

# Fazio says great competition pushes himself, colleagues

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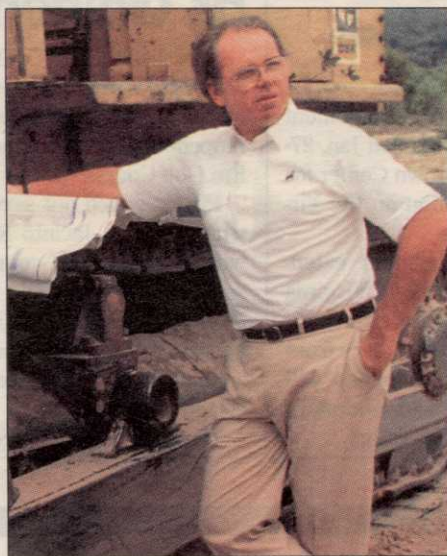
course that opened in March — “We had so much land and so many great opportunities, with no restrictions, that it worried me.”

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.”



Tom Fazio on site.

• Porter’s Neck, a private course in Wilmington, N.C., that opened Oct. 1 — “The site had sand-based soil with high contours that allowed us to dig the golf course into the ground and create some unique features. It has major clusters of oaks and enough variety of tree to give us a good feeling.

“Plus we had (Jack) Nicklaus and (Pete) Dye courses nearby at Landfall. So that added

the degree of challenge for us to do it. If you have great competition, a good piece of land and a client with a commitment to quality, you have it all.”

• Pelican Hill Golf Club’s Ocean Course, the first 18 of a 36-hole resort facility in Newport Beach, Calif., which opened Nov. 1 — “The course is in such magnificent condition, has such a tremendous environment, and is so strong that it even shocks me. The whole course was sodded. We planted a lot of trees. It’s like Shadow Creek (in Las Vegas) in that way.

“I was more nervous (about Pelican Hill) than with Shadow Creek. My concern was that when you go to Newport Beach and see the oceanfront, you expect a lot. I was nervous to the point that I second-guessed myself about being involved with it... People could see this property and say it should be another Pebble Beach. There will never be another Pebble Beach.

“But I am well satisfied with it now.”

Fazio also opened Osprey Ridge along with a new Dye course at Disney World in Orlando, Fla., on Jan. 2, and gave that layout high marks.

“It has some of the qualities of Lake Nona and Black Diamond, some of the feelings of

John’s Island West and of the ridges and open spaces of Jupiter Hills, features like Hammock Dunes and some of the interior holes at Long Point, all rolled up into one.”

## 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 overall.

“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.

## COMPETITION

Fazio also said competition is keener for keeping course design at a high level.

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

## Fazio layout turns into Pine Valley star search

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 Ransome 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 10-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 topo 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 lies 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 tees 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 every spring, and if it didn’t turn out — well...



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