



ISSUE 73 // SPRING 2026

BY DESIGN

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



GLOBAL GAME

ASGCA members share their experiences of designing golf courses around the world

APOGEE CLUB

Kyle Phillips, ASGCA, has completed his debut US newbuild in a development hotspot

ALSO:

- // Links at Spanish Bay
- // GCSAA Show 2026
- // Arcola CC

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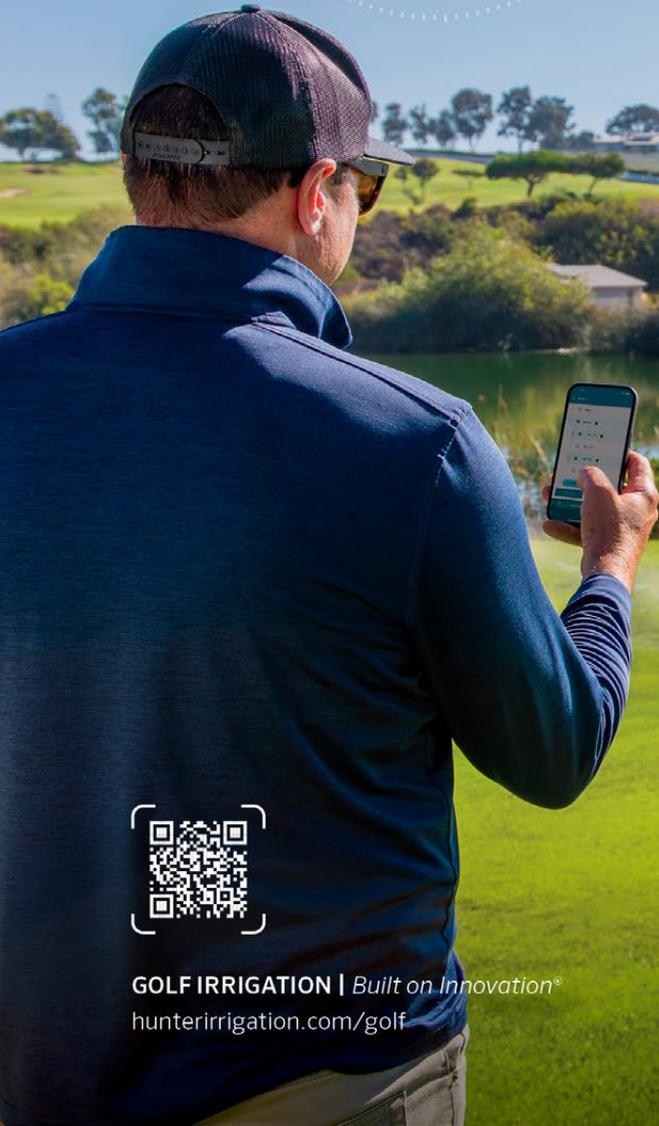
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Global reach

At the turn of the 19th century, as golf was gaining popularity in the United States, several golf course architects set off from the British Isles across the Atlantic to help design courses that would become the bedrock of our sport.

William Watson, born near the home of golf at St Andrews, immigrated in 1898 and went on to design over 100 courses in the US. A few months later, Donald Ross of Dornoch made the same trip and would become the most prolific of them all, with over 600 designs, and eventually also the founding father of the American Society of Golf Course Architects. Famed British architects like Willie Park Jr. and Dr. Alister MacKenzie would also leave an important mark on the game in this country, including some of our most revered courses, like Augusta National, Cypress Point and Maidstone Club.

Over time, the pattern has shifted in the other direction. It was a trickle at first, but the boom in construction following World War II saw architects like Robert Trent Jones, Sr. devote increasingly more of their time to international projects. Later, demand for courses bearing the name of superstar golfers like Arnold Palmer and Jack Nicklaus meant more and more American golf course architects would become involved in projects across the globe.

Today, ASGCA members have worked in more than 90 countries, and encounter all kinds of new and unusual challenges along the way, as we discover in our main feature article (page 14) for this new issue of *By Design*. We pick out a selection of recent international projects, in places as far afield as Ecuador, Iraq and Japan, to find out more about the experiences of the architects behind these designs.

There's much more inside too, beginning with our Digest section, which has exciting project news from both the US and beyond. I hope you enjoy the issue.

