



# Best of the Best

Golf Course News  
proudly presents its  
maintenance, design  
and construction  
awards for 1993

Best Maintained Course on LPGA Tour

## Mission, accomplished

By HAL PHILLIPS

PALMS SPRINGS, Calif. — Members of the Ladies Professional Golf Association (LPGA), like any touring pros, are choosy about course conditioning. When you play the nation's top tracks week after week, your standards are understandably high.

However, the condition of Mission Hills Country Club — site of the LPGA Dinah Shore Classic — met or exceeded those lofty standards. In an exclusive *Golf Course News* poll of Tour players, Mission Hills was named the Best Maintained Course on the LPGA Tour for 1993.

"We try to keep everybody happy," said Director of Maintenance

David Johnson. "We overseed in October, so by March, the course is in primo condition."

*Golf Course News* surveyed the 100 LPGA Tour players who played at least 22 events during the 1993 season. The Old Course at Mission Hills received 54 percent of the votes cast, while Columbia Edgewater Country Club in Portland, Ore. — home to the Ping-Cellular One LPGA Golf Championship — and Dupont Country Club in Wilmington, Del. — home to the McDonald's LPGA Championship — finished second, in a near dead heat.

The players heaped praise on the condition of Mission Hills.

Continued on page 57



LPGA Tour players chose Mission Hills' Old Course, home to the Dinah Shore Classic, as the Tour's best maintained course.

## R.M. Graves turns 18.9 handicap to his advantage

By PETER BLAIS

Few golf course architects would have you know they can't consistently nail the green from 200 yards with an easy 3-iron or drain any putt within 15 feet.

Not so Robert Muir Graves.

The 63-year-old, Walnut Creek, Calif.-based designer is proud of his 18.9 handicap.

"In fact, it's come down three to four strokes in the past year," he said. "I've backed off the business a bit lately and spent more time on the golf course. I've been practicing quite a bit. I'll bet there are three or four guys in the ASGCA [American Society of Golf Course Architects] I could even whip now."

Not that you'd ever get them to admit it.

In the competitive world of golf course design, many of the craft's practitioners believe potential clients expect them to be able to stay within a few strokes of Jack Nicklaus. If the truth were known, they fear it might cost them business.

Graves doesn't buy it. He simply laughed when informed he had received more votes than anyone else from his peers in a recent *Golf Course News* survey asking who was the *worst* golfer among professionally trained golf course architects.

If anything, being an average golfer has been a selling point Graves has used to bolster business.

"Thirty years ago, I graphed

Continued on page 55



Glenmore Country Club, a John LaFoy design in Charlottesville Va., was constructed by Landscapes Unlimited and opened in 1992.

## Builder of the Year

### Two in a row for Landscapes

By MARK LESLIE

LINCOLN, Neb. — Dedication to high-quality construction and commitment to pleasing its clients have propelled Landscapes Unlimited, Inc. to its second consecutive distinction as Builder of the Year.

In a poll of architects conducted by *Golf Course News*, Landscapes Unlimited edged out a handful of nominees for the honor, including Wadsworth Golf Construction Co., which won the award the first three years before Landscapes took it last year. Other multiple nominees were Guettler & Sons, Inc. of Fort Pierce, Fla.; Paul Clute & Associates, Inc. of Hartland, Mich.; Central Florida Turf of Avon Park, Fla.; Fairway Construction of Temecula, Calif.; American Golf Course Construction, Inc. of Plano, Texas; and Pavelec Brothers Golf Course Construction of Nutley, N.J.

Selection of the winner was based on surveys of clients, who were asked to rate construction based on quality, budget, deadlines, personnel, and the end result.

"This company is the best in the industry from top to bottom,"

Continued on page 55

## Architect of the Year

### Fazio team, led by Banfield, lays claim to architect honors

By MARK LESLIE

One for all and all for one. That's the maxim at Tom Fazio's golf design company, where Fazio himself and Andy Banfield are the architects' and builders' choices as 1993's Best Architect and Best Associate, respectively.

Fazio laid claim to Best Architect for the fifth time in the award's five-year life, winning more than 20 percent of the votes cast in the annual *Golf Course News* poll.

This was the only year the poll has asked who is the best architect who is not a principal in his/her own firm. The strength of Fazio's design team was illustrated by nearly 20 percent of the ballots being cast for Banfield and 40 percent naming Banfield, Tom Marzolf, Dennis Wise or Jan

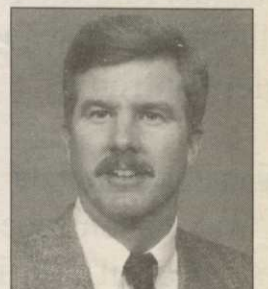
Beljan — all Fazio associates.

"The secret of my success is my staff. They're all so different and it's not unusual for me to have them all involved in one project," Fazio said. "Our main strength is we have the talent and can spend the time to have detail on each project. They have enthusiasm, energy and desire, and they work hard at it."

