

BRIEFS



ARCHITECTS GO ON-LINE

WASHINGTON, D.C.

DesigNetwork, the online information system of the American Society of Landscape Architects (ASLA), now gives members the ability to interface with Internet. Linking architects, contractors, designers, engineers, planners and the environmental industry, the service now has 1,000 regular users interfacing on issues ranging from design to specification, new projects and employment. More information is available from John Stump or Regina Travers at 202-686-2752.

LOHMANN DESIGN OPENS

MOSINEE, Wis. — Nine new holes and three reconstructed holes on the old nine have given a brand-new look to Indianhead Golf and Recreation, which opened here June 4. Lohmann Golf Designs, Inc. and Midwest Golf Development, Inc. provided design/build services for the project. Three new holes were routed on the existing nine and all new greens and tees were constructed. The new nine makes it an 18-hole par 72 track. A new automatic irrigation system and pump station were added. Mature forest, rolling topography, and wetland pockets provide scenic views and excellent playability.

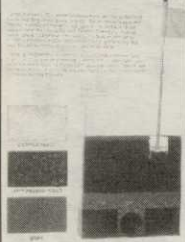
TRENT JONES IN IRELAND

COUNTY LIMERICK, Ireland — An agreement has been reached between The Robert Trent Jones Cos. and New York financier Tom Kane, and construction has resumed on an 18-hole championship course here. Nine holes of the course were built before the project was abandoned in 1990, when the ownership group of the Adarc Manor Hotel, led by Kane, could not sustain funding for the project. The course is expected to be ready for play late this fall.

TEXAS HALL OF FAME OPEN

THE WOODLANDS, Texas — The new Texas Golf Hall of Fame, which opened April 26 at The Woodlands, honors the people who build and maintain golf courses as well as the players. An eight-panel exhibit, titled "Where We Play," tells the history of course design itself, as well as that of the four courses at The Woodlands. The course designers are all represented — Joe Lee, Arnold Palmer, Robert von Hagge and Carlton Gipson. The Hall is open, free of charge, every day from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m.

EVOLUTION OF THE MODERN TEXAS GREEN



Oak Grove Island a golden egg for Golden Isles?

By SALLY LEE

BRUNSWICK, Ga. — As shelved lagoons and natural brush habitat have kept environmentalists satisfied, owners hope reasonable prices will keep Golden Isles area golfers happy at the new championship daily-fee Oak Grove Island Club.

"We wanted to give the Golden Isles a plush, resort-type golf course offering year-round affordability, and I feel we've done exactly that," said Mike Evans, president of Oak Grove Island Plantation, Inc., which owns the course. "This is a championship-quality course where a round of golf, including cart, costs \$25 to \$30. It's something that did not exist in this area before and it's something the people here can be very proud of."

Design-wise, during design and construction architect Mike Young received input from the Audubon Society on protecting and managing native wildlife. He incorporated such things as natural brush habitats for birds, bluebird houses and shelves in all lagoons.

The shelved lagoons ensure that native vegetation will continue to flourish by eliminating the steep banks common to many golf course ponds. The shallow shelves, approximately six inches deep, extend out from the edge of the pond about six or eight feet. The habitat is ideal for the reeds and cattails found in the area.

The club was developed in conjunction



Oak Grove Island Golf Club's bunkering shows the handiwork of designer Mike Young.

with a residential community offering more than 500 building sites with waterfront, marsh or golf course views. Accessible by boat or causeway, it also features a full-service deep water marina.

All this offered opportunity as well as challenge to Young, of Watkinsville. He designed and built the 18-hole layout

taking full advantage of the opportunities offered by the 200-acre primeval site.

Situated on a 700-acre interior marsh island fronted by the Buffalo and Turtle rivers and offering direct access to the Intracoastal Waterway, the course is not only surrounded by winding waterways,

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QA & A

Knott: Onus for change is on architects

Don Knott, chief designer for Robert Trent Jones II in Palo Alto, Calif., is responsible for nearly 20 top-rated courses in the United States, Japan and Australia. He owns a bachelor's degree in landscape architecture and master's degree in architecture from the University of California-Berkeley. Managing Editor Mark Leslie spoke with Knott when he took the gavel as president of the American Society of Golf Course Architects.

Golf Course News: What are your biggest challenges during your presidency?

Don Knott: I don't think they will be significantly different than what the golf world has been facing over the last several years. Ongoing environmental issues which will be so critical. You've got what seems to be a fairly negative perception of the game, particularly by non-golfers. That is directly related in some ways to the environment. Although we're not directly involved, the golf world is facing continuous legal challenges involving liability and equipment.