Mark A. Mungeam

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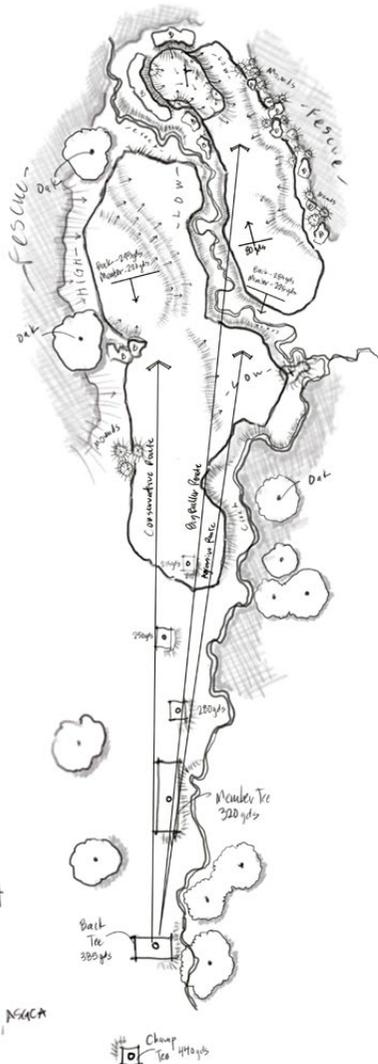
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For
Arcola C.C.
Hole #16
by: Andy Staples, ASGCA

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DIGEST

Work begins on renovation of The Links at Spanish Bay



Construction work has started at The Links at Spanish Bay in California, where Gil Hanse, ASGCA, and Jim Wagner are overseeing a major renovation. Their masterplan aims to take advantage of the course's coastal setting, make the layout more playable and strategic, and ensure it remains challenging for the elite players.

The design team will keep most of the current routing, however, several green sites – including the current fourteenth and eighteenth – will be relocated to create room for a new par-three hole that will

replace the current thirteenth. The square footage of greens across the course will be expanded by 40 per cent and will be resurfaced too. Pure Distinction from Tee-2-Green is being used on the greens, and its Prestige Premium Blend is being used on surrounds.

Other work includes replacing the rough that surrounds greens with low-cut turf, widening fairways, repositioning fairway bunkers, adjusting contours, new drainage and irrigation systems, and developing three more acres of environmental habitat area.

Tee complexes will be rebuilt and

repositioned to open sightlines, offer more options and reduce forced carries. According to Hanse's plan, the forward tees will be 500 yards shorter and the championship tees 375 yards longer, with the par changing from 72 to 71.

“Working on a project like this is a golf course architect's dream,” said Hanse. “The Spanish Bay site is one of the best we've seen for golf, one where all your senses are stimulated by the crashing Pacific surf, and we are excited by Pebble Beach Company's commitment to creating another extraordinary golf experience on the Monterey



Peninsula. This opportunity truly brings out the golf fan in me as much as the designer.”

David Stivers, CEO of the Pebble Beach Company, said: “We are highly confident in the Hanse Golf Course Design team and their ability to transform Spanish Bay into a ‘must play’ course for any golfer visiting Pebble Beach. We have seen a brilliant vision emerge from the planning stages and look forward to watching it take shape over the coming year.”

Spanish Bay will reopen in April 2027, ahead of the U.S. Open being played at Pebble Beach Golf Links.

New Coore & Crenshaw course opens in South Carolina



Photo: Palmetto Bluff

Anson Point, a new golf course designed by Bill Coore, ASGCA, and Ben Crenshaw, has opened for play at the Palmetto Bluff community in Bluffton, South Carolina.

The private layout lies within a 500-acre Lowcountry landscape west of Hilton Head Island that is managed by the Palmetto Bluff Conservancy.

With just 80 acres used for fairways, greens and bunkers, Anson Point weaves through four distinct ecosystems — upland pine terrain, maritime forest, live oak groves and salt marshes framed by sabal pines.

“As we studied the site that would become Anson Point, we came to believe it had the potential to yield a golf course of strong individual character, one that would provide highly interesting golf while showcasing the natural beauty of the Carolina Lowcountry,” said Coore.

The new course has been designed to offer a sharp contrast to the community’s existing golf, the Jack Nicklaus-designed May River layout that opened in 2005 and the reversible nine-hole Crossroads course, designed by King-Collins in 2024.

