



ISSUE 75 // FALL 2026

BY DESIGN

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



SETTING THE TONE

What are the attributes of a great opening hole in golf? ASGCA members give their views

JIM NANTZ

CBS Sports broadcaster and the 2026 ASGCA Donald Ross Award recipient talks about his career

ALSO:

- // Detroit Golf Club
- // Naples Beach Club
- // 2026 Solheim Cup

YOUR COURSE. CONNECTED WITHOUT LIMITS.

Pilot Command
Center Software



Integrated Hub with Pilot
Communication Modules



TTS-800 Series
Golf Rotors

Hunter

Golf Irrigation



Mark Mungeam
President, ASGCA

First impressions

Golf course architects often get asked what their favorite courses are. My answer is always the same: Royal Dornoch and Shinnecock Hills. I'm thankful to have visited both on several occasions. Most recently, that was Shinnecock, in June, for the U.S. Open.

Shinnecock has a great opening hole, playing downhill from an elevated tee near the clubhouse. As well as providing a view of the landscape, it immediately establishes some of the course's themes, such as William Flynn's use of diagonals and doglegs, the wild rough, and the impact of wind. The opener embodies what Shinnecock is about and sets the tone for what is to come.

First holes create first impressions, which tend to be important in all aspects of life, even when they perhaps shouldn't be. I found myself nodding along while reading the perspectives of our members in this issue's cover story, beginning on page 14, which asks what makes a good opening hole.

I'm looking forward to hearing more from members when we gather in October for the ASGCA Annual Meeting in Nashville. Just as competing professional golfers can be seen sharing tips on the range, those in our profession are always happy to share experiences and learn from one another.

The Annual Meeting will also see Jim Nantz being presented with the 2026 ASGCA Donald Ross Award. For generations of golf fans, Jim has been the voice of some of the game's greatest moments, including at The Masters. It was great to hear more from Jim in this issue's interview piece on page 22.

It has been a privilege to welcome you to each of the past four issues of *By Design*, during my year as ASGCA President, and I know you will be in great hands as I pass the gavel to incoming President Bill Bergin.

I hope you enjoy the read!

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Mark A. Mungeam".

By Design is sponsored by:



CONTENTS

6 Digest

The issue begins at Bernardus Golf in the Netherlands, which is preparing to host the 2026 Solheim Cup on its Kyle Phillips-designed course. We also report on projects in Cambodia, Florida, Illinois, Indiana and Texas.



14 Setting the tone

What constitutes a great opening hole? And what should it reveal about the challenge that lies ahead? Richard Humphreys canvasses the views of eight architects.



22 Life behind the mic

Ahead of receiving the 2026 ASGCA Donald Ross Award, Jim Nantz spoke with Richard Humphreys about clearing fairways at his home course, the layouts he reveres, his first foray in design and why the First Tee means so much to him.

28 Hands up for Detroit

At the recent Rocket Classic, PGA Tour players waxed lyrical about the renovated North course at Detroit Golf Club. *By Design* reports on the work by Tyler Rae, ASGCA.



30 Sketchbook

ASGCA Past President Tom Marzolf shares a sketch of a double-green layout for holes four and eight at Naples Beach Club in Florida.

On the cover



The first hole of the Old Course at St Andrews, photographed by Kevin Murray. First holes is this issue's cover story topic, which begins on page 14.

ISSUE 75 // FALL 2026

Editor and Publisher
Toby Ingleton

Editorial contributors
Richard Humphreys, Laura Hyde

Design
Bruce Graham, Libby Sidebotham

ASGCA Staff
Jeff Brauer, Mike Shefky, Marc Whitney,
Ann Woelfel, Hunki Yun

Subscribe to *By Design* at
www.tudor-rose.co.uk/bydesign

© 2026 American Society
of Golf Course Architects.
All rights reserved.

www.asgca.org

Bernardus ready to host Solheim Cup



Bernardus Golf is the first club in the Netherlands to host either the Solheim or Ryder Cup

Bernardus Golf, a design by Kyle Phillips, ASGCA, near Cromvoirt in the Netherlands, is set to host the 2026 Solheim Cup.

The 20th edition of the Solheim Cup will take place from 11-13 September 2026 and it will be the first time a Dutch club has hosted either the Solheim or the Ryder Cup.

Bernardus Golf has tournament experience, having hosted the country's national open on the DP World Tour between 2021 and 2023.

The course opened in 2018 and quickly became recognized

as one of Europe's best layouts (*Top100golfcourses.com* places it at number 39 in continental Europe). Phillips oversaw a transformation of a site that was previously three flat cornfields to create a heathland-style design punctuated with lakes that are the primary feature of three holes.

Ahead of the club hosting the best women golfers from Europe and the U.S., golf course superintendent Niall Richardson spoke about recent changes to the course.

"We have not made any major changes to the golf course itself,"

said Richardson. "Most of the work undertaken in recent years has focused on creating wider spectator corridors and improving circulation. We have carefully transplanted established areas of heather to protect them from spectator traffic and relocated approximately 60 trees. Those trees will remain in their new positions, ensuring that the improved routes can also support future tournaments."

For logistical reasons, the Solheim Cup routing will begin on Bernardus's third hole. "We have rented adjoining



Photo: Bernardus Golf



Photo: Orchard Valley

Greg Martin refreshes Orchard Valley in Illinois

Orchard Valley Golf Course in the western suburbs of Chicago, Illinois, will reopen for public play in September 2026 following a renovation by ASGCA Past President Greg Martin and contractor Wadsworth Golf Construction Company.

The course was originally designed by Ken Kavanaugh and opened for play in 1993. It is owned by Fox Valley Park District and operated by Troon, with Martin hired to identify and advise on course repairs.

