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BY DESIGN



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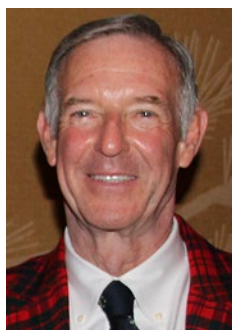
What is it to be part of a community? For some, it is a sense of togetherness and mutual support, for others the opportunity for social interaction or access to shared amenities. For most it is probably some combination of each of these, and more.

While developers look to golf for a financial return on investment, the appeal for residents is often golf's ability to deliver these attributes that make a community.

It is clear from our cover story that a major appeal of golf—and one of the reason that developers are continuing to build it into their projects—is its ability to bring people together. As a golfer, you can learn more about a person during a round of golf than you can in a year's worth of passing conversations. It creates enduring friendships. And it's not just golfers who benefit. A clubhouse and related facilities can provide a range of other activities—social events, a pool, tennis, or dining—to appeal to a broad spectrum of people throughout the community it serves, and beyond.

The golf course itself can contribute to the local community too—it serves as a green space buffer, and plays an important role in water management within a development.

I hope you enjoy the issue.



Steve Smyers, ASGCA
President
American Society of Golf Course Architects

BY DESIGN

Editor and Publisher: Toby Ingleton

Editorial contributors: Sean Dudey; Stuart Hackwell, Rain Bird; Adam Lawrence; Aileen Smith

Design: Bruce Graham

ASGCA Staff: Chad Ritterbusch; Therese Suslick; Mike Shefky; Aileen Smith; Marc Whitney

Photography: Lennar Corporation; Preston Development Company; Rees Jones Inc.

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ASGCA Past President Bill Love designed the golf course at the Carolina Colours community in North Carolina.
Photo: Preston Development Company.

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Water use

Architects help address water challenges

ASGCA President Steve Smyers, ASGCA, has made an appearance on the *Golf Channel's* 'Morning Drive' program as part of its Water Week.

In conversation with Matt Ginella, Smyers discussed the role of the golf architect and how they act as innovators and thought leaders when it comes to addressing the water challenges faced within the industry.

When asked about the extent to which irrigation and sustainability is being discussed in golf, Smyers said: 'That is *the* conversation right now. Water management and turf reduction is a big issue in remodelling, especially in the western U.S.'

Smyers said that architects and superintendents are working closer than ever: "They maintain what we as architects design, so the relationship between the architect and the superintendent is absolutely critical."

Smyers also discussed the future of golf, and said that innovation is key to ensuring the health of the game going forward. He described the sense of community within the golf architecture industry, highlighting joint educational seminars, case studies and the sharing of information among fellow architects.

He also referenced a new water book that will be released at the upcoming Golf Industry Show by the ASGCA in association with Rain Bird and The Toro Foundation.



ASGCA President Steve Smyers discussed water management on Golf Channel's 'Morning Drive'

Meanwhile, a new survey indicates that golf course superintendents in the U.S. have reduced the amount of water used to maintain courses by more than a fifth in recent years.

A report from the Golf Course Superintendents Association of America (GCSAA) found that the amount of water used to maintain courses in the U.S. in 2013 was 21.8 per cent lower than in 2005.

Funded by the United States Golf Association through GCSAA's Environmental Institute for Golf, the survey collected information from almost 2,000 golf course superintendents. These results

were then analysed by scientists at PACE Turf and the National Golf Foundation.

The survey found that golf course superintendents increased their use of recycled water by 33 per cent in the period between 2005 and 2013.

Water savings have also been made through turf reduction and improved technologies, including computer-controlled targeted irrigation systems and sensors measuring soil moisture.

The survey report can be found at www.gcsaa.org. And the entire 'Morning Drive' interview with Steve Smyers can be seen at www.golfchannel.com

Golf tourism

Golf tour operators report rise in bookings

A new report from KPMG's Golf Advisory Practice has found that golf tourism around the world is continuing to grow at a substantial rate.

The volume of tourist golf bookings in 2014 increased compared to the previous year, with 80% of surveyed operators reporting an increased

number of bookings year-on-year. The report indicates that the past few decades have seen the success of golf tourism rise considerably, and many golf tour operators are now tailoring their offerings to meet the specific needs of golfers.

The proportion of longer trip bookings increased compared

to previous years, indicating the willingness of golf travelers to spend more on golfing holidays.

Spain and Portugal remain the two most popular destinations globally, while South Africa, Morocco, the UAE, Thailand, Vietnam and Bulgaria were listed among the most popular emerging golf tourism hot spots.

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Design Excellence Recognition Program

Nine clubs cited for design excellence

The ASGCA has revealed its Design Excellence Recognition Program recipients for 2015.

Projects from nine U.S. courses have been recognised for their work with ASGCA members in addressing unique design challenges.