ASGCA Foundation hosts Design Boot Camp

The ASGCA Foundation hosted a Design Boot Camp at Pinehurst, North Carolina, in March 2026.

Fourteen students were joined by eight architects, all ASGCA Past Presidents, for education sessions, golf and site tours.

A highlight of the boot camp was a tour from Bill Coore, ASGCA, of Pinehurst No. 11, which is under construction. He spoke on a variety of topics, including his design philosophy, growing up in North Carolina and his long-term partnership with Ben Crenshaw, and attendees had the chance to consider the new course’s routing and hole design plans.



Photo: ASGCA

Limassol Greens course opens in Cyprus

Limassol Greens, a new golf destination in Cyprus, has opened an 18-hole course designed by Cabell Robinson, ASGCA Fellow.

The layout has been built on a former citrus plantation and features rolling terrain, mature trees, open fields and natural bodies of water.

“The course mainly has a parkland character with a few links-inspired holes,” said Andrew Darker, the resort’s general manager. “A key influence on the links holes is the course’s setting. It borders the island’s largest salt lake and lies near the sea. This exposure creates constant airflow, salt-laden breezes and open, firm playing conditions.”



Photo: David Böll



“I’ve never had a job interview in my life”

Doug Smith, ASGCA

In the latest podcast from *Golf Course Industry’s* “Tartan Talks” series, Doug Smith, ASGCA, speaks about how he entered the golf course design profession and his role as a NCAA Division I golf coach.

On the advice of his father, 21-year-old Smith FedExed over 100 letters to golf course architects. “I got calls like crazy,” he says. “Ed Seay was the first, a wonderful man and he inspired me

to keep going. Being from New York, the only architect in the area at that time was Stephen Kay. He rang me at 11 o’clock at night on a Thursday and we really hit it off. He offered me a job on the spot, and that was it. I’ve never had a job interview in my life.”

Alongside his career as a golf course architect, Smith has also had a career as a golf coach. He is currently the head women’s golf

coach at Providence College.

“One of the first things I notice nowadays is that the length off the tee for collegiate players is incredible,” says Smith. “The guys are hitting incredible distances and even the women are now hitting it 270 yards. Golf architecture is changing with these bombs off the tee.”

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

Here are links to other recent “Tartan Talks”, now featuring over 90 episodes:

- [Chris Wilczynski, ASGCA, talks about executing new projects where homes border golf holes](#)
- [Ty Butler, ASGCA, describes the methodology behind a Texas-sized course revival](#)



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Brookside appoints Rae for Ross restoration

Brookside Country Club in Canton, Ohio, has appointed Tyler Rae, ASGCA, to lead a restoration of its Donald Ross course.

The first phase will comprise the rebuilding of greens six, twelve, fourteen and sixteen, as well as the expansion of putting surfaces across the course to recover their original sizes and shapes. Also, every bunker will be reconstructed to restore their Ross character and scale, as well as introducing modern liners.

Fairways will be widened to reopen approach angles that have narrowed over time, select tree removal will recover sightlines and turf health, and all tees, fairways and greens will be re-grassed. The irrigation system will be updated, and cart paths will be rebuilt.



Image: Tyler Rae

Future phases will include the repositioning of tees, new practice greens and reinstating Ross’s dual fairway corridor between holes two and eight.

Tyler Rae’s restoration masterplan for Brookside Country Club

ASGCA members collaborate on Mexico design

Agustín Pizá, ASGCA, and Chad Goetz, ASGCA, of Nicklaus Design have co-designed an 18-hole golf course for Valle de los Encinos, a new, luxury resort community in Chihuahua, Mexico.

“This is a project where collaboration truly elevates the result,” said Pizá. “From routing and strategy to land planning and execution, every decision is intentional – designed to challenge elite players, reward thoughtful shotmaking and remain deeply enjoyable for everyday golfers.”

Goetz added: “I’m excited that this collaboration gives us the opportunity to bring our two design voices together to create a singular and truly distinctive vision.”

Construction is underway and is expected to be complete by 2027.



Photo: Piza Golf and Nicklaus Design



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Oleada Golf Links on track for summer 2026 preview



Photo: Harris Kalinka

A new 18-hole golf course by Ernie Els Design is on schedule to open for preview play in July 2026 at Oleada Pacific Living & Golf, a new 860-acre oceanfront resort community on the southern tip of the Baja California peninsula in Mexico.

