

something about straight, rough stripes against the straight fairway or green stripes that makes everything too stark and rigid. I've always felt that surrounding the straight ones with the contoured ones somehow softens things.

I've come to discover that I'm not the only one who has specific striping preferences. Mark Merrick, a 20-year veteran superintendent in the mid-Atlantic region, has his own theory on burning in stripes.

"You have to mow in the same direction, on the same stripe, two times in a row," Merrick says. "So if you mow left to right on Monday, then it's left to right again on Wednesday, on the exact same stripe. The next two mowings are then right to left, etc."

"To the untrained eye, stripes look like magic," says Elizabeth Black, the author's spouse. "I look out across the golf course, and my first thought is *that* is so cool! How do they do that? It's all the same grass, but it's light and dark at the same time."

It was explained to her that it was all smoke and mirrors, used to trick the eye into seeing the perfection of the stripes versus any slight imperfections that may exist in the turf. She didn't fall for that, however, and had to settle for the shadow/reflection explanation.

But not everyone sees the magic in the stripes. Jack Mackenzie, certified superintendent of North Oaks (Minn.) Golf Course, has his own thoughts about stripes. In an e-mail, he wrote, "Here is an odd angle for you, pardon the pun: I hate stripes! In fact, I loathe them. Why can't the meandering architectural integrity of a course hold its own without the contrived appearance imposed by burned-in striping? Why all the harsh geometric lines when a flowing design is so much more natural? Isn't the final target round? To me a striped course is distracting to the eye."

Whatever your opinion on stripes, your palette awaits your decision on it every morning. ■

## Eye of the Tiger

IF HE WANTS TO BE A  
SUCCESSFUL ARCHITECT,  
WOODS NEEDS TO SEE HOW  
THE DESIGNING GREATS DID IT

By Anthony Pioppi

**T**iger Woods recently announced his plans to become a golf course architect. Although his management company touted the decision as earth shattering, it merely produced chuckles inside the design industry.

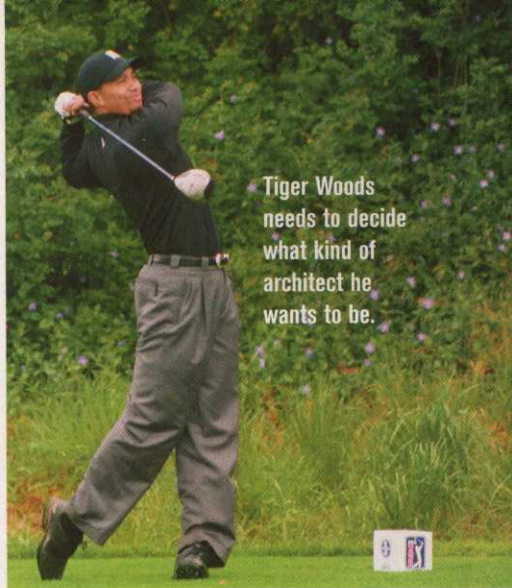
If Tiger happened to seek my advice, I'd happily tell him some ways to avoid the pitfalls encountered by his predecessors, many of whom have made the mistake of thinking that great golf swings translate into great architecture, too.

First, I would tell Tiger he can't judge the worth of a golf course by how he plays it. As Jack Nicklaus now admits, he designed with too much arrogance and not enough listening in his early days. As a result, an inordinate amount of his greens favored a high fade approach shot — the exact ball flight he happens to play. Alas, very few recreational golfers hit a high fade.

Second, Woods must decide what kind of architect he wants to be. If it's about building great golf courses, he should follow in the footsteps of Ben Crenshaw and surround himself with a team that works on only a few courses a year, ensuring the proper amount of attention is paid to each.

If he decides it's all about the money, or that knowing the going rate for a house lot on one of his courses is more important than knowing the yardage from the forward tees, there are plenty of templates for him to follow.

But there are consequences to having



Tiger Woods needs to decide what kind of architect he wants to be.

a hands-off approach. Take the courses that are visited by a cadre of construction companies that must "improve" them — again. One three-year-old course is undergoing its third major renovation since it opened in 2003; this round is costing somewhere in the neighborhood of \$2 million. Conservative estimates put the total cost of renovations, thus far, at about \$5 million.