The Design Excellence Recognition Program was created in 2012, with each annual list highlighting the innovation and problem-solving skills necessary for today's golf course design work.

The 2015 nominations (see right) were reviewed by a panel of golf industry leaders, including representatives of the Club Managers Association of America, Golf Course Superintendents Association of America, Golf Course Builders Association of America, and National Golf Course Owners Association.

"I offer my heartiest congratulations to these tremendous golf facilities, as well as the golf course architects who provided their talent and expertise along the way," said President Steve Smyers, ASGCA. "The Design Excellence Recognition Program continues to grow each year. And this year, the projects highlighted show the positive impact a well-designed facility continues to have for golfers and an entire community."

Best new courses

ASGCA members on 'Best New' list

Projects involving members of ASGCA have dominated a recently released 'Best New Courses' list.

Compiled by *Golf Digest*, eight of the 10 featured courses for 2015 have been designed by members of ASGCA.

The list includes Cabot Cliffs in Inverness, Nova Scotia, Trump Golf Links Ferry Point in New York and the Full Cry course at Keswick Golf Club in Keswick, Virginia. Of the 10 projects listed in the publication's 2015 remodel of the year, six involved ASGCA members.

Visit tinyurl.com/oen6bp to view the full list

2015 Design Excellence Recipients

- **Atlantic Beach Country Club**
Atlantic Beach, Fla.
—Erik Larsen, ASGCA
- **Birnam Wood Golf Club**
Santa Barbara, Calif.—Dr. Michael Hurdzan, ASGCA Fellow
- **Glenview Park Golf Club**
Glenview, Ill.—Rick Jacobson, ASGCA
- **Griffith Park Golf Course**
City of Los Angeles, Calif.
—Forrest Richardson, ASGCA
- **Independence Golf Club**
Midlothian, Va.
—Lester George, ASGCA
- **The Lochmoor Club**
Grosse Pointe Woods, Mich.
—Paul Albanese, ASGCA
- **Oaks Country Club**
Tulsa, Okla.
—Bill Bergin, ASGCA Associate
- **The Preserve at Boulder Hills**
Wyoming, R.I.—Robert McNeil, ASGCA
- **Rockwind Community Links**
Hobbs, N.M.—Andy Staples, ASGCA

A special edition of By Design featuring of all nine projects will be available in February 2016

Blume oversees Pearlland project

The second phase of a renovation project at Pearlland Golf Club, Pearland, Texas, has been completed. Golf course architect Jeff Blume, ASGCA, has overseen the work, which involved the development of new greens, bunkers and tee boxes.

New course for Michigan casino

A new course is to be built at the Island Resort & Casino in Harris, Michigan. It has been designed by Paul Albanese, ASGCA, of Albanese & Lutzke and will be his second course at the resort, which is owned and operated by the Hannahville Indian Community



Work completed at Cypress Head

The course at Cypress Head Golf Club in Port Orange, Florida, has reopened following a renovation project led by Mike Dasher, ASGCA.

Renovation complete at Sawgrass CC

Sawgrass Country Club in Ponte Vedra Beach, Florida has completed a 27-hole renovation project. The club worked with Robert Walker, ASGCA, on the project, which included improvements to fairways, tees, bunkers, bridges, drainage and irrigation.



The Full Cry course at Keswick Golf Club

Investing in golf



Today's developers
continue to recognize
the appeal of golf,
as Toby Ingleton
discovers

With local fish populations in decline, the village of Ingonish Beach in Nova Scotia, Canada, had a problem. Its entire economy revolved around the fishing industry, and was in danger of dying out as yields from its daily ocean excursions fell.

The year was 1938 and the answer to the community's problem was golf. The popularity of the sport was gathering pace throughout North America and the fabulous landscape where the Cape Breton National Park meets the Atlantic

could be an irresistible draw for golfers from far and wide.

Golf architect Stanley Thompson was hired by the Canadian Government, and he set to work on Highlands Links, a course that would make the very best of a beautiful canvas and to this day remains one of the world's finest. The construction of the course provided work for the village's population and, for over 75 years now, the club has been an asset to the local community—providing a source of employment and attracting

ASGCA Past President Bill Love, ASGCA, designed the golf course at the Carolina Colours development in New Bern, North Carolina



Photo: Preston Development Company

tourism that delivers benefits throughout the village economy.

In 1947, Thompson, with 12 of his fellow golf architects, would form the American Society of Golf Course Architects and, to this day, ASGCA members are working not only with established communities, but also with developers who see golf as an amenity that will help their projects to thrive.

One such example is the work that ASGCA Past President Bill Love, ASGCA, completed for Overlook Holdings, responsible for the **Carolina Colours**

residential community in New Bern, North Carolina.

The development team has been building communities in the state for 25 years, so were keenly aware of the need for their new development to withstand the vagaries of a sometimes turbulent property market. "It was essential that the golf course at Carolina Colours would not only deliver the desired premium on property prices, but it should be built on the foundations of economic, social and environmental

sustainability," says Love.