The renovation began in November 2024 and included refreshing and expanding selected greens; renovating, realigning, relocating and reconstructing bunkers; and expanding and resurfacing tee boxes.

All tees, fairways and greens were regrassed with disease-resistant seed varieties. New retaining walls were created on the second and seventeenth, while a new fairway was constructed on the thirteenth. Selected cart paths were realigned and reconstructed, and a new state-of-the-art irrigation system was installed.

farmland close to that tee, allowing the fan zone, public entrance and back-of-house infrastructure to be located away from the core golf property,” said Richardson.

“Bernardus was designed as a championship golf course, but not specifically as a venue for a tournament of this scale, so selected areas have been widened to improve the movement of players, officials, television crews and equipment between holes.

“Fundamentally, however, the course remains faithful to the

layout constructed in 2016 and 2017. That is a strong endorsement of the original design by Kyle Phillips: the priority has been to enhance tournament logistics and the spectator experience, rather than change the course’s playing strategy.”

The three Dutch Opens that Bernardus have hosted has helped with the club’s preparations. The 2021 event was staged in September, closer to the timing of the Solheim Cup, while the 2022 and 2023 editions took place in May.

“Each tournament allowed us to refine every aspect of our preparation – from course conditioning and presentation to logistics, communication and collaboration with the tournament organizers,” said Richardson. “One of the most important lessons was understanding precisely how the course performs under tournament pressure, and where relatively small adjustments can make a significant difference.”

Read more from Richardson on Golf Course Architecture’s website.



Plan. Design. **BUILD.**

Plan. Davey and EDI work alongside golf course architects from the earliest stages, providing detailed site assessments, tree inventories, preservation planning, and environmental mitigation strategies.

Design. Our teams partner closely with architects to bring each course's vision to life. By integrating arboricultural and environmental science with design intent, we help shape routing, sightlines, and play features while preserving the character of the landscape. Our expertise in plant health care, tree relocation and environmental management allows architects to work more creatively, knowing natural assets can be thoughtfully repositioned to enhance both form and function.

Build. Construction is where vision meets execution, and where trees and ecosystems face their greatest challenges. From overseeing root zone protection to executing complex tree moves, we help safeguard the integrity of the landscape throughout the build process.

Creating a premier golf experience requires more than vision—it demands trusted partnership, scientific expertise, and precise execution. Davey works hand-in-hand with golf course architects to plan, protect, and position natural assets in ways that elevate both playability and design intent. By bringing together the strengths of Davey Tree, Environmental Design, Davey Resource Group, and the Davey Institute, we support every stage of course development—from initial concept through long-term stewardship. Davey delivers research-driven solutions that enhance the game, preserve the landscape, and ensure courses endure for generations.



Contact Your Golf Expert

Mark Jordan

330.635.7967

Mark.Jordan@Davey.com



New Brian Curley course opens in Cambodia

Chhun On PGA National Cambodia, located on the outskirts of Phnom Penh, has opened its new Palm course, designed by Brian Curley, ASGCA. It is Curley's second at Chhun On, having completed the Lake course in 2024.

While the resort is working alongside the Cambodian Golf Federation to help create opportunities for more Cambodians to access the game, its initial focus is to let people know about the country's potential. "Cambodia is on its way to becoming a golf destination that will soon rival Thailand with its quality of courses and unique cultural offerings



Photo: Brian Curley

and sites," said Curley. "As the country grows in the direction of offering upscale destination resorts, I am very pleased with the

commitment that ownership made here to first-class construction and operations, certainly raising the bar for golf and driving new visitors."



"Technology is leading to more variety in bunker styles"

Brandon Johnson, ASGCA

In the latest podcast from *Golf Course Industry's* "Tartan Talks" series, Brandon Johnson, ASGCA, speaks about modern bunkers and his King's North project at Myrtle Beach National in South Carolina.

"In the southeast of America, clubs are still seeing, and maintaining, record numbers of rounds," says Johnson. "They want to make improvements. Clubs are seeing their neighbors make

improvements and generate a return on those investments."

He highlights bunkers as an area where clubs are targeting their investments. "The technology we have now in terms of bunker construction allows architects to do creative things," says Johnson. "Technology is leading to more variety in bunker styles."

Bunkers were a focus for Johnson on the King's North course. "It is

a core golf experience," he says.

"It has a gentle roll and fall to the property, so it does feel special in that market where you do have a lot of real estate. From a design standpoint, there is a lot of heroism and opportunities for fantastic recoveries. This is golf, for golf's sake, and it is routed as such."

Listen to the full "Tartan Talks" at golfcourseindustry.com.

Here are links to other recent "Tartan Talks", now featuring over 120 episodes:

- [Tim Gerrish, ASGCA, shares outdoorsy stories and golf industry perspectives](#)
- [ASGCA Past President Damian Pascuzzo talks about Campus Commons in California](#)



**WATERVISION
CLOUD TELEMETRY**



**PRE-SHIP
DYNAMIC TESTING**



**PSN: PUMP
SERVICE NETWORK**



**ELECTRONIC
BUTTERFLY VALVE**



**CUSTOM COMPOSITE
ENCLOSURES**



CELEBRATING 40 YEARS OF FOCUS!

Trusted by 50 of the top 100 *Golf Digest* courses and thousands more. Delivering innovative pump solutions is all we do.

TO LEARN MORE ABOUT WATERTRONICS, VISIT
WATERTRONICS.COM OR CALL 1-800-356-6686.



Construction begins on new golf course in southern Florida

Photo: Chris Wilczynski

Construction has started on a new 18-hole golf course by Chris Wilczynski, ASGCA, at Taylor Morrison's Esplanade at Solaeris in Port St. Lucie, Florida.

