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NEWS**
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Golf Course News
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annual awards for
1994

BEST KEPT COURSE ON PGA TOUR

McBride, Muirfield Village earn players' approval

By HAL PHILLIPS

DUBLIN, Ohio — Before the start of the 1994 Memorial Tournament, superintendent Mike McBride consulted the National Weather Service, hoping for clear skies and a rare measure of reassurance.

In each of the previous three years, during tournament week, the heavens had dumped untold gallons of water here on Muirfield Village Golf Club, site of the prestigious Memorial. But the 1994 forecast looked very promising, meaning a lack of precipitation.

"I overruled the weather pattern and made a little wager with Jack [Nicklaus]: \$10 bucks that it wouldn't rain that week," McBride explained. "Jack laughed and gave me 10:1 odds.

"Turned out this was the first Memorial Tournament when we didn't have any rain from Monday through Sunday... So Sunday night at the winner's reception, I got a \$100 bill from Jack."

A rain-free week was all McBride and his staff needed to impress the players, who voted Muirfield Village 1994's Best Maintained Course on the PGA Tour in an exclusive survey of PGA players conducted by *Golf Course News*.

Another Jack Nicklaus design — Castle Pines Golf Club in Castle Rock, Colo., site of The International — finished second in the voting, while Westchester

Country Club in Rye, N.Y., host of the Westchester Classic, finished third.

"We try to keep the course as close to tournament conditions as we can every day," said the 40-year-old McBride, a native of nearby Worthington. "When you're dealing with 120 personalities, you're not going to please everybody. We do take recommendations and the feedback seriously. But if the guy shoots 66, let's face it: He loves the golf course. If he shoots 81, he might use the course as an excuse.

"I think the key to any 18-hole event is consistency from one

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A wee burn guards the 11th green at Muirfield Village Golf Club in Dublin, Ohio, site of the Memorial Tournament. Under the stewardship of superintendent Mike McBride (at left), Muirfield was named the PGA's Best Conditioned Tour stop in an exclusive Golf Course News poll. Said Curtis Strange: "Year after year, with all the courses in such immaculate condition, Muirfield always tops my list as the best conditioned." Added Tom Lehman, "Muirfield can be tied, but not beaten." As the 1994 Memorial winner, Lehman's comments are understandable.

Muirfield Village Golf Club Dublin, Ohio

...

Head Superintendent:
Mike McBride

Assistant Superintendents:
Steve Logan, Chuck Barcroft

Service Manager:
Louis Haveisen

Horticulturist:
Steve Clapp

General Manager/
Tournament Director:

John Hines

Designer:

Jack Nicklaus (1974)

Senior Agronomist:
Ed Etchells

BUILDER OF THE YEAR

Clute & Associates gets the better of past winners

By MARK LESLIE

HARTLAND, Mich. — Once a rock picker, now the Golf Course Builder of the Year, Paul Clute has come a long way since 1965.

Chosen Builder of the Year in *Golf Course News'* annual poll, Paul Clute & Associates of Hartland, Mich., will be honored at the annual banquet of the Golf Course Builders Association of America in San Francisco during the GCSAA International Golf Course Conference and Show.

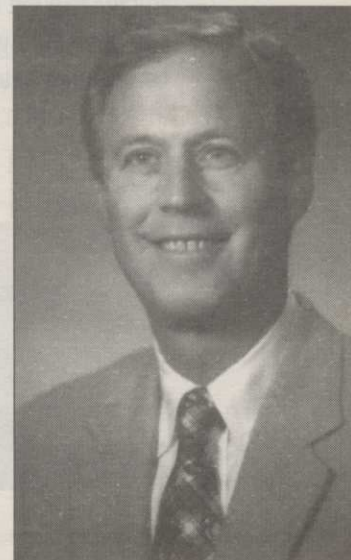
Clute attributed his success to his personnel and the firm's attitude toward business. "Bulldozers, equipment and materials are available to us all. It's the people who make the difference — in supervision, equipment operation, drainage and

irrigation," Clute said. "We've been able to find, train and keep good people. And we've tried our best to stress our overall company goals, our perspective on doing business: the balance of giving good service to the owner and architect on each project and still trying to survive profit-margin-wise.