“This is one of the most spectacular projects on our books,” said Els, who is working with design partner Greg Letsche, ASGCA, on the project.

Els and Letsche have made full use of the site’s natural sand, ridges and dunes for their course. They’ve used them to separate and frame holes, jut into fairways as a hazard, to design interesting greens and create multiple angles of attack. Wind will also be a key factor in a round at Oleada, so the pair have designed wide landing areas to ensure a ‘find your golf ball experience.’

Most holes play near the beach, with only one, nine, ten and eighteen playing near the clubhouse and Pacific Villa residences. The par-three fourth, par-five sixth and par-five sixteenth have been laid out nearest the ocean.

The official opening is planned for November 2026.

SOCIAL UPDATE



 **ASGCA**
@ASGCA

ASGCA Foundation Design Boot Camp Day 3: It was a special day as Bill Coore gave a tour of Pinehurst No. 11, which is under construction.



 **Golf Course Architecture**
@gcamagazine

Rees Jones returns to Quintero Golf Club, north of Phoenix, Arizona, to oversee a renovation to suit the club’s evolving membership.



 **Hills • Forrest • Smith**
@HFS_GCA

A good golf course architect is not afraid to get dirty. This is just one of the lessons being taught by Steve Forrest (second from right) to attendees at the 2nd @ASGCA Foundation Boot Camp this week at Pinehurst.

Search ASGCA on the below channels for more posts:



Around the world

By Design takes a whistle-stop tour of the globe and asks ASGCA members what makes international projects different to their work in North America.

ASGCA Founding Member Robert Trent Jones, Sr. famously said that “the sun never sets on a Robert Trent Jones golf course,” a reference to his far-reaching portfolio of courses, the pioneering architect eventually working in 35 countries around the world.

Many ASGCA members have since followed a similarly globe-trotting path, with large portfolios far from home. For example, Jones’s sons Rees and Bobby, and their respective design teams, have extensive global design experience, while Brian Curley, ASGCA, Kyle Phillips, ASGCA, and Golfplan architects David Dale, ASGCA, and Kevin Ramsey, ASGCA, are perhaps all better known for their international work than their designs in the United States. Most ASGCA members have completed projects outside the US and in total, there are golf courses by ASGCA members in more than 90 countries.

Over the following pages, *By Design* looks at a small but diverse selection of those, and finds out about the challenges of working in different environments, cultures and landscapes. ●

Course: Curracloe Links

Country: Ireland

Architect: ASGCA Past President Jason Straka and Dana Fry, ASGCA

Curracloe Links is a new 18-hole golf course by Fry/Straka that is taking shape on the southeast coast of Ireland and is expected to open in 2027.

“Working in Ireland is certainly different than in the US insofar as the access to materials are more limited,” says Straka. “Although our design approach hasn’t really changed, we have opted for a more aggressive style of bunkering, mainly in terms of steepness of slopes, depth and more randomized locations.

“Both Dana and I traveled around the country studying all the well-known courses and many lesser-known ones. That gave us a barometer of how to be different but also to know what extremes they each had. For example, the wild-wooly natural edges of Royal County Down led us to plant gorse, ferns and marram grass around some bunker edges; we also studied how bold we could be with green slopes and transitions; and noted the fairway and primary rough widths of many seaside courses to account for the wind.”

Photo: Kevin Murray





Course: Paragraph Tabori

Country: Georgia

Architect: Kevin Ramsey, ASGCA

Paragraph Tabori Golf & Spa in Tbilisi, Georgia, opened in late 2025 with a nine-hole golf course designed by Kevin Ramsey, ASGCA, of Golfplan.

“Like many of our projects in a country where golf is new, there is an education process that goes on with the client and contractor,” says Ramsey. “They are used to building roads and structures, not golf courses. We explain the construction methods and value of proper materials but also provide experienced personnel to make sure the golf features are built properly. Our design approach doesn’t change; it’s more down to educating the local teams to ensure a full understanding of the quality we are after.”



Photo: Curracløe Links



Photo: R. D. J.

Photo: IMG

Course: Oddur Golf Club
Country: Iceland
Architect: ASGCA Past President Bruce Charlton

Robert Trent Jones II Golf Course Architects is underway with a project to create new holes for Oddur Golf Club near Reykjavik, Iceland, and reconfiguring the existing 18-hole golf course to create a 27-hole facility. “The working environment is very similar to the United States with almost everyone speaking excellent English,” says Charlton.