The site for the golf course was once a flat citrus farm. Multiple lakes will be created

across the property, generating approximately 650,000 to 700,000 cubic yards of soil to then be used to shape the course's landforms, fairways and playing corridors.

"Our goal is to create a sense of place that encourages shared experiences with family and

friends," said Wilczynski. "The best rounds are those where each hole makes you look forward to the next – and that's what we're focused on delivering."

Ryangolf is leading construction, with the course expected to open by summer 2027.



Shary Municipal reopens following redesign by Jerry Lemons

Shary Municipal Golf Course in Mission, Texas, has reopened following a comprehensive redesign by Jerry Lemons, ASGCA.

The City of Mission, close to the border with Mexico, wanted to address ageing infrastructure at the course and decided to invest in a new vision that would reimagine the nine-hole municipal facility and transform it into a more versatile and sustainable destination for the community.

Lemons worked with contractor VM Golf Services to redesign the layout, rebuild greens and add lighting from Musco Sports Lighting for evening play.

Two par fives were converted into par-three and par-four holes. Two greens and two tee complexes were entirely rebuilt, while the remaining greens were reshaped and expanded. The total putting surface has increased from 20,000 to 52,000 square feet.



Photo: Shary Municipal



**SPECIALTY
SANDS
& SERVICES**

573-280-6559

www.thesandsaver.com

SAND \$AVER™

The Sand Cleaning System



Don't replace your dirty bunker sand! Renew it.
SAVE 80% by washing and recycling vs buying new.



Blast away fines. Restore drainage.
Rent the system. We train you.
Quick set up and easy 2 person operation.
The economic and sustainable solution.

Scan to see Sand \$aver in action →



Cape Royale in Texas targets fall 2028 reopening



Photo: Landscapes Unlimited

The Cape Royale golf course in Coldspring, Texas, is to be renovated by golf architect Ty Butler, ASGCA, Landscapes Unlimited's project development group and contractor Heritage Links.

Butler's renovation plan includes some routing adjustments but mainly preserves the original playing corridors.

"The course will be more challenging from the tees while maintaining playability for the average golfer and will be visually striking," said Clay Fetherbay of Landscapes Unlimited.

Liddy restores Dye design at The Bridgewater Club

ASGCA Fellow Tim Liddy has completed restoration work on the Pete Dye design at The Bridgewater Club in Carmel, Indiana.

"Our goal was to sharpen the presentation while preserving the strategic DNA of the course," said Liddy. "Restoring The Bridgewater Club was truly a labor of love. I believe Dye would be proud of the final result."



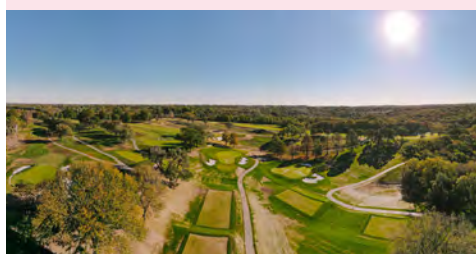
Photo: The Bridgewater Club

SOCIAL UPDATE



Golf Course Architecture
@gcamagazine

Raymond Hearn, ASGCA, speaks about his 30-year career, including his journey into golf course design, approach to restoration projects and latest design work.



Mid America
@midamerica_golf_
and_landscape

A new era at Swope Memorial has begun. The restoration preserved the character and strategic intent of the original design while updating the course to meet expectations of today's golfers and maintenance practices. The project involved Todd Clark, ASGCA, and Brent Hugo of CE Golf Design, with Ron Whitten serving as contributing architect.



ASGCA
@ASGCA

"GOLF'S GRAND DESIGN" is available from ASGCA, and examines the history and role of American golf course architecture and explores the unique relationship between the people who play the game and the places where they play. Co-authors: Bob Cupp, ASGCA, and Ron Whitten



Search ASGCA on the below channels for more posts:



Setting the tone

What constitutes a great opening hole? And what should it reveal about the challenge that lies ahead? Richard Humphreys canvasses the views of eight architects.



Known for the wide fairway it shares with the eighteenth, the first on the Old course at St Andrews is one of the most famous opening holes in golf

A golf course only has one opportunity to make its first impression.

ASGCA founding father Donald Ross, who designed more than 400 golf courses, famously said that the opening hole should be a “gentle handshake.” More than a century later, that remains among the most widely adopted principles of golf design.

The first tee is a place where anticipation and uncertainty meet. Regardless of the number of onlookers, first-tee nerves have an uncanny habit of kicking in, even among seasoned players. Most are likely to appreciate a gentle handshake above a rude awakening.

P.B. Dye, ASGCA, says of the opening hole: “It should get players away from the clubhouse and ideally would be a driver and short iron. It should have a challenge but not be too severe. Nobody likes to start with a double bogey, get mad, and quit after one hole. Golf’s not fair but should be fun!”

A. John Harvey, ASGCA, agrees, referencing Ballyowen Golf Club in New Jersey, which he co-designed with ASGCA Past President Roger G. Rulewich. “The first should not be overly taxing on the player from the tees or approach into the green. Encouraging the golfer and calming the nerves with a sense of ‘feeling good’ about starting the round with a relatively straightforward hole helps to promote a positive experience.”

“There is always a little doubt about what golfer is going to show up, therefore I think the course is more fun if I start with a simpler hole where there is more room to hit a loose shot,” says Chris Cochran, ASGCA. “On the green I prefer simpler contours to help a little with the putting as well.”



