desert as a canvas for golf.

From the 1930s through the 1970s, architects such as William P. 'Billy' Bell and his son William F. Bell, Lawrence Hughes,



Photo: Conrad Dahl

*Built in 1927, O'Donnell Golf Course in Palm Springs is considered to be America's first desert golf course*



*Jack Snyder's work at The Boulders in the 1970s helped redefine the approach to desert designs, to be more integrated with the natural terrain*



Robert 'Red' Lawrence and Jack Snyder carried desert golf forward. All would help to define early principles for golf in arid landscapes with scarce water.

Red Lawrence's Desert Forest course – laid out in Carefree, Arizona in 1962 – was pioneering in the way it was integrated within the desert landscape, inspiring others to embrace the surroundings, rather than impose their courses upon them. "While Red Lawrence and Billy Bell had worked with the land, Snyder took an even lighter approach," says ASGCA Past President Forrest Richardson. "Snyder's work at The Boulders [also in Carefree] ushered in a new

era of desert golf design with his minimalist approach where rock outcroppings and native desert were untouched as much as possible."

### **Less turf, less water**

Water has always been the defining challenge of desert golf, and sustainability concerns have increasingly shaped design decisions.

Richardson's very first design was in the desert. As a boy, he built a miniature course, 'Rolling Rocks', in his backyard in Phoenix, raking the desert floor and installing tuna cans as cups.

His first professional assignment was Arizona Grand, on the desert edge of South Mountain

Park in Phoenix. His takeaway: desert courses demand a different mindset about water. "The first consideration in the desert is appreciating that what you will create will need to be kept growing with a different level of intensity," says Richardson. "We need to balance factors such as water availability, delivery and storage – and future climate change."

Today, most desert courses rely on recycled water rather than groundwater. "It's a sustainable model," says Richardson. "Many people assume golf 'uses' water. But the reality is that water in the desert is more about 'borrowing' – the science today is returning

## DESERT GOLF



Photo: Brian Oar



*Pete Dye's Wolf course at Las Vegas Paiute Golf Resort in the Mojave desert*

water to the land, often by recharging the groundwater.”

Turf acts as a natural filter, processing millions of gallons of treated wastewater daily before it returns to the aquifer. Courses also cool their surroundings: in Phoenix, neighborhoods near golf are three-to-five degrees cooler than adjacent urban heat islands.

Richardson has applied these lessons across projects like The Links at Las Palomas in Mexico, Mountain Shadows, and Arizona Biltmore. “It’s all about turf footprint,” he says. “An 18-hole regulation course may have about 60 acres of turf. We can get there by adding one or more par threes than typical, as they require far less grass than par fours or fives.”

Runoff is equally important. “We’ve learned that excess water escaping to

the native desert can alter vegetation in unnatural ways,” says Richardson. “Going forward, I predict more short and alternative formats in the desert. It just makes sense. Less turf, less water and – often – more fun.”

### **Desert differences**

Cynthia Dye McGarey, ASGCA, has applied similar principles in the Sonoran and Mojave deserts. “Desert landscapes vary – the native area can be sand, rock, lush desert scrub or bare. When laying out a desert course, it is key to identify as many natural features and vegetation and preserve them. It is difficult to recreate the native desert, and it takes many years to recover once it is disturbed. Re-establishing native vegetation is expensive and requires a temporary drip irrigation system.”

In lush desert settings like the Sonoran, she explains, the terrain is rocky and undulating, with a web of arroyos cutting across the land. “Earthworks in this setting are minimal so laying out the golf course to highlight the natural features, preserve the vegetation and strategically use the natural terrain are the first steps.”

Ancala Country Club in Scottsdale, Arizona, was the first desert course where Dye McGarey faced strict water restrictions, with turf limited to 78 acres. “In 1990 people were not used to golf surrounded by native desert because most of the courses in the valley were wall-to-wall grass,” she says. “To meet the challenges of the limited turf requirements, only the tees are irrigated, and the landing areas are only 50 yards wide



*Sand Hollow was built on the red sand of St. George in Utah*

with a border that is kept pretty bare of vegetation.