With responsibility for master planning the entire development, Love's firm, Love & Kington, was able to achieve its client's goals by preparing concepts that would fulfil both the criteria for the golf course and development objectives for the residential component of the plan. After extensive analysis of existing site conditions, including sensitive areas, topography and drainage patterns, the course was routed to fit compatibly with its surroundings.

“In addition to providing a beautiful golf experience for residents and guests, the course is a green space buffer to environmental areas, including wetlands and a very sensitive black water stream. The ponds in the development have been designed to serve multiple purposes: strategic features within the golf design, stormwater management to the community and an irrigation source for the course,” he says. “The result was a golf course integrated with residential development areas to provide enhancement value while maintaining the best possible golf experience and reasonable development costs.”

Among the community—which is largely retirees—it’s not just golfers who benefit. “Golf anchored the project,” says Love. “But the environment can be enjoyed by all. The course has protected topography and natural features that lend character to the area, and extended green space back into the community. And the clubhouse provides amenities such as a pool and social activities that bring the local population together.”

This role of a golf club as a focal point for the community is also driving a trend towards courses reopening.

“People want their golf courses back,” says ASGCA Past President Tom Clark, ASGCA, a principal of Ault, Clark & Associates. “In addition to restoring the premium on their property prices, they recognize that a golf course can tie the whole development together.”

In addition to two projects for new golf courses within residential developments, Clark is currently working on four projects to reopen golf courses in established communities.

One of those is at the **Beacon Hill** development in Leesburg, Virginia, a suburb of Washington, D.C. In 1999, Clark created the original 27-hole routing, before the developer handed the project to a different group for completion. A colorful history of changes in ownership eventually saw the golf course fall out of operation in the mid-2000s, despite local efforts to keep it maintained.

“When the course was here, there was a better sense of community,” says Terry Allen, one of the homeowners at Beacon Hill. “We would have a Friday afternoon couples’ match, and then all drive our carts over to one of our homes to socialize afterwards. There was much more interaction among the people here.”

Allen and a group of fellow homeowners have been working to find a way of getting the golf course back. They have generated interest from a variety of potential operators, and are hopeful to have now identified one that could see them reopen the course within the next two years.

Clark has developed revised plans that will give them a practical route to getting 18 holes back to operation. This will begin with clearing the brush that has grown around the perimeter of the course, then re-seeding and sprigging. He’s also recommending tweaks to the design to broaden the appeal and give it a better chance of long-term success. “When I first visited the completed course, I was amazed at how deep they’d built the bunkers—they were 10-15 feet deep in places. They had left all the streams open and created what was a very difficult target golf experience.”

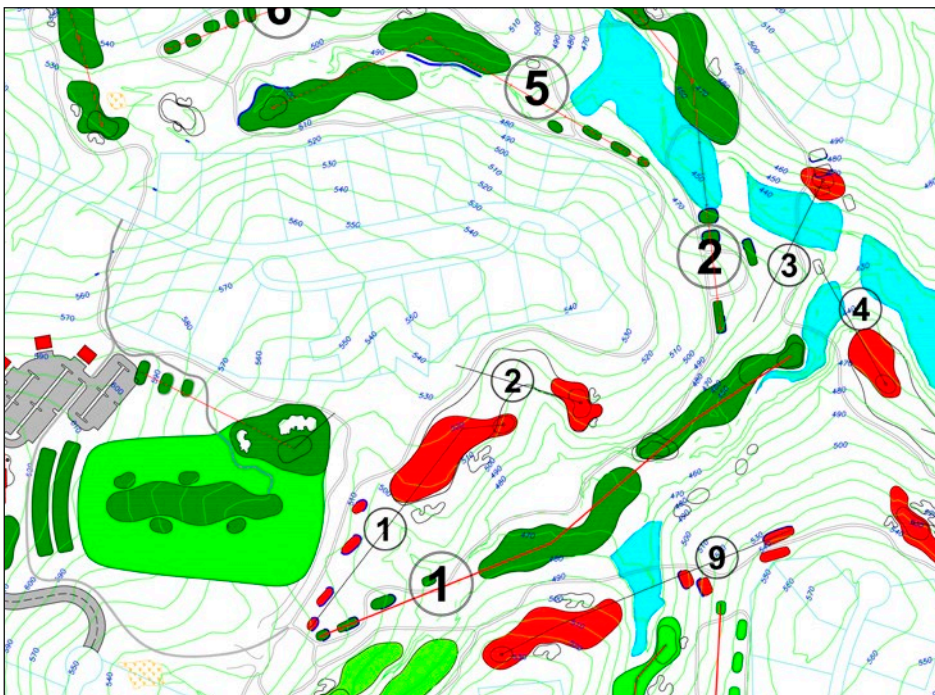
“While I personally like a difficult golf course,” says Allen, “from a business standpoint, I understand the need for it to be softened. Making Beacon Hill a more playable course is best for everyone.”