"We're also in it for the long term. And when you are, you make the right decision more often. You may suffer profit-wise at any given moment, but in the long term it pays off."

This is the first time Clute has won the 6-year-old award. It was captured by Wadsworth Golf Construction Co. of Plainfield, Ill., the first three

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Paul Clute

The right people on the right projects at the right time. That is the key to success for Paul Clute & Associates, owner Paul Clute said.

"We don't have a real rigid company structure — enough to stand up straight but flexible enough to meet the needs," said Clute.

Among them are project supervisors Bill Stevenson, Kevin Sitz, Tim Cockerill, Bob Kirkwood, Glen Kein, Randy Ruth, Barry Trueblood and Scott Robinson. He also mentioned Bob Steele and Bob Trueblood, who assist Clute in traveling and coordinating the projects from the home office in Hartland, Mich.

McBride, Muirfield Village get the players' nod



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hole to the next; that greens, for example, will have the same speed and firmness on all 18 holes, including the practice greens; that greenside bunkers are the same from hole to hole, so players don't have to guess whether this bunker is firmer than the others.

"And it takes a lot of labor to get bunkers to a condition where the players like them. It's simply a matter of taking the time."

Each Monday following the

tournament, McBride, Nicklaus and Golden Bear Senior Agronomist Ed Etchells conduct a walk-through to review the things McBride and his crew did well — and those things on which they can improve. It might be the putting surfaces, McBride explained. Or it might involve the bunkers, tree lines or spectator movement.

"I'm always looking to make improvements," McBride said. "Yes, the course was as good as it's ever been [for the '94 Memo-

rial]. The back nine greens were newly sodded in the fall of '93 and they were as good as newly sodded greens could be. But next year they'll be better.

"I love the challenges here and that we continue to make improvements. It's only a 20-year-old golf course. Jack has a lot of things he wants to do to make it a better course than it is today, and I like that.

"That's why I look at this job as the best in the business. In my position, there's really no

"If the guy shoots 66, let's face it: He loves the golf course. If he shoots 81, he might use the course as an excuse."

— Mike McBride

other place that I want to go."

Indeed, during his agronomic career, McBride has never worked anywhere else.

In 1973, while home on summer break from Bowling Green University, McBride worked on the construction of Muirfield Village. He graduated with his degree in political science and worked outside of golf until 1982, when he returned to Muirfield as a crewman. He worked his way up; was promoted to assistant; earned his agronomy degree from Rutgers University; and was named head superintendent in 1985.

His rapid rise, McBride asserted, was not a solo run.

"Obviously, it starts with Jack," said McBride. "We interact quite a bit during the year. He's up here quite often — playing golf, taking care of business and visiting with family. Since I've been superintendent, it's been important to know what he likes, from that one-on-one relationship.

"Ed Etchells was the original superintendent here and has moved up through the organization. His support has been essential. Then there's our general manager and tournament director, John Hines. Between those three people, we can pretty much resolve anything. It's nice to have that type of solid, positive working relationship.

"And my staff takes absolute pride in this place and really wants to be the number-one conditioned course out there. They're all good problem-solvers and make all the adjustments you have to make on a day-to-day, month-to-month basis."

McBride's crew consists of 25 year-round employees, headed by assistants Steve Logan and Chuck Barcroft, Service Manager Louis Hauelsen, and horticulturist Steve Clapp.

During the Memorial — when the crew swells to 35 — everyone on McBride's staff made a positive contribution and impression.

"I was out in Palm Springs recently and played in that Diner's Club tournament," said McBride. "I talked with Andrew Magee and Curtis Strange, who said they had voted for us. I think it's important to get the feedback from them — not to see where you stand in relation to everyone else, but to see what the players need on a week-to-week basis.

"And with Jack Nicklaus being my boss, it's nice to earn that sort of reputation."

Reputation or no reputation, someone should tell McBride to stop taking his boss' money.

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