

# A PANEL DISCUSSION: A Critical Look at Contemporary Golf Course Architecture

*EDITOR'S NOTE: One of the key segments of the February, 1986, Green Section Educational Conference in San Francisco was a panel discussion of Contemporary Golf Course Architecture. The tone and stage for the discussion were to be set by Ben Crenshaw, PGA Tour player and a member of the USGA Museum Committee. Unfortunately for us, Crenshaw was unable to attend the Conference because of a rain-delayed tournament at Pebble Beach. However, the other panel members were:*

*Gene D. Baston, President GCSAA and CGCS, Waco, Texas*

*Rees L. Jones, golf course architect, Montclair, New Jersey*

*Jerry Tarde, executive editor, Golf Digest, Trumbull, Connecticut*

*Frank Hannigan, Senior Executive Director, USGA, Moderator*

*This is a transcript of their views on the subject.*



*Frank Hannigan*

**FRANK HANNIGAN:** The panel today is comprised of a golf course superintendent, a golf course architect, and the editor of that publication which, more than any other medium, defines contemporary architecture. We were to have a fourth expert this morning, but he is not with us for the best of all possible reasons. Ben Crenshaw shot 68 yesterday at Pebble Beach, and he is playing in the fourth round of the rain-delayed tournament. Ben Crenshaw was really looking forward to doing this. He is a golf course freak and has been since he was a kid. It is no secret that he is very much a traditionalist and that he is chagrined by much of what he thinks of the dominant trends and influences in today's golf course architecture.

Before we begin, we had better define the subject. What is meant by "modern or contemporary golf course architecture" are those courses built mostly in the last decade and a few as early as 1970 **that have attracted the most attention.** That attention derives from word of mouth, from advertising and promotion, from television, and from golf magazines. To name names, we are talking about a few designers and their work. They are Pete Dye, Jack Nicklaus, and the Fazios, Tom and George. Of course, there may be as many as 75 or more other practicing architects in the country today, many of them both successful and excellent. We are going to hear from one this morning. For the purposes of this discussion, however, we are going to operate on the premise that a disproportionate amount of attention is being paid to the work of just a few men, and because of this attention and their success, they have a great deal of influence. Many of the elements they put into their work inevitably drift over and down through the rest of the field.

Some of us tend to think of a particular period in American golf as the golden age of golf course architecture. This period began at the end of the First World War and ended with a thud at

the onset of the Great Depression of the 1930s. The high priests of that period were Donald Ross, Alister MacKenzie, A. W. Tillinghast, Seth Raynor, Bill Flynn, and a couple of others. They were fortunate that they operated in a special time with special privileges and advantages. For the most part they were designing courses for the members who had equity. The courses were to be playgrounds, places of pleasure. They had nothing to do with commerce.

**T**ODAY, we live in an age of notoriety. Refrigerator Perry is nowhere nearly as good as Howie Long, but Howie Long doesn't get invited on the David Letterman Show. This same syndrome applies in golf today, where the name of the game is to be noticed, to draw attention to the product. Notice and attention convert to money. That is not necessarily the fault of the golf course architect. He didn't create this society. I have read a good deal of golf's literature of the 1920s. Donald Ross was largely an anonymous figure; somebody way behind the footlights even though he was going around sprinkling these little jewels of golf courses throughout New England like some architectural E.T. dropping off candies. Remember, Ross had the luxury of building for members.

Today, the architect builds for a company which, by definition, has to think of a bottom line. Green fees, the sale of real estate and housing adjacent to the property, and making the course into an arena or stadium may conspire against art. It is not at all certain that Donald Ross could have survived in this climate.

We now move on to the Panel.

