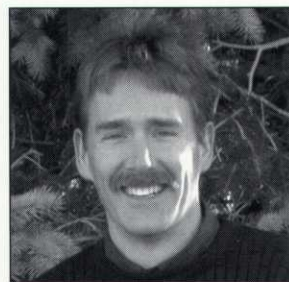


Insight:

One Architect's Perspective

By Kevin Norby

Herfort Norby Golf Course Architects



Biography

I attended South Dakota State University and the University of Idaho at Moscow and I have a degree in Landscape Architecture. Much of my early education on the principles of golf course architecture come from my relationship with Don Herfort who spent 35 years designing golf courses in Minnesota, Iowa and Wisconsin. I formed Herfort Norby Golf Course Architects in 1998 and Don retired in 2003. New courses include The Refuge in Oak Grove, Greystone in Sauk Centre and Boulder Pointe in Elko. With the slow down in new courses, most of our work currently involves renovations and practice facilities including Forest Hills Golf Club, Columbia Golf Course, Gross National and Mason City Country Club.

Today there is a push to restore golf courses back to their original design, sometimes called sympathetic restoration.

How does one select an architect for the job?

The success of any project is in large part dependent upon the personalities of the people involved. It is important that your architect be someone who can effectively communicate with you and your Board so that your project gets approved. It is, of course, also important that you select an architect who has the knowledge and experience to come up with creative solutions to difficult problems. There are a lot of people out there that have been involved with two or three projects but don't have the experience to know how to handle the uncommon or unforeseen issues that come up during a golf project. During a "sympathetic restoration" we are trying to preserve the original course architect's design philosophy and architectural style but not necessarily preserving the original course routing or bunker placement. Most experienced architects will have the knowledge and ability to successfully research and implement a "sympathetic restoration." As a superintendent, you need to determine which individual will be the most effective

at successfully communicating with you and your Board without interjecting too many of their own personal stylistic biases.

Why should an architect be used when restoring a golf course?

You hire an architect to listen to your ideas, provide alternative design solutions and to help educate your Green Committee and Board on how your project will affect aesthetics, playability and your maintenance budget. Restoration and renovation projects, in particular, can often become very political. Your architect can assist you by presenting alternative solutions and attempting to bring the differing parties together. Your architect can use his expertise to insure that the final design not only looks good, but is also sympathetic to the limitations of your maintenance budget and to the varying abilities of your membership. Once approved, your golf course architect will prepare detailed plans and specifications, guide you through the bid process and then oversee the work to insure that the original design intent and budget are met.

Technology is impacting the game of golf and many courses do not pose a challenge to the bigger hitters. With limited land, what can be done to thwart their attempts at par without disrupting the integrity of the architect's intent?

The game of golf is about so much more than distance. Subtle undulations in the green, alternative approaches to the green and risk/reward opportunities which require the golfer to decide where to place the ball are good ways to make a short hole exciting yet challenging without necessarily adding length. Some of my favorite local golf holes are very short par fours with water or heavily bunkered approaches.

Was it the ball or the clubs or the USGA that allowed this situation to get out of hand?

I think it would be unrealistic to expect the manufacturers of golf equipment to stop trying to come up with new products each year. On the same note, I don't think we can blame the public for wanting clubs or balls that go longer and straighter. I think the problem here is that for years the USGA has placed so much emphasis on length and not enough emphasis on strategy, ball control and accuracy. I would like to see the USGA, and more of today's architects, get back to creating golf courses and golf holes that place a greater emphasis on strategy and risk/reward opportunities.

Have you considered the newer Round Up ready bents and their impact upon golf courses?

I'm not one to jump on the band wagon for new products when we have old proven products which are functioning just fine. This is particularly true with turf grass varieties. Every year there are dozens of new varieties and the seed suppliers try their best to get us to use theirs. I like the varieties that have been around for five or ten years and that I know don't have any major deficiencies. I prefer to let someone else do the experimenting.

Have players taken to the forward tee programs being designed into older courses today?

We have had a few of our courses consider the program but unfortunately there have always been higher priority issues to deal with. I think in time the program will catch on and the public will come to appreciate the idea.

Do you have a preference of sand used in bunkers today?

