


Mountain Lake Golf Club



A living page from the history of golf in America

BY JOEL JACKSON, CGCS

Viewing the Mountain Lake Golf Club is like looking at a history book of early golf course architecture in America. The men who fashioned the course from the wooded hills in Lake Wales — Seth J. Raynor, golf course designer, and Frederick L. Olmsted, Jr., landscape architect — were pioneering leaders in their respective fields. The book, *The Golf Course*, by Geoffrey S. Cornish and Ronald E. Whitten helps reveal Mountain Lake's unique place in golf's storied past:

"In reviewing the history of golf course architecture it is possible to divide those who practiced it into three groups: those who provided the functional, inexpensive, layouts demanded by their times; those who constructed attractive, enjoyable golf courses that advanced the state of the art; and those who created superior

Continued on Page 20 ►



Landscaping at Mountain Lake was done by Frederick L. Olmsted, Jr. whose father laid out New York's Central Park. Note the use of native vegetation to frame the hole.

History... serves to set the stage for the rich traditions and continuity embodied at Mountain Lake. The course has remained true to the original design with only minor alterations over the years.

► Continued from Page 17

designs, often pioneering trends in the process.

"Little credit has been given to the first group, the functional designers like Tom Dunn of Britain and Tom Bendelow of America. They provided scores of courses that enabled legions of newcomers to play the game. The second group consists of the accomplished designers, men like Wayne Stiles and Seth Raynor. They were masters of their craft, creating above-average courses and occasional outstanding layouts..."

Mountain Lake certainly falls into the latter category.

According to Cornish and Whitten, "Charles Blair Macdonald is credited with building the first 'classical golf course in America (at Southampton, on New York's Long Island... -ed.), one which would eventually compare favorably with the championship links abroad and serve as an incentive to the elevation of the game

in America.' Before undertaking the project, he made careful studies of the site and demanded that only experts in their field be involved in the construction of the project. He hired local surveyor Seth Raynor to serve as construction engineer. After eight years of planning and two years of actual construction, The National Golf Links of America was completed. Raynor proved to be so invaluable that he would construct all the courses later laid out by Macdonald."

"Raynor constructed not only all of Macdonald designs, but he did some 60 designs of his own. He became a designer in 1915, but was most prolific after World War I... He played the main role in remodeling the Chicago Golf Club, which had been credited entirely, but incorrectly, to Macdonald. Other Raynor originals include (Mountain Lake in 1917), the Country Club of Fairfield and the Greenwich Country Club both in Connecticut, and the Yeaman's Hall Club of Charleston, S.C.... Raynor was respon-

Mountain Lake Golf Club *Lake Wales*

Management: Robert Krumm, president; L. Patton Brown, greens chairman; H. Palmer Wood, general manager; Paul Tessier golf professional; Steve Ciardullo, superintendent.

Playing policies: Members and guests of members.

Design/Construction: 18-hole, links-style layout designed by Seth Raynor, constructed by Frederick L. Olmsted Jr.; opened 1917.

Greens: Average 6,000 sq. ft.; 12 in Tifdwarf, 6 in Tifway 328 (scheduled for replanting to Tifdwarf); cut 1/8" to 5/32" in the cool seasons; 5/32 to 3/16" in summer; greenspeed 9.0; overseeding Pennlinks bentgrass @ 7 lbs per 1,000 sq. ft.

Tees: 2 acres featuring possibly the state's first island tee on 8th hole (*pictured above*); mixture of Ormond, common and Tifway 419; cut 3/8"; overseeding: perennial ryegrass blend @ 20 lbs per 1,000 sq. ft.

Through the green: 100 acres mixture of Ormond, common and Tifway 419; cut 1/2" to 1 3/4"; overseeding 40 acres in perennial ryegrass blend @ 450 lbs per acre.

Croquet courts: 2 regulation courts 105'x80' maintained on same program as greens.

Irrigation: Toro Varitime II controls with Toro 680 double row coverage.

Maintenance staff: 14 including Steve Cardullo, superintendent.; Joe McHaffie, asst. supt.; Thomas Hicks, head mechanic (Lake City); Rick Stapleton, assistant mechanic; Marlin Carter, spray technician; Wendell Elliot, irrigation technician.