Our first panelist is no less than the President of the Golf Course Superintendents Association of America. Gene Baston grew up in Augusta, Georgia, where, as you know, there is an annual tournament of some repute. Gene's father was in the construction business and supervised all the renovations that



were done on the Augusta National Golf Club for a period of more than 20 years. Young Gene observed his work and he was part of it. He went to Georgia Southern University and after that, took a job as an assistant at Augusta National Golf Club, where he worked from 1950 to 1965. His first head superintendent's job was at the Savannah Inn and Country Club, in Georgia, a Donald Ross course, I believe. After five years in Savannah, Gene moved on to Bay Hill, in Orlando, Florida, the flagship course of the Arnold Palmer empire and site of an annual PGA Tour event. From 1972 to 1985 Gene was at the Birmingham Country Club, in Alabama, where they had 36 holes of Donald Ross. Gene is now at the Ridgewood Club, in Waco, Texas, and has served on the Board of the GCSAA for five years. Gene will tell us how it feels to be a superintendent at a modern course.

**GENE BASTON:** Contrary to popular belief and some rumors that go around, I do not shoot all golf course architects. It is a pleasure for me to be here and I hope that any of my expressed comments will be received as pertaining to maintenance and not criticisms of design features that may or may not enhance the game of golf.

The golf course superintendents of today can and do maintain excellent turf under some extremely difficult situations. We accept this challenge. But another challenge we often face, and one that is becoming more and more difficult for us to sell, is large budgets to our clubs to maintain turf under some very difficult situations. I have just a few quotes that may prompt further discussion:

“The Lord made golf courses. Golf course architects simply discovered them.” — *Donald Ross*

“Golf should be a pleasure, not a pennance.” — *Donald Ross*

“I am not trying to create maintenance problems. I'm trying to reduce them!” — *Contemporary Golf Course Architect*

“Hand mowers are a lot less expensive to operate than gang mowers.” — *Contemporary Golf Course Architect*

“Grasses planted on a one-to-one slope, or even a zero slope, i.e., straight up and down, do not retain water, do not retain fertilizer. Get a grass that grows very slowly on that bank. Then you'll only have to mow it four or five times a year.



Figure 1 (top). Figure 2 (above).



"It is my belief that, if you remove water and fertilizer from a grass area, you won't have to maintain it at all. It will die.

"Each course requires a design plan that takes into consideration what is right for that course, its maintenance budget, climate, and the golfers who are going to play it regularly. An architect should not force his style on a course." —  
*Gene Baston*

The most successful use of waste areas or minimal-maintenance areas that I have observed are areas that would not be in play under any circumstances. They are non-play areas, and I feel this is a term that should be applied to them.

When reading a newspaper story not long ago about a city considering construction of a swimming pool, one of the councilmen opposing the pool gave these reasons for his opposition: it was too costly to construct, it was not conducive for the enjoyment of the people who would use it, yearly maintenance costs would be excessive, and the proponent was only building a monument to himself. For a minute, I thought a golf course architect had gone into the swimming pool business!

**I**HAVE SOME illustrations of architecture that created maintenance problems. (1) We recognize that it is beautiful, but can we afford it? (2) Contours are beautiful but when wear occurs, we have a maintenance problem. (3) Is this purpose or is this signature? (4) A golf hole should have a lasting

impression upon the player. I think this one will. (5) Sometimes you need to seek divine guidance. The golfer is asking for help to get over this and the superintendent is asking for help to maintain it. (6) Design like this has to make us ask, "Is it good, is it fair, is it fun?"

I heard it said at a meeting not long ago that it seemed golf architecture today was taking the route of A Design of Six. You take six men, with six weed eaters, six hours a day, six days a week. Is this your design? If it is, plan to increase your budget. Be aware of the costs to maintain difficult, lavish designs. They dictate maintenance problems and increase your budget. (7) Minimal maintenance. This, to me, is what golf is all about — a game that we enjoy playing, a game we enjoy watching. To me it is not much trouble looking out over closely mowed, manicured turf. That, to me, is the epitome of good golf design.

I quote the Green Section's Bill Bengeyfield at a recent National Golf Foundation dinner: "Golf is to be played on grass." If we are to play golf on grass, recognize that golf course architecture directly affects turfgrass maintenance costs. And if we are to develop minimal maintenance turfgrasses for golf, I would leave you with just one additional thought. Support USGA/GCSAA research to find grasses that will provide us with at least the same or even better playing surfaces in the future but will require less water, less fertilizer, and less mowing. Then we will have truly achieved minimal maintenance.



