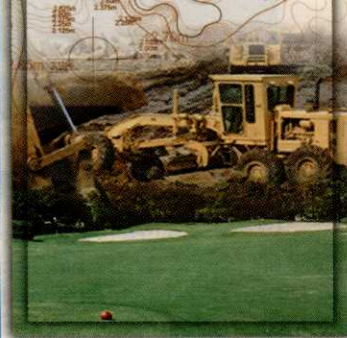


# DEVELOPMENT & RENOVATION



## Editorial Focus: Design and Construction

### BRIEFS

#### MACCURRENCH RENOVATING NEW ORLEANS CC

JACKSONVILLE, Fla. — MacCurrench Golf Construction Inc. began its renovation of the New Orleans Country Club in January. The project, which should wrap up by mid-summer, is in conjunction with architect Bobby Weed, who recommended a complete redo. The course will be re-grassed with an updated infrastructure to include drainage, irrigation, car paths, tees, greens and bunkers. The project also includes the removal of several large trees to expose and preserve the larger heritage live oaks that line the course. Sand from a horse track that existed prior to the course's construction in the early 1900s is being used to cap some of the muck soils on the site.

#### JACOBSON GEARS UP FOR BUSY YEAR

LIBERTYVILLE, Ill. — Golf course architect Rick Jacobson has signed on for a number of projects in 2003, including two design projects with Jack Nicklaus — the Americana Bayside Resort in Sussex County, Del., and South Market Golf Club in Prince William County, Va. In addition, Jacobson has groundbreakings in Wisconsin and Virginia, openings in Illinois and New York, and several renovation projects.

#### TURNER CONSTRUCTION TO RENOVATE TWO

GAITHERSBURG, Md. — T. A. Turner Construction Services Inc. has been awarded construction contracts in Virginia and Bradenton. The company will perform renovation work along with Palmer Design Company on the Palmer Signature Course at Keswick Club in Keswick, Va. Turner will also take on an extensive renovation of the Gene Bates-designed El Conquistador Country Club in Bradenton, Fla. At Keswick, the renovation will add 400 yards to the course, while the El Conquistador renovation involves installing a new irrigation system and expanding the course's irrigation ponds.

## Dye takes technology, developers to task

By DEREK RICE

In the last year, the debate over technology in golf has intensified, with the American Society of Golf Course Architects calling for more regulation of golf equipment in order to keep golf course length, and by extension costs, from spiraling out of control.

Pete Dye has seen a lot of changes in his more than 40 years designing courses, including technology. Never one to temper his opinions, during a panel discussion at the Golf Course Superintendents Association of America conference in Atlanta, Dye appealed to the USGA and other organizations to take a more heavy-handed approach to regulating technologies.

"[The industry] needs to get together and try to stop the golf ball for the great players," Dye said. "This hitting a golf ball 400 yards is ridiculous. You can't make

golf courses 8,000 yards long, with the environment and the costs — it's crazy."

Dye said one solution would be having two sets of rules — one for professional golfers and another for the average golfers who make up the vast majority of the golfing population.

"The ball's going farther for the good player, but they're not going any farther for Mabel Smith, who tees off on Tuesday morning and hits the ball 135 yards. Not one



Never one to mince words, architect Pete Dye (second from right) covered a range of topics during a panel discussion at the GCSAA show in Atlanta.

ball today goes one inch farther than the ball they made 50 years ago," he said. "So Martha Burk ought to be

yelling at the golf ball manufacturers that they're discriminating

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## Guest Commentary Augusta uncrowned

By RONALD W. FREAM

The history of Augusta National has always been recorded, Masters by Masters, since 1934, as if a sacred ritual, the continuation of a serious tradition. The mystique has been mas-



Ronald W. Fream

saged and enhanced year after year as TV coverage projected the world's great players — taking their turns as champion — putting on the green jacket, after a usually breathtaking final round before a huge gallery.

Augusta National Golf Club has long considered the Masters as an "inheritance to posterity." The origins of the course, inspired by Robert Tyre Jones Jr.

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## Editorial Focus: Design and Construction

## Weathering the construction slowdown

By DEREK RICE

With golf course construction declining, some builders are finding it hard to get enough work to keep their staffs busy, but in the case of at least two builders, 2003 is shaping up to be busier than 2002.

Lithia, Fla.-based Quality Grassing & Services Inc., winner of the 2002 Golf Course News Large Builder of the Year Award (GCN, March 2003), expects to complete more than the seven projects it finished in 2002, said company president J. Howard Barnes.

"We've got a lot going on this year, more than last year," Barnes

said. "We've got three major renovations we're starting, and we've got some new stuff going on that we'll finish with no problem."

Fidel Garcia, president of Ryangolf Inc., located in Deerfield Beach, Fla., said while the slowdown will have an effect on a lot of builders, his company will be busier than last year, mainly because of the quality of clients it works with.

"Going forward, we are fortunate to have a clientele that's immune to the economy, to be honest with you," he said. "I knew there would be a certain number of projects that they would be start-

ing and I would have my fair share of those. So I didn't worry and it has come through."

