**The best of 1991**

**Wadsworth repeats for 3rd time as top builder...**

*By Peter Blais*

For the third straight year, Wadsworth Construction Co. has been selected as the top golf course builder in the Golf Course News annual golf course architects survey.

While the Plainfield, Ill.-based contractor garnered the most votes of the five major golf course companies — Paul Clute & Associates Inc., Landscapes Unlimited Inc. and Guettler & Sons Inc. — registered strong showings.

"We appreciate the architects giving us this consideration. It's a good feeling. We also appreciate the efforts of the developers to their courses' versatility, playability, challenge and sensitivity to the environment."

"He has great versatility in style; no two courses are alike," wrote one."

"(He designs) great but playable courses that are sensitive to the environment," wrote a second.

Another said Fazio produces "fair, challenging and beautiful design work." Fazio himself said he would stake his future on courses he designed in 1991. "It will be a working document that members will discuss at the annual meeting in New Orleans."

"No organization I know of has a wide body of construction cost data base."

Arnold also hopes to begin a golf course construction cost data base. "There is a great need for a wide body of construction cost data base," he said.

The members of the strategic plan committee include Arnold, GCBA President Perry Dye, Paul Eldredge of Wadsworth Construction Co., Jerry Pierman of International Golf Group, Jim Kirchdorfer of Irrigation Supply Co., John McDonald of McDonald & Son Construction, David Truttmann of Buckner Inc., Doyle Jacklin of Jacklin Seed Co. and Paul Chute of Paul Chute & Associates.

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**EPA DEMANDS MAN 'UNDO' NINE HOLES**

WEST BEND, Wis. — Owner Jim Korth was "pretty proud" of the nine holes he had used in a golf course under construction when he was told by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency he must restore the area to pre-construction condition, in effect, excavating the trees and greens south, or face more than $1,000,000 in fines for wetlands habitat violations.

Restoration cost is estimated at $20,000. Korth had dealt with the county Land Use and Park Department and the Army Corps of Engineers.

**MICH. GOVERNOR RESURRECTS PLAN**

ACME, Mich. — Gov. John Engler has resurrected a controversial proposal to replace wetlands along the Leelanau Peninsula's Crystal River with an 18-hole golf course and housing development.

EPA Administrator said the agency has re-evaluated its decision to block the proposed expansion of the Homestead Resort in Glen Arbor. Developer Robert Kuras seeks a permit to fill almost four acres of wetlands near Crystal River.

Michigan's Department of Natural Resources wants to approve the project.

"If the EPA allows the golf course development," said Sierra Club's Great Lakes program director Brett Hulsey, "it will be open season on wetlands in Michigan."

**LIBERTY STATE PARK OPPOSED**

JERSEY CITY, N.J. — Scott Weiner does not believe advocates of an 18-hole golf course at Liberty State Park have demonstrated a need for it.

The state environmental commissioner questioned whether the course could generate enough money to be self-sustaining and finance improvements in other sections of the park. He did not rule out consideration of farmland an urban renewal area to help de-

**Developers**

Mr. Arnold, a 22-year veteran of Wadsworth, and his wife, Marianne, who is a natural resources planner, are the driving force behind the project. Mr. Arnold said he would stake his future on courses he designed in 1991. "It will be a working document that members will discuss at the annual meeting in New Orleans."

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Fazio says great competition pushes himself, colleagues

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course that opened in March — "We had so much land and so many great opportunities, with no restrictions, that it worried me."

But he is happy with the results — the "individual character of the holes and the playability characteristics, and the features, creeks, trees, rock outcroppings, sheer cliffs, long-range and short-range views, the forms and shapes of greens and bunkers, and the vegetation."

• Caves Valley, a private Baltimore course that opened in July — "It's tremendous — a modern-day Augusta National. It has great variety in rolling terrain, with the strength, character and style of beautiful, natural golf lands of the Northeast. Everything was perfect when it opened... It looks like it's been there a long, long time."