The opening hole at Augusta National has one of the more inviting tee shots on the course, and tends to leave players with a relatively short, albeit exacting, second shot

There are practical benefits from starting gently, too, particularly in relation to pace of play.

ASGCA Fellow John Steidel says: “The fairway should be wide, the hazards few and not difficult. I want golfers to be able to find their drives and hit their second shots without delay.”

Steidel doesn’t think the entire hole needs to be gentle. “I like the tee shot to be relatively easy while the second shot to the green should be more difficult – perhaps to a medium-sized putting surface that is slightly elevated,” he says. “The hole should become harder the closer the golfer gets to the green. However, for shots that miss the green, the recovery

shots should not be that difficult.

“The green surface need not be flat, nor contain steep slopes that lead to three putts. Areas where pins

“I don’t like par fives for first holes as they can really slow up play”

are to be set should be between one and two per cent slope so that putts can be made.”

The desire to get players out of range quickly tends to lead

designers towards a par-four opener.

“A par five is not good, since some golfers will wait for the group ahead to leave the green and think they can get there in two,” says Stephen Kay, ASGCA. “We need to get golfers off the first tee and off the first hole.”

Cochran agrees: “I don’t like par fives for first holes as they can really slow up play, and I want to avoid having golfers hit fairway woods or hybrids on their second shot.” For similar reasons, he also avoids a one-shotter. “I’ve never done a par-three opening hole and hope I never have to,” he says.

In the U.K., there are several well-known par-three openers,



Photo: Logan Whittton/The Masters



Photo: RL&SA

including at Open Championship venue Royal Lytham & St Annes and the highly regarded courses at Walton Heath and The Berkshire. There are, however, very few opening par threes in the United States. Cochran notes the first at Independence CC in Kansas as “an interesting example.” Maxing out at 143 yards, it’s relatively short and therefore qualifies as ‘gentle’ but obviously requires players to complete the entire hole before the next group tees off, and therefore enforces an interval between groups that may be too long. This may not be ideal for public courses that are looking to maximize the number of rounds they can



Photo: Pacific Grove

Pacific Grove Golf Links in California provides a rare U.S. example of an opening par three. In the U.K., they are more common, including at Open venue Royal Lytham & St Annes (top)



The inviting and picturesque first hole at Ballyowen in New Jersey, designed by ASGCA Past President Roger Rulewich and John Harvey, ASGCA

accommodate each day.

Pacific Grove in Monterey is an exception, a par-72 that begins with two par threes, ‘Little Tombstone’ and ‘Big Tombstone.’ Switching nines wouldn’t help, because the tenth is also a par three.

The larger interval created by a par-three start might be seen as a benefit to clubs that do not have any need to maximize rounds, as it spaces out play. But even for those, a drivable par-four might be a step too far.

Mike Dasher, ASGCA, recalls a story from his mentor, ASGCA Past President Arthur Hills, after the opening of The Pelican Bay Club in Naples in the late 1970s.

“Gene Sarazen told Art that the opening hole was too easy, and the finishing hole was too hard,” says Dasher. “In 2000, ignoring The Squire’s advice, we created a drivable par four at North Shore

Golf Club in Orlando. Many players would wait until the group ahead exited the green before driving; this had a tendency to space out play early in the round.

“While entertaining prospective clients at North Shore, Bobby Hewitt, Bob Hewitt and I were waiting for the group ahead to finish out the hole – not that Bobby and I were any threat to driving the green, but prodigiously long Bob was. Bobby asked if it was a bad thing to have to wait like we were on the opening hole. My response was, ‘How can you say you’re waiting if your round hasn’t yet started?!’

“Nevertheless, the Hewitts hired us to design Eagle Dunes Golf Club, north of Orlando, which happens to open with a par five.”

Pace of play is not the only practical consideration for an

opening hole. Kay says that the first tee should be able to cope with a greater tendency for practice. “The tee needs to be the size of a par-three tee because there will be so many warm-up swings,” he says. “The rule is 1,000 square feet of tee for every 10,000 rounds, with 50 per cent more on par threes. So, if there are 40,000 rounds, the first tee should total 6,000 square feet.”

Kay also believes that the hole should be pretty and reflect the design style the golfer will see on the rest of the course.

ASGCA Past President Tom Marzolf concurs, emphasizing the importance of visual impact. He says the first hole should give players an immediate understanding of the experience that lies beyond. “A great opening hole should be visually bold, and the strategic interest clear to read from the tee; it should give a



Machrihanish in Scotland has one of golf's most memorable opening tee shots, with players carrying as much of the beach as they dare

taste of what the round will be like,” says Marzolf. “The first hole should be on an excellent piece of land with views of the entire site.”

“A great opening hole begins with a visually dramatic composition that immediately sets the tone for the golf adventure ahead,” echoes Jeff Lawrence, ASGCA. “While the first hole should not rely on unnecessary difficulty or manufactured drama, it should provide a strong, honest test that establishes the rhythm, character and cadence for the remainder of the round.

“While many exceptional golf courses are not defined by a truly iconic first hole, the best of them introduce design elements that immediately reveal the course’s character. Whether through dramatic visual aesthetics, distinctive bunker styling, strategic green complexes, or a thoughtful

integration with the natural landscape, these features give golfers an immediate sense of the identity and experience that awaits.”

When sportswriter Dan Jenkins compiled ‘The Best 18 Holes in America’, published by *Sports Illustrated* in 1965, his choice for the

“A great opening hole should be visually bold”

opener was Merion East’s 360-yard par four, where the tee is nestled right beside the clubhouse patio.

“Standing on the first tee, you have to feel a moving sense of privilege,” he is reported to have said about Merion’s first. “You are exactly where just about every great in the game of golf has been before

starting a major championship.”

