

Bates' successes began with Nicklaus, continue with Couples

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providing quality in whatever he did. He's also one of the greatest design strategists there is.

Johnny Miller doesn't believe in boundaries when it comes to course design. He's come up with some wild ideas. Some worked and some didn't. He once created a bunker that [intentionally] had 3 feet of water in the bottom of it all the time.

GCN: Your most recent association is with Fred Couples. How did you two get together? We've heard that Fred's involvement in a golf project is minimal. Is that true?

GB: Miller and I designed Binks Forest in West Palm Beach (Fla.), and Fred won a tournament there in 1991. After the tournament I was being interviewed for a job at a nearby private club. The developers wanted a professional player for promotional purposes. Fred wasn't that well known at the time, but he was handsome and charming. I said, "How about Fred?" They liked the idea. I called him and introduced myself as the designer of Binks Forest. We got together, hit it off right away and here we are.

It's not true that his design involvement is minimal. We do a lot of behind-the-scenes work together. His site visits have been less than he would have liked the past 18 months because of his bad back. He's physically just unable to go

out into the field in some cases. But his health is improving and he's been very involved lately. Fred has an excellent feel for taking what's on paper and transferring that into the field.

He also knows how to set up a course for the mid- to high-handicap golfer. He was a junior hack who grew up playing on some well-used public courses.

GCN: How did you get the Green Mountain National job near Burlington, Vt.? When will it open? How would you describe it? What is the significance of its being that state's first municipal layout?

GB: I worked with Nicklaus in Switzerland, which has similar terrain to the Northeast. It can be tough for an outsider to find work there because New Englanders can be pretty provincial in choosing an architect. A guy named Steve Durkee conceived the project. He spends some time down here [Palm Beach Gardens] in the winter. He just walked in the door one day and asked if we'd be interested.

The course should open in July. It has a lot of variety, nine meadowland and nine mountain holes with some beautiful views. It's the first municipal course because Burlington has grown to the point where it's big enough to support something like this. Those financial resources aren't available in most other Vermont towns.

GCN: Green fees at Green Mountain

are supposed to be in the \$40 to \$50 range, fairly expensive by municipal standards. Is this an indication of the growing difficulty of building affordable public courses?

GB: It's an expensive project and the town doesn't want to subsidize it. It has to pay for itself, like most new municipal courses today.

GCN: Couples/Bates has seven projects in various stages of design, permitting and/or construction and you alone have another 10. Is that par for the course?

GB: Yes. Ten active projects is a comfortable number for us. That allows us to pay attention to details.

GCN: How big is your office and who are some of the key people?

GB: We have six people on staff, including a secretary. The designers include Steve Wolfard, Matt Swanson and Kipp Schulties. Wolfard worked for Nicklaus and has run our Dallas office the past four years. Swanson came here directly out of Ball State University [Muncie, Ind.]. He started in the field and is in the office full time now. Schulties called me during his last year at Indiana State University and worked a semester on a renovation project at Frenchman's Creek in Palm Beach Gardens, Fla. He's full time now and is on site at San Juan Oaks in San Juan Batista, Calif.

GCN: Who is your favorite course architect and why?

GB: Not even close, Alister Mackenzie. If you play well, you'll score well on his courses. If not, you pay the price.

GCN: What is your favorite course, other than one of your own, and why?

GB: Cypress Point would be first and Pasatiempo a close second, both Mackenzie layouts.

GCN: Was there a watershed course that launched you into the public eye as a course architect?

GB: Green Spring Golf Course in Washington, Utah. It was the first project on my own. We started building in 1989 and took 12 months to open it. Golf Digest named it one of the top five new courses of the year. It was a nice way to come out of the box. It didn't surprise me that Golf Digest recognized the course itself, I just didn't think enough people would get out there to rate it.

GCN: Who was the most influential person in your career and why?

GB: Ron Kirby. He taught me the nuts and bolts of the profession. There are generally two kinds of people in this business. The tie guy works well in the office and is good with clients. The boot guy enjoys working in the field and can kick the contractor in the butt when he needs

it. Ron is one of the few guys who is both a good tie and boot guy. Bob Cupp has that rare combination, too. Personally, I enjoy the outside work. That's where the magic happens. You can take the drawings into the field and improve on them. And I just like working in the dirt.

GCN: What has been the major change in the profession since you first became involved?

GB: There are so many more of us [architects] today. When I first got involved, few architects had their own business. And we were all scrambling for projects. Everyone was cost-conscious in those days. You didn't move a lot of dirt and the pizzazz was minimal. Things got wild from about 1984 to 1990. Architects were like drunken sailors, with everyone trying to one-up Pete Dye. The Savings and Loans were pots of gold that everyone tapped into. That disappeared all of a sudden and now everyone is back to being more realistic, more cost-conscious.

The problem is that the number of projects hasn't increased as fast as the number of architects. Some of the young guys are giving quotes for half of what an experienced architect would charge. That's just too low. A price of \$75,000 to \$100,000 is hard to justify for the two to three years it generally takes to bring a project from conception through construction.

GCN: According to the National Golf Foundation, 468 new courses opened in 1995. Do you see this pace continuing?

GB: More money is coming into the industry, so more of the marginal projects are able to find money. Many municipalities are realizing that golf can be a recreational adjunct that can make money for the city. Money is also more readily available from individual investors if deals are put together properly. They see golf as a good investment.

GCN: You are known as one of the major designers of Cayman courses. The idea seems like a good one but has never really caught on. Why is that?

GB: Golf is a very traditional game. People are often skeptical about anything new or unique. The Cayman ball looks different, sounds different and doesn't go as far. Charlie Frazier, a Hilton Head developer, saw it as a great addition to industrial parks. But it's bucking tradition.

GCN: Why haven't you sought admission to the American Society of Golf Course Architects?

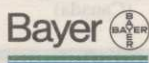
GB: The ASGCA is a wonderful association. I've had to pay attention to my business and my family and just haven't had the time to join. Some day I may be a part of it.

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Ross Society funds Cornell student's work

BLOOMFIELD, Conn. — Cornell University landscape architecture student David V. Ferris Jr. received a \$6,000 internship this summer from the Donald Ross Society to work on a golf project that may have lasting effects on the industry.

The grant to Hurdzan Design Group of Columbus, Ohio, is allowing Ferris to work on Widow's Walk Golf Course in Scituate, Mass. Widow's Walk is a unique project expected to "produce the least environmentally impacting golf course possible while enhancing wildlife potential," according to Michael Hurdzan.

It is expected to require one-half the average water, fertilizer, pesticides and fossil fuels for maintenance. Also, 18 different types of putting greens are being built on the course to help research in that area of maintenance.

A master's degree candidate with a bachelor's degree in horticulture, Ferris intends to enter the golf course design field.

The 1,200-member Ross Society is dedicated to promoting, preserving and maintaining classic golf courses, especially those designed by the legendary Donald Ross.