TPC designs face 'sweeping changes'

By Bob Seligman

PGA Tour officials are switching the emphasis of Tournament Players Club courses to layouts using more of the natural surroundings while being less penal in nature. Bobby Weed, chief designer for the PGA Tour, said the movement began last year when PGA Tour Commissioner Deane Beman said a need existed for more traditional courses. It gained momentum after a survey of more than 150 touring pros showed that they like those types of layouts.

"In the 1990's you'll see some sweeping reforms in the way we build the golf courses and it will start with design," Weed said. "We want to revert back to some of the traditional design, and that doesn't necessarily mean target golf."

It does mean a move away from the severity of the first TPC at Sawgrass, in Ponte Vedra Beach, Florida. The Snead alliance would enable Graves, who is in the "upper middle" of the $300,000-$1 million range for U.S. architects, to charge the $500,000-plus fees demanded now by some. Palmer's and Nicklaus's normal fees are $1.25 million.

Snead and Graves hope their combined status will allow them to move increasingly into Europe, Asia and Latin America, where golf's popularity far outstrips courses. Their idea is to compete for the top jobs.

"We've been very successful," said Graves, "but we can't quite meet the Arnold Palmers."

"Occasionally, we get a job away from them or Robert Trent Jones Jr., or Pete Dye, but we are not regularly considered for the high-end resorts and developments," Graves said.

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