*Gene Baston*

*Figure 3.*



*Figure 4.*







Figure 5 (top). Figure 6 (above).

**FRANK HANNIGAN:** In the American theater the Barrymores were known as the Royal Family. In golf course architecture, the Royal Family is that of the Joneses. Robert Trent Jones, the patriarch, is still going strong in his 70s. He completely changed the face of golf course architecture in the period beginning after the Second World War. He had extraordinary energy, a different vision, and determination. Trent Jones knew how to market both himself and his products. Every architect who is making a decent living today owes something to Robert Trent Jones. His oldest son is Bobby Jones, whose base is in Palo Alto, California. Bobby Jones's work is imaginative and includes such courses as SentryWorld, in Wisconsin, the one with all the flowers, and Princeville, a lovely course in Hawaii. Bobby is now at work on two projects in the Pebble Beach area. One is Poppy Hills, to be owned and operated by the Northern California Golf Association, beginning this summer. The other is Spanish

Bay. It will open next year. His partners in the latter design are Tom Watson and Sandy Tatum.

The younger of the Jones sons, and the latest of this Royal Family, is Rees. Rees Jones grew up in New Jersey. After high school he was shipped off to a golf factory in Connecticut — Yale University — and after that he worked for his dad. Rees has been in business for himself for many years. His most esteemed early work was Arcadian Shores, at Myrtle Beach, South Carolina. I think of Rees Jones as something of a traditionalist. Incidentally, Rees seems on the verge of a new and deserved repute. He is doing a new course in Augusta, and any new course in Augusta, because of where it is and the crowd that comes there, gets a great deal of attention. He has also just opened a new course at Pinehurst called Pinehurst No. 7 and that inevitably puts him in the same league with Donald Ross, whose No. 2 course at Pinehurst is certainly one of the game's masterpieces. Finally, Rees

Jones is now overhauling one of the game's beloved antiques — The Country Club, in Brookline, Massachusetts, where so much golf history has been made and where the 1988 U.S. Open Championship will be played. Nothing does more for a golf course architect's reputation than an association with a U.S. Open Championship. He's a good golfer who breaks 80. He does it at his home course, the Montclair Golf Club, in New Jersey, and will do it occasionally at his second course, Pine Valley.

**REES JONES:** The question we are asked to answer today is, "Will the modern golf course stand the test of time?" This is the type of question I always hoped for when I was being tested in college, because it has so many answers.

We are supposed to be comparing some of the courses of today to the courses of the 1920s and earlier. What we must first understand, however, is that many of the sites we have today



are so much less suitable than the sites available back in the early part of the century. The early architects had the opportunity to build golf courses on ideal sites.

Our design styles today are a throw-back, to some degree, to design styles of the early 1900s. I think we are improving designs, but in some cases a few architects are trying too many tricks. Also, today we are building courses for a different type of client. We are building primarily for real estate developers, whose main interest is selling the adjacent real estate. He often then transfers ownership of the golf course to the members after the real estate has been sold. We are also building golf courses for major resorts for daily fee play and for tournament viewing. Fewer and fewer truly private golf courses are being built today.

The expectations of today's players (because they see so many golf courses on TV) are far greater than they were back in the '20s. The demand for quality maintenance is much higher in the U.S. than in Britain. Score is of great importance to every golfer in America, whereas in Britain, it is whether or not you beat your buddy. Here, whether or not you score the number you always intend to is much more important.

We are building dramatic resort golf courses to draw people to new, sometimes mammoth hotels, and the golf courses are sometimes of secondary interest to the client. The client wants you to build something dramatic to bring guests to the resort to fill up the rooms. Pinehurst No. 7 is dramatic and will help that resort. The Spanish Bay Golf Course that my brother is doing on the Pacific Ocean, in Monterey, California, will help fill the hotel they are building there.

