

Witter Design adds Lembke, expands roster of projects

By JAY FINEGAN

LOCKPORT, N.Y. — The golf course architectural firm Witter Design has expanded its team with the addition of Brian Lembke as senior designer. Trained as a landscape architect at State University of New York School of Environmental Science and Forestry, Lembke spent the last three years with national golf course contractor Turf Drain Inc., where he learned the skills of course construction and shaping. His impact has been immediate with Witter Design, which has several projects underway this season.

According to golf architect and company founder Scott Witter, the addition of Lembke should give clients additional confidence that the same individuals who developed the design ideas will also transform them into the envisioned landscape.

Witter noted that, in many cases, superintendents and their crews are capable of handling the finishing aspects of a green, bunker, or tee renovation project. "For many clubs we work with, it makes a lot of sense for this to occur and we encourage it," he said.

Under these circumstances, Witter added, it's not easy to find an independent contractor who's capable of shaping a particular feature and who is interested in handing the remaining work over to the club. With the shaping and project coordination skills of Lembke, he said, Witter Design has opened up new opportunities to assure clients that their design intent will turn out as planned.

A case in point is the 89-year-old Potsdam Town and Country Club, in upstate New York. Witter Design is completing the finishing touches on nine new holes to bring the course up to 18 holes. It is a dramatic Adirondack mountain layout that crosses a trout stream seven times.

A local contractor, Ron's Agri-drainage Inc., accepted the challenge of the project without the experience of having built a course before. It was not long after the dirt was moved that Ron's Agri-drainage encountered trouble.

"Ron had no idea how to do the green-shaping, and he had no shaper — the shaper he was counting on fell through," Witter said. "He called and asked if we



The ninth hole at Lockport Town and CC in Lockport, N.Y. where Witter designed a two-hole expansion and made major renovations.

could spare Brian for a few weeks. It worked out very well. Brian had been one of Turf Drain's top shapers for three and a half years. It took care of Ron's crisis, because Brian was on top of the Cat 550 doing all the shaping. And I was going to get exactly what I wanted, because Brian was going to be my eyes on site. He gives us a new dimension.

"That's a big difference from the way most architect's work," Witter added. "Normally, we supervise construction and make changes, and say 'let's raise that mound up a little bit, let's give a little more shadow play on that bunker.' Then you go away and return in two weeks for your next visit, and that's been done."

The grassing of the Potsdam course will be complete by early September, and the full 18-hole track is expected to open

in fall 2001.

Also in progress for Witter Design is a new 18-hole daily-fee facility, Ironwood Golf Course, southeast of Buffalo. Set on scenic high ground in Wyoming County, the routing of the new course had to negotiate its way around a large television transmission tower. Ponds are now being excavated and earthmoving has begun for the rough shaping of green and tee sites. Irrigation and the primary feature construction will commence in the spring of 2001.

Other ongoing projects for the firm include multiple tee and bunker renovations at Midvale Golf and Country Club and Penfield Country Club, both in Rochester, N.Y. Witter Design is also working with architect Jerry Matthews to co-design the 18-hole Redjacket Golf Club.

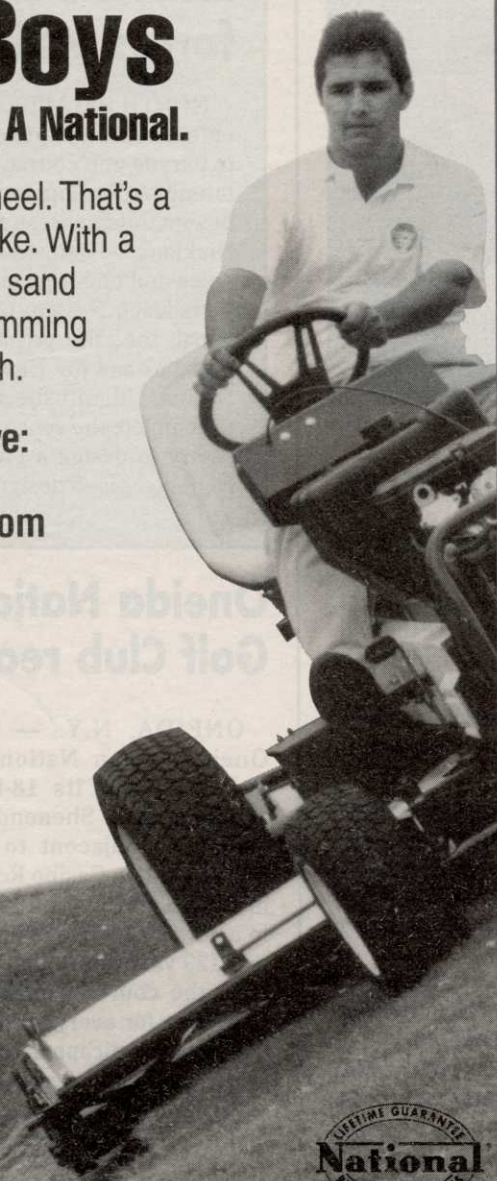
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The 13th hole - "Blind Man's Bluff" - at Whistling Straits' Irish Course, which opened Aug. 1

