If you don't like these 29
great ones, wait a year

Florida has lots of great golf courses. And if you don't like any of the current
crop, just wait a year or two. Within
that span, at least a few new courses
will make somebody's list of "greats."

Great golf courses can be found all
over the world; what distinguishes
Florida's collection is its size, variety
and, above all, relative youth.

Of the 29 outstanding golf courses
depicted on these pages, only 11 were
built before 1980, and only three before
1970: the Bay Hill Club and the "Blue
Monster" at Doral by Dick Wilson and
Seminole, the 60-year-old mystery
course which makes everybody's list
even though most have never trod its
turf or laid eyes upon its classic Donald
Ross bunkers.

We chose 29 courses for two rea-
sons:
• That's how many we ended up
with after taking the top 20 from three
publications which have extensive
experience in Florida and adding the
nine beauties on Golf Digest's list of
America's 100 best golf courses.
• We couldn't fit any more around
the map.
The latter statement is not entirely
facetious. A hundred could have been
added with little drop in quality.

Truth be told, the "rank" of a golf
course says as much about the quality
of its public relations as it does about
the quality of the architect, contractor
and superintendent.

Two different methods were used
by the four publications to select the
courses on their lists: Golfweek, a na-
tional weekly newspaper which began
as a Florida publication in 1975, and The
Florida Golf Reporter, a monthly maga-
Zine, both rely on reader polls. Readers
see only a small percentage of the
courses they vote on.

Golf Digest and The Florida Golfer,
on the other hand, have panels of "experts" walk the courses, study the
layouts, pore over the blueprints, test
the shot values and consult the stars.
They come up with the same
courses as the readers, only in a slightly
different order.

So take the particular rankings with
a dose of skepticism but trust us: these
are great golf courses. They represent
some of the very best work of 16 differ-
ent architects, 12 of whom are still sign-
ing contracts.

Most are spectacular to behold, dif-
ficult to play, and impossible to get on,
par ticularly at this time of year. Many
were built in conjunction with real es-
tate developments that are not yet sold
out: qualified prospects can get on, if
arrangements are made in advance.

A few are open to the first golfers in
line, notably Bloomingdale Golfers Club
in Valrico and Coral Oaks in Cape Coral.
The latter is municipally owned.

Of the resorts, Mission Inn is proba-
bly the least known but its dramatic
changes in elevation are matched only
at The Ravines, Jupiter Hills and Black
Diamond Ranch, all of which are veddy,
veddy private.

One thing these 29 golf courses
have in common with hundreds of Flor-
da layouts: they are exceptionally well
maintained. For that reason, we have
given the FGCSA superintendent credit
for the ranking, along with the archi-
tect.