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Off The Fringe Full Force

ARCHITECT GAINS REPUTATION
FOR RESTORING USGA COURSES

By Mark Leslie

When restoration of an old, classic golf course coincides with a United States Golf Association (USGA) event, golf course architect Ron Forse is often the person called in to make it work.

While Rees Jones is known as the "Open Doctor" for renovating several golf courses to host the men's U.S. Open, Forse could hang a shingle declaring himself as the "Director of Design Protocol/The Other Championships" or "Course Surgeon, Championships."

Since the early 1990s, the young Pennsylvanian has built a reputation for mastering the restoration of golf courses designed by the likes of Donald Ross, A.W. Tillinghast, Willie Park Jr. and William Flynn — but especially Ross. Like notches in a belt, Forse and his senior designer, Jim Nagle, have worked on 35 courses designed by



Ross, the dean of the Golden Era of golf design in the early 1900s.

Forse's track record on USGA championship courses, by the years they held events, is impressive. It includes:

1998 — Forse built an alternate 10th green and rebuilt the famous par-3 sixth green sporting a bunker in the middle at the George Thomas-designed Riviera Country Club in Pacific Palisades, Calif., host of the U.S. Senior Open as well as the Nissan Open.

2001 — Forse created a master plan, restored bunkers, tees and greens, and designed a short-game practice area and cart paths at Ross-designed Salem Country Club in Peabody, Mass., host of the U.S. Senior Open.

2004 — Forse restored the entire golf course, to Ross's original intent, at the Kalkwa Club in Erie, Pa., host of the U.S. Women's Amateur.

2006 — Forse recently completed implementing his long-range master plan of the famous Tillinghast-designed Newport (R.I.) Country Club, one of the five founding clubs of the USGA and host of the U.S. Women's Open. He restored the entire course to Tillinghast's "design intent."

"It's a thrill to restore these classic courses, especially when it happens to correlate with a major tournament," Forse says. "It's also a challenge because many of them are becoming compromised by today's equipment, which is making an inadvertent assault on their integrity. Anything we can do to keep the design intent a reality for the golfer is an honor and a privilege."

Mark Leslie, a freelance writer from Monmouth, Maine, represents Forse.

Quotable

"People think in terms of the instant mature look. We're in an era of instant gratification."

— Bill Coore, golf course architect, on people who golf courses grown in now.

"A plague invented by the Calvinistic Scots as a punishment for man's sins."

— Journalist James Reston on the frustrating game of golf.