This sensation makes the handshake feel decidedly less gentle, particularly as the clubhouse murmur settles to a whisper as you line up your shot. It’s a relatively short par four and scoring tends to place it among the easier holes on the course – in the 2026 U.S. Amateur it ranked 12th and 15th for difficulty over the two stroke play rounds – but it generates both fear and wonder and sets the tone for a round where strategy must be well considered to succeed.

“In my own designs, I strive to create an opening golf hole that offers genuine anticipation and excitement,” says Lawrence. “I want every golfer to step onto the first tee, pause for a moment and experience an unmistakable sense of wonder, a true ‘wow’ moment that captures their imagination.

Transforming Historic Golf Courses

NMP Golf Construction helped modernize Detroit Golf Club's historic North Course while preserving the timeless Donald Ross design envisioned by Architect Tyler Rae.



RENOVATION | IRRIGATION | DRAINAGE | CONSTRUCTION

NMPGOLF.COM | INFO@NMPGOLF.COM | 888.707.0787

ELITE

Bentgrass Blend

DESIGN WITHOUT LIMITS.

One variety. Every zone. Specified with confidence across greens, tees, fairways, collars and approaches.

ENGINEERED FOR EVERY COURSE CONDITION

- Thrives in sun, shade, and coastal sites.
- Uniform canopy across every playing surface
- Fast establishment for on-time project delivery



Crystal BlueLinks + Pure Select

Specified on championship courses nationwide



Work with our agronomist on your next specification
tee-2-green.com | lsharp@tee-2-green.com



Chris Cochran, ASGCA, highlights the first at Panther National in Florida as having qualities required for a good opening hole: "lots of eye candy and a generous fairway"

From that very first swing, they should feel confident they are about to embark on a memorable golfing journey, one defined by thoughtful design, strategic variety and lasting impressions."

Many of golf's most memorable opening holes are set on high ground, often by virtue of being close to the clubhouse, for which the high point of a site is often considered ideal. Southern Hills, Riviera, Shinnecock Hills, Cypress Point – the list goes on – all enjoy an elevated opening tee shot, with the thrill of driving to a fairway below and, more often than not, fabulous vistas of the golf course landscape.

Elevation can be helpful for the nervy golfer, Steidel notes, so that "even topped tee shots could roll 100 yards." He also prefers a dogleg slightly right, "to help most public course golfers who fade or

slice, especially on the first hole."

Steidel also points out that "the opening tee shot should be any direction but east, to avoid tee shots into a rising sun."

Cochran highlights his work at Panther National in Florida with Nicklaus Design in 2023, as

"The opening tee shot should be any direction but east"

epitomizing most of the qualities required for a good opening hole. It's a mid-length, slightly downhill par four with the prevailing wind behind the player.

"It is a pretty hole with lots of eye candy and a generous fairway," he says. "It is a classic risk/reward

hole where balls challenging the left fairway bunkers shorten the hole considerably and give the golfer the best angle into the putting surface. The fairway bunkers are shaped so golfers who hit a good recovery shot should be able to still reach the green.

"There is plenty of room right of the left fairway bunkers. However, for the long hitter, if the wind is right, the right fairway bunker may mean them hitting a three-wood off the tee. The green sits at the base of a hill where balls hit away from the greenside bunker may feed onto the green. If they miss the green, a fairly straightforward chip awaits. The green is gently contoured with a soft elevation change up to the back-right pin.

"It's a pretty hole where you can make a lot of birdies but rarely worse than a bogey, which makes it a great starting hole." ●

Life behind the mic

Jim Nantz has been a constant voice and face representing the game of golf for more than 40 years. Ahead of receiving the 2026 ASGCA Donald Ross Award, he spoke with Richard Humphreys about clearing fairways at his home course, the layouts he reveres, his first foray in design and why the First Tee means so much to him.

“Hello, friends.” What started as a secret code for his father, who was battling Alzheimer’s disease, to listen out for during the 2002 PGA Championship, became an iconic opening line for sports commentator Jim Nantz.

It is a fitting phrase for a broadcaster whose career has been built around making people feel part of the occasion. For more than four decades, Nantz has been the voice of some of sport’s greatest moments, from the Masters to the Final Four and the Super Bowl. Yet his connection with golf goes well beyond what happens behind the microphone.

His appreciation for the game extends to the places where it is played and the people who shape those places. Nantz has long taken an interest in golf course architecture, regularly acknowledging the architects behind the courses that provide the stage for the tournaments he covers. That interest

has now taken him beyond the broadcast booth and into the design process itself, where he has begun to contribute his own ideas to projects.

Ahead of receiving the 2026 ASGCA Donald Ross Award, I spoke with Nantz about his earliest memories of golf, the courses and architects he admires, his first steps into design and the role golf continues to play beyond the game itself.

Can you tell us about your first experiences of golf?

When I was a young lad, my parents were charter members of a club being built near our home in Charlotte, North Carolina. Pine Lake Country Club would be my first exposure to golf course architecture because the founding members were asked to be a part of its construction. We went out as a group and picked up rocks, stones and branches on what would be the future fairways and then piled them

into the wheelbarrows that people were pushing behind us.

I was back at Pine Lake this year for the opening of a short course built inside the 18-hole main course. The par-three layout is called The Nantz, and it was so special to be there on 4 June with my family, including my son Jamo. He’s 10 and a competitive golfer, and he played 18 holes with junior members that rotated every three holes. There were about 200 members following along as a gallery and I had the microphone and introduced all the players and called their shots. It was one of those special days I’ve had in my golf life because it was a full-circle moment. Back to a course where I had my hands in the dirt, so to speak, when I was just a wee kid. And now I was able to bring my children there to open a course that’s named after the family. It was very special.

