

Hutchinson's Golf Works takes home Large Builder Award

By ANDREW OVERBECK

ORLANDO, Fla. — Frank Hutchinson started his career in the golf course construction business as a college student raking rocks out of irrigation ditches. In the course of his 26-year career, Hutchinson has performed almost every task in the construction process from being an irrigation superintendent to a shaper to a project superintendent. In 1988 he struck out on his own forming Austin, Texas-based Golf Works, Inc. and has emerged as one of the country's best builders.

While his hard work and perseverance probably paid off long ago, Hutchinson's Golf Works was recognized for its quality work in 2001 as it received the *Golf Course News* Large Builder of the Year Award. Hutchinson accepted the honor here at the Golf Course Builders Association of America's annual dinner Feb. 7.

Golf Works scored a 106.9 out of 110 points for its four projects in 2001. Other participants in this year's contest were Course Crafters, Highland Golf, Landscapes Unlimited, MacCurrach Golf Construction, Medalist Golf, Quality Grassing & Services, Ryangolf, SAJO Construction, and Shapemasters.

GOOD PEOPLE, COMMUNICATION AND TEAM WORK

According to Hutchinson, communication and teamwork are the keys to forming successful relationships and building qual-

ity golf courses.

"Receiving this award is about Golf Works, its people and the relationships that we have formed," he said. "When you can communicate your message to clients and design firms, and follow through, the results are tangible. I stay in constant communication with the project superintendent, architect and developer. If a struggle or conflict comes up we are then able to immediately address it."

Hutchinson attributes the firm's success to an experienced staff.

"I have a group of 34 people who have been with me eight years or longer," he said. "With those people around and the fact that we only do between four and six courses a year, it keeps our product quality consistent."

Hutchinson is also very hands on. "There isn't anything in this business that I haven't done," he added. "When I come to a site, I don't just meet with the developer and the project superintendent, I meet with all my guys."

THREE NEW ARCHITECTS

Good communication skills were especially needed this year, as three of the company's four projects involved working with architects it had never worked with before.

"A lot of architects will tell you that they don't want to work with you on a high profile job when it is the first time," Hutchinson said. "But we worked hard to establish a good relationship in the begin-

ning and that helped us to be successful."

At Lake Cliff on Lake Travis outside Austin, the firm worked with Palmer Course Design; at Flintrock Golf Club in Austin they worked with Jack Nicklaus II; and at



A view of the 14th hole at Lake Travis

Teravista Golf Club in Round Rock, Texas, they worked with George Clifton.

It also helped that all three of those projects were located within 30 minutes of Golf Works' home base in Austin.

"I usually make two visits per project, per month," said Hutchinson. "This year, I was able to be on site two or three times a week."

Hutchinson said the most difficult job his firm did this year was with an architect that he has worked with on several occasions.

At the city-owned Trosper Park Golf Course in Oklahoma City, Okla., Golf Works

performed a full renovation that was overseen by architect Randy Heckenkemper. It was the 14th project that Golf Works and Heckenkemper have done together.

"It was an extensive project that we had to do in a very short cycle," said Hutchinson. "When you are working with an architect that you have such a long history with, sometimes they are more demanding. But as a result, the revenues are up eight percent at the course, and the city has committed to doing some more work next fall on some of their other courses."

2002 SHAPING UP FINE

While new course construction has slowed, Golf Works has plenty to keep it busy in 2002. The firm has projects going in Seattle and Missoula, Mont., in addition to four others in Texas.

It also started work on its own golf course this past August at ShadowGlen Golf Club in Manor, Texas. The five million dollar course is being designed by local firm Russell Bechtol, and Hutchinson expects to have it opened by this October.

"Some days I question myself," said Hutchinson, "but it made sense to use the experience that I have gained over the years to venture out in the ownership direction."

Agri-Scape snags Small Builder title

By ANDREW OVERBECK

ORLANDO, Fla. — The winner of the *Golf Course News* Small Builder of the Year Award was also presented to a golf course builder who has been in the industry for a long time. After spending ten-plus years as a landscape construction company, Mark Eitelman transformed his firm into Agri-Scape Golf Course Construction in 1992.

Agri-Scape and Eitelman received the award at the Golf Course Builders Association of America's annual dinner here Feb. 7. They posted a score of 104.6 out of 110 for the three projects that they built in 2001.

Also participating in this year's award were ASL Golf Course Construction, Course Doctors, Daylen Golf, Frontier Golf, Glase Golf, Golf Course Construction, SEMA Golf and Southeastern Golf.

ON THE ROAD

Ever since getting into the golf course business in the early 1990's, Eitelman has been on the road. With a core group of guys — including his brother who is a shaper — with him since day one, Eitelman's firm has done projects up and down the East Coast and into the Midwest.

This year, however, the firm stayed close to its home base of Ellington, Conn., working with architects Brian Silva and Tom Fazio.

At Red Tail Golf Club in Devens, Mass., Agri-Scape worked with Silva in creating an 18-hole course that plays over, in and around the former Fort Devens.

"It was a great site to work with, with natural topography and sand and gravel, which really allowed us to go crazy," said Eitelman. "One hole plays through an old artillery storage area and we kept a lot of the old bunkers and grass mounds.

No two holes out there are the same."

Just five miles away in Bolton, Mass., the firm moved double the amount of earth — more than 800,000 cubic yards — at the Oaks Course at the International. The Fazio-designed course, which has numerous waste areas and dramatic elevation changes, opened in July after a short eleven-month construction cycle.

RENOVATING WITH SILVA

After doing a lot of Donald Ross renovation work with Silva, Agri-Scape had the chance to do a full bunker renovation at the Seth Raynor-designed Fox



The sixth hole at Red Tail GC

Chapel Golf Club in Pittsburgh this past year. The club, preparing to host the Curtis Cup in August, brought back the original bunkering and restored some tees to their original location.

"We used box blades and hand work because of the severity of the slopes and the steep faces," said Eitelman. His crew worked on three bunkers at a time while the course stayed open for the duration of the work. "We used a lot of plywood," Eitelman continued. "It was challenging."

Agri-Scape will be doing more work at Fox Chapel this spring in addition to new work with Palmer Course Design in Greenland, N.H.

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