### ANALYSIS

Just being involved, however, is not enough. Woods needs to realize that those who design and build courses for a living have much more knowledge on the subject than he. Woods should take the time to learn from them.

Woods also needs to leave his ego on the practice range and realize that everything he designs is not going to be universally praised. Ben Hogan was involved with just one design in his life, and, as legend has it, he was so concerned about its design he hand-raked every green. When the press gave the layout mediocre reviews, Hogan took it so personally he never designed again. A thin skin does not last long in the architecture business.

If he has not already done so, Woods should read up on the subject of golf course design. He should start with Alister Mackenzie's book, "The Spirit of St. Andrews," then move on to George Thomas' "Golf Architecture in America." He also should study the National Golf Club of America in George Bahto's "The Evangelist of Golf." And, of course, he

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must scrutinize the drawings of the Old Course, for within those 18 holes are all the secrets of great architecture.

Like others before him, Woods would be wise to partner with a known architect for his first few designs. Nicklaus had Pete Dye, and Tom Weiskopf had Jay Morrish. For Tiger, I would suggest, in no particular order, Steve Smyers, Brian Silva or Gil Hanse. They adhere to the school of design that C.D. Macdonald and Mackenzie used, which starts by genuflecting at the altar of the Old Course.

I know Woods thinks he already knows course design, but his words betray him. When he says Warwick Hills Golf & Country Club in Grand Blanc, Mich. — which opened in 1958 — is a great example of Classic Era architecture, he reveals his ignorance and immediately loses credibility. Woods might as well say a Double Whopper is a great cut of beef.

The same is true when he says he wants to build difficult golf courses. He should realize the average player isn't looking to get his butt kicked, but rather to be challenged and have fun. Saying he's going to make a course difficult is like a cook saying he's going to make the chili really hot. In both cases, it's easy to do but is usually unsatisfying to the customer.

And one last bit of advice: He should try to have some fun. Everything about the building of a golf course (other than the permitting process, which he should subject himself to just once so as to understand that special brand of hell) is a joy. Learn to read a topographical map; listen as design associates and contractors talk; watch a bulldozer operator carve out a bunker from start to finish.

Unlike competitive golf, architecture is not about winning and losing. It is about creating something that will bring pleasure to others. In the end, it will be the golfers — not a scorecard or bank book — who decide how well Woods has done. ■

## Becoming Certified Makes Sense — And Cents



It pays to become a certified golf course superintendent — literally. On average, certified superintendents earn much more than superintendents who aren't certified. The annual increase in salary of certified superintendents is also much higher.

The average salary of a certified superintendent rose from \$62,948 in 1998 to \$80,489 in 2005, according to the Golf Course Superintendents Association of America (GCSAA). Incidentally, the salary increase for non-certified superintendents for the same period was from \$58,091 in 2003 to \$63,126 in 2005.

But becoming a certified superintendent takes time and dedication. The fact that there are only about 1,965 certified superintendents — a small percentage among the universe of golf courses — might be a reflection of the magnitude of the achievement. To achieve Certified Golf Course Superintendent status, candidates will have successfully completed a rigorous program of study and professional experience over and above that required of Class A, Superintendent Member or Class C members, according to the GCSAA.

Becoming certified doesn't just mean a potential upgrade in salary; it also provides superintendents a boost in the way they are viewed professionally by their peers. Certification goes hand in hand with professionalism. Did you know that all of the GCSAA board members are certified?

Today's superintendent shouldn't just rely on his or her agronomic knowledge to do his job, the GCSAA states. The superintendent who better understands the business of golf and who works well with other department heads to help the golf facility succeed will be in high demand.

Preparing for certification takes considerable time, the GCSAA says. The association, however, offers many resources to help superintendents. For more information on becoming certified, visit the Web site at [www.gcsaa.org/mc/certification/default.asp](http://www.gcsaa.org/mc/certification/default.asp).

*The "Tip of the Month" is provided by Syngenta to support superintendents in their agronomic, business and professional development. To comment on this column, submit a lesson from your own experience, or suggest a topic to be covered in a future issue, please visit [www.golfbusinesstips.com](http://www.golfbusinesstips.com).*

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