

# Forward to the past

## Course architects push for a return to traditional design

By Mark Leslie

"Tradition is history ... and we're adamantly traditional," says golf course architect Gary Panks.

Tradition is on the rebound, says colleague Rees Jones.

"Tradition has been lost," retorts Pete Dye, considered by some the ultimate traditionalist and by others the consummate renegade.

Even as many in the golf world have bemoaned the passing of "traditionally" designed golf courses the last 20 or so years, architects are either returning to that look or redefining the word.

"It's time we kicked out a few windows and let in some fresh air... and go back to tradition," said architect Jay Morrish, who works with former Tour golfer Tom Weiskopf. "Dings, dents and dimples everywhere may be a thing of the past."

The definition of "traditional" itself is critical to the discussion.

Most agree it is defined at least as much by how a course plays as how it looks.

Morrish said the old-time "masters" designed courses to force the golfer to use all his clubs. "You can usually bounce the ball to a portion of most of their greens," he said.

"These architects would allow you to play to your strengths rather than dictate the kind of shots you had to hit to the green. Think of Augusta National and the trouble around the greens. Many times you have three options to play on a hole: You can chip it, pitch it, or put it.

"But on the modern courses, if you miss the green you reach for a wedge... So that was removed, and that is what I refer to as the traditional part of the game."

Jones said, "Basically, the definition of traditional would be that it uses the site as it lays to its optimum rather than forces a course onto the site and builds greens where they shouldn't be built. That's why you have the old traditional courses because when people looked at sites they would look at five or 10 and pick the ideal one... They found the site that was the easiest to build on, that would need the least amount of earth work, that was the most natural in many cases. Today there isn't that much choice of sites."

Jones said the traditional courses "were built in valleys. When you looked for that ideal site you found a receptive landing area. It would



Photo by Bob Spiwak



Photo by Peter Blais

Pete Dye was asked to design PGA West in La Quinta, Calif., above and to the left, to be the toughest course in the world. Features he used to accomplish just that included a sand trap close to 20 feet below the green, and traps that on some holes ran hundreds of yards long.

be a little concave, like the links courses in which they built all the holes in valleys. They contained your shots better. They allowed

you to bounce the ball on (the green) rather than hitting smack into a wall if you hit it short.

"The architects used to build

ramps into the greens. They'd lose their grass in the summertime because they didn't have automatic irrigation and the grasses were

## Some claim developers share 'blame' for circus courses

Developers share the blame with golf course designers for courses loaded with contrived features and that are too difficult for the average golfer, say architects.


"They'll (developers) tell you, 'I want greatest, most beautiful golf course' in the state of Arizona, or Australia, wherever you are," said Gary Panks of Graham/Panks International in Scottsdale, Ariz.

Architect Rees Jones of Montclair, N.J., explained: "Developers are trying to get their courses rated highly. And hard is thought to be good."

In the case of PGA West, for which Landmark Land Co. asked Pete Dye to design the world's most difficult course, Jones said: "That wasn't a bad idea because they have five other courses. And it was the standard-bearer of the project and drew people. But it is not the type of diet you want every day."

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