



DESIGN & DEVELOPMENT 1999

The winds of progress blustered good news throughout the last 12 months of the millennium as yet another year of 400-plus golf course openings grew closer in the headlights. By Nov. 4 the National Golf Foundation reported that 438 courses had opened this year. It appeared the record 468 might be eclipsed by year's end.

Another 963 courses were under construction while 814 were in planning, keeping the pipeline chock full.

Buffing the shine on this news is the fact that these projects did not even include a number of First Tee facilities that are in the works around the United States, facilities that will draw tens of thousands of youths into the game of golf. Among those that will be included among the new openings:

- the Jack Nicklaus-designed Spring Creek Ranch outside Memphis, Tenn., which, as the first Audubon International Golf Course, shows the industry continues to develop with one eye on the environment and another on great golf;
- Arcadia Bluffs in Arcadia, Mich., designed by Rick Smith, built by GCN 1998 Small Builder of the Year Furness Golf Construction, and illustrating that Old World-style sod-wall bunkers can still be resurrected in the New World;
- the Willard Byrd-designed Thistle Golf Club, the 101st course to open on North Carolina's Grand Strand, which exemplifies the notion that sometimes more is better; and
- the Tom Doak-designed Apache Stronghold in Globe, Ariz., which illustrates that Indian tribes remain strong contributors to golf growth.

Suffice it to say that there appeared to be enough work to fill the plate of every person hanging a shingle reading: "Golf Course Architect."

Meanwhile, even more existing courses were enmeshed in either single-season or ongoing renovations or restorations. And the entire industry holds its collective breath waiting to see the impact of the new national wetlands regulations that will come into effect after the current Nationwide Permits (NWP) expire at midnight Dec. 30.

Although an Army Corps of Engineers spokesman said the new NWP should speed up the permitting process, some experts are warning that a far greater number of golf course projects will be affected—and slowed down. With the pipeline of course development still loaded, perhaps only government entanglements like these can slow this lion.

Pebble Beach's Missing Link

By DOUG SAUNDERS

PEBBLE BEACH, Calif. — Making changes to a golf course the age and stature of Pebble Beach can be construed as obtrusive tinkering. But to add an entirely new golf hole can seem like changing the smile on the Mona Lisa, or rewriting Beethoven's 5th Symphony.

But when Pebble Beach Co. broke ground on a new par-3 5th hole, its officials felt it would actually be the missing link bringing the course into the configuration that it was meant to have 80 years ago.

The new 187-yard hole will play along a bluff overlooking the ocean. Jack Nicklaus designed the hole to reflect the character of the rest of the course — a hole that should have been built in 1919.

It will replace the awkward par-3 5th that, in the original design, inexplicably played away from the ocean. Why this hole was laid out as it was illustrates how conflicts occur when golf courses and real-estate projects meet.

Pebble Beach Golf Links was created to stimulate land sales of the ocean properties of Del Monte Co. It was one of the first real-estate-driven golf developments in the West. As such, the balance between land sales, cash flow and construction costs were all factors in creating the golf course.

Over the years, the coveted property twice came up for resale — during the Great Depression and World War II. But Pebble



Pebble Beach's 5th hole

Beach Co. did not have the funds to buy it back. A Mrs. Jerkins bought the land and held onto it until her death in 1995. It was at this time that Pebble Beach finally secured the five-acre parcel, for \$9.5 million.

Construction of the new hole began last June and should be completed by January. Plans are to have it ready for the AT&T Pebble Beach National Pro Am.

The hole tees off just behind the 4th green, boasting a stunning view of the 6th hole rising up the cliffs and the back of

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FEBRUARY

Niebur, Furness named GCN's best builders

By MARK LESLIE



Joe Niebur



Tim Furness

COLORADO SPRINGS, Colo. — Niebur Golf, which former cowhand Joe Niebur created in 1991, has been named Golf Course Builder of the Year for 1998 by *Golf Course News*.

Furness Golf Construction received the plaque for Best Golf Course Small Builder of the Year.

Niebur and Furness received their awards at the annual banquet of the Golf Course Builders Association of America in Orlando during the International Golf Course Conference and Show.

The Niebur announcement followed an extensive survey of architects, developers and superintendents involved in projects for 18 builders nominated for the award. Of a possible rating of 80, Niebur Golf scored 78.675. MacCurrach Golf Construction, Inc. of Jacksonville, Fla., finished second with a rating of 77.96, and Landscapes Unlimited of Lincoln, Neb., placed third at 76.14.

Furness Golf Construction, Inc. received near-perfect ranking from the developers, architects and superintendents on the three projects it completed in 1998. The principals were queried on such areas as meeting deadlines and budget, sufficient personnel and equipment, quality of work, and project supervisor. Of a possible score of 80, Furness finished at 79.2.

Furness was followed in the survey by Turf Drain Inc. of Novi, Mich., with a score of 78.17, and Quality Grassing & Services, Inc. of Lithia, Fla., at 77.48.



Steve Forrest, second from left, and Arthur Hills look over a topographical map flanked by Brian Yoder, left, and Drew Rogers.