"This is a club of the next century — what clubs will be like. It's a tremendous environment. And the quality of maintenance, landscaping, setting for golf, the attention to detail... Every phase of it is just wonderful."

• Champion Hills, a private course near Fazio's home in Hendersonville, N.C., that opened in July — "It's a Wade Hampton-type of site, only more dramatic in a lot of different ways — maybe less dramatic in some."

By Mark Leslie

Pine Valley has long been Tom Fazio's favorite golf course on Earth. Now he is doing things at that venerable Clementon, N.J., property he has never done before.

"We built a bunker and put a tree in it. We built greens as severe in contours as ever. We built several uphill shots to greens," he said.

The project started as a simple one. Pine Valley chairman Ernie Ramsome thought it a good idea to have a par-3 course, or a few more-holes, to play after finishing a round. He asked long-time member Fazio to design a 19-hole practice course on 120 acres.

But the project took a major — and novel — turn during a topographical map-reading session, and it hasn't been the same since.

Indeed, if you were to choose your 10 favorite shots at the George Crump-designed Pine Valley course, you might be able to take them all on Fazio's little par-3 gem.

Why? Fazio and project manager Andy Banfield were looking over the top map one day and Banfield remarked: "This is exactly the same elevation change and in the same direction" as the second shot on the 2nd hole.

"That's one of my favorite shots anywhere," Fazio said. "It's uphill, which I don't like, but it's a great shot."

Then the same thing happened on the 10th hole. "I didn't want to duplicate the hole. But what would be wrong with simulating it? I would love to hit that shot 100 times," Fazio said.

That set the two to looking for other similar contours. And, voila! The second and third shots on the par-5 15th followed, and others took shape as well on similar terrain.

"It's a 10-hole practice course you can play and love," Fazio said.

Most holes have no trees but the same contour and slope as the originals.

Is it popular among Pine Valley members? "The risk factor was high," Fazio said. "I was always worried and nervous. I have a hundred friends who are members there. I see them all every spring, and if it didn't turn out... well..."

But it did. The risk paid off. And Fazio's reputation as one of the world's premier golf architects didn't suffer. It was just a little bit of heaven, he said.

"It's our little par-3 gem," Fazio said. "We've learned a lot from it. We've learned how not to make mistakes.

"There is no course in the world that is going to have a par-3 course that looks like this. It's a very unique concept."

"We're all into 'now,' " he said. "Nobody wants to wait any more. We've learned how to not even wait for nature. We just move nature in. Instead of waiting for grass to grow, we put sod in. Instead of planting small trees and waiting five or 10 years for them to grow, we plant trees with 20-year maturity on them. It just amazes me."

Maturity has also been enhanced by sophisticated irrigation systems, maintenance programs, equipment, and the technology of maintenance itself, Fazio said.

"We've got the latest technology. It's the future."

"There are many quality designers, contractors and developers out there. The competition of business, your product, the pride of authorship penetrates through the whole society, not just in golf," he said.

Changes over years

Fazio, who broke into the industry working for his famous designing uncle George, said much has changed in the last 29 years.

"The expectation level of a new golf course has changed substantially from what it was in the 1960s," he said. "Back then, if you did a new course, people would say, 'It will be a good golf course some day when it grows in and matures.'"

"That was the mark of excellence. In the last five to eight years it has evolved to where a new course is compared to the best courses in the world. That's the expectation level to some degree in a lot of places."

Fazio said such thinking is "a tribute to the industry, to all the designers, the technology and the dedication to quality throughout the industry."

The high expectations have evolved for many reasons, he said, including course rankings in the media and the society's outlook.

"We're all into 'now,' " he said. "Nobody wants to wait any more. We've learned how to not even wait for nature. We just move nature in. Instead of waiting for grass to grow, we put sod in. Instead of planting small trees and waiting five or 10 years for them to grow, we plant trees with 20-year maturity on them. It just amazes me."

