By Mark Leslie

PHILADELPHIA — The man who is credited with creating the profession of golf course construction accepted the annual Donald Ross Award here, then asked architects to design tracks to "equalize" golfers.

Accepting the award, Brent Wadsworth told members of the American Society of Golf Course Architects: "Handicaps help to equalize the scoring opportunities, but you as designers have the final power to equalize all types of players."

"By your designs, you can give the game — in addition to all the other enrichments — a parity that not even the handicap system can produce. Just hope you won't lose sight of this opportunity for the future of golf."

Wadsworth's call to action climaxed the ASGCA's annual banquet, held April 26 at the Philadelphia Cricket Club. The Ross Award is presented in honor of the famous course architect whose name it bears and who was a founding member of the ASGCA.

"In the early years of golf course design, architects all had to have their own shapers and builders because there was no golf course contractor," said Roes Jones of the ASGCA. "Brent Wadsworth really started the profession of golf course contracting, which has made it easier for us to institute our ideas. And we are very, very pleased to honor him tonight."

In 1958, after three years designing golf courses, Wadsworth received a Fleet Safety Award for "No Vehicle Accidents" for not having any fleet accidents during the contest year.

By Rob Seligman

S ELECTING sand for a golf course bunker would seem to be such an easy procedure. You just contact a company dealing in the material, buy several tons of the stuff, and let players experience all the joys and frustrations a bunker shot can provide.

But choosing what you feel is the right sand for your bunkers is, as Mike Beebe, an architect for Orange Park, Fla.-based Mark McCumber and Associates, says, "an inexact science."

According to Judith Gockel, president of Agri-Systems, a company that tests sand for playability, there are 22,000 to 23,000 types of sand, each one slightly different from another.

David Oatis, director of the United States Golf Association sand research department, notes that sometimes sand tests are conducted on the wrong sand, which will fail the test without any indication of why.

"In selecting sand, you have to consider how the sand will perform in the bunker," Oatis says.

Sand comes in all shapes and sizes, ranging from fine and fine-grained sand to coarse and coarse-grained sand. Coarse sand is more resistant to the pressure of the ball in the bunker, while fine sand is more difficult to play from. Coarse sand is also more difficult to pack down, while fine sand is easier to pack down.

Sand is typically sold by the cubic yard, with the price varying depending on the type of sand and the distance it has to be shipped. The finer the sand, the more expensive it is because it is harder to ship and more difficult to pack down.

Sand is typically used in bunkers to provide a soft landing for the ball, while also providing a challenge for the player. The sand should be fine enough to prevent the ball from rolling too far, but coarse enough to prevent the sand from washing away.

The importance of sand in bunker design is crucial, as it can significantly impact the playability of the bunker. A well-constructed bunker with the right type of sand can make a significant difference in the overall quality of the course.

Sand is often used in combination with other materials, such as grass or gravel, to create a more challenging and visually appealing bunker.

The selection of the right type of sand is crucial in order to create a bunker that is both enjoyable and challenging for players. By understanding the properties of different types of sand and selecting the right type for your bunker, you can create a bunker that is both visually appealing and challenging for players of all skill levels.
Besides physical injury, golf course architectures and superintendent are concerned with "injuries" to a player's score — and their egos — if poor sand contributes to escalating handicaps. Coarser types of sand, rather than rounder types, seem to be better for playability.

"Sands on the coarser side pack better. They create a better sand shot for the average player," says Wyss. "Most of the silica sands are used. They're fairly angular in the particle shape and not more rounded. Rounded sand would not pack down as well."

"If sand is very rounded, it will be less stable. The particles will shift against each other after the sand you'll have more buried lies," says Oatis. "If the sand is platey (flatter or more angular) it will be tighter and could be too hard. You want a sand that's firm, but not too hard. It's a subjective thing."

— Patrick Wyss, a golf course architect based in Rapid City, S.D., also favors firmer sand because the ball stays up better in the bunker, which is good for new golfers, and because it stays in place better in high winds than soft, fluffy sand. Wyss will also try to have sand on his courses that stays smooth and maintains a nice texture after a rainfall.

"In a sand bunker, one thing that's important is what's happening under the sand," says Wyss. 'I'll use sand that won't wash out during a rainstorm. I'll use a grainier sand in a wetter environment for air space so the water can percolate out. It keeps moisture at a lower level below where you're hitting. I'll use less-grainer sand in a drier environment."

Playability is the prime factor in selecting the type of sand you want for a golf course, but the color of the sand is also important. Bright sand may look great on television, but it can turn a potential Picasso into just another Venus Paradise paiy-by-the-numbers portrait.

"I look at colors as a model backdrop," says Wyss. "Bone-white beach sand in the middle of Nebraska doesn't make sense. Yellowish-brown belongs there. In coastal courses, more white sand blends into the white beach sand in the middle of Nebraska doesn't make sense."

"I'll still give the same definition, but it's not as strong a contrast between the bright white and the green [of the golf course]," says Gockel.

Price is also very important in selecting what type of sand to use. Wyss says trucking fees add about 75 percent to the overall costs for sand. As a result, many courses try to use local sand. With all the companies selling the product, local sand is available in many areas.

"We try to use local sand if it's a good quality," says Beebe. He adds that if it isn't good, his company tells the owners to get outside sand.

"There are different prices for different grades of sand," says Beebe. "I don't think there's a huge difference from company to company. Most costs are in freight."

Clearly, golf course people go to great lengths to have the best sand their players can enjoy. But, in the end, do all golfers really know that no matter what their individual results may be, the sand they're playing out of has been judged as what's best for them?

"Bunker sand is extremely subjective," says Oatis. "Golfers are poor in knowing what's good and what's bad in bunker sand."

And that's no buried lie.