NC State offers golf course architecture class

By Mark Leslie

North Carolina State University's golf course architecture short course offered last spring, that it invited Rich Mandell to return to teach this fall — that capped full season.

"Our big problem was, there is so much to teach. So we expanded to a full-fledged, three-credit, 15-week class," said Mandell, vice president of Whole in Design in Durham. "We'll design some projects, starting with the students' own fantasy hole, and include designing specific holes pretending to be Donald Ross or C.B. MacDonald for a day."

Mandell, a University of Georgia alumnus who has worked for course designers Dan Maples and Denis Griffiths, had 25 students in the Landscape Architecture Program's short course. They ranged from landscape architecture to turfgrass, sports management, civil engineering and forestry resource students.

History is a major part of the program, beginning with the links courses of Scotland. Students will be introduced to MacDonald, Ross, A.W. Tillinghast, Robert Trent Jones Sr., and others of the past as well as modern-day's Pete Dye and Tom Fazio.

"We'll speak about trends in design and how and why things were done in the past and why they aren't done now," Mandell said. "For instance, the influence of major equipment on design and construction; and how there was a move to 'vanilla-ization' in the early 1950s when, I think, courses were made too golfer-friendly, fairways were flattened to accommodate bad lies, and greens were open in front to accommodate bad shots."

The class will also encompass routing, designing a course in a real estate development, construction and construction documents, among other topics, Mandell said.

Golf Course News: Was there one factor in particular that led you to the North and South American markets? A series of factors?

Graham Marsh: I think it was more of a series of factors. We had spent over 10 years working in Southeast Asia, Australia and the Pacific Rim, and we had to cut our teeth on some pretty difficult projects down there.

We competed against many of the main architects in that region. When I say main architects I mean architects from the United States and Europe and the ones that come out of Japan. Consequently, I had decided to play the Senior Tour and was spending more time in the United States. I spent a year or so over here just looking at the markets. With the buoyancy of the market over here in the U.S., certainly I saw new opportunities.

GM: Do you have a grand plan for your expansion?

GCN: How many people are involved in that core group?

GM: In my office in Australia, I have 14 people full-time.

GCN: Do you see the U.S. as a different challenge than the markets in Australia and the Pacific Rim?

GM: I think the challenge varies from site to site. If you're talking about the business challenges, then I think certainly I saw new opportunities. From an architectural perspective, I think it's more of a matter of coming up with the right design that meets the market needs and is consistent with the client's wishes.