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Wadsworth garners Best Builder plaudits for third time

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Faizo); Four Seasons Golf Course, Lake Ozark, Mo. (Ken Kavanaugh); Laurel Oak Country Club, Sarasota, Fla. (Gary Player); The Grasslands at Oakbridge, Lakeland, Fla. (Pate/Cupp Designs); Bighorn Golf Course, Palm Desert, Calif. (Arthur Hills); Porter's Neck Plantation, Wilmington, N.C. (Tom Fazio).

The Grasslands at Oakbridge, Lakeland, Fla. (Gary Player); Fazio); Four Seasons Golf Course, Lake Palm Desert, Calif. (Arthur Hills); Porter's Ozark, Mo. (Ken Kavanaugh); Laurel Oak top new private course and Loch Lloyd in Virginia, Ohio, Oregon, Guam, South Carolina in Hawaii (3), Michigan (2), California, Virginia, Ohio, Oregon, Guam, South Carolina and Pennsylvania.

The company is also looking at expanding into the international market, pursuing jobs in Canada and Saipan near Guam, Cotter said.

The demand for new golf courses continues strong, although the lack of financing is affecting the course construction industry, Cotter said.

"Fortunately, we've been able to pick up several projects the past few months," the Wadsworth executive said. "Many courses have their permits and are ready to go. They just can't get underway because they can't get the financing."

"But I have heard of several banks that are re-opening negotiations on projects they turned down a few months ago. So maybe things are starting to improve."

Clute agreed lack of financing is a major stumbling block.

"Demand for new courses is fine," said the Hartland, Mich.-based contractor. "But we aren't insulated from what's happening to the economy. Our industry is tied to the housing market and that's affecting us.

"Financing and environmental permitting are the two big issues and will continue to be for some time. Two years ago, permitting was the major item slowing down construction. Today, lack of financing has probably passed it by."

Although they are competitors, a strong mutual respect exists between the top vote-getters in this year's survey. Like Clute, President William Kubly praised Wadsworth.

"The biggest change I've seen is the increased attention to detail and that requires more people," Clute said. "The detail we used to put into the green has spread all the way back to the tee. Developers want cart paths, irrigation, drainage, turf and everything else ready to go from the first day. People used to say it took two to five years for a course to mature. Now they want it to look mature right away. And that's driven the cost up."

"We could build a course for $20,000 a hole 25 years ago. Now it costs that for the average green."

Clute's 1991 revenues will be in the $10 million-to-$15 million range, about the same as two years ago.

"1990 was our highest revenue year ever," he said. "We had a couple of high-dollar projects that just happened to both be completed that year. It was unusual. This year will be about the same as 1989 and next year should be about the same again."

Clute opened seven courses in 1991 — Naperbrook (Ill.) Golf Course (Roger Packard); Brighton Crest Golf Club, Fresno, Calif. (Johnny Miller/Gene Bates); Trapper's Turn, Wisconsin Dells, Wis. (Roger Packard/Andy North); The Golf Club of Tennessee, Kingston Springs (Tom Faizio); Hills Course of Palmetto Hall Plantation, Hilton Head, S.C. (Arthur Hills); Emerald Bay Plantation, Destin, Fla. (Robert Cupp); and Ibis Golf Course, The Heritage and The Legends, West Palm Beach, Fla. (Jack Nicklaus).


Landscapes Unlimited finished third in the survey. Like Clute, President William Kubly praised Wadsworth.

"They do a quality job, have a professional... Continued on page 43
that trails behind the Cushman® Turf-Truckster.

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Sawgrass takes Tour’s resort honors

The course that Nature had savaged with winter wind and storm fury was attacked and renovated by man on a major scale. Needed changes were defined. An earlier end to daily play prior to the tourney was deemed advisable. Shutting down the course the Monday before tournament practice was a practical stroke.

The course was closed in the fall for winter seeding. The week’s shutdown permitted uninterrupted germination of the grass.

A tree-trimming program added course sunlight.