Again, it’s not just the golfers within the community who will benefit. “The most attractive thing about the course is that it is absolutely beautiful,” says Allen. “It has streams and ponds, elevation change, it’s wooded and there are hawks and deer everywhere.”

Clark’s new plan also provides the homeowners with the option of using some of the land for other activities. “I picked a best 18 that will make a really nice par-72 course. But it leaves space for a short course to be developed, as well as nature trails and a ball field for the homeowners.”

Lessons of a difficult decade for the housing market have been learnt, and developers are adapting their business plans to find a sensible balance for their projects.

In Millsboro, Delaware, Lennar Corporation felt that having a golf element was crucial to the success of its **Plantation Lakes** project, even in its earliest stages. They wanted to market a golf club membership to people who



ASGCA Past President Tom Clark has developed a plan that will help get the golf course at Beacon Hill back into operation



Photos: Lennar Corporation



Plantation Lakes opened with six holes, and the developers are adding more as the community expands



lived and worked in surrounding states of Maryland, New Jersey and Virginia, and were retiring to Delaware to take advantage of the favorable tax structure.

“Due to the property being on The Eastern Shore and only 30 minutes from the beach, it was determined that Plantation Lakes would be developed as a resort community with a golf course featured in a package of amenities that also included a fitness center, outdoor pool, trails, open spaces and community parks,” says ASGCA Past President Steve Forrest, ASGCA, of Hills & Forrest.

The Hills & Forrest team proposed a solution that would enable Lennar to invest in its golf course at a pace that matched the progress of the development. The golf course was designed to be built in stages, with a few holes being available at the initial phase of the project soon after development began in 2007.

This was enough to satisfy early homeowners, providing them with a picturesque outlook and access to high-quality golf holes at a reasonable

price. As it happened, this strategy paid dividends. When the recession arrived, homebuilding slowed, but Lennar was able to continue maintaining the six golf holes it had completed before the downturn.

With the market now recovering, the development can flex up again. “Approximately 400 single family and townhouse units, with supporting infrastructure, have been sold and settled,” says project manager Shawn Smith, ASGCA. “The clubhouse has been completed, including a pool and gym. Three additional golf holes are under construction, with the grand opening scheduled to take place on Memorial Day in 2016.”

It’s this type of pragmatic approach that is enabling developers to balance the attraction of golf with the need for a sound financial investment. And it’s not just residential developers who are finding a return on investment in golf. Resort developers continue to see golf as a primary draw of visitors. The Spring 2015 issue of *By Design* told

the story of the Pascua Yaqui Tribe of Arizona, whose **Sewailo** golf course—designed by Ty Butler, ASGCA and Notah Begay III—is succeeding in its goal to attract more visitors to the tribe’s Casino Del Sol resort.

Every development will have its own optimum solution. As Bill Love concludes: “It’s important not to simply apply the blanket statement that ‘golf is a good investment.’ Each project should be examined on a case-by-case basis and we can’t necessarily expect to complete a course at the onset of a project. We have to meet the development objectives and build it for long-term success, which means delivering a high quality product, protecting sensitive environmental areas and working to a practical timeline.” ASGCA members have the experience and expertise to propose a golf design that is best suited to a developer’s goals. ●

For Questions & Answers on Selecting Your Golf Course Architect, visit <http://asgca.org/free-publications>

Using water wisely

Golf courses are much more than just an amenity at The Villages community in Florida. Stuart Hackwell of Rain Bird explains

Thirty years ago, H. Gary Morse began to develop The Villages, a master-planned community in Central Florida. Starting with one subdivision and 9 holes of golf, the Morse family has developed The Villages into a 54,000+ home community with 630 holes of golf. The Villages is the eighth largest city in Florida, larger than other well-known snowbird destinations like Clearwater. The entire community encompasses 32 square miles in area with over 115,000 residents, 70 percent of whom are there full-time.

As the community has grown in size and scope, the infrastructure required has grown as well. Entire town centers with thriving retail shops, recreation centers and a wide range of sports fields and amenities have been developed for homeowners and their guests. Separate roads for cars and golf carts help move people around the neighborhoods.

Golf at The Villages has developed under the leadership of Ken Ezell, ASGCA, George Clifton, ASGCA, and the late ASGCA Fellow Lloyd Clifton, ASGCA. In 1989, they designed their first course for The Villages. Since that time, almost 600 of the property's 630 holes of golf have been designed and built under their guidance. Today, the Villages comprises 10 27-hole and two 18-hole championship courses

and 36 nine-hole executive courses. The courses have a surprising amount of elevation change (over 115 feet across the property) and plenty of undulation in the playing surfaces to create more strategy and challenges for the golfer. Ezell describes the style as "look hard and play easy, creating a fair experience for the golfer."