Equipment: 4 John Deere walk mowers; 1 Toro 3000 diesel triplex; 1 John Deere 2243 triplex; 2 Toro 5100D fairway mowers; 1 John Deere 305 5-gang pull-behind mower; 1 John Deere 2263 trim mower; 1 Toro 325D rotary mower; 1 John Deere 200-gal. sprayer; 1 John Deere bunker rake.

Utility vehicles: 3 John Deere Gators; 2 Club Car Carryalls; 3 tractors; 1 flat bed truck.



Special
**GOLF
COURSE
MIXES**

Sterilization Available



Since 1948
**Florida Silica
Sand Co., Inc.**

Dade County
949-3521

Broward County
923 8323

Complete Line Of
**LANDSCAPE
Materials**

**Red Ball
Diamond Clay**



Bok Tower, centerpiece of nearby Bok Tower Gardens (also designed by Olmsted and his father), can be seen between the trees at right. Frequent concerts on the Tower's world-class carillon enhance the peaceful, park-like setting.

The genius of Olmsted lay in his uncanny ability to pick the ideal location for the key trees on every hole. Over the years, the trees have not intruded on the design or shot values of any hole.

sible for luring Charles Banks and Ralph Barton into the field of golf design. He met and retained Bank on the Hotchkiss School of Salisbury course project and Barton joined him after working on the University of Minnesota course as a volunteer construction supervisor."

"The team of Raynor, Banks, and Barton along with C.B. Macdonald went on to design and build the excellent Yale University Club. It was to be Raynor's last effort, for he died of pneumonia in 1926."

Another world-class architect, Alister Mackenzie, ironically owes one of his most notable courses, Cypress Point, to Raynor's passing. Referring to Cornish and Whitten we find, "The founders of Cypress Point had not originally retained Mackenzie as their architect. They had hired Raynor, who had done the nearby Monterey Peninsula Country Club course. But Raynor died and although he had left preliminary plans for the course, they were never used."

While we have digressed a bit into

history, it serves to set the stage for the rich traditions and continuity embodied at Mountain Lake. The course has remained true to the original design with only minor alterations over the years. Noted architect Brian Silva, who is an expert student of the old masters' designs, is consulted if any alterations are to be discussed. The only major concession to passing time has been the conversion of the original greens to Tifdwarf bermudagrass. The original putting surface contours have been maintained even during that process.

The park-like flavor of the early, turn-of-the century courses is majestically portrayed as the rolling fairways of Mountain Lake wind their way through the mature trees. In fact, the members and residents refer to the property as "The Park." It is the stately trees, especially the oaks, that help define and frame the golf holes and course boundaries. Their placement and installation over 76 years ago was a masterpiece of genius by the other half of the combination that brought

Steve Ciardullo Larchmont, N.Y.

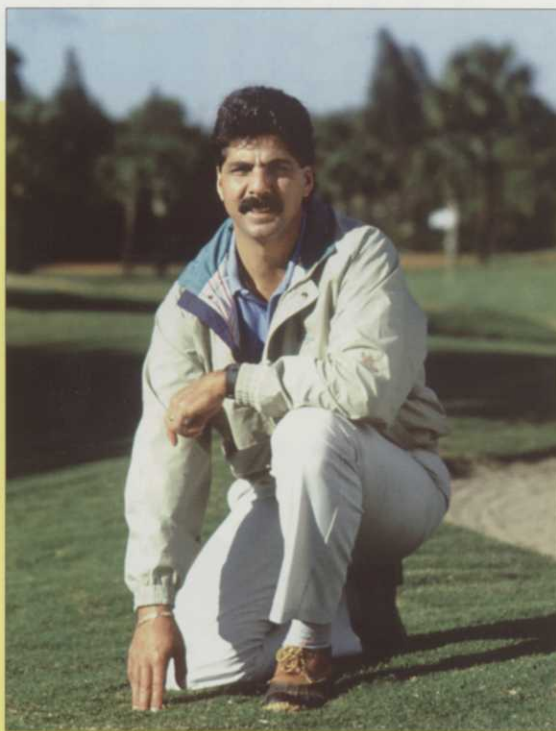
Family: Wife, Debby;
daughter,
Madison, 3.

Education: AA in
business
management
from Broward
Community College; turf management program by Dr.
Max Brown at Broward Community College.

Previous employment: Coral Springs GC, assistant
superintendent; Eage Trace TPC, crew; Pelican's Nest GC,
superintendent (assistant superintendent, construction);
Hunters Ridge CC, superintendent; The Forest CC,
superintendent.