We have used a lot of different sands but my preference today is the Ohio Best Signature Blend. It has a great consistency, it drains well and balls don't plug.

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With the demand for ever-quicker greens, older greens are losing many cupping locations. What is a comfortable speed for everyday play?

I think that the speed of a green again depends on whom the course is being built for. A public daily fee or resort course may want green speeds around 9.5 to 10.0 while a private course would generally be set up for somewhere between 10.5 and 12.0. The key is to determine during the design phase who your client is.

Name your foursome

Gary Player (a golf legend),
Tom Lehman (a great person)
and Bill Murray (a lot of fun).

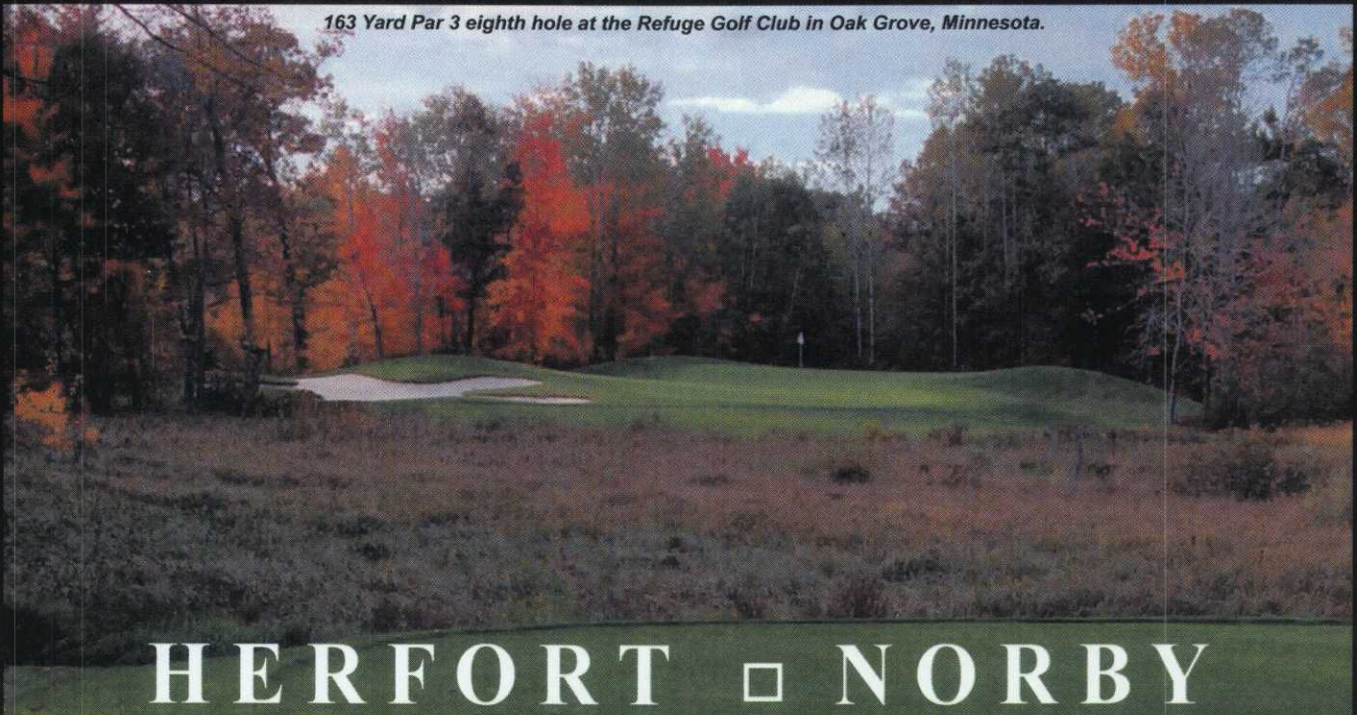
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163 Yard Par 3 eighth hole at the Refuge Golf Club in Oak Grove, Minnesota.



HERFORD □ NORBY

Golf Course Architects

6452 City West Parkway, Eden Prairie, MN 55344

Phone: 952. 942. 0266

Fax: 952. 942. 0197

e-mail: golfnorby@eschelon.