“The irrigation is hardline with half heads so there is little overspray into the native area. This helps minimize the maintenance

course at the Las Vegas Paiute Golf Resort. “The Mojave Desert is completely different to the Sonoran,” she says. “The terrain is much flatter, and the vegetation is very sparse.

bunkers help keep the ball in play. Unlike Arizona, the Paiute courses didn’t have a water restriction – it is located on a large aquifer that has crystal clear water. Though the turf area was expanded to 96 acres, it is still a desert course.”

## “When laying out a desert course, it is key to identify as many natural features and vegetation and preserve them”

of the bordering native areas by keeping the native plants and grasses from becoming too dense where players can’t find a slightly wayward shot.”

Dye collaborated with her uncle Pete and cousin Perry on the Wolf

“Everything in the golfing corridor was graded. There wasn’t topography to tie into though, so several minor arroyos were kept as features. This turf area was capped with six inches of sand. Sandy waste areas and strip

### **Balancing water and playability**

The Mojave extends into Utah, and there are several golf courses around St. George in the state’s warm, red-rock corner. Sand Hollow, opened in 2008, designed by John Fought, ASGCA, and Andy Staples, ASGCA, was built on red sand, and takes full advantage of the site’s dunes, ridgelines and rock formations.

“While not every state has the turf restrictions that must be followed in Arizona, it is important to be good stewards of water usage,” says



*The Rees Jones team laid out TPC Danzante Bay to sit lightly on the desert landscape of the Baja Peninsula in Mexico*

Fought. “Knowing this as a goal, you must design a golf course in these areas to incorporate native vegetation or utilize native grass species or plants that require little to no irrigation. If you understand this water saving mode, you will integrate

they drain quickly, allowing for precise irrigation without runoff or pooling. Moisture sensors and irrigation heads ensure water is applied only where it’s needed.

Fought emphasizes the importance of designing for both

than other areas. I often have the tee shot landing zone 70 yards wide but narrow areas around the back tees and near one side of the green. This allows players some comfort when playing their drive.

“At Sand Hollow, we angled tees so that only the bigger hitters had forced carries. We also kept the fronts of the greens generally open so weaker players could bounce their approaches onto the green. We need to create holes that players play without losing golf balls. As long as there is an option to play a hole with undue risk then I think we have done our job as designers.”

**Designed into the landscape**  
ASGCA Past President Rees Jones has several desert courses to his name, including in California,

## **“We incorporated more playable desert areas adjacent to the turf to transition into the preserved native desert”**

these areas seamlessly into your design motif for the golf holes.”

At Sand Hollow, large swaths between holes were left as natural desert sand, sagebrush and rock. The underlying dunes also helped:

challenge and playability. “One design element that I employ is to have plenty of room to hit a drive,” he says. “We may narrow areas on a hole to eliminate turf but keep the tee shot landing zone wider



Photo: Rob Perry

Nevada and Arizona. One of the more recent examples is TPC Danzante Bay in Mexico, on the east coast of the Baja Peninsula.

“The desert is essentially a hazard surrounding each hole,” says Jones’s associate Steve Weisser, ASGCA. “We incorporated these hazards on angles into the line of play in a variety of ways in which they become increasingly easier to navigate as the tees move forward.”

Danzante Bay has a combination of canyon, desert, beach and mountain environments. “We shaped the holes to create grades receptive to shots on the high sides and turfgrass swales serving to collect shots that roll off the low sides of the fairway,” says Weisser. “We incorporated more playable desert areas adjacent to the turf

## Delivering uniformity

Carl Eberts of Hunter Industries explains how technology helps to minimize water usage in desert environments

Ak-Chin Southern Dunes Golf Club, south of Phoenix, Arizona, is a sandbelt-style course designed by ASGCA Past President Lee Schmidt and Brian Curley, ASGCA. The 320-acre layout, with 95 acres of irrigated turf, faces extreme conditions, including summer highs of 120 Fahrenheit and strong desert winds.