Hobbies and interests: Family, golf, hunting and fishing.

Professional affiliations: GCSAA; FTGA (Funding and
Endowment, Turf Certification committees); FGCSA
Everglades Chapter (former president); FGCSA Ridge
Chapter



**Tradition and
continuity have
also been the
hallmark at
Mountain Lake.
There have been
only seven
superintendents in
the club's history.**

Mountain Lake to life.

Frederick Olmsted, Jr. was just as masterful in his craft of landscape design as Raynor in golf design. Olmsted came by his talent by studying the efforts of his father, who is credited with designing Central Park in New York. The genius of Olmsted lay in his uncanny ability to pick the ideal location for the key trees on every hole. Over the years, the trees have not intruded on the design or shot values of any hole. It actually appears like the course was designed and built through a stand of mature trees.

Tradition and continuity have also been the hallmark of the staff at Mountain Lake. The head landscaper recently retired after 52 years of service. He was the hunting and fishing guide for "The Park" when it was first developed. The first superintendent, Harvey Linderman, retired after 40 years of service. There have been only seven superintendents in the club's history. The working atmosphere is so congenial and professional that the previous superintendents who didn't retire, left reluctantly.

Tifton Physical Soil Testing Laboratory

Specializing in:

- Testing All Materials for USGA Golf Green Construction.
- Developing Putting Green Rootzone Mixtures that meet USGA Specifications.
- Recommending Topdressing and Bunker (Trap) Sands that meet USGA Specifications.
- Developing Sportsturf Rootzone Mixes with Optimum Physical Properties for Athletic Fields.

1412 Murray Avenue
Tifton, Georgia 31794



T. Powell Gaines
(912) 382-7292



Wood storks and other wildlife are common sights at Mountain Lake, which lies along the west side of the Central Florida Ridge, Florida's major topographical feature.

That brings us to the present superintendent, Steve Ciardullo.

Steve began his love affair with golf as a 12-year-old caddy in Larchmont, N.Y. "I was big for my age and the caddy master made me swear I would say I was 14 if anybody asked," Steve said with a grin, "I loved it. I caddied year round, even in the winter. A kid could make good money in the winter if he was willing to put up with the cold weather. I worked as a caddy all the way through school until I was 17 or 18."

"I remember one spring, just as the season was beginning, the superintendent — Dominick Dimarzo — stopped me one day and asked me if I would like to work on the maintenance crew that summer. He told me that if I would commit to working for him for four or five summers, he would ask the club to sponsor me at nearby Farmingdale College to major in the agriculture program.

"Well, I passed up his offer. The image of becoming a golf course superintendent at that time wasn't all that great. Hey, I was a 17-year-old kid full of vinegar. Isn't it ironic how things turned

out? If I'd been a little smarter, maybe I could have gotten a quicker start in this business!"

Steve's entry into the business may have been delayed a while, but he had several excellent tutors along his road to success.

"I had the great fortune to work for Lee Bladen and Fred Klauk at the Eagle Trace TPC course. Lee was the first to open my eyes to the possibility of a career in golf course maintenance. He was a master at fine-tuning a budget and getting the most out of every dollar. After Lee left and Fred took over, there was no doubt in my mind that I wanted to become a golf course superintendent.

"Fred was one of the finest examples of a first-class professional that I have ever seen. I think his management programs revolved around teaching everyone everything about their jobs. He never seemed to lack the patience to stop and tell you why something had to be done.

"I was taking turf management classes at night with Dr. Max Brown at Broward Community College. During the day, I would question Fred about the subject

Folks who want to be really successful should work for a couple of good superintendents to compare styles and philosophies. I think there is a real danger for young men to take that first superintendent's job too quickly.

matter from the night before, and he would help me make the transition from the textbook to the real world of turf.

"I suppose the best testimony to his patience and professionalism is that fact that there are seven or eight superintendents or assistant superintendents in the business today. We were all on that crew at that same time."

"I like to think of myself as a pretty well-rounded superintendent at this stage of my career. I would be remiss if I didn't acknowledge the impact that Buddy Carmouche has had on my development. When I moved to the Naples area, I met Buddy and we became good friends and golfing buddies.

"Buddy taught me how a superintendent must be able to communicate with members and owners. There are times when our positions can be thrust into the middle of club politics. Buddy showed me the value of patience, diplomacy, and common sense. Those aren't things you learn in turf school!

