

It's amazing what an architect can do with a fertile mind...

And a little bit o' muck

BY BRADLEY S. KLEIN

At the official opening of Weston Hills C.C. last November, a visitor came up to architect Robert Trent Jones, Jr. "Nice piece of rolling terrain, Bobby," he commented. "How'd you find it?"

The globe-trotting son of the world's most famous golf designer turned and smiled. "You should have seen this place a year ago," he said to his anonymous admirer.

Now Bobby can allow himself to look back with pride. His first work in Florida has been a commercial and critical success.

The course, at the intersection of routes I-595 and I-75 at the far west

edge of Fort Lauderdale, is the centerpiece of a 4,000-acre business and residential project under development.

ment by Arvida/JMB Partners. When members of the Robert Trent Jones II Group first arrived on site in 1988, they found a plot of land that looked suspiciously like a swamp. The land ran at an elevation of 4 feet with water sitting at two feet.

"Instead of listening to the land, here we had to create it," says Bobby.

Over the years, Robert Trent Jones, Jr. has listened to a stunning variety of land types. Along the way, he has also sung a few distinctive tunes of his own. Never one to be accused of modesty, he has skillfully utilized one of the fastest and most inventive minds in the trade.

The result has been a body of work encompassing 100 completed projects in two dozen states, 20 countries, and five continents. Another 40 courses are in various stages of planning, construction or grow-in.

He has four project designers, a support staff of eight, and some 40 people working for Greenscape Ltd., an affiliated construction division.

Bobby logs over 150,000 miles per year in the air, and his phone bill alone entitles him to AT&T stock.

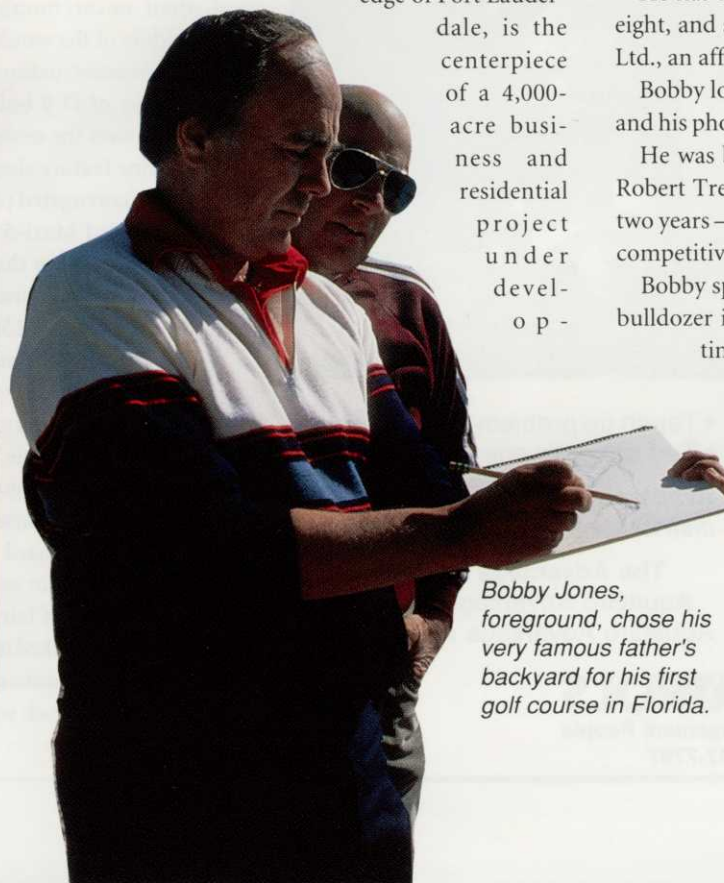
He was born in Montclair, NJ, the eldest son of Robert Trent Jones, Sr. His younger brother — by two years — is Rees Jones. One can only imagine the competitive pressures in such a household.

Bobby spent many a youthful day on a tractor or bulldozer in the company of his father, but by the time he enrolled at Yale in 1957, he had decided to head off in another direction. He took his degree in American Studies, and then spent one unhappy year at Stanford Law School before returning to the family fold as an assistant to his father.

