



Clients give builders high marks in poll

By MARK LESLIE

CHAPEL HILL, N.C. — Consistently high marks for the country's leading builders bode well for the industry, according to Golf Course Builders Association of America (GCBA) Executive Director Phil Arnold.

"The quality of their work has increased dramatically — even in the last five years," Arnold said from his office here.

Noting that 19 companies — the most ever — were nominated for Best Builder Award this year, Arnold said: "Some of those companies weren't even heard of 10 years ago and they're among the best today. It's much more specialized and people recognize it as that."

"Our profession as a whole has evolved to be a much more professional group of people — from us and Wadsworth, Neibur, Clute and Fairway and a lot of small contractors, too," said 1995 Builder of the Year Bill Kubly, president of Lincoln, Neb.-based Landscapes Unlimited, Inc. "It's not a mom-and-pop business any more. And we're using standards that you'd be using in other sorts of business as well. This came with the advent of 300 to 400 golf courses a year being built."

Kubly said he observes smaller builders all over the country, who do one or two golf courses a year, "whose reputations are certainly as good as ours."

In its annual poll, *Golf Course News* asked clients of the five most-nominated course builders to appraise their work. In all eight of the survey's categories, the average score for the five builders topped 9.1 on a 0-10 scale:

- Overall construction of the projects: 9.33.
- Whether construction quality met expectations: 9.43.
- How well the companies stayed within budget: 9.17.

• How well the companies met time deadlines: 9.39.

• If the firms had adequate personnel: 9.22.

• The quality of the personnel: 9.16.

• If the firms had adequate equipment: 9.18.

• Rate the companies' supervisors: 9.27.

Wadsworth was cited by various course architects for its quality work, conscientiousness, trustworthiness, attention to detail, going "above and beyond the call of duty," and for "anticipating architects' and owners' thoughts and concerns."

A perennial finalist, Fairway Construction was said by one architect to be "rapidly becoming 'a force' in being able to provide quality construction while expanding its amount of work."

"It is the most cooperative in working with other disciplines to insure that projects are advanced," said one supporter.

Niebur Golf was new to the finalist group in the *Golf Course News* polling, winning some raves from clients.

"Joe and his staff are very professional," said architect Dana Fry of Hurdzan Golf Design in Columbus, Ohio, "and I am sure in the near future they will be judged on the same level as Wadsworth, Landscapes or Clute..."

"What I really admire is that in just seven or eight years Joe Niebur has built his company into a very good one that builds great golf courses for a very reasonable price — and he has done so with his own money."

Craig Perna of Taylor Woodrow/Kenco, Ltd. added an explanation point to his assessment of Niebur, who built Addison Reserve in Boca Raton, Fla., for him. Perna wrote a "20" out of a possible 10 for quality of staff and "50" for the project supervisor.

[High praise, but GCN averaged in 10s.]



The Golf Club at Bradshaw Farm, built by Landscapes Unlimited Inc. and designed by Grant Wencel, opened in December in North Atlanta, Ga. It is set on an old farm property, with two restored silos framing the 18th green and 30-mile views of the North Georgia mountains.

The winner: Landscapes

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Golf Course News will present the Builder of the Year Award during the Golf Course Builders Association of America (GCBA) banquet at the International Golf Course Conference and Show in Orlando, Fla. The dinner will be held at 8 p.m. on Feb. 9 at the Omni Rosen Hotel, preceded by a 7 p.m. reception and followed by an auction to raise funds for the association and for research.

After being nominated by the nation's golf course architects, the builders provided *Golf Course News* with lists of their clients. The clients, under protection of anonymity, were then asked to rate the builders, on a scale of 1 to 10, as to construction of their project; how well it met the quality they expected; its project supervisor; and if the company met budget and deadlines, had adequate personnel and equipment, and high-quality staff.

"Because it's a vote of our customers, it means a lot to us to know they're that happy with our work," said Bill Kubly, president of Landscapes. "The most important task we have is keeping that client happy. Regardless of the project's size, the job isn't finished until our clients have been totally satisfied. We're proud of being on time and on budget."

"We're thrilled that our builder members are so highly regarded by their clients — the developers and architects," said Phil Arnold, executive director of the GCBA, noting that all the top vote-getters are GCBA members. "I know last year was a very frustrating one in which to build because of the hurricanes and floods and, in certain areas, the difficulty in finding good personnel."

"If you go out on a Landscapes job site, everybody, right down to the person raking the bunker, knows that the company has won that award a couple of times and really has a lot of pride in working for them."

The accolades poured in for Kubly and his firm. "This is our fifth course with Landscapes Unlimited as general contractor. Enough said. They are the absolute best!" said Roger Watson of Carolinas Golf, which saw its Oak Valley Golf Course in Winston-Salem, N.C., completed last summer and Currituck Golf Course in Kittyhawk, N.C., finished in December.

"Landscapes Unlimited brought to life an exceptional Tom Fazio course design," said Fred Durham, president of Maroon Creek Golf Club in Aspen, Colo., finished in October. "Their sensitivity to the environment and their flexibility as contractor has

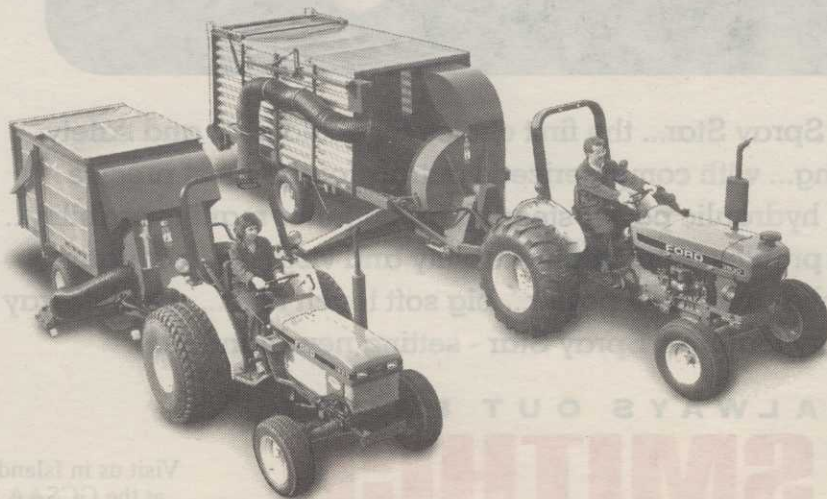
been beyond reproach. This project would not be the success it is today without Bill and his organization's involvement."

Citing his Sunset Hills Country Club project in Carrollton, Ga., as coming in below budget and a month early, General Manager Ken Kennedy said of Landscapes' staff: "professionalism at its best."

And Ross McCown of NEBCO, Inc. in Lincoln added: "Although you didn't have a 'rock wall' category, we had several holes [at Quarry Oaks Golf Course in South Bend, Neb.], where Landscapes really did a magnificent job with rock walls."

Three-time Best Builder Award-winner Wadsworth also garnered rave reviews. American Society of Golf Course Architects President Jeff Brauer, who split his nomination between Landscapes and Wadsworth, each of which built two of his courses in 1995, said: "Both companies possess the ability to keep on schedule, strong financial resources and the experience of working with all the best architects in the industry. When we complete a project with Wadsworth or Landscapes Unlimited, we invariably find something in their construction technique that we can use to improve our own specifications."

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