Clifton, Ezell and Clifton designed the golf courses on larger-than-average acreages as a focal point of each village within the overall community. They incorporated large lakes between adjacent holes, providing extensive water retention areas to capture and retain storm water runoff. Golf holes are strategically designed to handle flood water, draining excess water from residential and common areas. With the golf courses located in floodplain areas, homes are built on higher ground with many course views. This philosophy changed the way that the property could be developed, optimizing the number of homes that can be built in a given location.

As the infrastructure of The Villages increased in complexity, a highly sophisticated water management system has also evolved. An extensive storm water management system moves rainwater off hardscape and common areas and into storm retention ponds. Four on-site

wastewater treatment facilities have been built to manage the wastewater generated from the community. The golf courses are integral parts of the management system, handling the disposal of both rainwater and reclaimed wastewater.

Reclaimed wastewater from four on-site water treatment facilities, plus one local off-site facility, is used to irrigate the golf courses. In season, almost eight million gallons of reclaimed water is generated each day by the five facilities. An extensive network of pumps and piping distributes the reclaimed water to irrigation lakes around the property utilizing a very elaborate SCADA system with remote lake level monitoring and automated fill valves. Twenty pump stations then pump the reclaimed water onto the golf courses each night. One of the unique features of The Villages' irrigation systems is the extent to which the reclaimed water is managed. Golf areas are irrigated primarily with reclaimed water. Rather than just disposing of it, the reclaimed water is considered as a valuable resource to be used and managed as efficiently as possible.

Rainfall can be feast or famine in Florida. In some years, like 2006 with 28 inches of rainfall, there are drought conditions and the reclaimed water is managed carefully. In other years,





like 2015 when there has been over 52 inches of rainfall in the first nine months of the year, excess rainfall generates huge quantities of storm water that must be managed. The irrigation ponds can be remotely switched from reclaimed wastewater to storm water supply when needed. The golf irrigation systems are then used to distribute excess storm water onto the golf courses.

Here's one example of how the golf courses aid in storm water management: Bonifay is a recently constructed 27-hole course with 250 acres of irrigated turf and a 3,600 gallon-

operation at The Villages golf courses. They are designed to operate in a highly-efficient manner using high-uniformity sprinklers with state-of-the-art control. Weather stations, automated rain gauges, internet-based handheld control and pump station monitoring provide information that enables superintendents to effectively manage irrigation. This is important in times of drought when reclaimed wastewater is the primary irrigation source and a valued commodity. During wet periods, the systems dispose of storm water. Lakes and

Ezell describes the IC System as: "a huge plus to the construction and long-term operation of our golf courses. The ease of installation and simplicity of only having one wire on any given hole makes it easy to phase in golf course construction. Each station is single-head control with IC and we have much more flexibility which means we can grow in a golf course faster." He adds: "We expect our long-term maintenance costs to go down as we have eliminated the field controllers, which were our primary cost of maintenance parts. The long term savings should be significant with IC."

As The Villages approaches completion of the build-out, Ezell reflects on the work that has been done so far: "The golf courses have become bigger as the development evolved and we incorporated storm water and wastewater management into golf course design. Now the courses are integral to the success of the entire community. The residents love the golf courses, although they are so much more than just an amenity, they have enabled us to optimize the space for the developer and the residents and create a community and golf courses that are unique in the world." ●

Stuart Hackwell is International Sales Manager at Rain Bird Corporation, <http://rainbird.com>

/// Irrigation ponds can be remotely switched from reclaimed wastewater to storm water supply

per-minute pump station. Following recent heavy rains, one of the nines was closed to golfers and storm water was pumped through the irrigation system, disposing of two million gallons of water on the closed nine in less than 24 hours. The closed nine was re-opened to golfers within two days with carts on paths. The Villages was able to easily and efficiently manage the excess storm water with minimum disruption to golfers and residents.

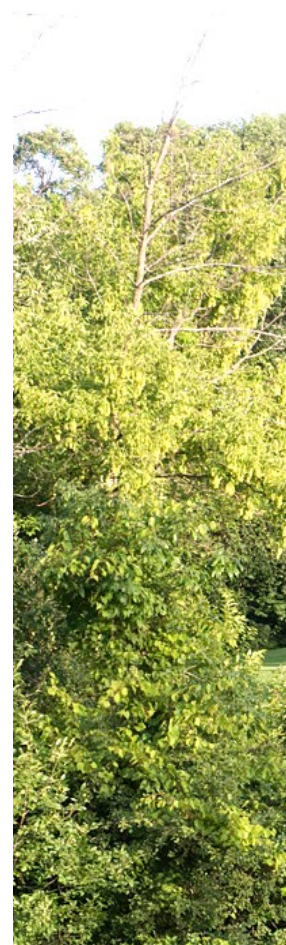
Twenty-three Rain Bird™ computer-controlled irrigation systems are in

ponds act as storage retention basins to provide flexibility to manage water use.

