

ROBERT TRENT JONES Snr.

Winner of the 'Old Tom Morris' Award

Robert Trent Jones Snr. is the fifth person to be awarded the 'Old Tom Morris' Award by the G.C.S.A.A.

The courses designed by this talented architect represent an enormous contribution to golf and the future of the game.

Despite reaching the magical three score years and ten, this jovial bundle of energy still jets around the world designing an increasing number of golf courses, carved from such unlikely sites as desert sand in the Middle East, mountain sides in Japan and even a rubbish tip in Britain.

Robert Trent Jones Snr.

A Maker of Memories

The golf course architect, Robert Trent Jones Snr., once described by the *New York Times* as the greatest in the world, is this year's nominee for the 'Old Tom Morris' Award from the Association of Golf Course Superintendents of America.

This rare and profound form of recognition is only given to individuals who have made an outstanding contribution to the game of golf. Past recipients have included Arnold Palmer, Bob Hope, President Gerald Ford and last year, the first lady of golf, Patty Berg.

Trent Jones, a lively rotund 80 years old still travels the world designing golf courses.

He has thirty under construction, including a second course for the King of Morocco, twenty in the planning stage and around 450 completed.

The 27 hole course at Moor Allerton nr. Leeds is his only finished course in Britain, but he is currently working on a public course carved out of a disused rubbish tip, seven miles from London Airport, which when completed will give superb views over Windsor Castle.

Jones, British born emigrated to the USA with his family when he was six. He landed his first job as a caddy at 12 and in 1927 shot the lowest amateur score in the Canadian Open.

Friends urged him to turn professional, but he had already made up his mind he was going to design golf courses, no doubt influenced by a man who had come into his life, Donald Ross already a renowned golf course architect and incidentally a student of old Tom Morris.

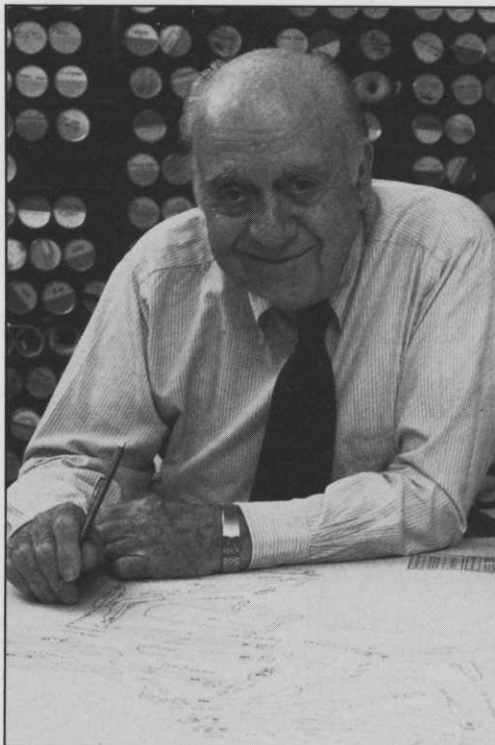
Robert Trent Jones is a firm advocate that managing a golf course is a profession. Greenkeepers must be able to diagnose disease, organise soil fertility and manage their staff to follow a prescribed programme of maintenance.

He believes the key to improved standards is better education, facilities for which are still sadly lacking in Britain, but advancing rapidly in the United States, with numerous Universities prepared to regard agronomy, as a pure science with degree courses for golf course managers.

As an architect he has a simple philosophy. 'Every hole should be a hard par, but an easy bogey!' His greens and tees are always big, water and sand his trade mark, but always placed to penalise the poor shot and at the same time add beauty to his designs.

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He continues to log 300,000 air miles a year, briefly alighting here and there in teeming resorts and remote corners to oversee current projects.



During one recent week, he was in Texas and Florida. During the following week, he was scheduled to be in Boston, Spain and California. Between travels, he was at home in Montclair, talking nonstop about the vast new territory that he is turning into fairways and greens.

'I'll retire when they build that last bunker and put me in it'

All in all, Jones has 20 golf courses under construction around the globe and another 30 in various stages of planning. Assuming that these 50 projects reach full fruition, he will have created a total of 500.

Born in the British Isles (where incidentally, he has recently designed another golf course, in Wales), Jones moved with his family to Rochester, N.Y. At age 12, he landed his first job, as a caddy. Other duties in those younger days included cutting the greens every day with a Worthington mower. One boy pushed. Another pulled.

In an interview with Clay Loyd of Golf Course Management he said, "I didn't know anything about golf, but I used to emulate the pros who

gave exhibition matches there - British players like Henry Vardon and Ted Ray".

For 50 cents, Jones bought his first golf club in the pro shop - a 2-iron - and used it for every shot. By age 16, he set a record for the course. "In the morning, I carried my own bag and shot a 77", he recalls. "In the afternoon, my friend carried my bag, and I had a 69".

In time, he talked Cornell University into allowing him to take a hodgepodge of academic courses of his own devising. Simultaneously, he enrolled in the Rochester School of Art, and to this day his sketch pad is never far from hand.

"You can't be a great golf course architect without a knowledge of all golf shots", says Jones "You can build a golf course, but you can't build a great one unless you know the golf shots and have the feel. That's what makes my courses harder to play for the pros; I know what's a good golf shot and what's not a good golf shot - and I make it fair".

What is it like working with the man the *New York Times* has called the most famous golf course architect in the world? GCM asked one prominent GCSAA member golf course superintendent who was in from the beginning of one course's construction.

"The Jones organization allows you (the Superintendent) to have some creative input, to expand a little on what they're trying to do. They are trying to create modestly priced golf today. Jones is more inclined to work with what nature has given him, as opposed to moving massive amounts of earth. He tries to enhance what's there as opposed to drastically changing it. He's done that very well where we are".

That sounds strangely similar to the way some earlier architects designed golf courses. Among them was Old Tom Morris of Saint Andrews. He selected natural green-sites, plotted holes on these sites and arranged them into a circuit - all the while favouring the natural contour of the land. Jones' style, as he describes it, is having a "feel" for golf course design and "knowing how to take the terrain and route the golf course through it, then designing the holes according to strategy and the terrain that you find on the individual holes".

"Too many architects are trying to emulate the dunes of Scotland", says Jones. "Unfortunately, that is not easy to do - and it's frightfully expensive. What's more, they wind up with a mishmash of mounds that look like a bunch of ugly chocolate drops, and a golf course that isn't much fun for the members to play".

Next on Jones' busy agenda: He plans to write a book. "I'd like to pick my Top 100 golf courses". Jones, who started a book years ago but never completed it, plans to solicit input from professional and amateur golfers, golf news media and other appropriate sources to provide a "solid base" for his picks.

We are indebted to Golf Course Management and Director of Communications, Clay Loyd of the GCSAA for the material in this article.