Seay accepts Don Rossi Award for Palmer

By MARK LESLIE
ANAHEIM, Calif. — Saying “some of the accolades we get as architects start right in this room,” Ed Seay stood in for Arnold Palmer who received the Don Rossi Humanitarian Award from the Golf Course Builders Association of America (GCBA).

A partner in Arnold Palmer Golf Design who has worked with Palmer since 1971, Seay told the annual GCBAA banquet here that he first spoke to the organization in its fledgling stages in 1973. “Then you were not recognized much,” he said. “Today you are not recognized as you should be — as the backbone of our industry — but put yourselves on your back. You have made it. You’re here and all of us architect and owners are very proud of your efforts.”

In presenting the award in absentia to Palmer, outgoing GCBA President Paul Eldredge of Wadhurst Golf Construction Co. cited the Golf Hall of Famer as “the one who kicked off the game of golf similar to Don Rossi kicking off our organization.” Rossi was a founder of GCBA and served as its executive vice president when he died six years ago.

In a prerecorded, videotaped message, Palmer alluded to the approximately 200 golf courses on which he has been a design consultant and said: “If there is anyone who appreciates a group of people more than I appreciate [you], I don’t know where they are — because you have helped protect the integrity and the tradition of the game of golf. And I might add that I feel that you have an obligation to continue.

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Venturi puts maintenance into perspective, wins Old Tom Morris

By MARK LESLIE
ANAHEIM, Calif. — Golf course conditioning, not playing equipment, has created the biggest change in the game of golf, according to Ken Venturi.

Venturi, here to accept the Old Tom Morris Award from the Golf Course Superintendent Association of America, told a press conference: “The courses are so perfect. In the past you had to have imagination. You had to create something that wasn’t there. Now, look at Augusta National and you can put on the fairways. That has been one of the greatest changes in golf. You can talk about equipment. But I’m talking about conditions. That has made the game much, much different.”

Saying he is inspired by tradition, Venturi spoke of Ireland and Scotland where “they play ‘down’ golf instead of ‘up’ golf.”

“The ball is made to run,” he said. “You can never make a green hard enough.”

Irish and Scottish golf, he said, give the golfer multiple choices. “It allows you to use your imagination.”

“A good shot-makers what they like,” he said, “and they like golf course news”
Venturi
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He has

done the same thing. He has taught the game of golf to the modern world, whether doing special schools, or as a golf analyst on TV.

Telling Venturi the public has enjoyed the game through his words and actions, McGinnis said: "Although more than a century apart, there is no mistake Old Tom Morris and Ken Venturi share a special kinship as guardians of the game of golf."

While Venturi suffered a hand injury that ended his competitive career and missed out on the big paydays of modern times, he said: "I'm very fortunate... What price would you put on being able to dine with Bobby Jones and Francis Ouimet and having Byron Nelson take you under his wing, and having Ben Hogan say he would like to play with me when we play the Masters?"

He said he would like to see younger players "come up and introduced himself to an older player and thank them for being able to play today for the millions of dollars they make."

Other comments from the 1998

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1998 GCSSA SHOW WRAP UP

Old Tom Morris Award-winner:
- "I don't think I've ever played a round of golf when I wasn't humbled. I never played the perfect game. Golf is like humility. When you think you have it, you've lost it... It will teach you personality. By playing a round in competition with a person I can tell you a lot about them, about their business, their personality, how they handle life."
- Golfers are winning at younger ages today because there are no wars; and they can get points easier. "I missed three Ryder Cups because I had to wait five years to get enough points."
- "Today, someone makes $2 million, and it's all relative. It's hard to make $2 million when first prize is $2,000. In 1956 I won four times and finished in the top ten 15 times and earned $49,500... But today you don't get to sit next to a Gene Sarazen. So it's all relative."
- "I don't think it will be an Olympic sport. We have our Olympics. I look at the Olympics as amateurs. I don't get a kick out of watching our professional NBA players winning the Olympics. That's no contest."
- "Match play will not survive over here [America] because of television. Television prevents you from having match play. If you and I are in the finals and they are televising, and after 18 holes you have me eight down who's going to watch us play? That's the one key to match play. I've always loved match play, and that's one thing I missed as a pro."
- "Golf courses are becoming obsolete — like Marion. I would like to see a [distance] limit on the golf ball itself. And on equipment. We used to have a sweet spot the size of a nickle to hit an iron shot. Now it's the size of a lemon."

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