

Retaining your team: Palmer has know-how

Ed Seay, the head of Arnold Palmer's design team for more than two decades, agrees that ego and the ability to flex one's imagination are major factors in lead designers leaving firms to go it on their own. But he feels his boss and partner holds the key to keeping both "the figurehead" and lead designer satisfied.

"Arnold's a remarkable guy. He speaks in a lot of 'we's.' A lot of other guys speak in a lot of 'I's.' We are a team," Seay said. The attrition rate at Palmer Course Design Co. over 22 years: One.

"We have a lot of camaraderie and respect for one another — for our receptionist as much as me. Also, it appears as though we are very laid back, but everyone has a very high degree of urgency," Seay said. "Arnold has never ever given me one reason to regret the partnership."

Yet, accolades from the boss don't always keep the forces under the corporate umbrella. One colleague said Robert Trent Jones Jr. "was always very good at promoting the people under him. He's been quick to give credit where it belonged."

Nevertheless, a number of lead designers have struck out on their own from the Robert Trent Jones II International covering.

Bob Cupp, who formed his own company in 1985, expects his "Three Musketeers" team never to break up. He said doing projects with agronomist Billy Fuller and construction coordinator Jimmie Griffin "is just wonderful. When you add in John Fought in our Western office, it's more fun than we should be entitled to have."

A financial twist if sweetens the fun factor. Cupp and Kite Golf Enterprises partner Tom Kite have established that on projects for



Ed Seay, above, and his partner, Arnold Palmer

which they secure the funding, they have the management rights. "Everybody in our crew has a piece of that," he said. "If they leave, they lose it."



Apprenticeship and teamwork

The days of the apprenticeship are long past in almost all professions. Golf course design is an exception, said Ed Seay of Palmer Course Design Co.

"Art Hills, Ken Killian, Dick Nugent, Gary Kern, Larry Packard — they all came out of Robert Bruce Harris' office," he said. Ronald Fream, J. Michael Poellot, Gary Roger Baird, Mark Rathert and Jerry Martin have apprenticed with Robert Trent Jones Jr.

Larger firms all have spawned

protege of some renown.

It all shows, said Seay, that building a golf course is a cooperative effort.

"The Palmers, Hurdzans, Players, Hills, Dyes — those of us who are active — have a lot of guys turning these [golf courses] around and getting it done."

"I believe all golf courses are team efforts," agreed architect Rees Jones. "No one architect does it all. Greg Muirhead and Steve Weisser in my office work hand-and-hand with me on designs. Austin Gibson and Clyde Hall run my jobs. We all have a focus and the same concepts."

The man behind the man

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After all, notoriety usually stops at a firm's letterhead.

"I've thrived and enjoyed it. It's been a comfortable relationship for me," said Rulewich, who for 30 years has been a lead project designer for 86-year-old Robert Trent Jones. "I've had opportunities to break away... But, probably for lack of initiative and ego, I chose not to."

"Mr. Jones created opportunities for me and other people to get to work on some great projects, and I was content to do that."

Asked if he resented not getting public recognition for his work on Jones courses, Rulewich said: "Not really. I guess I've never had the ego to feel that that's what I had to do."

"I've never pursued [the idea of leaving Fazio]," said Banfield, who has been on the Fazio payroll for 20 years. "Every project is exciting and evolves to the next one. If you're on your own, you have the responsibilities of being a businessman. Tom has to wear so many hats."

"What is success or fame but satisfaction? I have that now. I'm sure people at times would like the recognition. But I'm thankful to be where I am."

Any lesser amount of recognition he may have received over the years hasn't fazed Ed Seay, the main man in the "design" of Palmer Course Design Co. for 22 years

"The [course] owner chooses to market a 'Palmer design.' Down the line, it's 'Palmer-Seay.' That's a marketing issue," Seay said, adding: "Arnold is very generous in his accolades to me and others in the company."

