

My Top Five Golf Heroes

By Jim Walker

Some superintendents are good golfers and good turf men. Some are not good players but are

As It Lies good turf men. Some are neither and, as Jerry Glanville, former coach of the Houston Oilers told an NFL official: "Do you know what N-F-L stands for? 'Not for Long' if you keep making calls like that!"

As a lifelong golfer who played very well at one time and as a 30-years-plus superintendent who considers himself a good turf man, I wish to express my opinion of who I think are the five greatest players of all time. These players are not in any specific order. They are just who I think are the top five and why.

ARNOLD PALMER came along at just the right time

in golf evolution. Mr. Palmer had it all. He had a powerful game, great charisma, and a magnetic personality. He made every person he looked at feel as though they would have a beer with him later at the local pub. Mr. Palmer did more for golf in its early marketing years than all the others combined. No wonder he is "The King" and rightfully so.

JACK NICKLAUS.

During the height of the Palmer era, Nicklaus came along to challenge Arnie and his Army. During his early antagonist years he was known as "Fat Jack," the gallery openly cheered his miscues and all but booed his great shots. It took years for the stigma to disappear. And even at that, it took maturity, weight loss, and subtle PR for Mr. Nicklaus to gain widespread favor as the Golden Bear with the ardent golf fans. The fact that Mr. Palmer had aged and did not contend in every event he played also helped. Nicklaus's longevity of high-level performance is amazing. Just think about it: he was a force to be reckoned with from the 1962 U.S. Open to the 1986 Masters.

GARY PLAYER is on my list, not only because of his record and great playing ability, but because he was also the first truly international player. A mere

wisp of a man, "Laddie" was the final cog in the wheel known as the "Big Three" during the 60s and 70s. He could hit 4-woods as close as Palmer and Nicklaus hit their 9-irons. His short game - particularly from greenside bunkers - was magical. Couple that with his tenacity of a bulldog and it goes a long way in explaining his success for decades. A great injustice occurred for years on the PGA tour because he was disliked for being a "furriner." Gary Player is a total gentleman and lifelong contributor to growing the game.

ELDRICK "TIGER"

WOODS. Just when golf needed a shot in the arm, especially with minorities, along comes a multi-ethnic young man from California who has taken the world by storm. With an electric smile that can charm the skin off a snake, Tiger has accomplished more in six years as a pro than 99 percent of all the others players who came before him. I will not wax poetic on his mind-boggling talent and records, because he is in the paper, magazines and on TV more than the President of the United States.

ANNIKA SORENSTAM.

Talk about an area of our game that needs help more than the Boston Braves needed Warren Spahn and Johnny Sain, and it's the LPGA tour. I'm not even sure if this best female player of all time can breathe life into this comatose traveling sideshow. It seemed her playing at the Colonial this year got more press coverage than the Gulf War, but no one died because of it except maybe Vijay Singh.

Forty-four victories, all the major titles and thirteen wins worldwide last year say all you need to know about Annika... except she made a liar out of me by shooting 71 - 74 on one of the toughest tests the tour sees each year. Perhaps Annika can pioneer more events that would feature the top 20 ladies and men in some friendly multimillion-dollar tournaments. I loved the former J.C. Penny Classic and the ongoing Three Tour Challenge featuring three PGA, three Senior PGA and three LPGA pros going at it. You just go girl!!

That's it for me. I'm looking for reactions and comments about what you think, up or down. Call me at (305) 256-9840 or fax me at (305) 945-3428. Any interesting comments will appear in the next issue.

Farewell, My Friend

By Mark Jarrell, CGCS

It has been the saddest and most tragic of years - we have lost so many friends and colleagues. One more memorial tribute is due.

Six months ago I was writing in this column about how happy I was to see the publication of *Gentleman Joe Lee*, a book chronicling the accomplishments and design philosophy of Mr. Joseph L. Lee, the most prolific designer of golf courses in the state of Florida and a friend and supporter of all golf course superintendents. Mr. Lee once told me that had he not had the good fortune of success as a golf course designer, then he would have liked to have become a golf course superintendent.

Today I am sad and numb, writing a final tribute to a mentor, role model, and dear friend I've known for 34 years. Joseph Lewis Lee passed away April 22, 2003, at the age of 81 years, leaving a legacy of about 250 original designs and 500 total projects in his 50-year career. While his health had been up and down for over two years from fluid filling his lungs and various derivative problems, his passing of congestive heart failure still blindsided me. Not for a minute

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Joe Lee, left, with Ron Whitten, senior editor of architecture for *Golf Digest* and *Golf World* magazines and author of "Gentleman Joe Lee, 50 Years of Golf Design" at Lee's book-signing dinner at Palm Beach National GC in November.