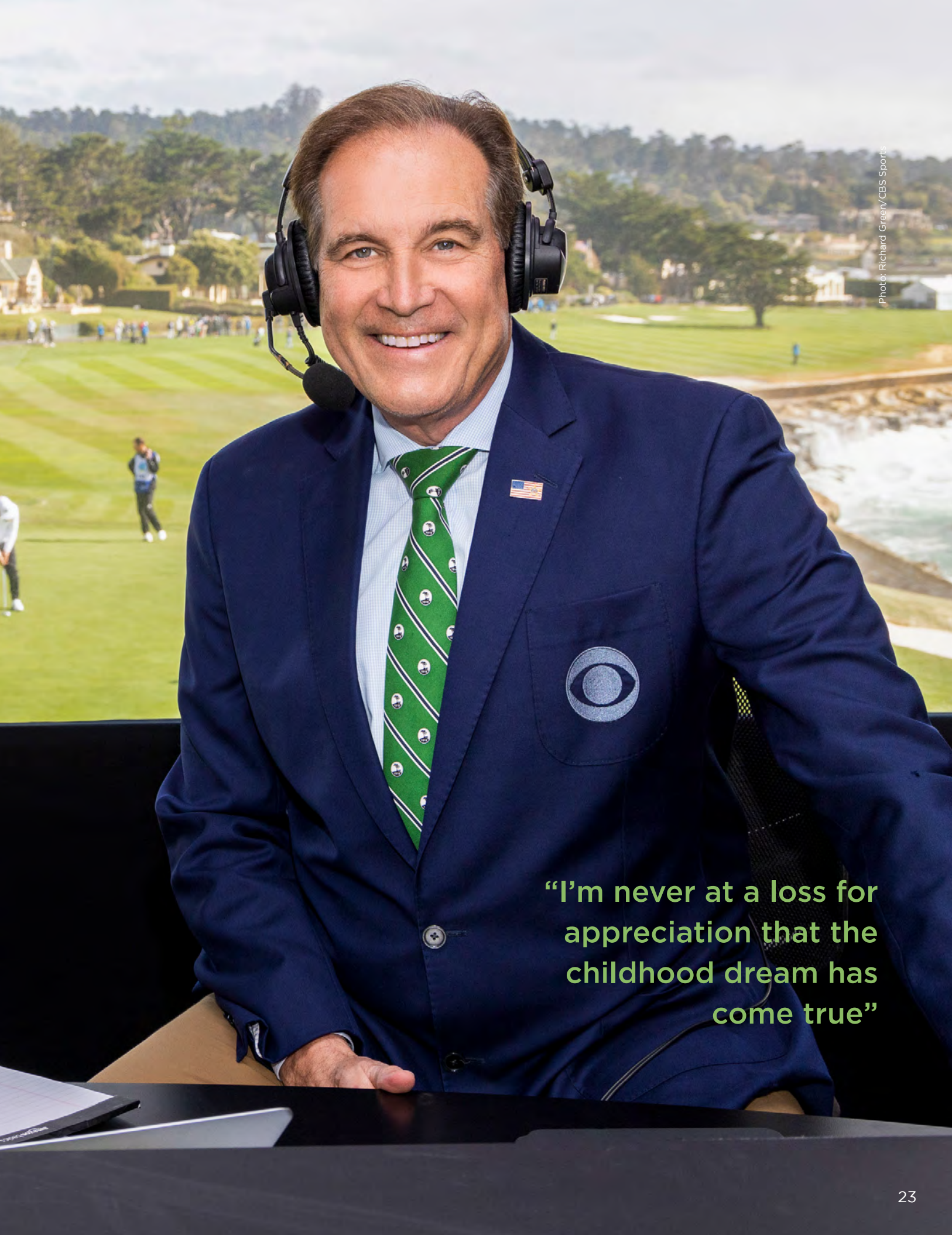


Photo: Richard Green/CBS Sports

“I’m never at a loss for appreciation that the childhood dream has come true”

INTERVIEW

What first drew you into sports reporting and then into golf?

I was drawn by what I was watching on television. I was inspired by the voices of my youth and the stories they were telling. I was completely enraptured by it all. And I would daydream and imagine myself as one of those voices.

Specifically, I wanted to be one of the voices at Augusta. That was my career goal. I wanted to be a broadcaster for CBS; I wanted to call the Masters. Lo and behold, when I was 26, I got my first chance to broadcast the tournament. Forty-one years later, I'm never at a loss for appreciation that the childhood dream has come true.

From your perspective behind the microphone, how much does the architecture of a course shape the drama that unfolds during a championship?

Golf course architecture has so much to do with the way people consume their golf coverage. There are so many special places, like Colonial that John Bredemus and Perry Maxwell built in the 1930s, Jack Nicklaus's Muirfield Village and Pebble Beach that Jack Neville and Douglas Grant designed. I am keenly aware of the people who shape the earth of the courses we broadcast tournaments at. I hope my appreciation for their work and craft comes out on those broadcasts.



Jim Nantz recently returned to Pine Lake in North Carolina, where he learned the game, to call play at a junior tournament where his son Jamo was among the competitors

Besides Augusta, which courses do you particularly appreciate?

If I take our schedule, we have so many fantastic courses created by a great mix of legendary architects. There's Pebble Beach, Torrey Pines in San Diego, created by father and son William P. and William F. Bell, with a masterful renovation by ASGCA Past President Rees Jones. And then we have George Thomas's work at Riviera and Pete Dye's collaboration with Jack Nicklaus at Harbour Town Golf Links. We feel the presence of Donald Ross on many courses, but one I do enjoy, perhaps because it's fresh in my mind, is Sedgefield Country Club in Greensboro. And as hard as we

try, I still think Sedgefield is more stunning in person than it is on television. It's truly a great work of art.