But what I'd like to push from a golf architectural point of view is a broadening of the scope of what I call an "acceptable" golf course. Over time, since the game started, the definition of what is acceptable in the eyes of the public and the golfer has continued to narrow. We started with an obstacle course over natural, raw terrain. We continue to become a bowling alley — a very narrowly defined concept of what is an acceptable course.

GCN: Is there a way for you to turn the tide?

DK: I think it's mainly public relations. It's guys like Pete Dye, for example, standing up and saying, "We've got to go



Don Knott enjoys playing the game as well as designing the courses.

back and put some old courses out in the field somewhere, and just hit the ball around." Condition is a factor. Always seeing [on television] perfectly conditioned golf courses has been an issue for years. Augusta National is in perfect condition, and it has become the standard. There are things you can do, but it's going to be a hard issue to sell to the general public.

GCN: Would the ASGCA membership want to take a stance on the issue?

DK: I think a lot of them would love to. There are so many courses pushing in the opposite direction. You've got the whole real-estate economics of the golf course ...

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ASGCA's outgoing president: Banks seeing light of golf's success

Competition among financial institutions, fueled by generally improved operating results, is opening the door to more funding opportunities for golf development projects, according to Jerry Matthews, who stepped down in April as president of the American Society of Golf Course Architects (ASGCA).

"The financial community is definitely looking more favorably on golf course projects than it did two years ago when everything was labeled 'real estate,' and therefore to be avoided," Matthews said. "We have the opportunity to build a stronger industry and further improve our image with the financial community," he said.

For that to happen, Matthews said the golf industry must:

- Prove that golf course projects are sound investments when properly designed, built and managed.

- Help golf property developers and related industry professionals to accurately calculate the cost and profit potential of a project.

Matthews said more private investors and contractors are taking a direct equity position in golf course projects. From a risk-adjusted rate of return, golf course developments are often better investments than commercial or industrial real-estate projects, he said.

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Jerry Matthews

Q&A: Knott

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which means you want to minimize space and maximize fairways, which physically narrows down the course.

GCN: Can you think of a good golf course that is on the outer fringes of that acceptability?

DK: Any of the links courses in Scotland that have stood the test of time are great examples of what golf used to be. Most of those links courses would be totally unacceptable if you attempted one here. They have too many blind shots. They have things the pros consider unfair, which is also a part of the narrowing. Our golf press in the U.S. seems to be highly driven by professional golfers, who are score-oriented. So you eliminate all those incredibly interesting factors of the links courses — blind shots, semi-blind shots...

GCN: Have you been able to do any links courses?

DK: We've done similar characteristics. At our new course, The Orchards, in Detroit. And at Spanish Bay [in Monterey Peninsula, California]. But Spanish Bay isn't on as big a piece of ground as you'd like to have for that sort of thing. And you take heavy criticism. Pete Dye got heavily criticized when he was doing blind bunkers and blind greens and all sorts of things that, in my opinion, make the game fascinating and exciting. You take a lot of abuse, so it would be hard for the average architect to fight that body of public opinion as to what is an acceptable course.

GCN: A lot of the architects say you shouldn't have any blind shots...

DK: That's true. But I happen to disagree. I think architects themselves are falling into line on what people are telling them is an acceptable course — mainly, what the pros and ranking systems are saying. Golf Digest ranks the top 100 or the best new courses, and it essentially tells you what a good golf course is: You've got to be able to define the fairways. You've got to be able to see the bunkers. You've got to see the green surfaces. Everyone says, "If that's how I get a course that's acceptable, that's what I'll design."

GCN: So everybody is designing a Rembrandt and there are no Picasso's left. No variant behavior is allowed.

DK: Yes, that's what I'm concerned about: that we continue to design more and more of a generic-type golf course.

GCN: Architects have shown you can handle the challenge of wetlands, and the challenge of using effluent in a lot of places. But what are the big issues around the corner?

DK: One of the biggest issues is that society is becoming more urbanized. We've got no affordable land left for golf. So the availability of golf is a huge issue. Where do you put a golf course in the San Francisco metropolitan area that's not on \$100,000-an-acre land? It either has to be public land that some city or municipality has had for 100 years and will make available

— and that doesn't seem to be happening in the last 10 or 15 years — or you have to go 100 miles away like the Japanese do.

GCN: How do you overcome that problem?

DK: Again, this is a radical concept for Americans to handle, but if you could get people to accept the idea that you don't have to play 18 holes, it would help. I mean, if you could say: "What's wrong with a seven, 11- or 15-hole golf course?" Why not play 11 holes? We can get 11 holes on this site. For hundreds of years that's what they did. The game didn't start at 18 holes. Even

the early American courses had six, seven holes. They added on. Very few started out with 18.