Press Clippings

Golf Publication Lauds Hilaman, Gaither Courses

By Don Veller

Florida Green is a magazine published by the Florida Golf Course Superintendents Association and comes out four times a year. The spring edition has a cover story on the Hilaman and Jake Gaither courses. The magazine ran several photos of the courses and talked at length about the two-course superintendent Jeff Heggen.

Also mentioned are Tallahassee Director of Recreation Randy Truesdale, Director of Golf Bill Zimmer and Alan James veteran pro at Jake Gaither.

Hilaman, which opened in 1971 as Winewood, was designed by Ed Packard. Gaither, a nine-hole course opened in 1956.

Hilaman and Gaither are best described in the magazine by this quotation: "Tallahassee is an island of golf opportunity located at a point where the state's peninsula takes a left turn into the panhandle."

Tallahasseeans are lucky to have both courses.

Editor's Note: Mike Goldie faxed me this article about the Spring Florida Green Cover Story that was part of Don Veller's Golf Column in the Tallahassee Democrat.

did I believe that his strength and determination, and modern medical science, wouldn't be enough to get him back on the golf course playing, designing, or sharing his vast knowledge of the game and profession he loved.

Joe's strength was quiet and unassuming - running silent and deep like the German submarines he monitored in the Mediterranean during World War II. His integrity and serene nature won over all but the most obnoxious of egos. He was like the eye of a hurricane during the heated discussions that often took place during the planning or implementation of one of his projects.

Joe used to say that one of the things he liked best about golf was the quality of the people who were involved with it. In my humble opinion, he is the gold standard against which all others are measured. He leaves a remarkable record of professional achievement, but he leaves an even more astonishing record of lives influenced. He was my hero, and I shall miss him, but his influence was such that he will always be with me.

While always smiling and upbeat, one comment 13 days before his passing revealed just how weary he was of the unremitting struggle to just draw breath and do the day-to-day activities we all take for granted. He told Mr. Robert E. Rich, his best friend and owner of Palm Beach National, "Bob, I can't even walk around this table without getting tired and out of breath. That's no way to live. If we can't figure out what's wrong, then... I don't know."

I think Joe had finally had enough, picking his ball up and putting it in his pocket, not because the bunkers were too deep or the rough too long, but because it had just gotten too dark to continue play. If there are golf courses in heaven, as all who play the game want to believe, then Joe Lee has replaced Donald Ross as Senior Designer, and is currently remodeling The Links of Paradise.

Editor's Note: The book, "Gentleman Joe Lee - 50 Years of Golf Design" by Ron Whitten, is not for sale in book stores. It may be obtained from the Joe Lee Scholarship Foundation, P. O. Box 1270, Boynton Beach, FL, 33425. A \$50 donation to the scholarship fund is suggested.

2002 Photo Contest Results

This is part 4 of presenting the 4 category winners of the 2002 photo contest.

Category 3 - Native Areas: includes native plants including trees, shrubs and grasses used in naturalized areas and aquatic vegetation plantings to create habitat and protect water quality.

First Place - "Florida Cactus" Jason DiMartino, Audubon C.C., Naples.

Second Place - "Cypress and Palms" by Tom Biggy, Bent Tree C. C., Sarasota.

2003 Photo Contest Rules

Category 1 - Wildlife on the course: includes any critter on the course that walks flies, swims, slithers or crawls.

Category 2 - Formal Landscaping: includes annuals and ornamental shrubs and trees planted in formal beds on the course or club entrance.

Category 3 - Native Areas: includes beds of native plants including trees, shrubs and grasses used in naturalized areas to reduce turf inputs and aquatic vegetation plantings used to create habitat and protect water quality.

Category 4 - Scenic Hole: includes any view of a golf hole (panoramic or close up) that demonstrates the scenic beauty of a golf course.

Easy Rules

1. Color prints or slides. Prefer prints. Only one entry per category. There are too many variables affecting publication quality to permit digital entries at this time.



2. Photo must be taken on an FGCSA member's course. Photo must be taken by an FGCSA member or a member of his staff.

3. Attach a label on the back of the print or slide which identifies the category, course and photographer. **DO NOT WRITE DIRECTLY ON THE BACK OF THE PRINT.** Each print shall be attached to an 8.5" x 11" sheet of paper using a loop of masking tape on the back of the print. Slides should be in plastic sleeves for easy access for viewing.

4. A caption identifying the category, course and photographer should be typed or printed on the sheet of paper below the mounted print.

5. Judging will be done by a panel of FGCSA members not participating in the contest.

6. Mail entries in a bend-proof package marked "PHOTOS. DO NOT BEND" to Joel Jackson, 6780 Tamarind Circle, Orlando, 32819. Entries postmarked after August 1, 2003 will be automatically entered in the 2004 Photo Contest.