He gradually assumed responsibility for his father's practice throughout the Western U.S. and the Pacific.

Bobby gained the attention of the golf world through his collaboration with his dad on the South Course at

Recipe for Weston Hills: smear 1 million cubic yards of muck over 150 acres of limestone. Shape. Run 30,000 linear feet of corrugated plastic drain pipe and install 1800 irrigation heads. Cover with 9 inches of dredged sand - 150,000 cubic yards. Plant bermudagrass. Add water and stir.



Bobby Jones, foreground, chose his very famous father's backyard for his first golf course in Florida.

Silverado C.C. in Napa, California. He gained a foothold in Japan in the early 1970's through several projects with his father, and in 1972 he left the fold to create his own company, Robert Trent Jones II Group. Initially the company confined itself to the Western and Pacific realms, but with the internationalization of the golf boom in the last few years his company, like many others, has gone worldwide.

Jones is a naturalist by temperament, a firm believer in environmental integrity. In preparation for his many projects in Japan, he read widely on the philosophical foundations of Japanese gardens and landscaping. He has also done striking work in the mountainous terrain of the Rockies: Sun Valley G. C. in Idaho, Arrowhead G.C. in Colorado, and Jackson Hole Golf and Tennis Club in Wyoming have all been routed through rugged country.

At Sugarloaf G.C. in Maine he has cut an astonishingly bold run along the banks of the Carrabassett River, with massive forested peaks looming in every direction.

At Cape Schanck, two hours south of Melbourne, Australia, he has built two courses, one public, the other private, that wend their way over a massive dune that sits atop the Bass Straits.

And in conjunction with Tom Watson and former USGA president Frank "Sandy" Tatum, Bobby transformed a neglected sand mine in Monterey, California, into the Links at Spanish Bay. Through cooperation with the California Coastal Commission, the course now serves as something of an experimental station for dunes reclamation and the cultivation of seaside grasses.

Jones recently served as president of the American Society of Golf Course Architects, where he oversaw a year-long series of panels and a conference in 1990 — held at Spanish Bay — devoted to environmental soundness and water quality management.

Perhaps his single most famous creation is the flowerbed hole — the par-three 16th at SentryWorld in Wisconsin, where 90,000 geraniums and marigolds create a dazzling scene.

Whether at the drawing board or in the field, Bobby is concerned to maximize the beauty of a golf course, even when that requires a certain artifice.

Jones' talents are not exhausted by his design work. He is, for instance, politically engaged — rare for a golf businessman. He was appointed by President Carter to serve on the U.S. delegation to the Conference of Security and Cooperation in Europe that met in Madrid in 1980. He has championed the cause of liberalization in the Soviet Union, and his own personal commitment to detente has been in the form of long protracted negotiations towards his building the Nahabino Golf Course in Moscow.

With all his worldwide activities, however, Bobby Jones, Jr. has been no stranger to the Fort Lauderdale area. Though Weston Hills is his first course in the state, he has spent many weekends and winter months at Coral Ridge C.C., the Fort Lauderdale facility built and owned by his father.

Southern Florida is legendary for its lack of elevation changes. How then, did Jones, Jr. and project designer Gary Linn manage to create such an interesting landscape for Weston Hills?

The answer is Muck Mountain, one million cubic yards of choice fill that had been dug out of the lakes and home sites and then unceremoniously dumped in the middle of the would-be golf course.


