

MICHAEL HURDZAN, Ph.D.

(1943 -)

BACKGROUND

Born in Wheeling, WV. As a youngster, worked for his father, a teaching professional at a nine-hole course in Columbus, OH. Developed an early interest in course design through course owner Jack Kidwell, who practiced golf architecture part-time. Graduated from Ohio State in 1966 with a degree in Turfgrass Physiology. Later earned a Masters in Landscape Architecture from OSU. Earned a Ph.D. in Environmental Plant Physiology from the University of Vermont in 1970, then returned to Columbus to practice golf design with Kidwell, who by then was the most active architect in Ohio. Formed the partnership of Kidwell and Hurdzan, Inc. in 1976. Took over the business when Kidwell retired in 1987.

Had many interests besides golf design. Served in the Army Reserves Special Operations Force for over a dozen years, eventually attaining the rank of Colonel. Gained experience as a military parachutist and earned foreign airborne qualifications from both British and German military forces. Retired from the "Green Berets" in 1994 after receiving the Army's highest peacetime honor, the Legion of Merit Medal.

Also taught advanced turfgrass classes at Ohio State. Wrote monthly columns for WEEDS, TREES AND TURF and GOLF BUSINESS magazines. While serving as President of the American Society of Golf Course Architects in 1984, published a four-part series, "Evolution of the Modern Green," for PGA MAGAZINE. Lectured extensively on golf course safety issues, environmental issues and construction issues. Established an extensive library of golf books and one of the nation's biggest collection of clubs and balls from past eras. Promoted the creation of a "Peace Corps of Golf" to introduce the game to emerging nations.

Is perhaps the closest thing to a Renaissance Man in golf course architecture.

DESIGN PHILOSOPHY

Mike Hurdzan championed low-budget layouts for much of his career and thus indulged in little gingerbread on his early designs. When the 1990s brought wealthier clients, Hurdzan began experimenting with a variety of styles, from the low-profile minimalist look to heavily mounded sculptures of earth.

IDENTIFYING CHARACTERISTICS

Early courses: the Kidwell style of flat fairways, oval greens and flanking bunkers. Recent courses: No discernable characteristics, except perhaps an unorthodox touch or two: A "bye" hole not intended to count on the scorecard. A 100-yard-long green. Extensive rock outcroppings. An island green in a cranberry bog.