**D**EVELOPMENT golf courses that will become private someday and daily fee golf courses definitely should be designed to be enjoyed. Form should follow function. This is not often the case. Several architects today are designing courses where function follows form. Money is being spent on dramatic visual features that hurt the higher-handicap players and really have no effect on the pro or the low-handicapper. High mounds, deep cavities, tee-to-green waste areas, hard-to-maintain bumps, inordinately deep bunkers, steep slopes, deep cuts in the middle of fairways. These features create the drama and many are effective and well thought out. The major mistake, in my opinion, is that

these features serve no purpose. When they are repeated hole after hole needlessly, they lose their effectiveness. I believe every hole should have its own theme, using different combinations of features. Each hole should be a new experience. The mark of an interesting golf course is that every hole can be remembered after a first round.

The routing of the holes, in my opinion, is the most important aspect of design. If this is done properly, the golf course will unfold and be enjoyable to play. We must not forget to have alternate routes of attack, essential for so many golfers to finish a round. I believe that it is wrong to design a golf course where so many of the higher-handicap players are really defeated before they strike the first ball. For example, we are building a golf course at Haig Point, on Daufuskie Island, one mile from Hilton Head. We had two opportunities to build spectacular golf holes from the bluff, across the marsh to a spit of land on Calibogue Sound. You can almost see the ocean. We did not want to miss this chance for two truly dramatic holes on this site. We came to the conclusion that these two holes might be too hard for the majority of players, because the carries were so long. So we are building a 20-hole golf course at Haig Point. We have two back-up holes for the eighth and 17th, so you can play the inland holes or the Sound holes, depending on ability or weather conditions. This is how we have created what we think is a great golf course while at the same time a viable recreational facility for all golfers.

While several golf course architects are adding all the dramatic aspects to their designs, they have often neglected green design. This is probably the second most essential aspect of golf course design, i.e., properly designed greens for the shot required. We are finding on contemporary golf courses, those that receive so much publicity today, that greens must often be rebuilt soon after the course opens. Some of these greens were originally built with too many plateaus and too much contour for the size of the surface. Some architects are designing fall-away greens or greens that reject shots on holes that require forced carries to reach them. Greens are being built that are too small for the amount of actual play and often too small for the shot required.

**T**EN YEARS AGO, golf course architects were being told by people responsible for maintaining golf courses

that we had to build lifeless, low-maintenance, long-slope golf courses in order for golf to be viable. We were in the middle of a terrible recession. In fact, we were not even designing many golf courses at the time. We had an energy crisis and it looked as if we really should concentrate more on lower-maintenance courses. However, it would have been wrong to design courses for low-maintenance only. I think architects made an attempt then to design for lower maintenance, but today there has been a great departure from this line of thinking because the economy is so good.

I don't believe we should take the character out of the golf course. I think we should have the same character in design with slopes, etc., as we did in the '20s. We should use our major features and the steep slopes judiciously in the areas where they affect play and shot values. That's the proper way to do it. We can build pot bunkers so long as they can be maintained. Bold mounds should be incorporated into the design of golf holes if they can be mowed. Large bunkers or waste areas should be used in areas that are in play and not necessarily from tee to green. Grass bunkers are an effective hazard for good and average golfers. In fact, they are really a better hazard for the average golfer. Courses should be built with diversity of style that can be maintained at a reasonable cost after the developer leaves the course to the members.

I feel we are in a renaissance period of golf course design. A golf course, however, should not be designed as an ego trip for the architect, but rather as a recreational facility to be enjoyed repeatedly. If a golf course is designed to make the top 100 list or to make a breathtaking photograph, it might not be viable when repeat play is required for success. I think one really must design a golf course with definition to be viewed from the tee and the fairway itself. Too many golf courses today have features that are not as visible from the ground as they are from helicopters.

The greatness of the game of golf, unlike many other sports, stems from the fact that every playing field is different. Every architect has his own concepts, and each course is a unique creation. But we must design interesting, fair, enjoyable, dramatic, beautiful courses that will attract new golfers. They must maintain the golfer's interest and allow him to play the game at affordable cost. We can use old concepts or devise new ones, but the features we use should be fair.