That's part of the narrowing definition. Why does it have to be 18 holes? I mean, it's a game.

GCN: What specific initiatives will you implement during your presidency?

DK: I will get the society to produce a white paper on pesticides and herbicides by [Dr.] Mike Hurdzan: what we know and don't know about them on golf courses, whether they're getting into ground water and running off the surface, what golf course architects do to

reduce or mitigate those issues, information that would be valuable to potential developers, owners, operators, the golf world in general — something we can produce and hand out. And I will have Bill Love work on another one on wetlands and wetland issues: what we know about them, what the government is doing, what we see as good or bad about them, the current federal regulations from a golf point of view. And I want Bob Cupp to do one on financing and feasibility. Even though it's not golf architecture per se, it's related certainly to development of new courses.

GCN: Who would these be handed out to?

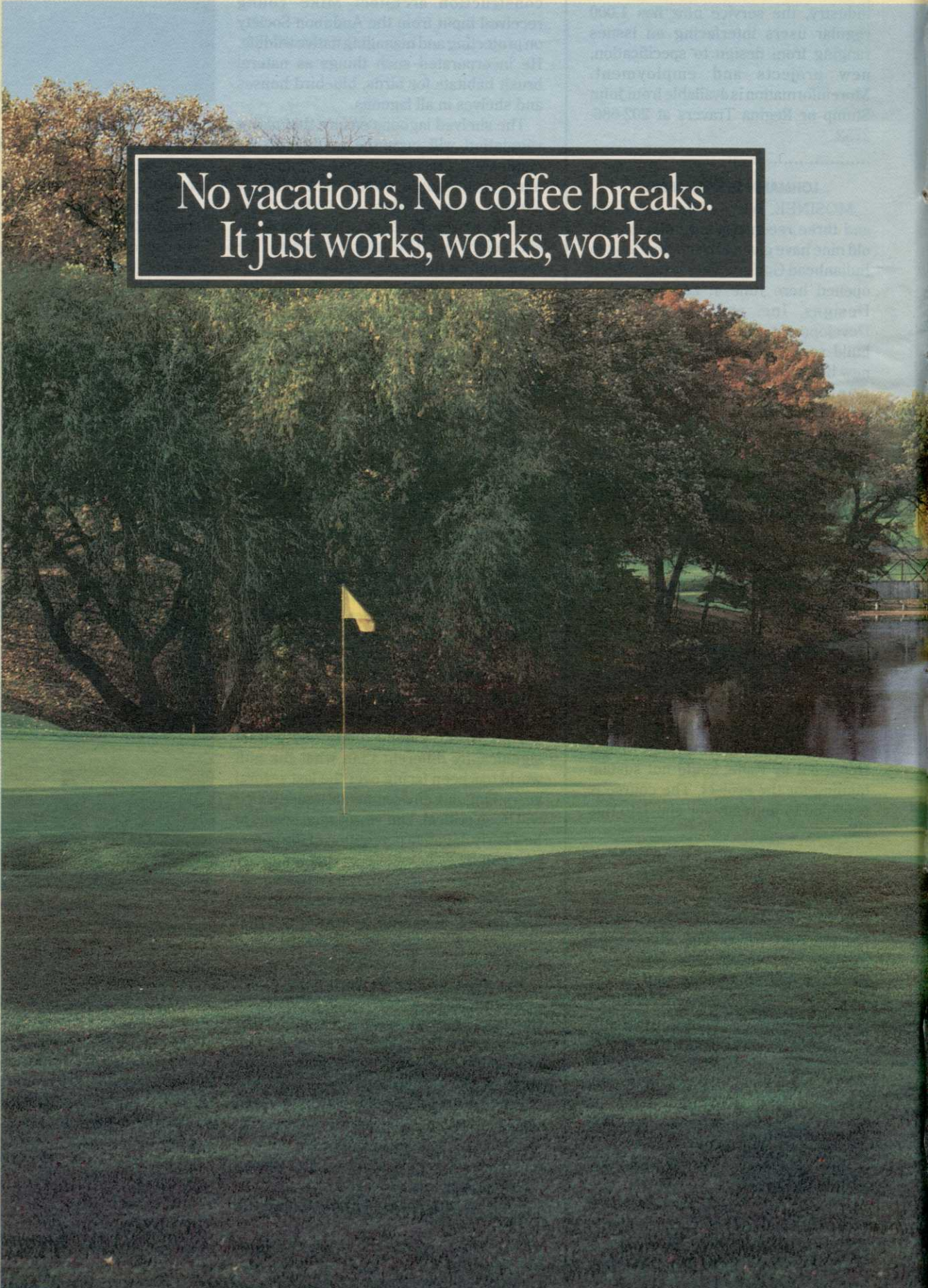
DK: I think we will develop these papers for our own use, then eventually turn them into something like Mike Hurdzan's article a few years ago [Evolution of the Modern Green] — a pamphlet available to anybody.