Play begins at Dye's Irish Course

By MEGHAN FOLEY

KOHLER, Wis. — A fourth Pete Dye-designed golf course has joined the acclaimed combination of championship layouts at The American Club resort here. This one, named the Irish Course, lies adjacent to the Straits Course at Whistling Straits. Public play began August 1.

The Irish Course weaves around the western perimeter of the Whistling

Straits property, and features bentgrass tees, fairways and greens as well as large bunkers and sand dunes. Four creeks wind through the course and come into play on nine holes.

Five tee placements are marked on each hole, although more can be accommodated. The arrangement allows players of varying abilities to enjoy a round together without diminishing

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Hills' Sienna Plantation opens

MISSOURI CITY, Texas—The Sienna Plantation Golf Club, designed by Arthur Hills, has opened for play. The club is part of Sienna Plantation, a 10,500-acre community near Houston. The course winds through a forest and several lakes add challenges, offering risk/reward shot values.

"Spacious corridors afforded us

the opportunity to build a variety of golf holes," said Hills. "Our goal was to design an easy-to-maintain course that fit naturally onto the site, enhanced the beauty of the property and provided variety in the shots required. We wanted to be sensitive to the environment while keeping in mind the elements that give a course character."

Sienna's planners spent nearly a year identifying and delineating sensitive environmental areas and designed the course to have zero or minimal impact on the wetlands environment, said Doug Goff, general manager. Sienna worked with wetlands consultants to create areas of interest around the golf course, preserving the wetlands. On the course, the wetlands will be treated as hazards.



The 17th hole at the Arthur Hills-designed Sienna Plantation GC, near Houston

Irish Course

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the challenge. Yardage measures 7,203 from the back tees and 5,109 from the front. Slope and ratings have not yet been established.

"My challenge in designing the Irish Course was to make it of equal stature with its neighbor, the Straits Course," said Pete Dye. "It had to be more than just a complement to the Straits—it had to be comparable." The renowned architect, whose creations have occasionally been described as "Dye-abolical," said he approached the project with particular fervor. "I've used every trick I've ever learned in designing this course," Dye said. "I should say this with some degree of modesty. In my lifetime, I've never seen anything like this. Anyplace. Period."

Steve Friendlander, general manager and director of golf for the Kohler resort, describes the Irish Course as an interesting hybrid. "It has parkland-style holes with trees and creek crossings, grassland holes that are somewhat flat and meandering, and the dunes and bunkers of a seaside links course, without the ocean."

In addition to the creeks that intersect the course, the layout also permits views of Lake Michigan from five holes. The lake is quite visible from hole 13, but that won't be the principal reason the 183-yard, par-3 will be memorable, according to Friendlander. Dubbed "blind man's bluff," hole 13 reveals only about 10 to 25 percent of its putting surface from most of the tee boxes. "It may be the most memorable hole you'll ever play in the United States," Friendlander predicted. "The green is absolutely huge, more than 20,000 square feet. But it's built down in the middle of a war zone with pot bunkers and dunes 20 to 40 feet high on three sides."

Whistling Straits is located nine miles northeast of the resort destination of Kohler, Wis. The resort's other amenities include The American Club, the Midwest's only AAA Five Diamond resort hotel; Blackwolf Run golf course, site of the 1998 U.S. Women's Open Championship; and Kohler Waters Spa, set to debut in this fall. The Straits Course will host the 2004 PGA Championship. ■

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