Photograph by MARK BROWN

Rees Jones



*(Top, left) The 18th hole, Country Club of Hilton Head. This is a par-five punch-bowl green utilizing diverse features such as a pot bunker, sculptured bunkers and mounds on the approach. (Above) The 8th hole, Haig Point Golf Club. This hole would be too difficult for the higher-handicap player. Therefore, an alternate, shorter hole was built on the bluff. (Above, right) The 7th hole, Loxahatchee Golf Club, Jupiter, Florida. This is a good example of low-maintenance designed mounds which ultimately have to be maintained so that players can find their balls. Mowing is being done with four people using a fly mow and raking the mowed grass. (Right) The 4th hole, Jones Creek Golf Course. This course utilizes bermudagrass fairways, bentgrass greens and centipede roughs. The centipede grass is a lower-maintenance variety and provides a contrast between fairway and rough.*



Photograph by CHARLES HOLLEY



**FRANK HANNIGAN:** Our final panelist is also, shockingly, the youngest. He is Jerry Tarde, who is perhaps the most influential golf journalist in the world. As Executive Editor, he decides what goes into *Golf Digest* magazine, the biggest publication in its field.

Actually, it was the *Golf Digest* project of naming the so-called 100 Greatest Golf Courses that launched the current and general interest in golf course architecture. That list is revised every two years and its influence simply cannot be overstated. Architects will kill to get on the *Golf Digest* list, and so will the owners of profit-oriented golf courses.

Jerry Tarde, this power broker, grew up playing public golf courses around Philadelphia. He escaped to Northwestern University, and immediately after graduation joined the *Golf Digest* staff, where his rise to eminence has been meteoric. Jerry is a member at Winged Foot, the U.S. Open site near New York City, where he is what I think of as a strong six-handicap player. He is also a member of Royal Dornoch, in Scotland, but that is simply to show off.

**JERRY TARDE:** Now that you have heard from the Forces of Good, as Frank Hannigan explained it to me, I am supposed to represent the Princes of Darkness — Pete Dye and Jack Nicklaus. If you believe Crenshaw and Hannigan, they would say that anything new isn't good. They are the kind of people who think, as some music critics do, that anything written after the Baroque Period of Handel and Bach isn't worth listening to. I was reminded of that kind of people when I saw this month's issue of *American Heritage Magazine*, which is a very good historical periodical. This month it lists the 10 best automobiles ever made in the U.S. Nine of the ten were built prior to 1938. The one modern one was built in 1955.

I think we have to get rid of this notion that anything new can't be good. In modern architecture, that is an important thing to realize. The modern architecture period really came into focus in March, 1982, during the week of the Tournament Players Championship. If it can be pinpointed to a moment, it was when Jerry Pate threw Pete Dye and Deane Beman into the water beside the 18th green. Why did he throw them in? The reason is that something exciting was happening that week. A brand-new kind of golf course was introduced to the public on television. Something visually

exciting and different from anything the American people had ever seen before. It involved touring pros, and they have traditionally been influential in guiding the trends and thoughts of golfers. It was controversial. People had opinions on whether they liked the TPC or not. It got us talking about golf, about golf courses and about architecture.

For years, people inside the business, golf industry leaders, have been clamoring for changes in design to meet the changing conditions of the game. They wanted courses that required less care in an age of escalating maintenance costs and water shortages. They wanted courses that had more challenge with less yardage, due to escalating land costs. And they wanted more pleasure for recreational players while at the same time still keeping the challenge for the top player.

Pete Dye's TPC at Sawgrass attempted to answer these three desires in some innovative ways. I am not going to say that he answered them adequately, but he got us all thinking in a direction that has been good for the game. And he certainly was not the first to do it. The TPC wasn't even his first attempt at it. He had been doing that kind of course for the last 10 to 15 years, but the TPC embodied all that was new about modern architecture, and it probably will have the kind of influence on the game that the National Golf Links and Augusta National had in the first part of this century.

