



ARCHITECT'S AVENUE NAME GAME

Everyone carries burdens in life and living up to the expectations of your namesake can be one of the toughest. Just ask Jack Nicklaus II. "I was kind of like Don Quixote chasing that impossible dream," chuckles the 36-year-old when talking about his playing career. "I never really did anything professionally. I played the Canadian tour, the Australian tour, the European tour, I played some in Japan, some in Asia, the Ben Hogan tour. Also played some on the PGA Tour, but not as a regular tour member."

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Vermont Golf 1998

the team at Vermont National in 1997 — Jack II is the tallest, Jack III stands next to his famous grandfather.

Photo by Bob Labbanse

Despite a valiant effort to make his own mark as a professional golfer, Jackie's biggest victory was in the North-South Invitational at Pinehurst, which he won as an amateur in 1985. Fortunately, even after Nicklaus had given competition a good go and come up lacking, he still had the entire world of golf open to him. His interest gravitated toward course design.

"I've always been around it, following my dad. I think it's proba-

bly every golfer's dream to design a golf course. I remember as a little kid, drawing out these really unusual holes over water. I guess everybody with their imagination does that kind of thing. I had the opportunity when I got out of the University of North Carolina in 1985 to work in my dad's office. Although I was playing professional golf, in my free time I spent some time in the office helping the guys. Really just doing the busy

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work that had to be done when designing golf courses."

The Nicklaus design team included some talented people, but there's always room for additional help. "I'd go out in the field and do some tree plotting, cut and fills—the kind of work that gets delegated to whoever. About 1987, I got the opportunity to do a course in London—to be the designer. It really caught me off guard. They didn't want to go for

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the whole ball of wax of paying for my dad's fee, yet they wanted a Nicklaus golf course. So they asked me to get involved."

The Hanbury Manor project convinced Nicklaus that course design was a field that he could make his own mark in, where he wouldn't have to live up to his father's record. "The course came out very nicely; the people were happy with it and I had a ball throughout the project. It's always a treat to go open one of your golf courses and that went really well. It was a Ryder Cup year and I played with Dave Stockton and

Tony Jacklin who were the Ryder Cup captains. That's always a highlight of designing a golf course when you can actually go out and play it and enjoy it."

Nicklaus has opened more than a dozen courses in the decade since, some in cooperation with his father, some under his own name. He currently has more than



Greens on the front nine were completed by October, 1997.

Photo by Bob Labbanace

half-a-dozen new projects under development around the world, including courses in Italy and the Philippines, as well as Vermont National in South Burlington.

Blessed with a gorgeous site straddling one of the highest ridgelines in town, the front nine gazes out over Lake Champlain toward the Adirondacks, while the back side has a ringside seat on Mount Mansfield and Camels Hump. The Nicklaus team has fashioned a gentle, open outward half nearly devoid of trees and a strong, testing return home that visits some protected, natural green sites. The

project has been a blend of ideas from the start, though Jack, Jr. is quick to admit where some of his theories come from.

"My training in golf course design is basically from my dad, being around his work. Fundamentally, I'd like to say I think similar to my dad. I say that humbly because I don't think that

there's anyone better in the game than my dad. No only playing golf but with his golf course work." But Nicklaus is quick to add that everybody thinks differently, because "how they play golf is different. So I certainly, unfortunately, play different from my dad, so I'm going to approach the game a little differently."

Nicklaus the younger has also been influenced by the older masters. "I like Donald Ross very much. I went to school at UNC and I always loved Pinehurst Number 2. Very simple—he does some deception with bunkers in front of

greens. He has a lot of relief around the greens where you're not told that you have to hit a sand wedge flop shot. I think you'll see some of that at Vermont National—where if you miss a green you can putt it up the slope. You can seven-iron chip and run-it or you can hit the flop shot if you want to. Ross always gave you that option."

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think are the highlights of those courses. I don't try to copy something, but I try to take an idea and use it somewhere else. Whether it's a strategy idea or a bunker look, I might just take a small area of a bunker that I like and try and use it somewhere else." As an illustration, Nicklaus cites another master architect: "Playing in Australia I always enjoyed Alister Mackenzie's bunkers. That was always the highlight to his courses in my mind."

Nicklaus was impressed with the Vermont site right from the

start. "My first walk through was—'wow, this reminds me of Scotland.' I initially wanted to do pot bunkering and sod-walled bank bunkers, but because it was a co-designed course, my dad voted that down. I don't know why, but you know he's never done that on any of his courses."

Nicklaus is often asked what happens when the two co-designers disagree. "Well, we discuss it and then we do what he wants to do. Obviously he has the final say, but he respects what I want to do."

An inspection in June, 1997 revealed some areas of disagreement, but also charted a final push to complete the design. That tour also featured some distractions from the next generation, as 7-year-old Jack Nicklaus III joined the entourage. Jackie is a father of four and it will be interesting to see what direction golf takes them. Besides fatherhood and course design, Nicklaus is often noted for another part time job of distinction. "I caddie probably twice or three times a year for my dad. I really enjoy it. The tournament everybody remembers is the Masters in 1986, and I do, too. That was so special. How can you top something like that?"

"He's such a competitor and it's just nice to see people appreciate what he's done over the years. I think the applause has changed a little bit. When I first started caddying for him it was just for his performance on the golf course that day. It's a lot more than that now; people really appreciate what he's done over the years and they're trying to say thank you. It wells up inside of you. It's emotional when you approach those last three holes and people applaud like they do."

That cooperation between player and caddie is just as important when bringing a design project to fruition. Nicklaus has been pleased with the atmosphere of cooperation that has characterized Vermont National. "If every job that I did

was like Vermont—meaning you had so many people trying to work together—it would be a delight. Some jobs I go to its like pulling teeth to get anything done—everyone has their own agenda. In Vermont everybody has tried to work together.”

Although the course should open during the summer of 1998, it wasn't because Mother Nature

JACK NICKLAUS II DESIGNS

OPEN FOR PLAY

Bukit Darmo Golf Club	Indonesia
Eagle Bend Golf Club	Montana
Forest Hills Golf & Country Club	Philippines
Hanbury Manor	England
The Heritage at Ibis Golf & CC	Florida
Legacy Golf Links	North Carolina
The Medallion Club	Ohio
Sanyo Golf Club	Japan

UNDER CONSTRUCTION OR GROW-IN

Arzaga Golf Club	Italy
Atsuma Royal Golf Course	Japan
Golf Club Casablanca	Ecuador
Estrella Mountain Ranch	Arizona
Palm Island Golf Club	China
WuYi Fountain Palm Golf Club	China

JACK NICKLAUS/JACK NICKLAUS II CO-DESIGNS

OPEN FOR PLAY

Aspen Glen Golf Club	Colorado
Golden Bear Golf Club at Hammock Creek	Florida
The Golf Club at Indigo Run	South Carolina

UNDER CONSTRUCTION OR GROW-IN

Aliso Viejo	California
Lost Gold at Superstition Mountain	Arizona
Olympic Staff Ashikaga Golf Club	Japan
Sherwood Golf & Country Club	Philippines
Twin Eagles Golf & Country Club	Florida
Vermont National Golf Club	Vermont

didn't try to delay the festivities. “We got a late start—obviously you had a late spring,” Nicklaus notes as he recalls 1997. “Then when it was summer weather—warm enough to work—we were a couple of weeks late mobilizing our construction crew. We knew our grassing schedule was very optimistic, very aggressive.” Half of the course was seeded before an unusually early end to outdoor work was precipitated by high snowfall totals in November. The remainder will be completed as soon as possible in the spring.

Who do you think he'll bring to opening day this time?

