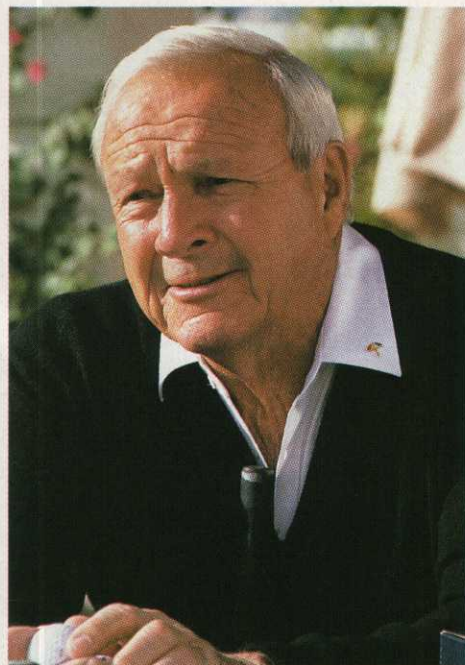


Arnold Palmer grew up watching his father tend Latrobe CC as its superintendent. He helped his father build the final nine holes at the Latrobe, Pa., course and his father made sure that Palmer was keenly aware of the challenges facing superintendents. Consequently, Palmer has always had kind words for superintendents — as a golfer, as a designer and as an owner.

“Arnold watches golf course construction with the eye of a superintendent,” says Ed Seay, executive vice president, chief operating officer and director of design for Ponte Vedra, Fla.-based Palmer Course Design. “He makes sure that developers don’t do anything that’s going



Aidan Bradley

Arnold Palmer

The ultimate
spokesman for
the profession

to cause maintenance headaches after the course opens.”

Seay, who has designed more than 200 courses with Palmer over 30 years, says his boss urges developers to involve the superintendent from the beginning of construction. Palmer believes that only superintendents who know courses intimately can adequately take care of them.

Palmer also understands that not all superintendents operate with a \$1.5 million budget, Seay says. He tries to design courses that can be easily maintained at a more reasonable cost.

Mike Wilson, superintendent of The Champions Club in Jacksonville, Fla., started his career at Bay Hill Club and Lodge, which Palmer purchased with partners in 1970. He says Palmer’s respect for superintendents permeates the entire management of the course.

“The approach they have at the club, which reflects Palmer’s philosophy, is to help people reach their potential,” Wilson says. “The management nurtured me professionally, and I’m grateful for all they did.”

To this day, Palmer remains intimately involved with Bay Hill’s operations. Superintendent Dwight Kummer says that when Palmer is in Florida, he’s at the course every day to play — and to walk the course with the superintendent.

Kummer says Palmer can be demanding

for superintendents, but he’s also fair. Palmer enjoys the agronomic aspects of the course, and he is always willing to try something new.

“You can tell that he grew up taking care of a golf course and really loves the process,” Kummer says. “Any time I go to a new course opening with him, he always wants to know who the superintendent is and wants to know what problems he or she is having. It clearly means something to him.

“I’m pretty spoiled,” he adds. “I’ve been with him for 10 years now, and he treats me like family.”

Jim Kernohan, superintendent at Metro West CC in Orlando, worked for Palmer’s management company at Silverthorn CC in Brooksville, Fla. He says the experience left him anxious to work directly for the man he calls, “The King of Golf.”

“I’ve always had the impression that he really respects what we do as superintendents,” Kernohan says. “He’s certainly been an inspiration for me, and I’d love to work with him directly some day.”

Now that Palmer has joined Callaway Golf as its spokesman for a driver the USGA deems illegal, several golf writers have written that he has sold out and that his image is “tarnished.” But superintendents familiar with Palmer’s maintenance-friendly approach to the game and the design of courses know that he will always be in their corner.

— Frank H. Andorka Jr., Associate Editor