"It's important for me to have variety. If you have different opinions and ideas, you get that."

"There are so many good people with our company," said Banfield, who joined the firm 20 years ago when George Fazio was the lead architect. "Tom says we have to do something unique and creative, to try to create memorability on a

Continued on page 56



The Tom Fazio team of architects is loaded with talented lieutenants, including (clockwise from top right), Tom Marzolf, Dennis Wise, Jan Beljan, Andy Banfield and the big boss, Tom Fazio.





## Best of the Best

### Banfield honored

Continued from previous page

His first five years with Fazio, he followed famed shaper Lou Cappelli around "like a puppy dog," learning how to box off tees and build fairways, all the while raking bunkers — anything and everything that needed doing.

But the hook, Banfield said, was when he climbed atop a bulldozer after work hours "just to get the experience and to create.

"It was a tool to create art. And when I started doing that, I was hooked," Banfield said. "I gradually got to where I was doing more of it. And, finally, they trusted me to shape Jupiter Hills."

What sets him apart from other lead designers?

"Working for Tom Fazio — no question about it," Banfield said. "That also means the entire organization."

From the Fazios, he learned shot values and how to devise playable courses for all golfers. From Cappelli, he learned the angling of greens and placement of bunkers. Basically, it all means "doing solid golf course design — a blend of playability and challenge," he said.

Banfield's key aim, he said, is "making the project look as natural as possible. We work at producing a golfing environment. Tom always wants us to be aware of the feel of the project. As a designer you can frame holes, use vistas and experiences. We try to create as much peacefulness and solitude as well as excitement as possible on a piece of property."

His favorite courses he has worked on? Shadow Creek in Las Vegas, The Vintage Club in Indian Wells, Calif., and Wild Dunes in Isle of Palms, S.C.

Banfield's strength, Fazio said, is "certainly imagination in all aspects, certainly detail, and a real love for the game of golf. Green shaping and bunkering are only a minor part of it.

"If Andy has one weakness it would be that he is hard-core about quality golf. Whether it is development issues or other constraints, he won't back away from quality golf.

"Working with team members, planners and other architects, Andy may have the reputation of being too hard-nosed and self-centered on golf. Some of the contractors will say they love him and he's talented, but he's always changing his mind.

"I call it the perfectionist looking to get more detail, to get it right."

## LPGA Tour players name Mission Hills best kept course

Continued from page 53

According to Shirley Furlong, its greens are "always pure as the driven snow." Colleen Walker said, "The fairways are cut close; rough is cut all the same height; and greens are smooth and quick."

Michelle McGann couldn't say enough: "Every part of the course was in excellent shape!"

While Mission Hills is a 54-hole resort, the Old Course — designed by Desmond Muirhead — is exclusive home to the Dinah Shore and handles 50,000 rounds a year.

Johnson oversees mainte-

nance at all three courses, but he credits Old Course Foreman Assistant Pablo Lua with day-to-day upkeep. Johnson also made sure to credit his mechanic, Raul Rodriguez, who keeps the operation running smoothly.

Johnson maintains he doesn't do anything that special to prepare the course for tournament play: Narrow the fairways a bit, speed up the greens, lower the fairways, etc.

"We stripe up the fairways starting about four weeks in advance," he said. "The hardest thing is preparing for the unforeseen: A wind storm, rain

storm or a hydraulic leak on the 18th green.

"We had a hydraulic leak a few years back, but it was on the fourth hole — luckily, not a TV hole. We also have a lot of geese, ducks and mudhens who love to eat ryegrass."

Johnson is something of a *wunderkind*: just 34 years old and director of maintenance at the permanent home of an LPGA Grand Slam event. He's from Sheboygan, Mich., and matriculated to the highly respected turfgrass management program at Michigan State.

After graduating in 1985, he

took an assistant's job at Inverness in Toledo before accepting a similar position at Mission Hills' Palmer course. He was named head superintendent at the Old Course in 1988 and director of maintenance in 1991.

There are still mountains to climb, however.

"I would like to have a U.S. Open someday: men's, women's, senior — I don't care," he explained. "I'd really like to work with the USGA on a tournament. I enjoy the challenge of hosting a regular tournament, though. It makes every year exciting."

# Looking for a new utility truck, but can't get past the price tag? Look again.

## Spirit PT



Introducing the Spirit PT — the new personal transport utility truck priced to easily fit any budget without sacrificing quality, durability or utility.

The Spirit PT has a lot to offer. It features a quiet, Honda 5.5 hp gasoline-powered engine. It handles up to 600 lbs. at up to 10 mph. Its rugged and roomy cargo box has a wide, low ramp-type tailgate for fast and easy loading and

unloading. But the best feature of the Spirit PT is its price tag — you've got to see it to believe it!

If you're looking to buy a new utility truck — or a couple of them — look no more. Catch the Smithco Spirit today!

ALWAYS OUT FRONT  
**SMITHCO**  
WAYNE, PENNSYLVANIA 19087