To keep the course playable and the turf healthy, the club recently upgraded to Hunter’s TTS-800 Series Golf Rotors with PressurePort technology. These rotors optimize nozzle pressure to produce ideal droplet size, ensuring maximum distribution uniformity and efficient water use, even in the harshest environments.

Collaboration between irrigation experts and golf course architects is key to meeting the demands of such a challenging landscape. Hunter’s versatile product line – from MP Rotator nozzles around bunkers to I-25 stainless-steel riser rotors on tees – allows precise control across every contour of the course. Smaller-radius sprinklers target specific turf zones, maximizing efficiency without compromising playability.

While we often work closely with irrigation consultants, our systems are engineered to meet the creative demands of golf course architects, no matter how ambitious the design.

Photo: Ak-Chin Southern Dunes

to transition into the preserved native desert. Each green also has turfgrass chipping areas to facilitate achievable recovery shots.

“Locating turf in areas that see the highest amounts of play is essential to achieve a balance between playability and the need to limit the amount of maintained turf.”

It is not just the Southwestern US and Mexico where golf courses

are being built in desert regions.

As population centers continue to grow in the Middle East, Africa and Asia, so too does the demand for golf. The design techniques that have evolved since that first desert layout was created in Palm Springs, along with advances in irrigation technology that minimize water use, allow new courses to be built with a mindset of minimal impact. ●

# A champion of public golf

In his time as USGA executive director, David Fay made it his mission to bring major championships to public golf courses. Following the announcement that he will receive the 2025 ASGCA Donald Ross award, Richard Humphreys spoke with him to learn more about his career

**"**If I could have chosen, I would have worked in baseball," says David Fay.

That's not what you might expect to hear from someone who worked for the United States Golf Association (USGA) for 32 years, 21 as executive director. "I always liked golf, it just wasn't my first

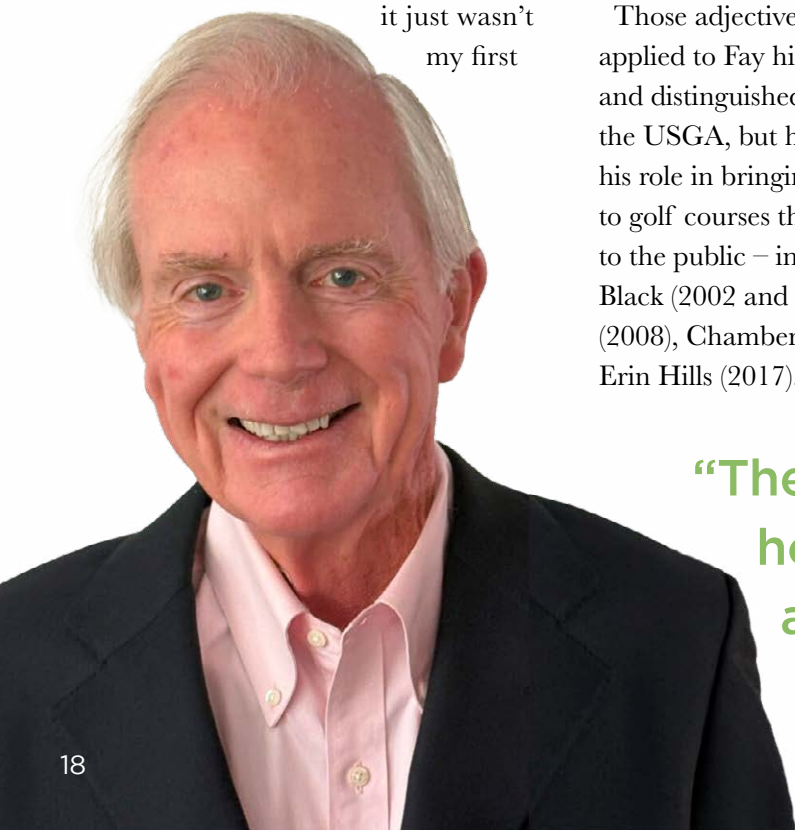
passion," he explains. When asked what it means to be named as the recipient of the 2025 ASGCA Donald Ross Award, he immediately compares the legendary golf course designer's career to that of Major League Baseball pitcher Cy Young, highlighting that both men were prolific, successful and respected.

