

# Best Architect in History: It's Ross hands down

BY PETER BLAIS

Donald Ross and Alister Mackenzie were selected the top two architects in history in Golf Course News' survey of course designers.

The Scot Ross and Brit Mackenzie finished with 19-1/2 and 12 votes, respectively, among the 46 present-day architects responding.

Others receiving multiple votes were A.W. Tillinghast (5), Robert Trent Jones Sr. (4), Dick Wilson (2) and Stanley Thompson (2). Jones is the only living member of the six.

"He's generally considered the grand master," conceded Geoffrey



Donald Ross

S. Cornish, co-author of the historical text "The Golf Course," who cast his own ballot for Ross' countryman Thompson.

"He built wonderfully playable courses. He did what architects strive for today — to build a challenging course for the pros that can also provide a relaxing round for the average golfer."

Ross supporters pointed to the "naturalness" of his courses which were built in harmony with the surrounding landscape.

"He was one of the best at blending his work in with the surroundings," said Edward M. Beidel of

Hassenplug Associates, Inc. "I played Pinehurst No. 2 recently and that just confirmed my belief."

Of the approximately 600 courses it's believed Ross designed, Pinehurst No. 2 was his favorite. He lived along the course most of his life and constantly tinkered with it, trying to get it perfect.

"I've played more Ross courses than anything else," said Thomas E. Clark of Ault, Clark & Associates. "Of all of them, I think I enjoyed Pinehurst No. 2 the most. So many architects and pros seem to think it has the best greens and layouts in the country, especially

**'He built wonderfully playable courses.'**  
— Geoffrey Cornish

the greens. It's a course you have to play several times to really appreciate."

"His courses emphasized strategy and playability," explained Arthur L. Davis. "He provided an opportunity for choice in shot-making that balanced a course so that the good and the average player could compete and enjoy themselves."

Many of Ross' courses have been tampered with over the years. But there is a movement afoot to restore them to their original layout or in line with Ross' philosophy.

"H.S. Colt believed great golf courses continued to live over time," said Cornish, quoting one of the best-known English designers. "Ross built very natural courses that have continued to live."

While Ross confined his artistry mainly to the United States and Canada, Mackenzie's canvas was the world. Mackenzie designs can be found on four continents.

"He was the first globetrotter," said Cornish.

However, he is perhaps best known for two U.S. courses. "I'm basing my decision mainly on two courses, Augusta National and Cypress Point," said Earl Stone.

Gary A. Panks of Graham/Panks International cited another Mackenzie effort, Royal Melbourne G.C. "It's rated by many as the best 36 (holes) in the world. He was a master at harmonizing his work with the environment," said Panks.

Harmonizing sometimes meant camouflaging to Mackenzie, who developed camouflage techniques as a member of the British Royal Engineers during World War I.

"A bunker will look like it's right up next to a green on some of his holes. But when you get up to it you find it's still 20 yards away," said Cornish.

Mackenzie and Thompson were also the first designers to incorporate the five basics of landscape architecture — harmony, proportion, balance, rhythm and emphasis — according to Cornish.

Among the other top selections, Tillinghast and Wilson were both born in Philadelphia. Tillinghast designed Winged Foot in Mamaroneck, N.Y., and Baltusrol in Springfield, N.J. Wilson was the architect of Indian Creek Club in Miami Beach and West Palm Beach Country Club.

Thompson worked throughout the world, but may be best known for his masterpieces Banff Springs and Jasper Park in the Canadian Rockies. He trained the English-born Jones, who later became his partner.

The first recipient of the American Society of Golf Course Architects' Donald Ross Award for outstanding contributions in the field, Jones has designed hundreds of courses throughout the world.



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