Twenty years ago Herbert Warren Wind wrote in *Golf Digest* that the ideal measure for a golf course was 7,400 yards "in order to make par for the pros the examination that par is supposed to be." Pete Dye's TPC, at 6,800 yards, was a departure from that thinking. Twenty years ago *Golf Digest* began ranking courses. The first ranking was called the 200 Toughest Courses in America. We used the USGA system of course rating, which is based mostly on yardage. The No. 1 course in the country was Runaway Brook, in Massachusetts, now called the International. It measured 8,000 yards. We quickly saw that was not the direction we should be going, and in succeeding years, we modified our criteria and changed the name of our ranking.

In 1969 it was called the 100 Most Testing Golf Courses. I think we were still preoccupied, if not with yardage, then with difficulty at that time. Resistance to Scoring is what we called it.

In 1971 we renamed it America's 100 Greatest Tests of Golf, and in 1975 it

was called, as it is today, America's 100 Greatest Golf Courses. The emphasis has been shifting away from length and difficulty toward interesting design.

**N**OW WHAT was so different about the TPC? I think we can break down the so-called innovations of the TPC into five categories. They are really not innovations, because they are things we have been seeing and have been in use for a couple of hundred years. One, the TPC was a shorter championship course. A year or two later, Pete built Long Cove, at 6,700 yards, and this has influenced other architects. I played Dan Maples's The Pit Golf Course last year, and I think from the back tees it is about 6,300 or 6,400 yards.

Two, Dye re-introduced the penal short hole. This is a hole that could best be described as a half par, a 2½, a 3½, a 4½ par. It is the equalizer, a challenge for the good player, yet the average player can still reach it. The 17th hole, the Island Green at TPC, is probably the most notorious example of a penal short hole.

Three, he brought back blind shots, where you can't see where you are going. He calls it a test of character and intelligence. "There is no such thing as a blind hole, once you have played it," he says.

Four, he brought to the TPC severely undulating greens and, as we have seen there and in others of his courses, undulating fairways. The pros don't like either of these very much because when they hit an A-type shot, they expect an A-type result. Too often at a Pete Dye course, an A shot gets a C result.

Five, the Natural Look. For better or for worse, Pete has extensively used waste bunkers and unkempt areas off the fairway. He has used different grasses, color contrasts with what he thinks are low maintenance. He says color contrast in grasses is as important as undulation.

Is this good? A friend of Pete's likes to say that Robert Trent Jones made golf course architecture a business, Pete Dye made it an art, and Jack Nicklaus made it expensive.

People ask us why we give so much attention or coverage to Nicklaus and Dye courses. The reason I think simply is that they are building the most lavishly expensive, most dramatically photogenic, most exciting, most controversial golf courses today. They are news events, and we cover them as such. Some people also contend that *Golf Digest* made them superstars, or that the media in general

made Pete Dye or Nicklaus a superstar and have given them an inordinate amount of power in the business. I think we have helped popularize them and enhance them, but their own design and word of mouth have really made them. Their own work has brought them attention.

Do they build the best golf courses today? Of the modern architects practicing today, with the exception of Trent Jones, they have more courses on the 100 Greatest than any of the others. It should be added that they also have been given the largest budgets and, in some cases, the best facilities to work on. So it would be a crime if they were not building today's best courses.

Are they too expensive? Pete Dye likes to say he is Robin Hood. He steals from the rich to give to the poor, the poor being the laborers who build his courses. I guess I am bothered, as Hannigan is, about the opulence of some. You go to the Vintage Club and they have an underground waterfall in the cart barn! But you can't really hold that against Nicklaus, Dye, or Fazio. People with a lot of money have always built expensive golf courses. The Yale Course was built 80 years ago and cost \$1 million.

You have to look at what these expensive courses have yielded. The PGA West Course in Palm Springs, California, is getting a lot of publicity these days. Some of it is negative, but Joe Walser will tell you that they have sold out 500 memberships before the course even was opened! Since opening on January 4, every starting time every day since then has been filled. The course cost \$5.4 million, which is a lot of money, but they are going to sell hundreds of millions of dollars of housing around it. Financially, it is a success.