Those adjectives are just as easily applied to Fay himself. His long and distinguished career was with the USGA, but he is best known for his role in bringing the U.S. Open to golf courses that are accessible to the public – including Bethpage Black (2002 and 2009), Torrey Pines (2008), Chambers Bay (2015) and Erin Hills (2017).

During his tenure, the USGA expanded its philanthropic activities, providing, through its 'For the Good of the Game' grants program, more than \$65 million since 1997 to more than 1,000 programs aimed at making golf more affordable and accessible. Together, these programs have served more than 2.2 million participants.

"Nearly 75 percent of golf courses in the U.S. are public facilities," explains ASGCA President Brian Costello. "David Fay made sure to shine a bright light on the accessibility and enjoyment of these courses, while maintaining the integrity of the

**"The idea was simple: why not host a U.S. Open on a course anyone could play on without paying a fortune?"**



David Fay helped bring major championships to public golf courses like Torrey Pines, which hosted the US Open in 2008



national championship as the ultimate test of golf.”

We spoke with David to find out more about his route into golf and the process of taking the U.S. Open public.

**How did you go from being a caddie to leading the USGA?**

Good luck and good fortune! I came to the game as a caddie, not a club member. I first caddied at Tuxedo Club when I was 12. I grew up in the New York metropolitan area and my nearest public course, Central Valley Golf Club, was 20 miles away, so I lived for ‘Caddie Day Mondays’ when we could play. Later, I worked on the grounds crew at Tuxedo Club.

After graduating from Colgate University, I worked at a bank for a while to pay off my student loans. My roommate at the time was George Peper, who later became editor-in-chief of *Golf Magazine*. At the time, George was working for the Metropolitan Golf Association (MGA), a regional operation of about eight people. When he left his role as communications director, I thought I could give it a try. It was good luck more than anything.

In the mid-1970s, golf administration was still in its infancy as a profession. However, people like PJ Boatwright, Frank Hannigan and Joe Dey [all former executive directors of the USGA] were very

helpful to me, especially in the early stages of my career. I can’t overstate how important the MGA was to me. Those years at the MGA provided me with the building blocks for a career in golf administration.

**Can you talk about the process of bringing the U.S. Open to public courses?**

In the late 1960s and early 1970s, people were only beginning to take an interest in golf course architecture. Robert Trent Jones Sr helped raise awareness, and in a 1974 issue of the USGA’s *Golf Journal*, Frank Hannigan wrote about A.W. Tillinghast, because a number of golf championships were taking place on Tillinghast courses, which



*Fay, second left, at the contract signing for the 2015 U.S. Open at Chambers Bay, with, from left, ASGCA Past President Robert Trent Jones Jr., Pierce County executive John Ladenburg and USGA president Jim Vernon. Top, Fay speaking at a press conference during the 2009 U.S. Open at Bethpage Black and, top right, with fellow executives at a USGA tournament*

further motivated people to learn about golf course design.

At one point, I wrote a column for *Golf Digest* comparing private and public golf access to someone buying a great painting and keeping it hidden at home. The British model seemed best – clubs like Muirfield and Royal St. George's were private but allowed some public play. While in the U.S., many wonderful courses were closed off to the public.

Bringing the U.S. Open to Bethpage Black changed that perception. It showed that a true public course could host the championship, which inspired other venues like Torrey Pines, Chambers Bay and Erin Hills to follow suit. This shift didn't mean abandoning classics like Winged Foot, Oakmont, Pinehurst No. 2 or Pebble Beach (both of which, while expensive, have always

been public), but it broadened the Open's identity.