“The local jurisdictional agencies are very much in tune with preserving the existing landscape – spectacular lava rock landforms and outcroppings – and we are currently working closely with the club and local authorities to create the least disruptive routing of golf holes possible. We have always adhered to the ‘listen to the land’ approach to our golf course designs and our goal in Iceland is to produce golf holes that appear to be designed by Mother Nature.”

Course: Shura Links
Country: Saudi Arabia
Architect: Brian Curley, ASGCA

The Shura Links course by Brian Curley has opened on an island development on Saudi Arabia’s Red Sea coast.

“I have made monthly site visits to oversee the course’s construction,” says Curley. “Most people immediately equate Saudi with ‘hot’ but the Red Sea is a year-round destination with average temperatures of 32C (90F) – less than you’d expect.

“The site was originally flat with zero natural features other than being on the sea edge. I have certainly started from flat numerous times but never on an oceanfront property. The islands here are natural – unlike the man-made ones in Dubai – and are low-lying and only slightly above sea level. Given that, the initial efforts were to dredge material to raise the island. Minimum levels were set for golf, non-turf areas and the lowest turf areas so that rootzones would avoid issues with saltwater wicking up.”





Course: Erbil Hills
Country: Iraq
Architect: Cynthia Dye, ASGCA

In 2025, Erbil Hills Resort opened with an 18-hole golf course designed by Dye Designs. The Iraq Open was held at Erbil in November 2025, the first such event in nearly five decades.

“Erbil is very different from the image many have of Iraq,” says Dye. “It has a Mediterranean climate, rich vegetation and varied terrain, making it an ideal location for golf.”

“Building the course presented unique challenges as the region had limited experience with large-scale golf construction. The local team, though skilled, was navigating golf-specific complexities for the first time. They quickly mastered new techniques, from engineering to environmental management, tackling these challenges with impressive success.”

“Despite adjusting timelines and processes, the project was a rewarding opportunity to introduce something new to the region, marking a significant step in golf development in the Middle East.”

Course: The Gotemba course at The Taiheiyō Club
Country: Japan
Architect: ASGCA Past President Rees Jones

The Gotemba course at The Taiheiyō Club in Japan was redesigned in 2018 by ASGCA Past President Rees Jones, with professional golfer Hideki Matsuyama involved in a consulting capacity.

“The key to our success was having a client who supported and understood the need to work with qualified golf course contractors,” says Jones. “Everyone on this project understood that attention to detail was essential to creating a finished product that is both enjoyable for golfers and sustainable to maintain.”

“In Japan, we worked with a high-quality contractor and team members whose familiarity with our expectations greatly facilitated progress of the project and our fundamental approach to designing and creating features did not have to change.”

Photo: Shura Links

Photo: Taku Miyamoto



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A Channel Drain in action at the PGA Championship at Valhalla GC, collecting surface water to protect the fairway below





Course: Savan Resorts
Country: Laos
Architect: Sean Quinn, ASGCA

A new nine-hole short course by Nicklaus Design opened at Savan Resorts in Savannakhet, Laos, in September 2025. The resort is located next to the Laos-Thailand border. “Other than the initial concept, the design approach was the same as it would be anywhere,” says Quinn. “We did struggle to find good quality sand for the fairways, but eventually river sand was found that worked at a slightly modified specification. “Working with a team like Flagstick Golf Course Construction Management and a good owner makes for a seamless experience.”

Course: Quito Tennis y Golf Club
Country: Ecuador
Architect: Mike Gorman, ASGCA

Construction has started on a new Robert Trent Jones II course for Quito Tennis y Golf Club, located near Ecuador’s capital city.

“The site of the newly located Quito Tennis y Golf Club sits at over 9,500 feet above sea level and is only 12 miles from the equator,” says Gorman. “Given this elevation, we are designing our course to play at a length of 8,300 yards, while actual playing distances are 10-12 per cent less than this. We will also have greater width than we usually do to allow players to target their shots well away from the dramatic canyons while utilizing the natural side slopes to reach the ideal positions on fairways and greens.

“The major difference in working in Ecuador is the Spanish language barrier with local labor rates significantly lower than in the US.”



