What does it take to design a golf course?

I wish I could string together four great rounds, say on a Thursday to Sunday as I march to the PGA Tour's Phoenix Open. I'd win a nice chunk of cash and certainly pick up the momentum necessary to place second or fifth, or even first on another week during the rest of the PGA season.

That would appear to be all I need to do to launch my supplemental golf course architecture career — you know, in case my game starts to slip.

As I wade deeper into the knowledge base of the golf business, I've repeatedly asked the top players in the design field what it takes to be a well-schooled course architect. The answers are as varied as the designers themselves; yet the common piece of any response is that one must be able to look at a site, no matter how perfect or how raw and awful, and picture a layout, figure out how each hole should be framed in the context of a given piece of land.

That skill alone takes "an eye," the same eye that separates Irving Penn or Helmut Newton from the rest of us simple camera owners. Yes, I own a camera, but what I choose to frame is what separates me from one of the masters. That master frames the shot before the eye gazes into the viewfinder.

A good designer is not necessarily a great golfer (I've seen this fact proven on two occasions), but a person who has an eye for the layout, someone who has stepped on countless acres of undeveloped earth and has seen thousands of holes materialize in the minds eye.

Now this is where I remain somewhat mystified. PGA pros have walked thousands of fabulous holes, but how many raw spaces has a pro surveyed prior to the layout of 18 new holes? Is being a great golfer any help in being a great course designer? Are the two skills related in any way?

Just prior to The Masters, Tiger Woods was caught saying that he has, in fact, entertained the thought of lowering over some blueprints. "I think it's going to happen a little bit later," Woods said in an Associated Press wire story prior to the big event. "I've got some ideas in my head of styles I like and things I want to incorporate into my own course designing." Woods went on to say he needed to play more courses around the world and learn more about drainage and slopes and development around the tract of land. "I'm very creative," he said, "I want to create that."

International Management Group (IMG) is reading a few new "design products" in the forms of Jesper Parnevik and Annika Sorenstam, two excellent players who will have "design team" put in place to support their new endeavors.

According to IMG, there are new more stars are on the horizon, all with slick marketing packages and niche-oriented business plans. How Jesper and Annika will do is yet to be seen. However, as more and more marquee names enter the field, it will be the market that will eventually decide what it takes to be a golf course designer.

Letter

WGA looks to work with industry

Edit note: The following is a letter from Graham Whatley, executive director of the Walking Golf Association (WGA).

Thank you for writing the article on the establishment of the Walking Golf Association (WGA) and including it in your recent issue of Golf Course News (GCN, March).

Everything in the article was a fairly legible reprint of information we have made and our views so far. There is, however, an aspect of our goals for the association which was not strongly stated in the article and we feel so sorry for you. You'll have to go to Golden Bear Club's disinterested in my course designing. The light went off when I received a press release in February announcing that Pepsico is the "Official Soft Drink of Golden Bear." We all know that Golden Bear means Jack Nicklaus — he, who, by the way, wears Golden Bear golf skis (and I'm all for self-promotion). As part of this agreement, Pepsi and other Pepsi-branded soft drinks will receive exclusivity and "pouring rights" at all Golden Bear-owned facilities including Golden Bear Golf Centers and Golden Bear Golf Clubs.

For Pepsi drinkers, this is no big deal. But for you poor Cocoholics, we wish you enjoy your rounds the way they choose. We still believe there is a market that will eventually decide what it takes to be a golf course designer.

Letter

This is the Official Typeface of a Mark Leslie editorial column

WGA looks to work with industry

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We've seen The Official Sneaker of the Boston Celtics. The Official Eye Wear of the U.S. Olympic Team and The Official Vehicle of the U.S. Ski Team. I wouldn't be surprised if there is an Official Underwear of the Jamaican Bobsled Team. Now this Official hype has hit the golf industry. I'm not talking about Tiger wearing the Nike hat, or Norman wearing a Reebok sweatshirt, or Kite wearing Hogan paraphernalia, or Payne Stewart wearing ... well, let's not get into that.

No, that stuff has been around since the advent of television. What I'm referring to is that we've moved into the upper echelon of this marketing madness that makes the normal person ask, "What? I mean, what?"

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**FROM THE COVER**

**CCA/PGA ETC**

Continued from page 1

-ments accepted the ClubCorp offer after consulting with the two other primary shareholders. Primary shareholders of PGA ETC are PGA European Tour, which owns 18.9 percent and International Management Group (IMG), which owns 19.3 percent. Approximately 38 percent of the shares are in the hands of the public.

Said Robert Dedman Jr. president and chief executive officer of Club Corporation International, “Our company expects to complement the expertise and skills of PGA European Tour and IMG with the 40 years of successful experience we have had in operating tournament-caliber facilities while building quality relationships with tournament sponsors, players and host course owners.”

PGA ETC owns and manages high-profile courses in England, Sweden, and Portugal which are the sites of internationally prominent golf tournaments. In England, PGA ETC owns a 50-percent interest in the Woburn Golf Club near London, the home of the British Masters, as well as two other tournament courses near London, Collingtree Park and Stockley Park.

The PGA ETC-owned property in Sweden is the home of the Swedish Masters.

In Portugal, PGA ETC owns the Quinta do Lago golf courses on the Atlantic coast, which have been the site of numerous tournaments such as the Portuguese Open and the Johnnie Walker Euro Classic. PGA ETC has a course built to Ryder Cup standards near Barcelona, Spain, currently under development.

Club Corporation International owns or manages more than 220 golf-related properties and private clubs worldwide.

**Leslie comment**

Continued from page 14

Gamble used to use the good Housekeeping Seal of Approval,” said Bob Swift, general manager of Indian River Club in Vero Beach, Fla., one of seven fully-certified Audubon Signature golf facilities.

"What's really ironic,” said superintendent Tim Hiers at Collier's Reserve in Naples, Fla., "is, you hear somebody say, 'we don't have the money to join (Audubon golf programs).’ They're really saying: 'We don't have the fortitude, desire or intent to do what is right.'"

Upon hearing that his design of The Classic at Madden's had won third-best New Upscale Public Golf Course in 1997, superintendent Scott Hoffman said: "My first reaction was that I was really happy for Brian [owner Thuringer], that it worked out. Not to sound like I'm not grateful, but when I look at the ratings, how do you rate all these golf courses? It's like rating your kids: Which is best?

There are a lot of great courses out there. We were fortunate. It's good for our area.”

Carter Morrish's pay from Bill O'Connor for designing three holes on the cliffs overlooking Malibu in 1992? (See story page 39)

"My deal with him was no charge," Morrish said. "He was to take me to play Rivera, Bel Air and Los Angeles Country Club."