Growing up, I sometimes visited Bethpage with friends. The courses were rugged and challenged but were not lavishly funded. The idea was simple: why not host a U.S. Open on a course anyone could play on without paying a fortune? The board and the state supported it, and the results proved the concept. And it



*The opening ceremony for the 2005 Walker Cup, held at Chicago Golf Club*

never hurts to have Tiger Woods win your golf tournament.

**To what extent have you worked with golf course architects, and what have you taken from those interactions?**

One architect I worked closely with was Rees Jones, who offered to redesign Bethpage Black pro bono. That commitment was crucial to the project moving forward. We worked with the State of New York, and the

USGA board – though skeptical – approved a \$3 million restoration. Woods won the 2002 U.S. Open – interestingly, all of his U.S. Open wins came on public courses – and any skeptics quietened down.

**What does the future hold for the industry?**

That's completely out of my purview. What I do know is that golf inspires a passion that other sports rarely match. People love to talk about courses in detail. To paraphrase

Charles Blair Macdonald, when given the choice of saying something negative about a friend's home golf course or a friend's spouse, the prudent move is to pick on the spouse. I hope the growth continues because, in my opinion, golf is the best game there is.

I believe anyone who loves the game should be grateful for the talented people who dedicate their lives to building, remodeling and preserving interesting, exciting golf courses. ●

# A fresh vision for Florida club

Fazio Design is undertaking a project to improve the playing experience of the Joe Lee layout at Interlachen Country Club.

Not to be confused with its Donald Ross-designed namesake in Minnesota, Interlachen Country Club in Winter Park, Florida, opened its golf course in 1985. Designer Joe Lee moved over 1.5 million cubic yards of earth in the process of excavating lakes and creating contour for the club's 270-acre site.

The club turned to Tom Fazio, ASGCA, to reimagine the layout. Fazio has many friends at Interlachen and has played golf there often with his wife, Susan. He wanted a member-friendly round that is visually bold and holds player interest with variety in green shapes, angles and contours.

ASGCA Past President Tom Marzolf of Fazio Design has been working on site with Fazio, club superintendent Bryce Gibson as well as Fazio Design colleagues, and ASGCA Past Presidents, Rick Phelps and Michael Benkuský.

The team have been replacing aging infrastructure, upgrading irrigation and drainage, and reimagining course features.

"The land the course sits on is very gentle and relatively flat," says Marzolf. "We listened to the members, who asked for dryer, firmer conditions, on a site prone to seasonal hurricane flooding and slow-to-dry soils."

Delivering that vision meant overcoming significant site challenges. "It has been a tough assignment," says Marzolf, who has extended the existing lakes to provide the fill needed to

venue Adare Manor in Ireland, among others. Together they have integrated agronomic best practices into the design. This included a full peer review of agronomic specifications, material evaluation and laboratory testing oversight in partnership with Kansas-based Turf & Soil Diagnostics.

"We completed a review of the construction specifications and grass species selections for the entire course," says Adam Moeller of

**"The design produces a predictable bounce on approach shots to a front pin and reliable rollout on recovery chips"**

reshape the layout. "It required a massive amount of earthworks to lift the course's landing areas, improve surface drainage and gain separation from the water table."

The project has seen Marzolf reunited with agronomic consultancy Turfgrass, who he worked with at 2027 Ryder Cup

Turfgrass. "We also provided a grow-in plan for all sprigged and sodded areas, developed and executed a thorough quality control program for all sands and gravel used for the project, and made agronomic site visits to assist the golf course superintendent with fine-tuning the grow-in and construction processes."



*Construction at Interlachen is nearing completion, with bunkers renovated to be larger and bolder*



The course has been regrassed with TifTuf bermuda, with fine-textured TifGrand approaches and surrounds. The expanded greens, now averaging 7,000 square feet, feature TifEagle. Turf health has been further improved by installing 400 catch basins to quickly intercept surface water and move it underground via pipes.

