By Mark Leslie

Foster opens own design firm

Keith Foster, who cut his teeth on bedrock working for Wadsworth Construction Co. and refined his design skills under the tutelage of architect Arthur Hills, has struck out on his own.

Foster, for six years Hills’ lead architect for the Western United States, has formed Keith Foster & Associates, headquartered in Mesa, Ariz.

On the heels of his announcement, one of his co-designs with Hills — Harbour Pointe in Seattle, Wash. — was named Best New Public Golf Course by Golf Digest.

An associate member of the American Society of Golf Course Architects, Foster said of his new firm: "We want to be involved in every phase of the work. That's one great thing about the Tom Fazio organization and Pete Dye. That's how they do it.

"Nothing will happen on paper or on site that I don't know about. We are responsible for everything. I don't want to compete with builders, just be on site to work with the construction managers."

Foster credited Brent Wadsworth and Hills with helping him learn the art of golf course construction and design.

"I owe a lot to Brent," Foster said.

"He took a real interest in me when I was 25 years old. He helped me understand design and the entire process..."

"When working on Cypress Run Country Club in Tarpon Springs, Fla., Mr. Wadsworth and I would walk the course and talk a lot about design... We worked closely together for about a year..."

Foster worked seven or eight Wadsworth projects in the next three years — prompting Wadsworth to speak with Hills about the young man. Hills offered Foster a position in 1985.

Foster said Hills has influenced him tremendously. "He is a great man. He's got a real sense of style and aesthetics," Foster said.

"When I first started with Art, I was more form driven. I was more concerned with shape. As I matured and worked more closely with Art, I've become a student of strategy. I've always enjoyed classic things... So, too, I enjoy classic American-designed golf courses. The last three to four years I've been studying a lot of the great golf courses in this country and have developed an appreciation for that type of work."

While working with Hills has given him "an opportunity to work on a lot of quality projects," Foster said:

"I am gaining my firm toward a simpler, more classically designed golf course. We are structuring everything for that. (H.S.) Colt, (Alister) MacKenzie, (George) Thomas, (Don) Ross, (A.W.) Tillinghast, all the great older designers key on strategy. Everything was set on angles.

That's what we're trying to do — create worthy courses that are simple forms, yet very functional and strategic, and more blending into the existing topography."

He said his plans have "a 1920s, 1930s flair. We do everything in black lines."

We create softer lines, more fractured lines, more angles. They have a weathered feel. They are more comfortable to look at, more classic."

Foster & Associates, including a landscape architect, agronomist and office manager, has signed on to design three golf courses — in Phoenix, Utah and Missouri — as well as Walking Stick, a restaurant as Pueblo, Colo.

"Americans seek to approach the European market should be aware that one does not need to begin a new project in order to find a point of entry," Croen said. "There are projects in all phases of completion — from conception to open play — that can benefit from American golf development and operations experience.

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