Can you tell us about your role at Tepetonga Club – and what your vision was for the nine-hole short course?

Well, first off, let me squarely put recognition where it needs to be and that is with Ogilvy, Cocking and Mead (OCM). That Australian triumvirate is one of the hottest tickets in golf course architecture. I was merely a design consultant.

The owner is a friend of mine from back in college and he knows that I've seen great courses all over



Photo: Tennessee Golf Foundation

Nantz talks with Rickey Hampton of the Tennessee Golf Foundation during a tour of Ted Rhodes Golf Course, where Nantz is assisting Bruce Hepner on a renovation

the world. I'm an ideas guy and he wanted me to come and present some for the par-three course. I am not telling the OCM guys how to do their job! I'm in awe of them and

Do you want to take on more design consultant projects?

Yes! I'm working in design a little bit more than I have done so before... people have probably heard about

“Golf course architecture has so much to do with the way people consume their golf coverage”

I've learned a lot. It has been one of those things in life that comes along that is just pure enjoyment. It's a passion project. I have made seven site visits, and the course is going through a soft opening before the official opening next summer.

the backyard holes I've designed at a couple of properties I own in Pebble Beach and Nashville.

But now I'm working with Bruce Hepner at a local municipal course named after the legendary black golfer, Ted Rhodes. The course is

in the heart of Nashville and has tremendous potential. It gets a lot of play, and the design is quite good. Under Bruce's direction and with me running right behind him, I think that Ted Rhodes is going to become a model for many city courses around the country. It will also be a great tribute piece to Mr Rhodes. I love working with Bruce and I'm learning a lot from him.

OCM also designed a nine-hole short course for Stanwich Club in Greenwich, Connecticut, and I had a minor role where I made a couple of site visits and provided my thoughts on the routing, especially the closing hole. These projects have whetted my appetite for more.

Master drainage plans are our specialty

Trusted by major championship venues, Top 100 legends, and your home course

Drainage planning and support

For stand-alone projects or as part of a build or renovation, Turf Drainage Co. of America offers a complete drainage planning service from our team of experts.

Innovative drainage components

Our range of products includes collection tools like Perma Basins, Channel Drains and Turf Drain subsurface seepage pipe, as well as transportation tools like Irrigation Driven Pumps and the Turf Drain Siphon System.

- Expert planning, design, manufacturing and installation
- Visit our website at www.turfdrain.com or get in touch with one of our experts at by calling toll free on 1-800-999-2794



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

 **Turf Drainage Co.**
of America, Inc.
turfdrain.com

SUBSCRIBE



FREE
DIGITAL
EDITION

Sign up to receive the free digital edition at www.golfcoursearchitecture.net/subscribe
Or subscribe to our printed edition, delivered direct to your door, for just £36 per year



In his roles as the national honorary chair of First Tee and a CBS broadcaster, Nantz gets to travel around the U.S. and impart advice and wisdom to many youngsters

As national honorary chair of the First Tee, can you tell us about the wider role that golf can play in contributing to the community?

This is a role that I took on in May 2025, and it has worked very well with my golf schedule in meeting with chapters when I am in PGA Tour cities like Hartford, Charlotte, Fort Worth, Miami, Toronto, Minneapolis and the list goes on. At the recent FedEx St. Jude Championship, we hosted a nighttime event that raised seven figures for the Memphis chapter of the First Tee.

All the research shows that the First Tee program is effective and is making a difference. The chapters reach our youth and teens, to the tune of almost three million Americans per year, and it's growing, with chapters opening up

outside the U.S. The kids that go through the First Tee program have a 98 per cent chance of graduating from high school and the percentage of them going on to college is extremely high too.

I think people get confused sometimes and think the First Tee is almost like a golf camp trying to train people to be the next Tiger Woods. It's way bigger and more important than that. Sure, there have been some First Tee alumni who have gone on to play professional golf, but this is really about enriching lives and giving our kids a chance to understand life lessons and to empower them to find a way to make a better life through education, camaraderie and learning things like compassion, understanding and teamwork.

I love the First Tee and when it first began back in the late 1990s,

I volunteered my time to a lot of chapters across the country. Commissioner Tim Finchem once asked me to speak on Capitol Hill, and I was honored to be asked to do that. Now, in this official capacity of honorary chair, I just want to reach as many communities as I can. It's been a real labor of love.

What does it mean to become the recipient of the ASGCA Donald Ross Award?

I am thrilled by this recognition and I have always tried to shine a light on architects and their great work. I hope I have represented these talented architects well through my broadcast coverage. I have always had a deep interest and appreciation for the people behind the golf courses, and I look forward to interacting with everyone in October at the ASGCA Annual Meeting. ●

Hands up for Detroit

At the recent Rocket Classic, PGA Tour players waxed lyrical about the renovated North course at Detroit Golf Club. *By Design* reports on the work by Tyler Rae, ASGCA.

“It’s one of the best re-dos I’ve ever seen, maybe ever in golf course design.”

High praise from two-time U.S. Open champion Wyndham Clark, for the work of Tyler Rae, ASGCA, on the North course at Detroit Golf Club. The course hosted this year’s Rocket Classic on the PGA Tour,

and drew great admiration from spectators, sportscasters and players alike. “They’ve made some cool changes,” added Cameron Young, one of many players who spoke glowingly about the results.