As construction nears completion, Turfgrass has continued to support the club. “Our role will then focus on helping the club navigate the typical challenges with determining when the course is ready for play, setting expectations for year one, and developing the operating budget for maintaining the new course,” says Moeller.

Design changes are also shaping a new playing experience. Extensive

tree removal has opened up views and allows more sunlight to reach turf areas. “We removed trees, shrubs and ground clutter to let the sun in,” says Marzolf. “Pine straw will be used extensively along the property edges where trees remain. Turf now plays a more active role in strategy, rather than forcing players to hit through dense vegetation.”

Bunkers have been repositioned to challenge longer hitters, with each hole redesigned for strategic interest. Large, bold, flashed bunkers now pinch landing areas and sit inside dogleg corners. Expansive sandscapes frame fairway corridors and new sand-screenings cart paths give the layout an ‘old Florida’ feel.

Firm, sandcapped approaches encourage the ground game, supported by low-mow surrounds

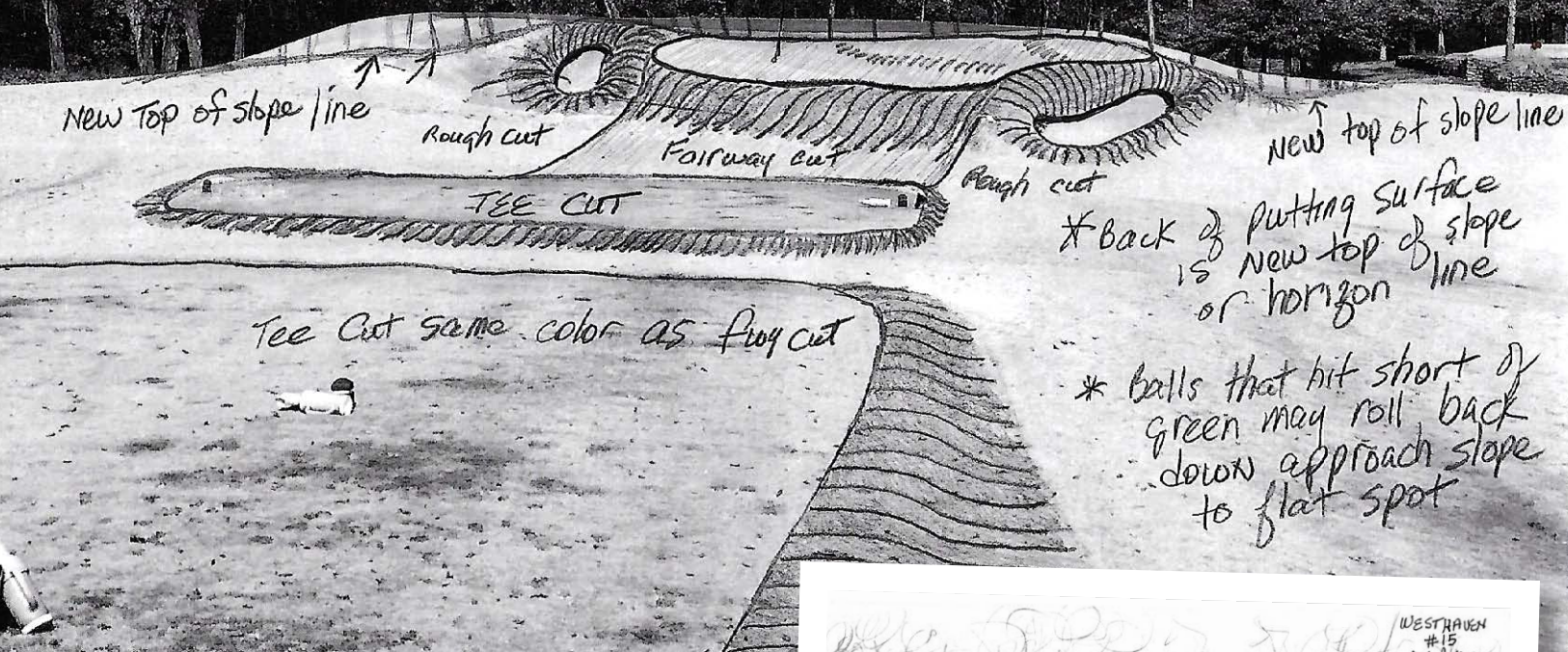
for short-game variety. “The design produces a predictable bounce on approach shots to a front pin and reliable rollout on recovery chips,” says Marzolf.

