

'low-cost muni' courses

of legendary architect Pete Dye.

"The cost of the land is the biggie. You can control the construction costs. Sure you can't build a \$3 million course on a swamp two feet below sea level in Jacksonville (Fla.), or on a rock pile for that amount. But given a fair piece of land, and by trying to keep your earth moving to a minimum, you can easily build a golf course for \$2-1/2 million. And you can build a good, functional clubhouse for \$500,000.

"Then, at \$25 a clip, if you play 40,000 rounds a year, that's \$1 million. You spend \$400,000 or

\$500,000 on maintenance and the thing makes a half-million per year. And you haven't sold your first sandwiches or Budweiser, yet."

Dye's \$250,000 fee is modest compared to many architects (Jack Nicklaus charges \$1 million for instance) and considering the family name.

"I think I can build a golf course cheaper than most people. And I can do it because I don't have plans. I don't do drawings. I'll use conceptual routing plans. And I'll do whatever needs to be done for the county and local agencies. After that, the people I work with are all

golfers. They all have degrees in agronomy. And we go out there and build a course that's easy to maintain. We're not trying to build a PGA West. But we're not out there building 18 bowling alleys either. We're out there to build 18 good golf holes."

With computers, high-tech equipment, specialized golf construction companies and a staff of various experts becoming the norm at many architectural firms, Dye is a throwback to another era.

"Nobody enjoys building a course more than I do. Working with the bulldozer operators, it's

just great. The engineers and land planners are a pain-in-the-butt. But the people actually on site building them, we have fun. I'm taking 20 people over to Scotland this year, all bulldozer operators, or golfers who happen to run bulldozers I should say. All they'll do is come back with more ideas. It will benefit me," he said.

"My talent lies with a bulldozer. I was raised on a bulldozer. I started on a bulldozer when I was 8 and now I'm 34. And I really know how to work with the people running the heavy equipment.

"Those are the people that get

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the work done. All the pencil pushers in the world, and engineers and all that stuff, aren't worth two beans unless you have the cooperation of that guy with the diesel all over his shirt. That computer doesn't build that golf course. When the bulldozer guy out there in the woods comes up on a magnificent 150-year-old oak, he (hopefully) says 'Maybe I should go around this thing and ask somebody.' Well if it's on a computer readout, that tree is gone. The human element is what makes the Dye difference."

Dye also keeps his costs low by maintaining a small staff and using mostly local rather than imported labor.

"I don't have any payroll," said Dye, who shares an office with a part-time secretary. "I built eight courses last year at an average of \$4 million each. That's \$32 million and I didn't have any payroll.

"Whenever I go some place, whoever is building the course pays for everything. I charge a flat fee and the work just gets done. The main reason is we use local help. I don't have a construction company I take from Florida to North Carolina to Chicago. I just go out there, put one person on the job and hire local people.

"The first thing I do is find a farmer who moves dirt and talk to him. I'm not going to bring up a person from Florida because he's going to have to sit there and learn something that someone who's been working up there 20 years already knows," Dye said.

"And you always end up somehow getting some great talent. The on-site supervisor is the whole key. Those are the people I haul over to Scotland. Those are the people I send to the job site. When you just bring in one or two guys to do the shaping and hire the rest local, it just works out better.

"But a lot of guys will sub the job to established golf course builders. Those guys will bring in 60 percent of the crew and hire just 40 percent, where I'll do 98 percent local and just two percent foreigners. It's kept me out of hock."

Land change OK'd for course

The Harmony Township, Pa., Planning Board has approved an ordinance allowing land used for a public golf course to fulfill open-space requirements in a proposed 434-acre development.

Buttonwood Country Club Inc. of Harmony sought the ordinance. The board told Buttonwood it must build the development on a minimum of 250 acres, with a minimum of 110 acres for the 18-hole golf course.

The town's planner, John Madden, told officials the course would be an ideal way to preserve open space.

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