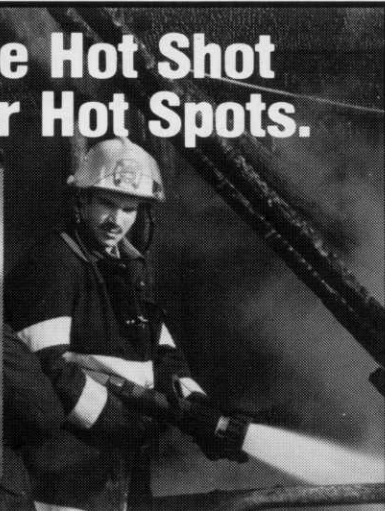
The construction plan was simple: take a convoy of D-9 bulldozers and smear the muck over the underlying limestone. After the fine feature shaping, run 30,000 linear feet of corrugated plastic drain pipe. Install a Rainbird Maxi-5 irrigation system with 1800 heads over the 150 acres. Then cover the entire golf course with a 9-inch layer of dredged sand — 150,000 cubic yards in all. Finally, call in Southern turf, of Tifton, Georgia, to grass the course — Tifdwarf on the greens, 419 bermuda on everything else. Add water and stir.

Presto, a great golf course.

Course superintendent Bob Drake was brought on board in May 1989, just as Muck Mountain was being massaged into rough shape of fairways and mounds. He had earlier worked with architect Karl Litten on several projects, and found Bobby Jones, Jr. easier to work with than he had anticipated.

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"He listened to me," recounts Drake. "Maybe he didn't follow all the advice I offered, but he certainly paid attention."

For their part, both Jones and Gary Linn express admiration for Drake's work throughout.

Says Bobby, "We'd always ask him, can you mow this?"

As a result, says Drake, "the golf course is a little bit easier to maintain than what I first expected. Instead of fly-mowing trap faces, I can use a self-propelled 21-inch mower with a two-cycle engine for the job."

As for design approach, acknowledges Drake, "Bobby is definitely golf-course oriented. He wouldn't compromise his design to facilitate the homes."

Indeed, the success of Weston Hills is that the course fits into the community without having given itself up to frontage lots. Internal space for golf was created through double fairways and generous setbacks.

The par-72 course plays to 5,354 yards

from the red tees and can be stretched to 6,989 yards from the gold. The greens — averaging 6,500 sq. feet are generous enough to accommodate the fickle winds.

Drake maintains the putting surfaces at .130 inch, walk-mowing them four days a week and ride-mowing them the other three days. The tees are also spacious, running from 6,000 to 10,000 sq. feet per hole.

Concrete cart paths run the length of each hole, though Bobby has also designed the course to be walkable. Tunnels, for instance, linking sections of the course are graded at level whereas vehicular roads have been elevated.

Jones is a fervent believer in dry firm turf. "We're after the lean and mean look," he says. That's important in a region where torrential showers are common. Drake claims that the course "can easily take an inch of rain at 4 p.m. and open the next morning with no problems."

There's a definite rhythm to the golf course — a Robert Trent Jones, Jr. trade-

mark. No water comes into play on the opening holes of each nine, but then things get tough as the watery graves progressively intrude upon each hole.

The ninth and 18th holes return in grand style to the clubhouse. They share a sprawling double green, reachable around the respective sides of a lake that divides the two fairways.

The once-barren site is now home to palm, ficus, and oaks. What used to be sandy wasteland has been planted with fountain grass and fakahatchee. It's hard to believe that such rolling, golf ground has been built upon land that not long ago was featureless.

But that is Bobby's special skill.

No one in golf has worked on a greater variety of terrain to create such interesting playing fields. Those who know the "before and after" story of Muck Mountain at Weston Hills have special reason to await Robert Trent Jones, Jr.'s Windsor G.C. in Vero Beach.

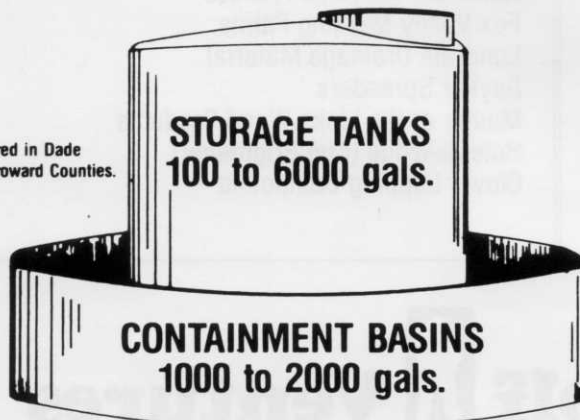
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