While most of the year is booked already, Garcia said Ryangolf will probably take on a couple more projects this summer.

Barnes said established relationships with owners, architects and developers, as in any business, are the X-factor that often figures into the hiring decision for a builder.

"It's good to have those relationships, and I don't begrudge anybody who can get them," he

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## Sunday River, Harris Golf close land, sales deal

By DEREK RICE

NEWRY, Maine — As expected, Sunday River Ski Resort and Harris Golf finalized their purchase and sales agreement last month, paving the way for construction on the planned 18-hole Robert Trent Jones Jr. course to begin.

At press time, closing on the deal was expected to take place in early May.

The only thing standing in the way now is the weather, which continued to be unseasonably

cold well into March. However, that shouldn't delay the course, as construction is slated to begin this summer with a summer 2004 opening date planned.

Harris Golf currently owns and operates two golf courses, Bath Country Club and Boothbay Country Club, as well as Harris Golf Shop in South Portland. The group includes brothers Jeff and Jason Harris, as well as their father, Dick Harris, a Maine golf icon who was principal in the

development of Falmouth Country Club nearly 20 years ago.

Jeff Harris said the company is looking forward to building the course because of both the designer and the scenic location.

"The opportunity to build a Robert Trent Jones Jr. course at Sunday River is one that we couldn't pass up," he said.

The course will become the second Jones course in Maine, giving the state a distinction among

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GOLF COURSE NEWS



## Augusta uncrowned

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and co-designed by Dr. Alistair MacKenzie were, as Horton Smith said, "a cause of character, individuality and personality." Over the years, modest changes were inserted into the original design. In recent years, cosmetic changes became common but remained modest. The most significant changes evolved as the standards of maintenance improved. The growth of turfgrass maintenance, agronomic knowledge and equipment sophistication led to the recent years' "immaculate perfection" standards – not a blade of grass unkempt.

Of the four recognized major golf tournaments of the year, only the Masters is played year after year at the same venue. This continuity of site helped enhance the legend of famous players, famous holes, famous shots and famous victories. Past shots and past scores could fairly be compared and certainly were. These past glories are obsolete now.

Throughout the years, the basic playing character was more or less true to the original design and the founders' original intent. The continuum was in place. Now, in an effort to counter or defend against recent technological advances by club and ball manufacturers, as well as the unique ability of Tiger Woods, Augusta is undergoing a vigorous redesign that has dramatically changed many of the holes. Where now are the continuum, the tradition and the playing link to the course Jones and MacKenzie produced? In fact, if Jones or MacKenzie were alive today, they would not recognize the Augusta National of 2003. Whatever great shots, superb lightning-fast putts or grand Sunday afternoon final nine charges that were the stuff of legends and so faithfully documented will not now be a continuum and link to past performances. The new course may well look like another Tom Fazio course, one of many, but not one of one. Lengthening and moving tees, bunkers and approach shots bring new golf not directly comparable with Masters tournaments of 2001 or before. Growing a "second cut" or semi-rough to hinder slightly wayward tee shots removes the long and proud distinction of not having rough at the Masters. Adding instant trees surely has altered how some of the holes were previously played. It is different now.

Will Augusta National still be automatically ranked as one of America's truly great courses or is it now actually one of several long, demanding courses set into surrounding woodlands? Augusta was never a course of unique natural setting or spectacular and memorable vistas. The pine forest actually became more claustrophobic as trees grew taller and wider and were joined by new additions of trees. The glory was in the link to a historic source of original design and a masterful management of the early legends.

While the "splendor, splendor, splendor everywhere" will return, it will surely be difficult now to claim the legacy or compare the scoring traditions of earlier Masters. From 2003, it is a new course, a new tournament and a new record to establish. Will Augusta National again warrant its lofty stature based

upon its illustrious heritage? Perhaps not. Perhaps now Augusta National will be another rolling, long, pine tree-lined course with nice spring flowers that merely hosts a prominent tournament and still provides enviable immaculate perfection in turfgrass management. While modern technological advances are helping the individual golfer's length of play, technology is doing nothing for the memories and traditions of golf, which are too few as it is. ■

Ronald W. Fream is the founder of Santa Rosa, Calif.-based Golfplan, which he founded in 1972.

## Construction slowdown

Continued from previous page

said. "You always like to have that unfair advantage. People get aggravated about it, but that's just business and that's the way these things get done sometimes. You just have to accept it and move on."

With course openings declining in 2002 (GCN, March 2003), the picture looks to get worse before it improves. Financing is often tough to come by, so builders have to get creative and competitive with their bidding.

"Financing has been difficult for our

clients," said Quality Grassing general manager Robert Price. "As a result, there has been an increase in joint ventures and partnerships for private investment."

To combat rising insurance premiums, Quality Grassing has also had to get creative, relying on some of those business relationships and staying on top of the situation, Price said.

"Insurance rates continue to rise while our bonding costs have stayed the same, so we have established close relationships with our insurance and bonding agents," he said. "We continue to compare their performance and rates with competitors." ■

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