Cornish and Graves: It's all here

GOLF COURSE DESIGN
GEOFFREY CORNISH AND ROBERT MUIR GRAVES

By MARK LESLIE

Golf Course Design by old friends and colleagues Geoffrey Cornish and Robert Muir Graves is golf's equivalent to those PBS shows — you know, Bruce Springsteen and Friends, or Plug-in-a-Bigtime-Name and Friends.

Two elder statesmen of golf design, Cornish and Graves, have basically taken their traveling road show (presented in the far corners of the continent from Harvard University westward), spiced it up with chapters from various other experts of note, and squeezed it all into 446 highly informative pages.

You want to know about "The Game and the Course?" It's here, explained in seven chapters. You want to know about "Construction and Grow-in?" It's here in seven more chapters. You want to know about "The Business of Golf Course Design?" It's here in four chapters.

"I emphasize," said Cornish, "that this work is not intended to compete with [Dr.] Mike Hurdzan's magnificent Golf Course Architecture. Our book is a mundane textbook and reference work, in part intended to influence future generations."

Many landscape architecture instructors, he said, "find they must devote a few weeks to course design because their graduates will often encounter a golf course in their future master plans. Many of these instructors attend our seminars and have used our notes but apparently needed a textbook."

Cornish and Graves, who between them have designed hundreds of courses in North America, start at the beginning: The history of golf and golf course design. Then they take us through the steps, whether they be broad-based (planning the course; selecting the site and routing the course; designing a golf hole; planning major changes and practice facilities; building the course) or specific (drainage, irrigation, turfgrass selection). Finally, they cap it off with the business side of the industry (financing, permitting and monitory, even training the golf course architect).

What they are not expert in, they have called on their "Friends" for assistance. Here's Audubon International President Ron Dodson contributing on planning the course; Kenneth DeMay, FAIA, on planning adjacent real estate; architect Bill Amick on short courses and Cayman golf; James McBarrett on irrigation; Dr. Norm Hummel and United States Golf Association (USGA) agronomists John Foy and Jim Moore on grassing the course; USGA Green Section National Director Jim Snow on turfgrass selection; and architects Desmond Muirhead and Thomas Marzoll on design.

Here's W. Gary Paumen, with Richard H. Elyea, Virgil Meier, Dean Mosdell and Christine Foy and Jim Moore on grassing the course; and architects Desmond Muirhead and Thomas Marzoll on design.

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The Good Doctor is in

THE GOOD DOCTOR RETURNS
GEOFF SHACKELFORD

By MARK LESLIE


The Good Doctor, for those outside the loop, is Dr. Alister MacKenzie, thought by many to be the greatest golf course designer of all time. And in this whimsical excursion, Shackelford may earn himself a few karate chops rather than kudos.

The book is written in the first person, from the point of view of a young golf course architect who gets hired by Dr. MacKenzie, who (we faint) did not die as we thought on Jan. 6, 1934, and has returned "to show the world again what it means to build a masterpiece."

A thorough student of Dr. MacKenzie, his writings and philosophy, Shackelford uses MacKenzie's voice and his own to lambaste current-day designers.

Herewith, a few of those views:

• Regarding bunkers, MacKenzie says, "My experience with today's courses is one of despair and disbelief."

• Regarding hazard placement, "I am even more disturbed by the trend of narrowing fairways and growing five-inch rough just off the sides ... I find that rough grass is of little interest as a hazard."

• Regarding watering, "I never thought I'd see the day..."

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Eugene Baston — 1985 — Superintendent and maintenance director, Anyang Benest Golf Club, Kyonggi-Do, South Korea. Also lives part of the year in Georgia.

Biggest change: "The advent of the new grass varieties and advances in light grass maintenance equipment over the past 10 years. The breeding programs with the bentgrasses, particularly in the Southeast, have yielded more tolerant bents. It's still not easy to grow bentgrass down here, but it's easier than it was."

Advice for Dave: "Develop a sense of humor and a thick skin. Seriously, the association is going in the right direction. Most of all, he should encourage everybody to keep up with the advances in the industry, particularly in terms of computer usage."


Biggest change: "The advances in technology, which will probably even accelerate. Keeping up with everything is even more difficult than it used to be."

Advice for Dave: "Be aware of the whole spectrum of superintendents, not just certain segments like the private club industry. Every superintendent, from the smallest Mom-and-Pop operation up to the most exclusive private club has certain needs. Be aware of them and try to tailor programs to meet those needs."


Biggest change: "The quality of the turf is the biggest change. Fairways today are the same quality as greens were in the 1950s. Bunkers are often manicured to the point where they are no longer hazards."

Advice for Dave: "Continue to build on the excellent educational tools that GC-SAA provides to its members and the public. The superintendent today is an integral part of the management team and needs business skills along with agronomic knowledge. However, this advanced technology must be combined with the basic fundamentals of common sense so necessary for all good keepers of the green."


Biggest change: "People play and see more courses than they used to, so we end up being compared to Augusta National and places like that. People are demanding more because they've seen more. They are also playing more. We used to have very few midweek players. Now it's not unusual to get 150 to 200 rounds midweek at what is a very private club. We've doubled our crew size in the past 25 years to keep up with the demands."

Advice for Dave: "You've got to decide on the priorities of your family and club top the list. You have to juggle the traveling and demands of being president of this association, while not forgetting about family and your job. Many guys have found that they've had to move on to a new job shortly after being president. Dave's a sharp guy and should do very well."


Biggest change: "A superintendent's tenure at a course isn't as long as it used to be during my dad's and my time. Make a few mistakes today, and you are out of a job. Job security is not what it used to be. There is a group of very well-educated people out there looking to get head superintendent jobs, but they don't have a lot of experience, and that concerns me."

Advice for Dave: "GC-SAA should recognize that we are the international leader in golf greenkeeping. We should embrace and enlarge that community feeling that we (US and Canada) are the leaders."

Charles Tadge — 1979 — District superintendent for the Hamilton County Park District, Cincinnati, Ohio.

Biggest change: "Technology, with all the computerized irrigation systems and the Global Positioning Systems. There are things you can do now that you wouldn't ever have thought about doing years ago. So it probably doesn't make for less work, but it does make it easier to accomplish things."

Advice for Dave: "Keep on top of membership services and keep providing good things for the members."


Michael Bavier

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Cornish/Graves

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members on using a team approach to designing and construction monitoring and architect Mark Mungeam (a Cornish/Graves member) in the original design at Augusta other than the putting green and a couple of bunkers."

And he tells Mackenzie he can't ask Augusta National's greens committee "if the fowl who built the 16th green was drunk or blind."

Well, the Good Doctor gets his site for a final golf course — a property on the ocean in San Diego with grasses grown from seed, sandy soil and undulating land.

The rest is up to you. Look for the troublemakers you know. (For instance, I found Dan Proctor and Dave Axland, identified only as Dan and Dave, two of the world's great shapers.)

There are others, believe me. One in particular is a troublemaker who is ready to hazard a guess at Tell me, who is Bill Mario? Let me know who you believe he is through fax (207-846-0657) or e-mail (mleslie@golfcoursenews.com).