**D**YE IS PERHAPS more concerned about maintenance than Nicklaus, but even Pete talks a better game than he plays sometimes. The TPC, for instance, is 412 acres, of which he claims only 60 have to be maintained. Two years ago, the maintenance budget there was \$900,000. On the other hand, where Dye does have more control at Long Cove, he says they used 30 percent less fuel than the next most economical club on Hilton Head.

Why are Jack's courses so expensive? I have put that to Bob Cupp, his chief designer. Simply, he says that Jack buys the best of everything — the best topsoil, the best putting surface mixes, the best irrigation, the best construction com-

pany builds his courses — and that drives up the costs. I guess if you can afford Nicklaus and Dye, the cost isn't too expensive. Part of the reason is the land these courses are built on. It is not as well suited to course construction as the land used in the early part of this century, and that drives up those costs. The TPC was a swamp before Dye built it. When these architects are given a good piece of land, as Dye says he was at Firethorn, a new course he just built in Lincoln, Nebraska, they can bring in a



Jerry Tarde

course under budget. Firethorn was built for \$1.2 million, including the irrigation system. He says there are a lot of Ray Charles holes there; the land was so good, even a blind man could build them.

When *Golf Digest* started publishing 35 years ago, it cost \$250,000 to build a golf course. The borrowing rate was 5 percent interest. The yearly debt you had if you wanted to start a daily fee course and build your own was about \$10,000 to \$15,000. Today, it costs \$2 to \$3 million to build a golf course, and the interest is in the neighborhood of 10 percent. So it costs you \$300,000 a year just to pay off a golf course. Joe Jemsek said at the PGA Show in Orlando that you just can't build and run a daily fee course for profit anymore. He thinks the future is in municipal courses that are subsidized by cities and in resort courses, where guest fees and building lots can pay for the course.

So what we are moving toward are these superdome golf courses, the TPC and PGA West, that the big resorts can afford. I am not sure that's so bad.

The other knock that you hear is that the new courses are too difficult. A better way of putting it is that they take

too long to play. But people enjoy a hard test of golf. Pine Valley is the No. 1 course in the country, and people brag about how many shots they take to play it. One of the solutions Nicklaus and Dye have offered is the use of multiple tees. Jack's new course in Loxahatchee, Florida, which certainly is difficult, won our Best New Private Course Award for 1985. It is 7,043 yards from the back tees, but there are four sets of tees, and from the front tees it is only 5,380 yards. Perhaps there should be a greater emphasis on getting members to play the tees they can enjoy. The USGA has taken a step in the right direction in getting rid of the term "ladies' tees" for the front tee markers.

**I**AM ALSO supposed to explain how the 100 Greatest Courses are chosen. We have a panel of 244 national and regional selectors. Over them is a national panel of 30 selectors. A course is nominated by architects, a new system we have started recently. (Before they were nominated by panel members, but architects nominate them now.) National panel members then must renominate them, and it takes three nominations by a national panel member for a course to be considered eligible for the list. We also have a rule that a course must be opened at least three years before it is eligible. That will give sufficient time to our panelists to play the course and also will diffuse the occasional over-enthusiasm that accompanies the opening of a spectacular new course.

After this list of nominated and eligible courses for the 100 Greatest is compiled, it is then circulated to our 244 regional selectors. They evaluate each course on a seven-criteria scale of 1 to 10. The seven criteria are shot values, difficulty, design balance, memorability, aesthetics, conditioning, and tradition. Seven criteria — 1 to 10 — 1 being poor and 10 being the best. A perfect course would get a 70 rating. We went to this kind of subjective/objective system to try to do a more accurate job of rating the courses within the 100 Greatest.

We often hear charges of politics in the ranking and I hope the new system will dispel some of that. PGA National, for instance, a Tom Fazio course, is somewhat controversial. It received more nominations last year than any other new course to be added to the list. That probably is because so many PGA members are part of our panel. So you would expect that if politics played a role in the decision, PGA National would be part of the 100 Greatest. As



it turned out, when the panelists, even the PGA members, came to filling out the ballot for the PGA National, they decided it wasn't good enough. I think when you have to put numbers down in seven criteria you sort of lose sight of the politics.