OCTOBER

New wetlands regs may stifle development

By MARK LESLIE

WASHINGTON, D.C. — The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers is implementing a new cadre of wetlands regulations in early 2000 that is expected to impact a far greater number of residential and commercial developments, including golf courses.

Public comment on the proposed Nation Wide Permits (NWP) expires Oct. 6, making the way for the new rules which affect jurisdictional waters of the United States — wetlands, streams, lakes, etc.

Although the new NWP have not been officially confirmed, experts in the field anticipate few changes before the current NWP 26 expires at midnight Dec. 30.

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DECEMBER

Forrest named Hills' associate

TOLEDO, Ohio — Golf course architect Arthur Hills has named longtime associate Steve Forrest a principal in his company. The firm, now titled Arthur Hills/Steve Forrest and Associates, has been involved in the design of more than 150 new courses throughout the United States.

Meanwhile, Brian Yoder and Drew Rogers have been promoted senior design associates and have been made partners in the firm.

"I want to recognize Steve's efforts through the years and call attention to the key role he has played in our success," Hills said.

Hills and Forrest are both members of the American Society of Golf Course Architects (ASGCA).

A landscape architect graduate from Virginia Tech, Forrest has worked with Hills for more than 20 years. His design philosophy reflects Hills' desire to create courses that are visually exciting, innovative, strategically challenging yet playable, and sensitive to the environment.

Yoder is an ASGCA member and has been with Hills since 1990. Rogers has been with the firm since 1992.

Richmond First Tee facility receives judicial nod

By MARK LESLIE

RICHMOND, Va. — A judge's stunning reversal of his own decision has paved the way for the Richmond First Tee project to, finally, get under way.

Richmond organizers, who had hoped to open the nation's initial new First Tee facility, had been stalled for months by opponents using legal challenges and appeals to administrative county approvals. Now, it appears, they can proceed.

On Feb. 3, Circuit Court Judge Jack B. Stevens reportedly told a court hearing he had been negligent when ruling that the county could lease land but only if it controls fees and oversees the leasee's operation. That flew in the face of the county-First Tee agreement for the youth-oriented course at Iron Bridge Park. First Tee advocates argued that the decision also appeared incongruent with the current leases the county has in effect with an airport and various other entities.

Now, according to Richmond First Tee Executive Director Tim Merry, it will probably be mid-March to early April before construction can begin at the park which sits outside the city in Chesterfield County.

"We are relieved," he said. "We had hoped this [reversal] would be the case. We are prepared to move ahead. We remain very committed, and look forward to the day when we can have kids out there playing on the golf course."

Local businessmen, led by Fred Tattersall, had raised \$2 million for the facility — \$1.5 million to build it and \$500,000 to operate it for five years, by which time it should be self-sustaining. The goal is to make golf affordable for area children.

Golf course architect Lester George, who is donating his services, and builder Quality Grassing & Services, which will earn no profit on the project, are prepared to get started. Shortly af-

ter Stevens reversed his decision, George submitted a new course routing, eliminating an irrigation pond that was a safety issue for some. And Quality Grassing stood ready to begin clearing, once the new plans were approved by the Chesterfield county commissioners.

Opponents to the project, led

by park neighbors, promised to appeal Stevens' decision. But Merry said: "We're not waiting for the appeal. By the end of February I will have all the permitting we need. Construction could only be held up by a judge granting a restraining order while awaiting appeal."

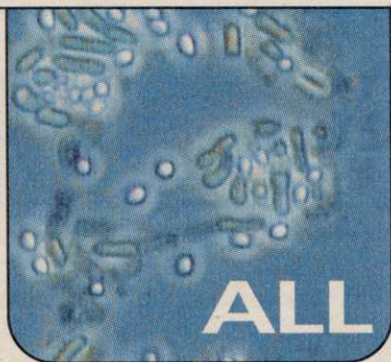
Richmond First Tee support-

ers see the year-long entanglement as a possible blessing in disguise, for two reasons:

- "When we go through it this time around, [national] First Tee is in a much better position to help us, and we're in a better position to do it," Merry said, referring to the fact that a year ago the national program had just been created by the PGA of America, PGA Tour, U.S. Golf Association, LPGA and others.

"Though not the first facility, we'll still have a unique project here," Merry added.

- While the county project was stalled, Richmond First Tee reopened talks with the city of Richmond concerning an inner-city site the city wanted them to build on in the first place. The project would be a three-hole layout next to an existing driving range, with another six holes in the future.



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Pebble's 5th

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the 7th tee clinging to the rocks. The prevailing winds will swirl into this green complex to help make it a challenging hole.

In order to make the hole blend into the rest of the course, the Pebble Beach maintenance staff has painstakingly created a sod nursery from cores harvested from the course's other greens. The goal is to blend in the new hole so that it feels and plays as though it has always been there.

The missing link of Pebble Beach will complete a string of uninterrupted golf holes from The Lodge at Pebble Beach all the way to Carmel Beach. ▶