In design, blood proves thicker than water

No hazards when it comes to father-son partnerships

By Mark Leslie

Tim Nugent was born on a golf course construction site. W. Bruce Matthews III grew up at Grand Haven (Mich.) Golf Course, managed by his father. Carter Morrish has been around the likes of Jack Nicklaus and Tom Weiskopf since he was a toddler. Heck, golf course architect Bob Cupp was his youth football coach. When Trent Puddicombe was born two years ago, his architect dad, Grant, assessed him this way: “Just another little shaper.”

This father-and-son golf course design gig can no longer be dismissed as merely anecdotal. It has gone beyond fad to trend. The golfing public generally knows the Joneses (Robert Trent Sr. and sons Rees and Robert Trent Jones Jr.), the Dyes (Pete and Alice and sons Perry and P.B.) and perhaps the Nicklaus (Jack, Jackie and Gary). But, there are more: the Nugents (Dick and Tim), Morrishes (Jay and Carter), Robinsons (Ted and Ted Jr.), Aults (Brian and Eric), Cupps (Bob and Bob Jr.), Davises (Arthur and Lee), Puddicombes (Sid and Grant and Mark), and Mootes (Bob and Dave). The list goes on. It includes dozens of old-fashioned apprenticeships.

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“Look at what the Jones boys are doing: just what dad did. I’m doing just what my granddad [W. Bruce Matthews] and uncle Jerry [Matthews] did. The same with Dan Maples [son of Ellis]. All of us, doing what dad did, with our own twists.”

Many sons of architects have gone into other fields altogether, only to return to their “roots” — outdoor work with their fathers. And others know from an early age they want to work in golf — in some way, or in whatever way they can — and never stray.

“Before joining me, Tim got a degree in engineering and construction management and was building high-rise office buildings,” said Dick Nugent, whose firm is based in Long Grove, Ill. “I told him, ‘You know all the skills of the construction industry, but you need to know about the money.’ He went back to school and got an MBA, then came here; he has added a lot to our business.”

Bruce Matthews and Grant Puddicombe were superintendents before Todd.

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Zontek honored with GCBAA Rossi Award

Chapel Hill, N.C. — Stan Zontek, for 20 years an agronomist with the U.S. Golf Association (USGA) Green Section and director of its Mid-Atlantic Region, will receive the 1997 Don A. Rossi humanitarian Award from the Golf Course Builders Association of America (GCBAA).

The GCBAA will present the award at its annual Awards Dinner, Feb. 9, in Las Vegas during the Golf Course Superintendents Association of America’s International Golf Course Conference and Show.

The award “is one of the most pleasant shocks of my life,” Zontek said. “I knew Don Rossi. I knew the kind of individual he was, all the hard work he did for the industry, and to be a recipient of this award sincerely is the highlight of my career. This is no idle comment. It is a fact.”

Added GCBAA President Paul Eldridge

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Randall & Blake acquires Contra Costa Landscaping

Ryangolf, Inc. joins Builders Association

DEERFIELD BEACH, Fla. — Ryangolf, a division of Ryan Inc., Eastern, has become a charter member of the Golf Course Builders Association of America. This move "enforces our uncompromised commitment to excellence that started when we built our first golf course in the 1960s," said Ryangolf Vice President Fidel J. Garcia.

The company this year completed jobs at Naples Heritage Club and Bonita Bay East in Naples, Cartails at Meadowview in Kingsport, Tenn., and Addison Reserve Third Nine in West Palm Beach.

GCBAA's Rossi goes to Zontek

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of Wadsworth Golf Construction: "We hope this award will bring to light Stan's long and dedicated work in the industry."

Zontek is the longest-tenured USGA employee and has served as regional director since 1976 — first in the Northeastern and North Central Regions before moving to the Mid-Atlantic. He was agronomist for the Northeastern Region from 1971-76.

A graduate of Penn State University's turfgrass management program, he is an honorary member of nine regional golf course superintendent chapters, a board member of the Musser International Turf Foundation, a member of the USGA Green Section Award Committee, and a member of the National Honor Society of Agriculture and the Technical Resource Advisory Committee of the Golf Course Superintendents Association of America.

Past recipients of the Rossi Award include Robert Trent Jones Sr., Joe Jemsek, Alice O'Neal Dye, Dr. Joe Duich and Geoffrey Cornish.

Zontek is a former Penn State pupil of Duich's. Indeed, when Duich accepted his Ross Award in 1995, it was Zontek who introduced him.