

Silva re-instills Raynor at Lookout Mnt.

LOOKOUT MOUNTAIN, Ga. — Back in 1991, when Tibby Gass was sorting through the attic of a recently deceased relative, she stumbled upon a set of golf course design plans — not just any plans, but a color rendering of Seth Raynor's original architectural blueprint for Lookout Mountain Golf Club.

Believing her discovery to be nothing more than a curious-but-small window on the past, Mrs. Gass framed the print and gave it to her husband, then-Lookout Mountain Green Chairman John "Sweetie" Gass, who in turn presented Raynor's schematic to the club.

For a time, this picture hung on a dark, mahogany wall in the men's grille at Lookout Mountain, waiting to be rediscovered yet again.

When Lookout member Doug Stein obliged, his discovery touched off a series of events which culminated last fall, when course architect

Brian Silva used Raynor's plans to complete a unique bunker and green restoration.

"We've still some work left to do. Brian still plans to restore two or three more greens in the Raynor style," said Stein. "But we've come a long, long way. Finding those plans was like something out of Treasure Island."

Originally called Fairyland Golf & Country Club, Lookout Mountain was not built on

Raynor's watch; the architect passed away before ground was ever broken, leaving his long-time lieutenant, Charles Banks, to supervise construction. The course opened for play in 1925 — without some 75 sand bunkers Raynor had envisioned.

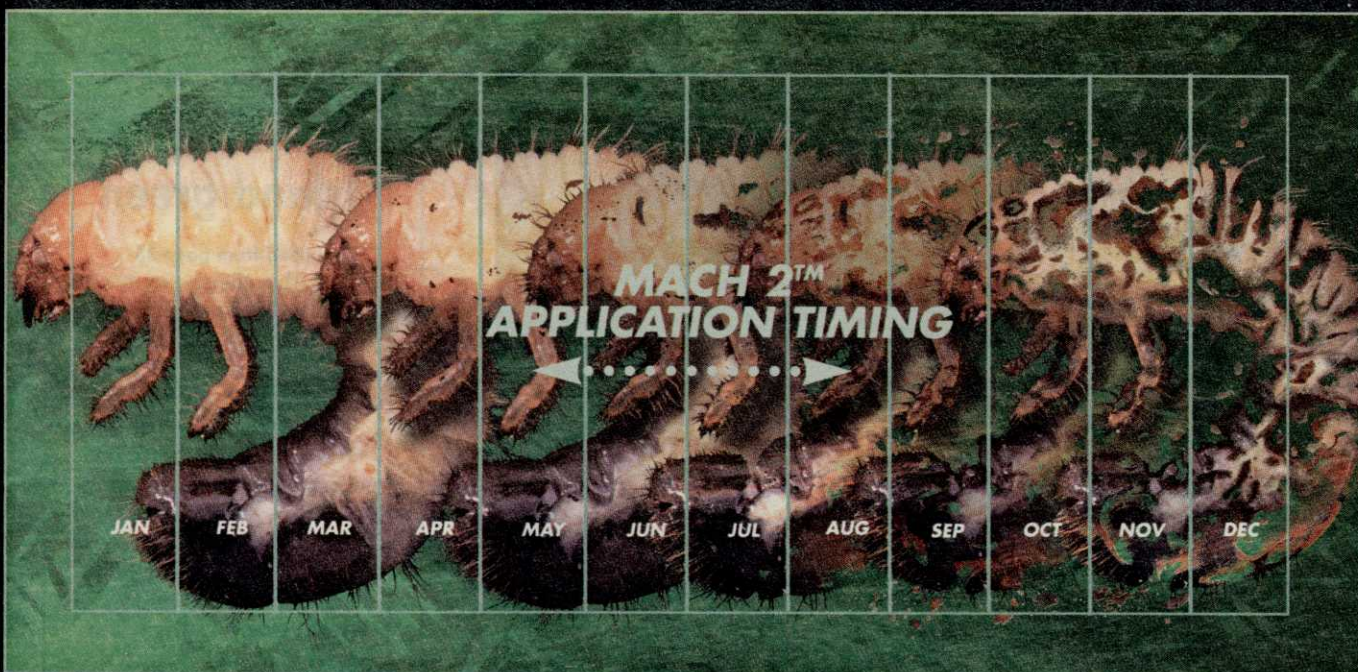
Recognizing these bunkers had been omitted, Stein and fellow member King Oehmig set about recreating what Raynor had in mind.

"Raynor's bunkers were largely flat-floored," said Silva, a partner with Uxbridge, Mass.-based Cornish, Silva and Mungeam, Inc. "They were designed to be deep and penal."

However, for Lookout Mountain members and those who know the course, Raynor's "new" fairway bunkers provide the biggest visual impact. "We added 55 fairway bunkers that weren't there a year ago," Silva said. "Think about adding so many bunkers to the fairways alone. That's a lot of bunkers. Yet they account for why Lookout Mountain looks more like a Raynor course today."

There is still work to be done at Lookout Mountain. This year, Silva plans to rebuild the 11th green and restore the 4th. Though Silva lives in suburban Boston, the remaining work will necessitate no special trips as he, Stein and Oehmig will soon break ground on a brand new course design.

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David Duval and Tiger Woods battle for number one like Sammy Sosa and Mark MaGwire did. I don't believe it is possible and in fact NGF is not predicting an end to golf, but rather they issued a veiled plea to build affordable, accessible, sustainable golf facilities. But bankers and wall-street types don't take the time to figure out what is implied; they react to what is said. So when a headline reads "Glut of Layouts..." they read that as golf courses are going to be harder to get, and golf may in fact experience a downturn.

This is a self-fulfilling prophecy and not necessarily a conclusion based on fact and logic. The net result is insidious and a threat to the potential growth that golf can, and should, enjoy.

The cup is neither half empty nor half full. It is what you want it to be, and if you are a writer looking for a story, saying golf is alive, doing well, and grow faster than the population is not sexy enough to get an editor's attention. As a golf course architect who has observed our industry for more than 40 years, it is my opinion that golf has never been stronger. The sky is not falling.