"Sometimes I don't think people realize how much more education there is to get after you get out of school. Folks who

'While we have been idealistically pursuing better management practices, we have been taking a beating in the political arena. Environmental issues are being bandied about emotionally in Tallahassee without the benefit of facts.'

want to be really successful in this business should work for a couple of good superintendents to compare styles and philosophies. I think there is a real danger in the business for young men to take that first superintendent's job too quickly. If he gets in over his head and gets fired, he can get a bad tag put on his reputation that may follow him in the business."

Steve has spent the majority of his career in southeast and southwest Florida. He has found some fundamental differences in turf management between the southern part of the state and the central region.

"Back in Fort Myers, if you asked me what is the number-one turf problem in the state, I would have said mole crickets! I have to tell you that up here nematodes have moved to number one on my list. We still have a pretty large variety of products to use on crickets, but our arsenal on nematicides is limited and in danger of getting smaller all the time.

"The other two big differences are the rainfall and temperatures. Along the coastal areas, rain showers were more frequent and obviously the temperatures were warmer. The guys down south haven't had any nights below 50 degrees. I've already had 10 nights below 50 and several below 40 and a light frost two weeks ago!"

Steve is also making an adjustment to the different style of club management at Mountain Lake.

"I really like the working atmosphere. It is very organized, patient, and professional. I report solely to the greens chairman on matters relating to the condition of the golf course. Period. No discussion.

"The greens committee's number-one function is communications.

"At the meetings, the committee discusses concerns of the members and what they would like to see. In return, I keep them abreast of conditions, maintenance schedules, and projects so they can inform the members.

"I work with the general manager on

budgetary expenditures and other general matters of the operation.

"If it sounds simple, it is! The members know what they want and they work with you to solve any problem that might arise."

What are some of the unique challenges of managing a nearly seventy-seven year old golf course?

One thing in Steve's favor is that the soil on the course percolates very well, so drainage has never really been a problem. When asked about shade problems from the mature trees, Steve had a wonderfully simple answer.

"When I first started, I was concerned about some weak turf areas obviously caused by shade. My fears were quickly put to rest when I found out the members already understood that you couldn't expect perfect turf to coexist with dense shade. The value of the trees to the beauty of the course offsets the small isolated areas that are affected.

"The only other challenge I have is managing the tee and fairway turf. There is a mixture of Ormond, Common, and Tifway 419. In the winter, when we are overseeded, the problem isn't evident; but in the summer months the different grass varieties don't respond equally to the same management practices. Since the number of rounds drops off dramatically in the summer, it is not a major concern to the club.

"We do have the final phase of the greens conversion to Tifdwarf planned for this year. That will keep us busy. We also plan to rework the bunkers. We will maintain the original design. We just need to resod some of the bunker faces, add new sand, and replace any clogged drains. The integrity of the original design has been and will always be maintained.

"I love the layout of the course. There is such a variety of holes with each category of par having long and short holes. I can't imagine anyone not having to use every club in the bag when they play the

course.

"The course is a links-type routing with the 10th hole as far from the clubhouse as you can get.

"When the course was being built they realized they could only have nine holes ready for the announced opening. So, they built holes one through six and then 16 through 18 to get the players back to the club. The remaining nine holes, seven through 15, were opened in 1918.

"The necessary change in routing resulted in a par 71 layout. It has to be one of the most challenging par 71s I have ever seen."

Steve has been active in the Florida Golf Course Superintendents Association and the Florida Turfgrass Association. He is a former president of the Everglades Chapter. He is currently serving on the FTGA's Funding and Endowment Committee and the Turfgrass Certification Committee.

"We have always been committed to raising monies for turf research and that, of course, must continue. However, while we have been idealistically pursuing better management practices, we have been taking a beating in the political arena. Environmental issues are being bandied about emotionally and politically in Tallahassee without the benefit of the facts. It is just as important for us to support our lobbyist so he can educate the legislators as it is for us to continue to find better ways to grow turf. It must be a two-pronged approach. The new Turfgrass Economic Impact Survey will help open a few eyes about what the golf industry means to the state of Florida."

Meanwhile, it is obvious what Mountain Lake means to Steve.

"I don't have to generate a lot of paperwork in my job. My responsibilities dictate that I spend more time on the course. I really like that. I get to work closely with my staff and that is important to me. This position has let me get back, literally, to the grass roots of the business."