Photo: RTJ II

Catching a wave in Florida

A new golf course by Kyle Phillips, ASGCA, has opened at Apogee Club in Martin County.

Over the past three years, more golf courses have been built in Florida than any other state, according to recent data from the National Golf Foundation. With 28 openings, and another 23 in progress, there is unquestionably a boom in golf in the Sunshine State.

A large share of this wave of development is happening in Martin County, where more than 10 golf

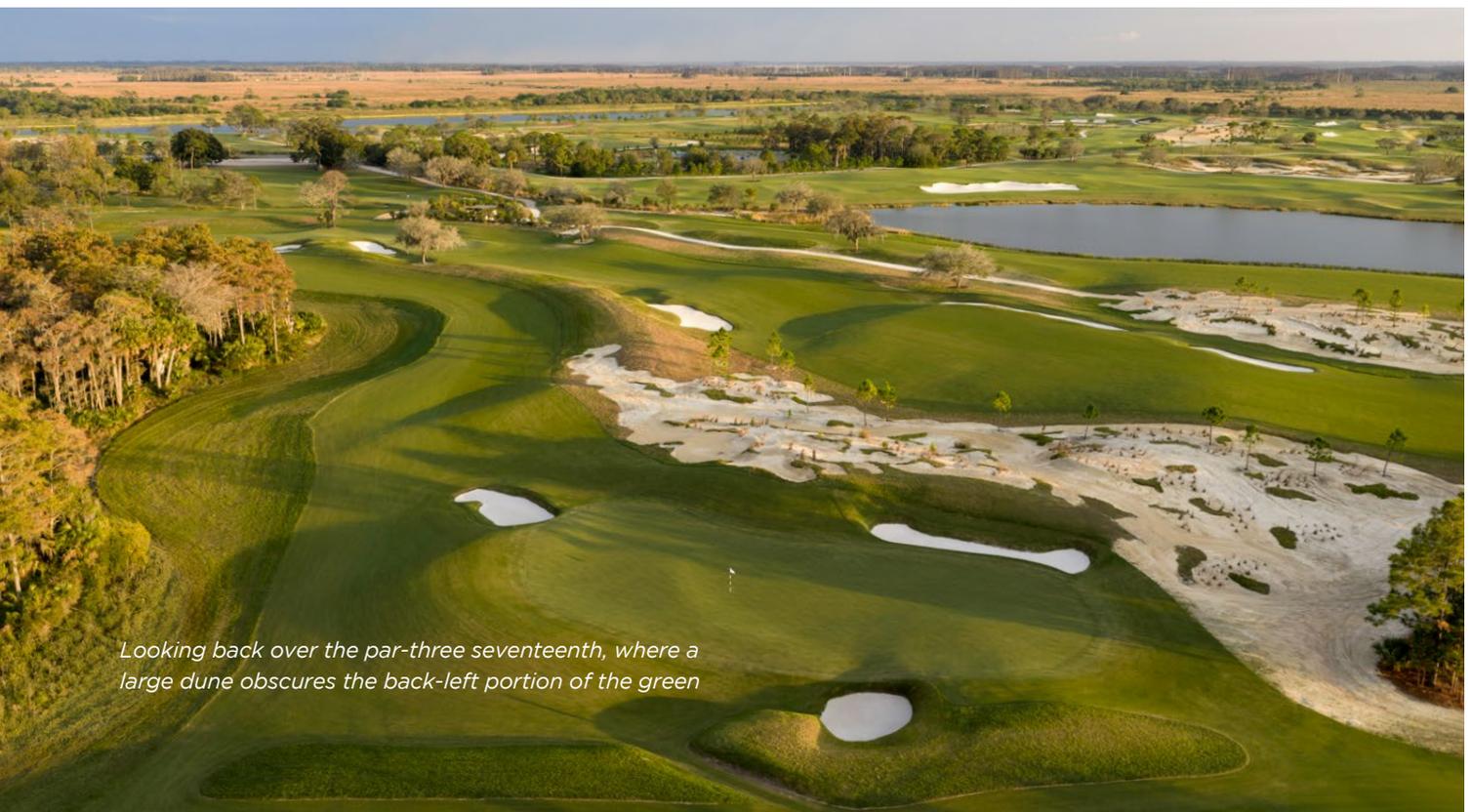
course architects have recently completed, or are actively working on, brand new golf courses.