Courses built or renovated at The Villages during the past six years have incorporated the Rain Bird Integrated Control (IC) System, a newer advanced technology that eliminates field satellites and reduces copper wire use by 90 percent compared to traditional satellite systems. To date, 234 holes are operated using this system. As older courses are renovated, following The Villages' long-term capital improvement plan, updating to the IC System is considered.

Providing expertise for improvements

A new program from the ASGCA and USGA is providing pro bono assistance to publicly accessible golf courses. Aileen Smith explains more



The health of the golf industry can be measured by the viability of thousands of courses that provide enjoyment to millions of golfers every day.

These facilities—many of them public—need to make sure that the design, agronomics and operation of their courses combine to offer a high-quality, sustainable product for their customers and remain an integral asset of the local community.

ASGCA and the United States Golf Association (USGA) have a long history of helping facilities to improve the playability of their courses and enhance the efficiency of their maintenance practices. Now, for the first time, the organizations have teamed up to offer their combined expertise to qualified facilities.

Through the USGA-ASGCA Site Evaluation Program, ASGCA architects and USGA agronomists will work together to provide pro bono assistance to facilities that will be identified through an application process. They will study the selected facilities and provide a summary report outlining opportunities for improvement

in course design, agronomics, environmental stewardship, and operations with the goal of lowering costs, improving the golfer experience and fostering a more welcoming setting.

“The ASGCA, along with the ASGCA Foundation led by John LaFoy, is pleased to partner with the USGA on this initiative. Golf facilities have long benefited from the efforts of ASGCA members and USGA agronomists. Collaboration between our experts will have a positive impact on the facilities we support. ASGCA members are excited and proud to bring their expertise to this program,” says ASGCA President Steve Smyers, ASGCA.

“Course design and maintenance form the foundation of a golf facility’s operations,” adds Mike Davis, USGA executive director. “With the knowledge that the ASGCA and USGA can offer, more publicly accessible facilities will be able to strengthen this base, while promoting resource efficiency, a better golf experience and a stronger connection to the local community.”

Canal Shores Golf Course, a community-owned and operated facility in Evanston, Illinois, is the

first course to receive a pro bono evaluation through the program.

“This has been an incredible opportunity,” says Jason Way, of the Canal Shores board of directors. “We have some great ideas about how to improve the course, but the assistance from the USGA and ASGCA allows us to get past the initial planning process, and we can move forward with our vision for making Canal Shores a multi-use community green space that the maximum number of people can enjoy.”

Selection of facilities

Interested facilities should apply via <http://asgca.org/site-evaluation>. In addition to providing the information requested in the application, facilities interested in the program may need to answer additional questions and/or take part in a call or site visit as part of the application review process.

The ASGCA and USGA will choose facilities that demonstrate a need and willingness to carry out the recommendations made. Selected facilities are expected to make their best efforts to carry out recommendations.



Todd Quitno, ASGCA, has provided work for Canal Shores, a community-owned and operated facility in Evanston, Illinois. It is the first course to receive pro bono assistance through the ASGCA-USGA program and now has a new vision to maximize participation



In 2016, there will be three deadlines to submit applications: March 15; Aug. 15; and Dec. 15.

Site visit and report

For facilities that have been chosen, an ASGCA-member architect and USGA agronomist will make a site visit within three months of selection in order to study the course design, agronomics and operations. The date of the site visit will be mutually agreed upon by the facility, USGA and ASGCA. The ASGCA and USGA will employ up-to-date research and data, advanced tools and a comprehensive knowledge base in order to provide an analysis and recommendations for the facility managers.

This report will reflect the goals and desired outcome stated by the facility. The report may comprise analysis and recommendations in the areas of: course design; agronomics and maintenance practices; and operations.

The analysis will identify several key areas for improvement and outline metrics that will help the facility achieve their goals and track the outcomes of the improvements. This summary

report will be sent to the facility within four-to-six weeks of the site visit.

Implementation and follow-up

The program provides assistance for a site evaluation and a summary report, but there will be no funding for implementation. Acting on the recommendations outlined in the report is the sole responsibility of the facility. Therefore, the summary report will be commensurate with the resources available to the facility as well as the scope of the desired outcomes.

It is the expectation of the USGA and the ASGCA that the facility will act on some or all of the recommendations provided by the ASGCA member architect and USGA agronomist. Depending on the nature of the improvement being performed, the facility will be expected to track and report the outcomes of the improvements that have been made.

Aileen Smith is Director of Programs at the ASGCA and is coordinating the site evaluation program. To apply for an evaluation of your golf facility, please visit www.asgca.org/site-evaluation

Preparing for your application

During the application process, facilities will be asked to provide some background information about the project. This will include details of:

- **The facility**, such as the number of holes, practice facilities, clubhouse, date of opening, architect, general history of improvements.
- **Visuals**, including aerial photos of the course and topographical maps of the course, where available
- **Existing conditions**, such as budgets, number of rounds and local market conditions
- **Challenges** faced with regard to course design, agronomics, operations and player experience
- **Proposed projects** that the facility would like to undertake, including costs, constraints and potential outcomes or benefits of the project.