Asked if he had considered leaving Rees Jones' firm, for which he has worked for nine years, Greg Muirhead said, "No, there's still a lot to learn."

Besides, he added: "It's a lot of fun and we do get to put our own

signatures and flair into each course. I look at all the ones I'm involved with and feel I had a big part in each one — from devising the routing to making it happen in the field.

"The recognition is nice but I think we all realize people hired our firm because of the guy's name on the door. He's built the reputation and that's what they're buying. Plus Rees is always free in giving us public credit."

"The bottom line is that what I really love to do is design," said Don Knott, who has worked for nearly

two decades with Robert Trent Jones Jr. "I haven't wanted to get into a position where I'd be running a company and spending most of my time doing public relations, sales, personnel management, collecting bills, and all those things..."

"I'm in a position where we get great clients, particularly good sites and I can concentrate most of my energies on how to design and produce a better golf course or better golf hole."

Asked how he has been able to disregard the fame that comes with headline designers, Knott said: "You have to have the right personality. There are clearly a lot of guys who have come out [of companies] who want their names in lights. In that case, they have to do their own thing. To me, it's not essential. To me, it's how good the golf course is. In 50 years 90 percent of the golfers aren't going to know who built the course. They will only know if it's fun to play and if they like it."

"For some reason we've managed to put together a staff that's happy doing their design work," he added. "The real internal satisfaction of all



Don Knott

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CREEPING BENTGRASSES

PennLinks



Doug Kucera
Assistant

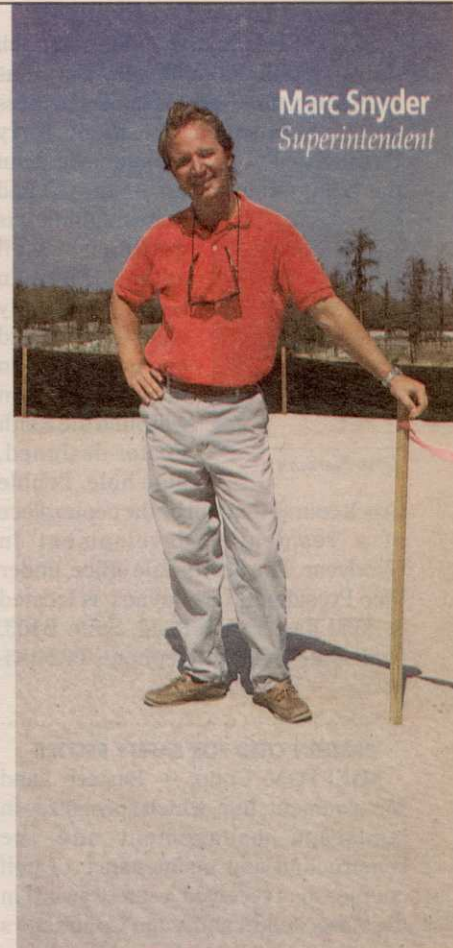
Mike Cantwell
Superintendent

Gateway Golf Club
Fort Myers, FL
Tom Fazio, Architect

"Before overseeding, we verticut the bermudagrass base to the soil line. We then spread 3 pounds per thousand of Penncross in one direction, 3 pounds of Penneagle in another and 12 pounds of *Poa triv* in yet another. We've been doing this for five years and our putting surfaces have been consistent every time.

"Our greens stand out like emeralds when the surrounding bermuda goes dormant."

Michael J Cantwell



Marc Snyder
Superintendent

Fox Hollow Golf Club
Odessa, FL
Robert Trent Jones, Sr., Architect

"Our goal is to create an upscale public golf course to serve a wide range of golfers from beginners to professionals.

"Based on my satisfaction with Penncross and the reputation of all the Penn bents, I'll use PennLinks as the primary component in my bent/*Poa trivialis* mixture when I overseed this fall. With PennLinks' improved performance and upright growth habit, I expect the greens to be outstanding the entire winter season."

Marc Snyder

Savvy Superintendents Specify