LITHIA, Fla. — Question: Which builder jumped into new golf course construction in both hemispheres at once?

Answer: The same firm that has been named Best Small Golf Course Builder for 1997 — Quality Grassing & Services, Inc.

Golf Course News' named Quality Grassing its second annual Small Builder award-winner after an extensive nomination and survey process that involved voting from developers, architects and superintendents of projects built in 1997 by the Florida firm. Quality Grassing won the honor with an extraordinary 96.973 rating out of a possible 100.

In 1997 Quality Grassing completed work on several major renovations and two 18-hole golf courses — Worthington Manor in Poolesville, Md., and Elks Run Golf Course in Richmond, Va. The results?

Joseph G. Harrison Jr., a board member at Ocean City Golf & Yacht Club, said of Quality Grassing's work on the...
America (GCBAA), has greatly contributed to the growth of golf and is celebrating its 25th anniversary.

Having established what they are, we should examine who they are and what they do to earn the title of hero. Not many firms in the world do only golf course construction. One reason is because the scope of the work is so varied and complex that few companies can organize, equip and train people to handle the work. Not only must the golf course builder be an expert in construction, he must be an astute business person to comply with all the legalities attendant to construction.

Although more courses are being built than 10 years ago, the competition during bidding can be fierce, requiring small profit margins. Once selected, the builder must execute all this work in a tight timeframe, hoping that delays and forced overtime wages will not eat up all the profit. Most contractors find such bidding and working conditions intolerable and thus they do not enter golf course construction, or they last a very short time.

Further, since golf course projects are so scattered it means that these men and women must be apart from their families for long periods, or develop an almost nomadic family experience.

The obvious question is, why do they persist in golf course construction? The answer is that these people are true artisans who find reward and take pride in the work they do. To remain in this business and produce big results each day's work requires that a builder put a bit of himself or herself into every roll, every mound, every green, every feature. They are creating as they construct and they feel good about what they do.

But if golf course construction is so creative, what is the function of the golf course architect? The architect plans at a macro-scale and is concerned with about 150 or 200 acres or more at a contour interval of perhaps one or 2 feet. The architect must plan the relationship or elements on a site that may not allow intensive personal inspection, or that have problems not clearly discernible.

On the other hand, the builder works at the microscale of perhaps 1/4 of an acre at a time and contour changes of inches on a site that has been completely cleared. The architect may draw detailed features at a scale of 1 inch equals 10 feet; but the builder must construct that feature at 1 inch equals 1 inch.

No matter how sophisticated the plans are drawn, there must always be field interpretation of those drawings; and it is this ability that separates the great builders from the wannabes. This ability is learned from technical training, repeated experiences, and years of honest constructive criticism. But it is not solely of intellect, for the great contractor has a superb imagination, reliable intuition and good eye-hand coordination.

Any dummy can be taught to run a bulldozer, but a precious few can develop the skill to shape an awesome green complex.

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