

Is there anyone who has ever played the game who hasn't had visions of being a golf course architect?

All golfers, from the top of the PGA Tour to the last little youngster in a junior tournament, all have illusions about the golf courses they play and those they would like to play. How often have you glanced out of the car window to see a grassy, wooded meadow and thought what a wonderful little 4 par that would make?

I did the very same thing in my younger days, and I still do. In my case, with a very famous father blazing a legendary trail in front of me, I actually *did* become a golf course architect.

Now that I look at it from the other side, it's amusing to hear the comment of golfers with regard to golf course design and construction. Years ago when Alister Mackenzie and Donald Ross were laying out courses, they would find a receptive piece of ground, a few mules and a drag line and get to work. A little mounding around the tees and greens, finishing work on the putting surfaces, some grass seed and a little water and you had a golf course.

However, in recent times, that has all changed. It often seems like most of the great sites have already been taken. In Japan they literally move mountains. In Hawaii we actually make topsoil out of lava rock. In the deserts of the Southwest we grow grass right out of the sand. In the US and Canadian Rockies we carve fairways right out of granite.

Finding the land is only the start of the puzzle. Then there is the endless permit process, including the EIR (Environmental Impact Report). Modern golf courses are now built to higher standards than ever before, and our private clubs and better public courses are now maintained in better playing condition than the generations before us ever knew. Even under ideal conditions, the design and building of a golf course today is a mammoth undertaking.

In getting ready to open our latest course in Madison, Wisconsin, we pulled together a few statistics and facts which will give an indication of what goes into a course in addition to a little seed, some sand and a few flags. Check these numbers: **Par 72. Hole variety:** five par threes, eight par fours, five par fives. **Length;** Tournament: 6,825 yds. Championship: 6,402 yds. Standard: 5,826 yds. Forward tees: 5,905 yds. **Area statistics;** Acreage: 310 acres, Manicured turf: 110 acres, Average green size: 6,500 sq.feet. Practice putting green size: 14,000 sq.feet. Chipping green size; 8,000 sq.feet. Average tee grouping size: 11,000 sq.feet. Acreage of fairways: 32.5 acres. Acreage of roughs: 71 acres. **Construction Statistics;** Turf laid during construction: 250,000 sq.feet. Irrigation pipe laid: 14.5 miles. Irrigation heads installed: 725 sprinklers. Satellite irrigation controllers: 17. Centralised computer controlled irrigation system: Toro Network 8000. Cartpaths: 21,500 linear feet. Drainage pipe installed: 2.15 miles.

In our company we have four project engineers, all of whom are accredited golf and landscape architects and fine golfers who maintain single figure handicaps. Each is a member of the American Society of Golf Course Architects, a



So you want  
to build a

# GOLF COURSE?

The Berkshire Golf Club under construction in 1928, using horses, manpower and drag lines. A far cry from its higher budgeted neighbour of 1991, Wisley Golf Club

prestigious organisation which promotes and elevates the game in every way possible.

What's the point of all this? It is simply that the specialised construction drawings for grading, drainage, irrigation and the various other details are never seen by the golfer. The blasting and the handpicking of rocks occurs long before the first shot is hit. And the talented people who design and build golf courses are not often visible either.

Those beautifully turfed golf courses that you enjoy are not laid out casually on the back of an envelope. Nor are they the result of pushing a little dirt around and throwing some grass seed on the ground. They are the result of talented and skillful people devoting what is often the better part of three years to plan, design and construct.

So the next time you think about becoming a golf course architect, remember it takes more than just a good golf game. Just as becoming proficient as an expert golfer requires years of play and countless hours on the practice tee, so too is a long apprenticeship needed to be a real golf architect in fact. Just as the great player makes the game look easy, so the best of golf course architects often make their work look easy, too. Don't you believe it. I have a lot of dirty clothes and worn out shoes to prove how tough it really is!

■ The author, Robert Trent Jones Jnr, is the famous son of a famous father, together responsible for the design of hundreds of courses around the world. The new Wisley Golf Club in Surrey, due to be opened this month, is a Robert Trent Jones Jnr creation. Our thanks to Bob Murphy and "Reading The Green" for generousities extended.