

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.