Facilities won't need to supply all this to complete the process, but more information enables the USGA-ASGCA to better evaluate the application.

Testing the best

ASGCA Past President Rees Jones, ASGCA Fellow, tells Adam Lawrence that the future of golf will require a new kind of championship course

The term ‘championship course’ is used reverently in golf circles, and most golf clubs aspire to such a distinction. For more than four decades, ASGCA Past President Rees Jones, ASGCA Fellow (known to many as the ‘Open Doctor’), has been designing courses that are of the utmost championship quality. He has worked on numerous famed courses, which collectively have hosted 23 major championships, five Ryder Cups, as well as other premiere events.

This coming year, 13 courses originally designed or renovated by Jones will be in the limelight as venues for: 2016 PGA Championship (Baltusrol Golf Club—Lower Course); 2016 Ryder Cup (Hazeltine National Golf Club); and six PGA Tour events including the annual hosting of the Tour Championship (East Lake Golf Club), 2016 Women’s PGA Championship (Sahalee Country Club), Swinging Skirts LPGA Classic (Lake Merced Golf Club) and the 2016 U.S. Amateur (Oakland Hills Country Club).

“The way we view championship golf courses is changing,” says Jones. “It’s no longer just about distance. True, there are plenty of professionals who now drive the ball over 300 yards, but there are also still plenty of tour players who don’t. Making courses even longer is not the sole solution, even if it’s desirable for other reasons.”

Jones believes course designers today need to be innovative; they need to figure out ways to make

golf courses challenging but not overly favoring the longest hitters. “Even today, when courses tip-out at 7,500-7,600 yards, the entirety of that length is not really intended to be used on the same day,” he says. “It’s to also give flexibility in course setup. Mixing up the setup with shorter holes as well as long ones is a good thing, giving balance between longer and shorter hitters.”

Throughout the game’s history the approach shot with a wood or long iron to a well-protected green has been regarded as the supreme test of the very best players”

Jones knows the style of a course is often dictated by the landform, but when it comes to designing green complexes he believes it requires both a meticulous mind, and one that is creative, yet in subtle ways.

“In the past, we used to think that front hole locations were more difficult when they were protected by hazards,” he says. “But today, players hit the ball so high and they impart so much spin, getting the ball to those locations is not so difficult

for them unless the green is elevated with a slope in front like many greens at Augusta or the Valley of Sin in front of the eighteenth green at St Andrews.

“Often, it is hole locations at the back or the corners of the greens that are most difficult because players want to fly the ball, even beyond the flag, and spin it back. This encourages the pros to use driver off the tee, even though this gives the player less of a chance to hit the fairway from which they can spin the ball. An errant shot over the green will be harder to recover from because most greens are pitched from back to front. We’ve seen this often. Tournament setup folks have recognized it too.”

According to Jones, today’s golf ball technology also comes into play. “These days, golf balls are constructed to allow stopping shots on a dime, so even when greens are firm the players can still aim at flags from the fairway,” he says. “This makes creatively crafted green contours more important for championship play than ever before. But of course, championship organizers generally want extremely fast greens and so you have to have pinnable areas that are flatter than in the past. So, in short, we are concentrating more on the transition areas in greens.”

Jones reminds us that hazards also need to be reevaluated, and the rough is more significant now than in years prior. It is, he notes, significant that the deep, small revetted pot bunkers



Photo courtesy of Rees Jones, Inc.

The South Course at Torrey Pines in California was totally remodeled by ASGCA Past President Rees Jones, ASGCA Fellow, in advance of the 2008 U.S. Open. It will host the championship again in 2021

of the Open Championship rota courses still pose a challenge, even to the best players, and thus, they define their playing strategy around them, as was the case with Tiger Woods during his two Open wins at St Andrews, in which he executed his game in such a way as to avoid the bunkers above all.

“The bunker game of today’s tour professional is so proficient that normal sand hazards don’t typically affect them, especially given the level of preparation of sand bunkers and the quality of the sand today—but water does,” says Jones, “That’s why Augusta is so challenging, because of the water on the back nine.” This, Jones points out, is another area where the needs of the professionals and the average golfer may clash; everyday players may enjoy the visual appeal of water-laden courses (and the challenge of taking on a water hazard) but they are also paying for their own golf balls, and losing ball after ball to water can get old fast.

Even among championship organizers, there are different mindsets about what constitutes an appropriate test. Week after week Tour courses are typically set up to allow players to shoot at pins and make birdies, often for excitement value. Traditionally, the PGA and the USGA prefer a more severe examination.

