Rees Jones restoring Ross' River Oaks

HOUSTON — River Oaks Country Club here has hired Rees Jones to master-plan a restoration of its Ross track. Built in the mid-1920s, River Oaks has since been extensively re-routed, its greens and tees totally redone and other changes made, so that only about 50 percent of the holes are similar to their original layout, according to Jones design associate Steve Weisser. So Jones intends to restore the course to the Ross style.

“WHITEMARSH Valley Country Club.

We've been around a long time — over 75 years.
The players demand impeccable turf and we deliver. But the highest standards around here are those I set for myself.

I have the future of the course to think about. So, I make sure the herbicides I use to keep the course gorgeous are also respectful of the environment. I try to make sure the course and the world will be around for another 75 years. Pendimethalin is the turf herbicide that meets these standards year after year.”

“'I've got some pretty broad shoulders. The future's on them.'

Tony Gustaitis, CGCS

Love goes solo

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lean times and, in the 1990s, in a boom period, which he expects will continue with public facilities being the driving force.

“There are so many golfers who need a place to play, and they need an interesting and exciting place,” he said. “The high-end public course will be developed more and more frequently. But 'high-end' to me doesn’t equate to a lot of money to build or a lot to play.

“I think there is a middle ground that will allow courses to be built and maintained for a reasonable cost that means lower greens fees... You don’t need to spend $7 million or $9 million.”

A key for this type of project, he said, “is making it efficient for maintenance. Then the good conditions will draw the people. It goes hand in hand with good design.”

His design style, Love said, is to make a course compatible with the existing site, “to make it appear and feel as natural as possible and at the same time create drama, keep you awake and pique your interest.

“One of the things I think is so important in design and which sometimes gets overshadowed by other things like the environment and playability, is aesthetics,” he added. “That is absolutely mandatory.”

Chairman of the American Society of Golf Course Architects' Environmental Committee, Love said the industry is “a long way out there [in protecting the environment], but there is always more to be done.”

“Certainly our goal is to make sure we dispel the viewpoint that golf courses somehow harm the environment or wildlife. The golf industry has been aware of environmental issues for a number of years and putting into practice good design and management for quite some time. That is not to say there isn’t room for improvement.”

For his part, Love intends to remain active in the ongoing discussions between the golf and environmental communities. And he is already active in his new design firm. He has hired a draftsman and an office manager and is in the development stages of two projects in Maryland and one each in Virginia, Pennsylvania and Nebraska.