Routing changes have also been made. The eighth and ninth holes have switched pars, to create a long par-four eighth that doglegs left and a par-three ninth that now plays into the expanded clubhouse lawn. With vegetation cleared, golfers and spectators can now enjoy a wide view from the patio.

From land shaping to strategic redesign, the work at Interlachen positions the course for decades of enjoyable play. ●

# Westhaven Golf Club

Billy Fuller, ASGCA

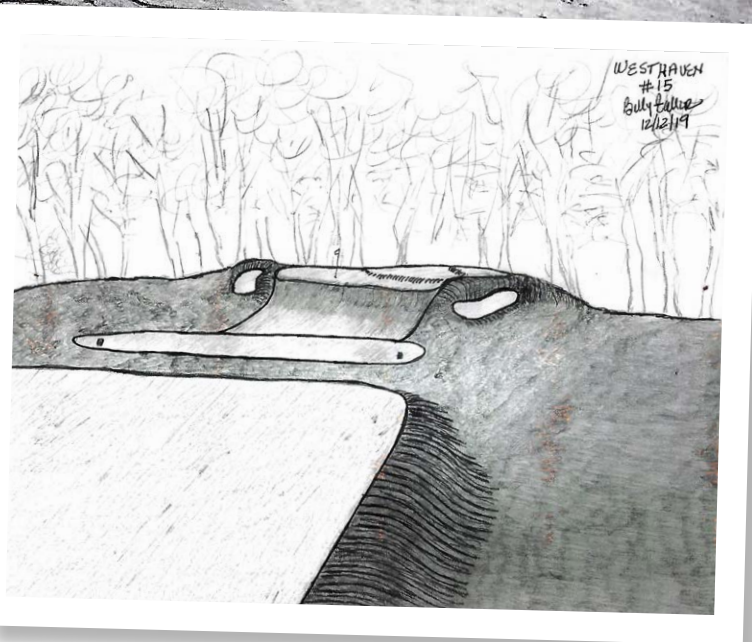


A sketch of the par-three fifteenth at Westhaven Golf Club in Franklin, Tennessee, where Billy Fuller, ASGCA, has completed a multi-year renovation.

Fuller says the fifteenth was previously “extremely difficult” with its elevated green and eight-foot-deep bunkers a challenge for members.

“Westhaven is a private club, with most members in the mid-to-high handicap range,” said Fuller. “In my strategy, I lowered the green by two-and-a-half feet, introduced the ground game and made the bunkers on either side of the green three-to-four-and-a-half-feet below the putting surface. Three distinct flagstick zones with a couple of noses bleeding into the putting surface create up and over putts, depending on where your ball lands in relation to location of flagstick.”

Fuller uses sketches on all his projects to show the client a proposed design. “I use a process I call ‘photo regeneration’, where I take a photo of the hole as it exists and then sketch the proposed strategy, using hash lines to emphasize features and slopes,” he said. “The final sketch is then used to create the final product for a ‘show and tell’, which is produced in Photoshop.



Fuller's initial sketch for the new hole and, main image, the 'photo regeneration' he created to communicate his plans to members

“I find when members look at an aerial plan, they really have very little understanding other than the outline of features from above, hole centerlines, etc. The old saying, ‘a picture is worth a thousand words’ is apropos! This type of presentation is really well-received and understood.” ●

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