The North was originally built by Donald Ross in 1915. When Rae was appointed in 2024 to lead

a renovation, he told *Golf Course Architecture* that he would “incorporate many facets of Donald Ross’s bold original design, including hummocks and mounds, angled drainage ditches and perched greens.”

The first phase of the project was a crucial undertaking. Between November 2024 and April 2025, contractor NMP Golf Construction installed new mainlines and valves, rebuilt all greens to their originally intended scale and height, installed new drainage, brought in new bentgrass and added a rootzone mix. “We also custom-manufactured 60 unique 36-inch drain basins with multiple pipe connections, ranging from 12-to-48 inches in diameter, and installed at depths of up to 25 feet to tie into the existing city’s storm system,” says Darryl Bartlett, chief development officer for NMP.

With the new infrastructure in place, Rae could focus on the course’s design. The second phase began in June 2025, straight after the 2025 Rocket Classic, and covered all course features, with the new



Photo: See Jane Play

Greens have been expanded, while greenside bunkering is now more prominent and deeper



Photo: See Jane Play

The seventeenth green is protected by three deep bunkers but there is still the option to run the ball onto the putting surface

aesthetic of wispy fescue-fringed bunkers particularly eye-catching.

Fescue has also been introduced on the fourteenth hole. Previously, the hole featured a large pond in front of the green. Rae has replaced that pond, the only water hazard on the course, with fescue and native grasses.

“The course is drastically different now and it is truly a new golf course”

“The bunkers that Ross built at Detroit Golf Club were atypical for him in the northern part of the United States,” says Rae. “Historic ground level photographs from the 1920s feature a higher sand flash than normal and beautifully concaved bottoms which released balls away from the bunker edge and face. We endeavored to reshape the bunkers in this historic style.”

A key aspect of Rae’s work was the conversion of holes seven and seventeen, both previously par fives, into long par fours, reducing the North course from par 72 to 70. Strategy was restored on both holes. On seventeen, Rae restored raised fairway bunkers and mounding,

brought back a drainage ditch crossing the fairway and restored the original green contours and greenside bunkering.

“Seventeen never struck me as a really easy par five,” said Young. Now, as a par four, he added that it is “a beast of a hole.”

But the renovation was not simply intended to make Detroit more challenging. The enlarged greens,

more prominent and deeper bunkering, fescue and restored drainage features have changed how the course is seen and played.

“We even carved back in all the epic angular ditches that Ross had devised in his 1914 masterplan, installed drainage that tied into the major drainage network that was installed in 2024-2025, and regrassed the entire course,” says Rae. “Other work included removing all cart paths, which made sense only after we added over one million feet of drainage, and returning to the original Ross routing by moving greens and hole corridors.

“The course is drastically different now and it is truly a new golf course. The players were phenomenal and very kind. We had very positive feedback from every one of them and they are excited to come back in 2028 and beyond.” ●

Hand-drawn site plan on grid paper showing elevations for shaping. The plan includes a central green area labeled '#4 - #8 GREEN' and several yellow areas labeled '#5 TEE', '#8', and '#9 TEE'. A blue line represents a 'TOP OF WALL' and a green line represents a '1.50 SLOPE'. Numerous elevation points are marked with numbers and dots. A red box highlights a specific area in the top left corner.

The double-green layout for holes four and eight at Naples Beach Club in Florida is part of a comprehensive redesign of the course by Fazio Design.

Originally opened as Naples Beach Hotel and Golf Club in the 1920s, the golf course was redesigned by ASGCA Past President John Sanford and ASGCA Fellow Jack Nicklaus in 2015.

In 2021, The Athens Group and MSD Partners took over the property and began design and permitting

for a new Four Seasons hotel (now open), 150 beachfront residences, and brought in Tom Fazio, ASGCA, and ASGCA Past President Tom Marzolf to reimagine the golf course.

“Double greens are the norm on the Old Course at St Andrews,” says Marzolf. “That said, many golf architects have yet to design one. At Naples Beach Club, we are doing exactly that.”

“The fourth is a very long par
three while the eighth is a short par
four. Hole four needed the option

for players to hit a shot short of the green and have the ball roll onto the green, while the eighth is receptive to high shots from under 100 yards. Even though it's one green, the pars are different and two very different clubs are required to hit the putting surface."

The green has a central ridge that helps to separate both sides of the putting surface and ensures there is some definition.

Naples Beach Club will open in December 2026. ●

SPONSORS



Hunter Industries

Founded in 1981, Hunter Industries is a family-owned, global manufacturer of best-in-class solutions for residential, commercial, municipal, agricultural, and golf course irrigation systems, as well as the outdoor lighting industry. Hunter offers comprehensive golf irrigation solutions designed to simplify irrigation while ensuring healthy, playable courses. From next-generation Pilot Command Center irrigation management software to the most reliable rotors in the industry, Hunter golf solutions are second to none.

www.hunterindustries.com



The Davey Tree Expert Company

Creating a premier golf experience requires more than vision — it demands trusted partnership, scientific expertise, and precise execution. Davey works hand-in-hand with golf course architects to plan, protect, and position natural assets in ways that elevate both playability and design intent. By bringing together the strengths of Davey Tree, Environmental Design, Davey Resource Group, and the Davey Institute, we support every stage of course development — from initial concept through long-term stewardship. Davey delivers research-driven solutions that enhance the game, preserve the landscape, and ensure courses endure for generations.

www.davey.com

// BY DESIGN IS SPONSORED BY:



// AND SUPPORTED BY:



ASGCA Leadership Partners

ASGCA thanks the following companies for their continued support of golf course development and renovation — helping ASGCA members do their jobs better, for the good of the game.

// MAJOR LEVEL PARTNERS



// MERIT LEVEL PARTNERS



// SPONSORS