GCN: Have you set a deadline for these papers?

DK: Not yet, but I will have the draft done well before our next meetings, then have a final version certainly by next year.

GCN: Roger Rulewich was the

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No vacations. No coffee breaks.
It just works, works, works.

Seven-course menu

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project will include three courses and housing. The starting date for construction there is still uncertain, although plans are to have one course ready for play by fall 1995.

Both facilities have most of their permits, Johns said. Chesapeake and The Legends Group have signed contracts on the first course in New Kent and the first two at Stonehouse, according to Legends Group Vice President Danny Young. Former Tom Fazio design associate Mike Strantz, who has worked extensively with The Legends Group, will design the first three layouts.

Chesapeake is the largest landowner in Virginia, Delaware and Maryland, controlling 385,000 acres in Virginia alone. New Kent and Stonehouse, however, will be the company's first golf course developments.

The company's landholdings in inland Virginia, coupled with studies indicating the need for more public golf courses in greater Williamsburg, prompted Chesapeake to seek an experienced golf development partner.

Chesapeake executives were familiar with the success of the Legends Group. The family-owned company operates six courses in the Myrtle Beach area — Marsh Harbor, Oyster Bay, The Heritage and the Heathland, Moorsland and Parkland courses at The Legends complex.

"We arranged a meeting when we knew they'd be up this way," Johns said. "They have an excellent management team. It's fun to work with an enthusiastic group that eats, sleeps and breathes this stuff."

Young, whose father Larry started the business by leasing a Myrtle Beach golf operation in 1975, said: "Our [The Legends Group] goal is to have six courses in the greater Richmond/Williamsburg area within the next five years.

"It's a very exciting market. The quality of the hotel and tourist base is very high. And there is a strong demand for public golf."

Young expects greens fees to be competitive with the nearby public courses. The New Kent project, 12 miles from

Richmond, will be built on timber land harvested three years ago, Young said. The small vegetation growing in "is just the type of landscape we were looking for. It will be mainly golf with some real estate. The homes will have great vistas across the course."

James City County planners have scheduled a July review of the Stonehouse project, located 12 miles from Williamsburg. Plans are to start construction in August or September.

"Stonehouse is much different than New Kent," The Legends Group executive said. "It's hilly with huge trees and large rhododendrons. We've routed one par-3 with a precipitous drop over an 80-foot ravine.

Q&A: Knott

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only other ASGCA president who was not a principal of his own firm. Does that have any personal or collective meaning to you?

DK: Personally, I am highly honored. I think it's a wonderful position. Traditionally, heads of firms are the president. In fact, we wouldn't have become bosses had our bosses not been previous presidents. It's wonderful to be recognized by my peers when the general public doesn't have a clue who I am from Adam.

The reason I've always worked in a larger firm is because I love to design. If I ran my own firm, I know from talking to everybody, I'd be spending 60 percent of my time selling jobs, collecting money, writing contracts, dealing with personnel management, running an organization. And 30 or 40 percent of my time designing. I now spend 90 percent of my time designing, which is what I love to do.

GCN: Would you do anything differently?

DK: No. I think anybody in this profession would like to someday, when they retire, take on a single job on a great site, and do a Pete Dye-Kiawah Island type project, where you live on the site, get into it every day, and try to create the best possible course.

GCN: How would you like to be transported, family and all, to Ireland and told: Here's a piece of land; build us a great golf course?

DK: I think it would be great. But with the practicality of big business in this modern day and age, you'd have to be independently wealthy to do one course and then sit around waiting for the next great site and next great client. You have to take them when they come. But you'd probably still come back in five years and say: "Gee, I wish I'd done it differently." There isn't a course you do that you don't go back to and say: "Oh, gosh, we could have done better there. I don't like that bunker. It's got to change."

People have this perception that if Donald Ross or Alister Mackenzie did it 100 years ago, it's perfect. Well, I know from my own experience — and I can't imagine they were any different — I'll bet they walked every course they ever did on opening day and saw things they'd like to change. You never go out there and are perfectly satisfied.



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