Bates' successes began with Nicklaus, continue with Couples

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providing quality in whatever he did. He's also one of the greatest design strategists there is.

Johnny Miller doesn't believe in boundaries when it comes to course design. He's come up with some wild ideas. Some worked and some didn't. He once created a bunker that [intentionally] had 3 feet of water in the bottom of it all the time.

He also knows how to set up a course for the mid- to high-handicap golfer. He was a junior hack who grew up playing on some well-used public courses.

GB: How did you get the Green Mountain National job near Burlington, Vt.? When will it open? How would you describe it? What is the significance of its being that state's first municipal layout?

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GB: I worked with Nicklaus in Switzerland, which has similar terrain to the Northeast. It can be tough for an outsider to find work there because New Englanders can be pretty provincial in choosing an architect. A guy named Steve Durkee conceived the project. He spends some time down here [Palm Beach Gardens] in the winter. He just walked in the door one day and asked if we'd be interested.

The course should open in July. It has a lot of variety, nine meadowland and nine mountain holes with some beautiful views. It's the first municipal course because Burlington has grown to the point where it's big enough to support something like this. Those financial resources aren't available in most other Vermont towns.

GB: Green fees at Green Mountain are supposed to be in the $40 to $50 range, fairly expensive by municipal standards. Is this an indication of the growing difficulty of building affordable public courses?

GB: It's an expensive project and the town doesn't want to subsidize it. It has to pay for itself, like most new municipal courses.

GCN: Couples/Bates has seven projects in various stages of design, permitting and/or construction and you alone have another 10. Is that par for the course?

GB: It's active enough. I'm fortunate for number of projects. That allows us to pay attention to details.

GCN: How big is your office and who are some of the key people?

GB: We have six people on staff, including a secretary. The designers include Steve Wolfard, Matt Swanson and Kipp Schulties. Wolfard worked for Mr. T[ony] for a couple of years. The boot guy the past four years. Swanson came here directly out of Ball State University [Muncie, Ind.]. He started in the field and is in the office full time now. Schulties called me during his last year at Indiana State University and worked a semester on a renovation project at Frenchman's Creek in Palm Beach Gardens, Fla. He's full time now and is on site at San Juan Oaks in San Juan Capistrano.

GB: Green Spring Golf Course in Washington, Utah. It was the first project on my own for a contracted building like a golf club. We took 12 months to open it. Golf Digest named it one of the top five new courses of the year. It was a nice way to come out of the box. It didn't surprise me that Golf Digest recognized and gives due diligence. I just didn't think enough people would get out there to rate it.

GB: Who was the most influential person in your own work, and why?

GB: Ron Kirby. He taught me the nuts and bolts of the profession. There are generally two kinds of people in this business. The tie guy works well in the office and is good with people. He enjoys working in the field and can kick the contractor in the butt when he needs it. Ron is one of the few guys who is both a good tie and boot guy. Bob Cupp has that rare combination, too. Personally, I enjoy the outside work. That's where the magic happens. You can take your drawings into the field and improve on them. And I just like working in the dirt.

GCN: What has been the major change in the profession since you first became involved?

GB: There are so many more of us [architects] today. When I first got involved, fewer architects had their own business. The biggest change is in the area of computer-aided design. Everyone was cost-conscious in those days. You didn't move a lot of dirt and the pizazz was minimal. Things got more sophisticated as the technologies advanced. Architects were like drunken sailors, with everyone trying to one-up Pete Dye. The Savings and Loans were pots of gold that everyone tapped into. That disappeared all of a sudden in the late 1980s. The only way we are making money is in putting together properly. They see golf as a good investment.

GCN: According to the National Golf Foundation, 668 new courses opened in 1995. Do you see this pace continuing?

GB: More money is coming into the industry, so more of the marginal projects are able to find money. Many municipalities are realizing that golf can be a recreational adjunct that can make money for the city. Money is also more readily available from individual investors if deals are put together properly. They see golf as a good investment.

GCN: You are known as one of the major designers of Cayman courses. The Cayman ball looks different, the sounds different. Is this a new attitude?

GB: Cypress Point would be first and Pasatiempo a close second, both Mackenzie layouts.

GCN: Was there a watershed course or architect?

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GCN: Who is your favorite course architect and why?

GB: Not even close, Alister Mackenzie. If you play well, you'll score well on his courses. If not, you pay the price.

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GCN: Who is your favorite course architect and why?

GB: No. There are plenty of great architects today. When I first got involved, fewer were involved and the pizazz was minimal. Things got more realistic and more conscious.

GCN: The problem is that the number of projects hasn't increased as fast as the number of architects. Some of the new guys are giving quotes for half of what an experienced architect would charge. That's just too low. A price of $75,000 to $100,000 is hard to justify for the two to three years it generally takes to bring a project from conception through construction.

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