A criticism we are vulnerable to is that we give too much attention to Dye and Nicklaus. Part of that is because they have the big budgets and the big facilities behind them, the ones that would most likely make the 100 Greatest list. So we have created two other categories of recognition for architects — the Best New Courses of the Year and the Best Public Course. The Best Public is an every-other-year ranking and Best New is obviously every year. We have been able to recognize new architects like Dennis Griffith and Brian Silva. Brian designed, with Geoffrey Cornish, the Captains Golf Course, on Cape Cod, which is our Best Public Course of 1985. Dennis Griffith worked with Ron Kirby in doing Pole Creek, which was our Best Public Course of 1984.

We like to think the 100 Greatest and the other awards that *Golf Digest* bestows on architects and courses promote better design the way the Academy Awards promotes better picture making or the Pulitzer Prizes promote better reporting. Awards drive people to excel. I was talking with Bill Davis, the founder of *Golf Digest*, the other day on the phone, and he quoted Napoleon as saying, "If you give me enough medals I will win any war." And that is what we are trying to do with our course ranking. We are giving medals to architects and owners, trying to get them to excel and to solve the problems facing golf course architecture today.

#### Closing Remarks by FRANK HANNIGAN:

To put our discussions of Contemporary Golf Course Architecture in perspective, I would make one point to you. Name a handful of great golf courses that have one thing or a couple of things in common and the list will surely include Oakmont, Merion, Pebble Beach, the National Golf Links of America, and Pine Valley. What those golf courses have in common is that every one was designed by an amateur. In all but one case it was the amateur's first attempt at designing a golf course and, finally, he didn't take any money for doing the work.

Maybe golf course architects ought to think about that!

# Reflections on Golf's Future

by C. GRANT SPAETH

Vice President, USGA, Menlo Park, California

*(Editor's Note: Frank D. Tatum, Jr., was unable to attend the Conference because he was playing in a tournament at Pebble Beach, California. C. Grant Spaeth agreed to present Tatum's paper in full while condensing his own scheduled remarks to a few brief comments.)*

**T**HE TOPIC "Reflections on Golf's Future" is, I find, not an easy one. In my research for it, I came across a quote from Sam Goldwyn; "Never make forecasts — especially about the future." So I am simply going to capsulize the material I do have while eliminating statistics on numbers of golf courses, numbers of golfers, etc.

If the past is any key to the future, we can look for the game to be relatively mature, relatively unchanging. In large measure, this will be true if the golfer — the amateur golfer that is — retains his

control over the destiny of his game. It seems to me that, regardless of what occurs during the course of the next 50 years, if the organizations of amateur golfers, i.e., city, regional, state, or national, continue to have no commercial objectives and are simply and solely concerned about preserving the game, then, whatever happens in those 50 years can be dealt with effectively.

In the field of turfgrass management, we can safely forecast the absolute certainty that less water will be available for our golf courses, particularly within metropolitan areas. With this forecast in mind, it is the amateur golfer who is investing heavily in research to develop grasses which, in fact, will not require high maintenance and particularly the high watering requirements that now seem necessary.

High technology clearly is going to try to change the game. Thus it is that amateurs, and in recent years the USGA, have spent enormous sums resisting changes, whether it is government or innovators or new patents, in order to protect the challenge and to preserve the game. And there is no one else around but the amateur golfer to resist these inroads. I personally see the inroads continuing and the litigation continuing. The amateur golfer is simply having to stand up and resist those challenges.

I could go through other aspects of the game, but you can do it just as well. I hope you will take with you the notion that ultimately the strength of the game depends upon amateur players spending some time and money to protect the game.

Sandy Tatum, as you all know, certainly exemplifies the sort of amateur golfer who spends a large chunk of his life on the mission I have just tried to describe. His paper conveys his depth of feelings about these issues.



C. Grant Spaeth