Three of those are now open at Apogee Club in Hobe Sound; the first by Gil Hanse, ASGCA, and Jim Wagner, and the latest a debut US newbuild for Kyle Phillips, ASGCA.

Phillips established his design business in 1997, following 16 years working for ASGCA Past President

Robert Trent Jones, Jr. While he has worked extensively in the United States, both for Jones and under his own banner, he is perhaps better known for his original golf course designs in other parts of the world.

When Kingsbarns, located near St Andrews in Scotland, opened in 2000, it quickly became regarded as one of the best courses in the United Kingdom, and has



Looking back over the par-three seventeenth, where a large dune obscures the back-left portion of the green



The approach to the fourteenth, which shares a double green with the sixteenth

remained close to the top of ranking lists. Many regard his work at Yas Links in the United Arab Emirates and South Cape Owners Club in South Korea as the best courses in those countries.

This portfolio, and the wide appreciation of his US restoration and renovation projects such as at The California Club and Hillside Country Club, means his first newbuild in the country – the Summit course at Apogee – has been eagerly awaited.

Phillips and his team followed the tried-and-tested formula that has been a hallmark of their work: a focus on emphasizing the site's natural character.

The course weaves through an 'Old Florida' environment of pines and oaks, and features a cypress grove and weeping fig and banyan trees. Albeit rarely coming into play, wetland areas are an integral part of the site and already becoming a haven for local wildlife.

For the most part, the land is relatively flat, but the clubhouse will be located on higher ground, so the holes closest to it – the first, twelve to fourteen, and eighteenth – feature significant elevation change.

The transition from high to low ground has been expertly shaped; featuring plateaus, valleys and swales, giving holes unique characteristics and landforms a degree of randomness as may have been expected if shaped by nature.

Phillips has drawn from his experience of golf in the United Kingdom and Ireland. "What you see on many links and heathland courses are small nuances that don't always reveal themselves immediately," he said, in an interview with *Golf Course Architecture*. "The more you play them, the more you begin to understand how they work. We wanted Summit to have that same quality – something that rewards repeat play and gradually reveals its character."

A defining feature of the course is its undulating greens and surrounds. Ground movement is most pronounced in these areas, encouraging imaginative recovery shots that can be played either along the ground or in the air.

Strategic variety also comes from some distinct features. The fourteenth and sixteenth holes share a large, rolling boomerang of a double green. The dune that frames the seventeenth green adds visual drama while also adding a touch of the 'blindness' that is much more common in the UK than the US. The bunkers are deep and distinctive too, inspired by the English inland links of Ganton and Woodhall Spa.

The result is a course that encourages thoughtful play and rewards familiarity, revealing more subtleties on each play. ●

Read more in the January 2026 issue of Golf Course Architecture magazine.

A centennial celebration

Snapshots from the 2026 GCSAA Conference & Trade Show, where ASGCA was a Presenting Partner.

The Golf Course Superintendents Association of America (GCSAA) marked its centenary with another successful hosting of its annual Conference & Trade Show, this time, in Orlando, Florida.

The annual event brings together architects, superintendents, builders and

vendors from across the world to meet and learn about the latest in golf design, construction and maintenance, as well as the opportunity to network with peers.

This year, over 12,000 people attended the event, and more than 8,000 seminar seats were filled, beating the previous record that stood since 2008.



More than 4,000 GCSAA members and industry partners came together for the GCSAA Centennial Celebration at ICON Park



Photo: GCSAA

Jeff Danner, ASGCA, moderated a panel on autonomous mowers, with insight from Kyle Kriewall of Toro, Kenton Brunson of Mid Ocean Club and Chris Tritabaugh of Hazeltine National



Photo: ASGCA



Photo: ASGCA



Photo: AquaFuse by CMF Global, Inc



Photo: ASGCA

ASGCA's new-look booth proved a popular spot for networking during the show



Photo: ASGCA

Photo: Bernard Academy



Photo: ASGCA

The ASGCA Winter Meeting and Networking Breakfast were once again very well attended by members and partners

Arcola Country Club

Andy Staples, ASGCA

The par-four sixteenth at Arcola Country Club in Paramus, New Jersey, where Andy Staples, ASGCA, is overseeing a renovation.