First Place

"Florida Cactus"

Jason DiMartino

Audubon C.C., Naples.



Second Place

"Cypress and Palms"

Tom Biggy

Bent Tree C. C.

Sarasota.

Operation Mountain Lake

By Joel Jackson, CGCS

This is Joel Jackson aboard a beer-laden Club Car reporting live from Lake Wales. I am imbedded with the Ridge

Green Side Up



Runners detachment of the Ridge Chapter Coalition as they make their way up Alt. 17 to occupy the Mountain Lake Golf Course. I was asked to fill in for Geraldo Rivera who was forced to leave

Polk County after revealing how many cases of beer had been purchased for the Ridge golf outing.

This first-ever media eyewitness report on the actual implementation of the notorious and infamous "Ridge Rules" in action is not recommended reading for dues-paying members of the USGA or their staff members. In fact, USGA Green Section Agronomist Todd Lowe left immediately after lunch before the first tee shot was struck. When I inquired why he was leaving in such haste, "Don't ask. Don't tell," he shouted as he ran to his car.

To give you a sense of the clear and present danger of a Ridge Runner golf outing, the game being played that day was "Best Two Net Scores" of each foursome. Our foursome contained five people, a fact that seemed to escape team captain Bobby "RPG" Ellis. The RPG stands for "Ridge Putt Gimme." The other members of our "foursome" were in order of rank: Alan "MOAS" Puckett - MOAS means "Mother of All Slices"; Tom "Bunker Buster" Barnett; Billy "Stealth Bomber" Card and me, "Three Putt" Jackson.

Captain Ellis gave early indications of how the Ridge Rules are used to alter the normally accept-



Ridge sand wedge. Photo by Joel Jackson

ed Geneva Convention Rules of Civilized Golf when he hit two or three tee shots on the first hole until he kept one in play. When I asked about the fairly obvious violation, he merely said he was invoking the "Multiple Mulligan" section of the Ridge Rules. Since both Ellis and Puckett are past presidents of the Ridge GCSA, I learned they are entitled to "Double Secret" rule bending.

On the second hole, when Ellis hooked his ball out of bounds, I asked if he wanted to reload. He said, "That ball is playable. Ridge Rules define out-of-bounds as a ball hit out of Polk County." Another rule he invoked often, which led to his nickname, was the "RPG" or Ridge Putt Gimme. RPGs ranged from 6 inches to 6 feet depending on his score needed on a particular hole. He never scored less than net par on a hole.

"MOAS" Puckett was devastating on the tee box. He would take dead aim left and a big divot (read crater) after firing his 580mm TaylorMade Cannon on a trajectory that looked a lot like a drunken Australian throwing a boomerang. Only once did the ball and his divots fail to make it to the fairway and that was on our last hole. Puckett proceeded to demolish two 80-year-old oak trees and two fairway bunkers with four mighty whacks plus his tee shot enroute to the front approach of the green and promptly got up and down with a three-putt for a Ridge Five. You do the math.

One of the most prodigious displays of high-tech ordinance came from my cart partner "Bunker Buster" Barnett. Using a laser-guided driver and fully automatic 7-wood, Barnett displayed the uncanny accuracy of his clubs by hitting a fairway and greenside bunker on every hole. Even though the bunkers had recently been fortified by architect Brian

Silva, he destroyed them easily. Captain Ellis showed me how to conquer them by using the patented Ridge Sand Wedge. See the accompanying photo. This club makes Peter Kessler's Perfect Club obsolete.

Billy "Stealth Bomber" Card had the most accurate artillery and constantly bracketed the middle of the fairways 300 yards down-range. If the other players chlidipped a drive or hit it so far off line that it would require too much time and effort to get back in play, we simply played scramble format and dropped within in club length of Card's ball. Ellis assured me this was entirely legal since it kept up the pace of play, which was vitally important to our coalition's timetable, since happy hour was going to be on an abbreviated timeline.

Puckett and Ellis also employed various diversionary tactics like dialing up each others cell phones to ring in the middle of a competitor's backswing. When it was impossible to get the timing down on the phones, they would simply talk, tell jokes and laugh just loud enough to be heard. Another effective tactic was to place numerous empty beer bottles in the dash compartments of the golf cart and swerve down the fairway at high speeds to creating distracting clanking sounds.

At the end of the day, after all that effort to shape and manage the rub of the green in our favor, we each ended up paying five bucks to the real golfers - "Wolfman" Hopkins and Scooter Scamehorn and another golfer whose name is classified (he does the Ridge wet work - code name, Water Hazard). Their "foursome" only had three people. Hey, Ridge Rules.

This is Joel Jackson reporting for Florida Green News from somewhere near Lake Wales.

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