Hurdzan takes on Fry as a full partner

By MARK LESLIE

COLUMBUS, Ohio — Mike Hurdzan, a former president of the American Society of Golf Course Architects, has made lead designer Dana Fry a partner in the firm, saying the new relationship "cements the commitment we have for each other."

"It is exciting to me because I see Dana as a genius in this business," said Hurdzan. "He has such vision and passion, whose source is truly God-given. He didn't learn it out of a book or from me. He has a vision for golf courses that I don't have, while I have a technical ability he doesn't have.

The marriage of the two can help our business and our profession." Hurdzan holds a PhD in environmental turfgrass physiology, a master's degree in turf studies and a bachelor's degree in turfgrass management, while Fry found his way into course design because he knew he couldn't play pro golf. An Arizona State University student, he happened to meet Andy Banfield, a lead architect with Tom Fazio who offered him a job on the crew.

Hurdzan, who had thought he'd never have another partner except the retired Jack Nicklaus, predicted the new Hurdzan/Fry Golf Course Design "will set a new trend in the industry."

The partnership is "a dream come true" for the 34-year-old Fry, who started that first job for Fazio Bagging cart in 1983.

Five years later, Pete Dye introduced him to Hurdzan, who offered him a job overseeing construction of Devil's Pulpit outside Toronto. That course gained immediate recognition, as have each subsequent tracks as Devil's Paintbrush, Naples (Fla.) National and Cook's Creek in Ohio.

"To be considered the best is subjective, but the one goal Mike and I have had in common is to be considered in that class," Fry said. "A lot of people say they want to be the best, but we will do whatever it takes to be the best. Time will prove whether we get there or not, but I think we will. I think we've made big strides to get where we are."

His contribution to the team, he said, is the 200 nights he spends on the job each year. "Great golf courses are built in the field," he said, "but physically being there, not sitting in an office, drawing up a pretty set of plans and showing up one month later."

"In our project in Palm Springs, Calif., from the end of May to the end of October, I visited the site every week except twice. To me, that's the difference between making something good and making it great — the personal attention to detail."

He attributed that attitude to working with Fazio Golf Design Group, especially Banfield, and with Bill Kerman of the Hurdzan/Fry staff who, he said, "quite possibly is the best person doing a set of plans that I have met.

Fry said the Hurdzan/Fry staff is extraordinary — from Hurdzan to Kerman, to Dave Whelchel who is "the key guy in our company," running the office, to Jason Straka, a Cornell University graduate who does many of the plans, and the support staff.

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By Edward Piria

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