“The existing hole was a short-to-mid length par four, bisected by a creek and playing to two greens,” says Staples. “The original left green was heavily sloped and placed at an awkward angle, while the right green was further back, presented a different design style and was built to receive shots from a completely different angle.”

Staples’ plan is to unify the design of the hole, put a premium on the approach angle and renovate the green closer to what original designer H.H. Barker envisioned.

“The existing creek was realigned to allow for a more conservative tee shot to the left, while delivering a true risk-reward decision on the right,” says Staples. “The green is best approached from the right, with an open entrance and the widest margin for error. The approach from the left, which has a more generous landing area, presents a narrower angle to the green and is made more difficult by uneven lies, mostly with the ball below the feet.”

Staples is largely remaining faithful to his sketch with small tweaks made to how the creek interacts with the right side of the fairway and moving the bunkers on the left closer to the tee.

“The green allows for running shots from the right, while an approach from left will require a lofted shot with spin,” says Staples. “The green contours drain from back to front, with a slight rise along the back edge to help support shots coming in from the left. Barker’s other designs, such as his Rumson course in New Jersey – noted on a 1930 aerial – provided inspiration.

“This hole was the one the membership wanted to see improved. It now plays as the one risk-reward hole on the back nine.” ●

Design Concept
for
Arcola C.C.
Hole #16
by: Andy Staples, ASGCA

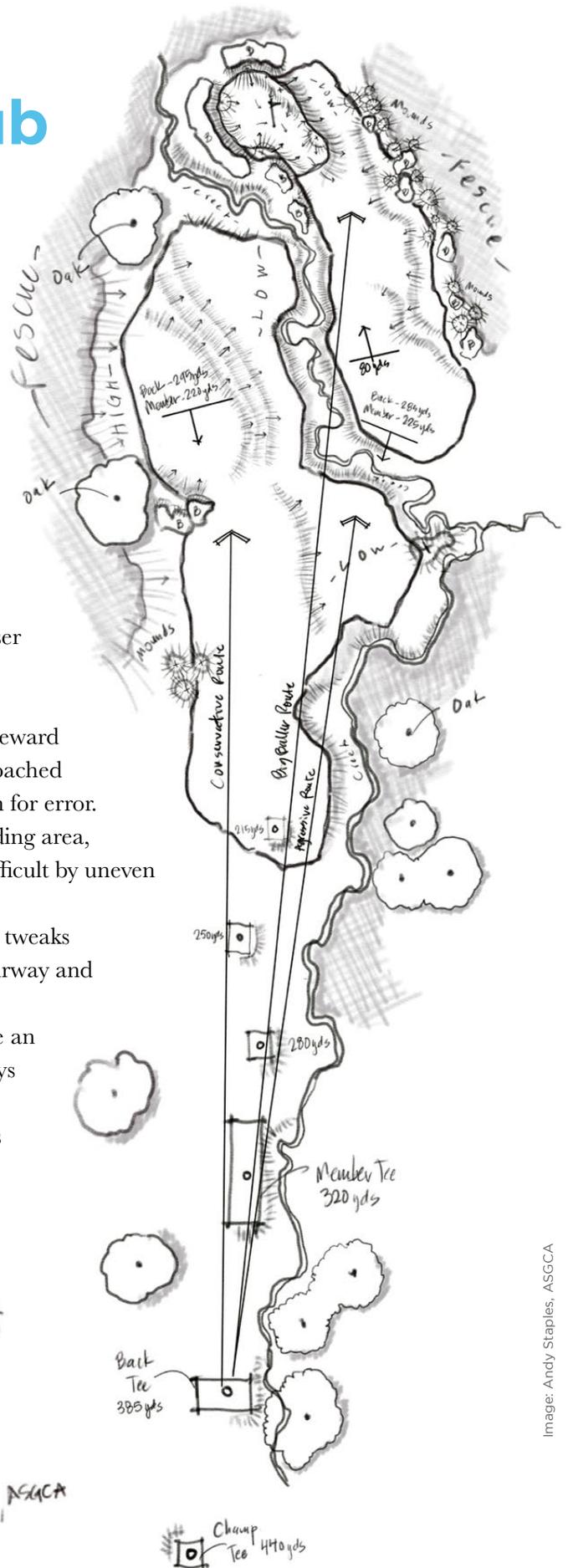


Image: Andy Staples, ASGCA

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