Three months before the late March event, three persons were added to the workforce.

Ball marks on all greens were seeded. There were no fairway divots. Sawgrass was ready.

Greg Norman, who had led the chorus of criticism in 1990, this time observed, “Perfect.”

Fred Blauk

Fellow Australian and winner Steve Elkington said, “I don’t think there’s a harder course in the world to play than this one when there is this kind of wind (42 miles per hour the second day), but course conditions couldn’t be better.”

Klauk, who said his mission in 1991 was to make the course the best ever, did just that in a rousing vote of confidence from those most knowledgeable and most demanding—tour pros.

“We were very focused the entire year and accomplished our goal,” he said.

He cited this “team” for making it possible: Bob Clarkson, assistant on the Stadium course; Gene Baldwin, assistant at the Valley course; chief mechanic Mark Sanford, landscape assistant Lee Rowe and office manager Cathy Macormick.

Gary Wilder and Callaway Gardens’ Mountain View layout, most testing of the resort’s 63 holes, made a remarkable run for tour laurels. Time wasn’t on their side.

Wilder, superintendent at Harbour Town and a veteran of 10 tourney events, was contacted last March by Callaway Gardens officials. The Buick Southern Open, a 27-year fixture at Green Island Country Club in Columbus, Ga., had been switched to Callaway Gardens Sept. 29-30.

Wilder was offered the job of whipping the course into tournament shape. Bunkers were to have priority. Wilder, who had much sand experience, arrived early in May and launched renovation operations.

The course was closed for the summer.

Wilder rebuilt bunkers that contained from one to two feet of sand. Greens received major stripping and fumigating attention, and fairways were sprayed heavily with a plant growth regulator that encouraged grass to grow from side to side and thicker. The ball cupped as well as the result of this concentrated treatment.

Pros responded favorably to the intense course face-lifting, as witness the flood of voting backing.

Staff and pay attention to detail,” Kubly said. “I’m always happy to be included on a bid list with them. It lets us know that the developer wants a quality job. A local contractor’s bid could blow us both out of the water, but the local contractor wouldn’t deliver what Wadsworth and we do.”

Lincoln, Neb.-based Landscapes Unlimited received 9 percent of the architects’ vote. The staff includes 80 full-time and another 40 to 80 part-time employees. Among them are five project managers, 15 construction superintendents and 20 shapers.

“Very simply, we try to deliver quality,” Kubly said. “We have a strong back-up staff to help out on projects throughout the country.”

Despite the slow economy, revenues are expected to exceed $20 million this year.


Others under construction are Bent Creek Golf Club, Lancaster, Pa.; Glenmore Golf Club, Charlottesville, Va.; Glenmora Golf Club, Scranton, Pa.; Hiyat Golf Course, San Antonio, Texas; Sapphire Country Club, Cashiers N.C.; and Wildwing Plantation, Myrtle Beach, S.C.

Kubly, a registered landscape architect, received his bachelor’s degree in landscape architecture in 1971 from the University of Wisconsin. He worked in the golf course construction and design field five years before opening Landscapes Unlimited.

“The biggest change I’ve seen is the amount of work,” Kubly said. “When I first got out of school, I thought all the course work would dry up in a few years. There has been a lot more work than I ever thought there would be.”

Guettler & Sons Inc. was the choice of 5 percent of the architects. The Fort Pierce, Fla. firm has served primarily the southeastern United States since 1954. Peter F. Guettler is chairman of the board.

Guettler course openings in 1991 included the Fairwinds Course at St. Lucie County Golf Course, Ft. Pierce; Valdaria Airport Public Golf Course, Palm Bay, Fla.; and Windsor Golf Course, Vero Beach, Fla.

Courses under construction are Northport Golf Course, Ft. Pierce; Valkaria Airport Public Golf Course, Palm Bay; and Hawkeye Golf Links, Spring Island, S.C.; and Sandridge, Indian River County, Fla.

Fred Blauk

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