Jones says even those organizations have realized that targeting a winning score close to par is a futile exercise. “I think we’ve gotten away from the par mindset,” Jones said. “We can’t control it. If we get rain before the event, the greens are like targets, and the players will score low. You want the best players to prevail. I think we’re going to see a lot more double-digit, under-par scores winning majors, and I don’t think the USGA, the PGA or the R&A are really concerned about that. The priority is to test the player’s ability with every shot in golf. The pros don’t have to hit long approach shots much anymore, and that’s a pity—throughout the game’s history the approach shot with a wood or a long iron to a well-protected green has been regarded as the supreme test for the best players. So that’s why par fives which the pros will almost always seek to reach in two, or even drivable par fours, have become increasingly important in today’s championship golf.

Converting par fives into long par fours is something which the USGA and the PGA have done quite often, and so, as long as you don’t overdo it, I think it’s a good idea. We want the players to have to hit every club in the bag, not just a parade of drivers and very short irons, and really, that

is one of a few ways in which we can accomplish that strategy.”

In closing, Jones reminds us his prescription for design success also includes a sense of balance. “The balance of a course is important too,” he said. “Today, we typically have four-to-six really good birdie opportunities, six swing holes and six really challenging holes, where a par is a great score. We are looking for balance, for holes that give the very best players a good chance to gain an advantage over the rest of the field. In order for a championship course to be compelling, it will always include a variety of captivating holes.” ●



ASGCA Past President Rees Jones, ASGCA Fellow

Rees Jones established his golf design business in 1974 and has designed or redesigned more than 170 courses in his career. <http://www.reesjonesinc.com>



“ I love the gambling component and excitement that short par fours provide. It is truly a chess match against one’s inner self

Jason Straka, ASGCA

For this issue’s Five to Finish, we speak to the current chairman of the ASGCA Education Committee

When the 2017 U.S. Open arrives in Erin, Wisconsin, Jason Straka, ASGCA, will surely reflect fondly on one of the highlights of his 17 years with ASGCA Past President Dr. Mike Hurdzan. Straka worked on the project that saw Hurdzan and co-designers Dana Fry, ASGCA and *Golf Digest*’s Ron Whitten transform 652 acres of rolling terrain formed by glaciers to the acclaimed Erin Hills golf course that will host a major just 11 years after opening.

Straka is now creating highlights of his own. Having established a new design business with Fry in 2012, he has been busy taking on new work for such clients as Pulte Homes and Arcis Golf, as well as completing existing projects under the old Hurdzan/Fry banner, such as Ambiente and Columbia Country Club. The Ambiente course at Camelback Golf Club in Scottsdale, Arizona, was one of *Golf Digest*’s best new courses of 2013, and *Golf Inc.* selected Columbia Country Club in Missouri as one of 2014’s Renovations of the Year.

With multiple degrees from Cornell University as well as professional training in golf course construction, greenkeeping and architecture, the northeastern Ohio native now also devotes time to educating others. In addition to his 10 years as lecturer and adjunct professor at The Ohio State University, he has taught throughout the United States and as far afield as

Brazil, Poland and South Korea—eager to spread his message of an environmental approach to golf design.

How is your game?

I travel so much that I rarely have an opportunity to play. However, my long game has been really solid this year. It is my short game that suffers from a lack of practice. I still do love to play when I get the chance though.

Which three people would make up your dream fourball?

My father Ron, son Zachary and maybe someday I’ll be blessed to have a grandson. To have four generations able to play together at the same time would be my dream fourball. So far, we’ve got three of the four covered!

What is your favorite hole in golf?

Rather than one specific hole, I’ll name one specific type. I happen to really enjoy designing and playing short, drivable par fours. If designed well, I love the gambling component and excitement they provide. It is truly a chess match against one’s inner self. Not only does a golfer have to carefully analyze his or her options but these holes provide a challenge to control one’s emotions when having to decide whether to play aggressive and go for it or be more conservative. Of course just last week, I played a match against my best friend and took a double on one such hole and lost the match by a shot!

I guess I need to work on the mental aspect as well as my short game.

If you could change or add one rule, what would it be?

I certainly wouldn’t add any. I think there are way too many as it is. Even many in the golf industry don’t know all the rules, and we’re around the game every day. It is unrealistic to expect the average golfer to know and interpret so many rules. Many casual players tend to ignore them anyway.

What project are you currently working on?

We have a lot of remodel projects ongoing. One of my favorites though is a turf reduction and landscaping project, including bunker overhaul, in the Los Angeles, California area. The course has majestic Live Oak trees scattered throughout. The premise of the remodel is to obtain much of the look, play and environmental characteristics as was restored at Pinehurst #2. In fact, I just spent the day with Bob Farren and John Jeffreys on #2 and can’t thank them enough for their hospitality and insight. It is gentlemen like them that make this business so enjoyable.

My partner Dana Fry and I are also working on projects in Maryland, Florida, New Jersey, Texas and Vietnam, among other places. We are fortunate to have a steady stream of work while not being too busy. ●



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