By Peter Blais

There's a saying that goes something like an army is only as good as its sergeants. That could also be true of Wadsworth Golf Construction Co., runaway winner of Builder magazine's annual survey of golf course architects and builders. Cypress Point, seat of Mackenzie's masterpiece along the rugged shore of Northern California's Monterey Peninsula, was listed among the top five courses in the country by 60 percent (27 of 45) of those responding. Cypress Point and Pine Valley are what we are returning to as architects," said Gregory Martin, director of golf course design with Ives/Ryan Group, Inc. of Downers Grove, Ill.

"We don't adhere to the designs of one or the other. Their choices reflect the current 'playability' versus 'challenging design' debate. Cypress Point is pleasurable excitement," said Kansas City, Mo., architect Craig Schreiner. "Pine Valley is treacherous at every turn. Pleasure is what golf is all about, more than challenge. Cypress breaks all the rules — back-to-front..."

"It's a Wade Hampton type of site, only more natural that it's just tremendous." We've got such tremendous clientele," Martin said. "We have to perform. We sodded the whole course," he said. "It used to be a Golf Club in Tennessee (Porter's Creek, in Chattanooga)," said Gre- Clemen Martin, director of golf course design with Ives/Ryan Group, Inc. of Downers Grove, Ill. "It's a golf club — no housing, no de- velopment. We had 1,300 acres to work with running through it. The course looks like it's been there for 100 years. We are returning to as architects," said Greg Martin, director of golf course design with Ives/Ryan Group, Inc. of Downers Grove, Ill.

"All are going to be as good as those we've just done," Fazio rated 1990 a '10' on a scale of 1 to 10. And, of course, the golfers go out there and they're the ones that are going to do the work." He added that it's a 10 because the courses are done. The courses for 1991 should be a 10, but we're still working on those. We've got to work just as hard. A 10 doesn't automatically happen. "It's like with Shadow Creek (which will open this spring in Nashville), or a Cave Valley (under construction in Balti- more)," which would be a 10. The concept is for a 10, the program, the commitment, but I can't tell you how good it's going to be until it's done. In 1991 these are all 10s in terms of planning. The ones that are farther along, like Trestles... "I can almost guarantee that people will put it as one of the best I've ever done. It's a golf course," Fazio said, "it's a Wade Hampton type of site, only more natural that it's just tremendous." We've got such tremendous clientele," Martin said. "We have to perform. We sodded the whole course," he said. "It's a Wade Hampton type of site, only more natural that it's just tremendous. It's a golf club — no housing, no de- velopment. We had 1,300 acres to work with running through it. The course looks like it's been there for 100 years. We are returning to as architects," said Greg Martin, director of golf course design with Ives/Ryan Group, Inc. of Downers Grove, Ill.

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Photo by Nancy Pierce angles, so wherever they put the marker, it's going to be a different hole every day," Jones said. "It's a gorgeous hole." Years ago, we dodged the fairways with Zoysia. With the natural trees, the creeks, the streams, the rock walls — you can't help but like it." The Newport Coast course is on the ocean and "is going to be extremely dramatic and very sensational," he said. Yet creating a masterpiece, Fazio said, "is no big deal. That's what we're getting paid for..." More importantly, that's what they ex-pect. We have to perform. "And, of course, the golfers go out there and they're the expectation is so high... If you've gone to Shadow Creek or the Vintage or one of the others and then you came to one of our new courses and it didn't measure up, you'd say, "What happened here, guys? Did you have to cut back? Didn't you work as hard?" Fazio said the pressure never eased. "After 28 years of doing it, the pressure just keeps building and building. But it's fun. It's not difficult. We've got such tremendous cli-ents with such tremendous interest in golf that it's great for the game," he said. Fazio said he can't help criticize that he only does expensive or high-end courses.
Wadsworth repeats as best golf course builder

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ally built our Southeast business from outside Illinois. The Nebraska native approached Wadsworth several times before he was hired as a drainage expert in 1979. "He was persistent," Wadsworth remembered. "We're glad he was." Harrell was named president of the Southwest office in Buckeye, Ariz., outside Phoenix in 1985.

• Tom Shapland, Pacific sub-office president; Shapland, 58, is a University of Illinois graduate, like brother Jon. After joining the firm in 1974 and working in the Southeast office for many years, he was assigned to head up the new Hawaii sub-office that opened last year. His title is actually vice president of operations for the Pacific office, which has already built three courses and is working on three others.

Wadsworth's lieutenant is John Cotter, 57. The company's first employee when it opened in 1958, Cotter and Wadsworth got together at the urging of Cotter's wife, a childhood friend of Wadsworth in his native Jollet, Ill.

"I asked him how he'd like to run a tractor for me," Wadsworth recalled of the company's current vice chairman of the board. "It turned out he had a lot of other talents, too. He had management skills, was very personable and business-oriented. He attracted other talented people. He's been of the utmost value."

"That's the staff that's led Wadsworth & Associates into the golf course construction wars the past 32 years and received a third of the ballots cast for best builder, up from one-fourth of the votes a year ago. "We're extremely honored to receive the award again," said Wadsworth. "We appreciate the feelings of our associates and the people in the industry for voting for us."

The company chairman added "working as hard as ever to meet the needs of the people we work for, especially the architects," was the main reason his company has earned such a positive reputation.

Added Eldredge: "We have our own staff and equipment. That allows us to control jobs much better than other contractors who have to subcontract out more work.

"We can also draw people and equipment from other areas if we're short on a certain job. That has made us good at delivering a quality product in a given time period."

"Being on time and on budget is obviously important to the many architects who have worked with Wadsworth. Sample comments from those selecting the company included:"

• "They still set the standard." — Gary Parks.

• "Always consistent and honest." — Jay Morrish.

• "No one does it better." — Michael Hurzdan.

• "They continue to do the best work." — Keith Foster.

Wadsworth said the recession has had a "very slight" effect on business. Revenues will again be in the $40-$50 million range, as they were a year ago. Many of the projects completed or nearing completion were started before the downturn really hit.

"There don't seem to be as many big jobs this year," said Eldredge. "For instance, there was a large earthmoving job in Hawaii we're working on that the developer decided to do himself. And there were several jobs that were supposed to start in September or October that have been delayed."

Wadsworth said construction costs have risen along with the rise in petroleum prices.

"A lot of the piping we use is petroleum-based," he said. "Then there is all the gasoline we use to run our equipment."

Still, it has been a good year for Wadsworth. Following are the courses (and the architect) that the company's regional offices built and completed in 1990:

Midwest — University of Wisconsin Golf Club, Madison, Wis. (Robert Trent Jones II); Indian Hills Golf Club, Ivanhoe, Ill., and Seven Bridges Golf Course, Woodbridge, Ill. (Dick Nugent & Assoc.); Conway Farms South, Lake Forest, Ill., and The Landings, Savannah, Ga. (Fazio Golf Course Designers); Cobblestone Creek Country Club, Victor, N.Y. (Hurdzan Design Group).


Pacif...