

TOM FAZIO

(1945 -)

BACKGROUND

Born in Norristown, PA. Entered golf course architecture as a teenager in 1962 by assisting his uncle George Fazio in course construction. On-the-job training and experience gave him intimate knowledge of both the creative and business sides of the trade.

Became a full partner with George in 1974. By the end of the decade, was handling most of the firm's work. The two went their separate ways in 1981. His 1979 remodeling of Inverness and his 1980 remodeling of Oak Hill garnered his first real national attention, but most of it was unfavorable. The opening of his Wild Dunes course along the Atlantic in South Carolina in 1980 quickly reversed the criticism. A series of private courses in the late 1980s established his reputation. By the 1990s, several polls declared him America's favorite golf architect.

He remained humble despite the praise and was popular even among his peers. Surrounded himself with a talented staff of designers and construction supervisors that included Andy Banfield, Jan Beljan, Steve Burns, Charlie Feeley, Dana Fry, Tom Griswold, Tom Marzolf, Maury Miller, Mike Stranz and Dennis Wise. Was never hesitant to credit them for much of his success.

DESIGN PHILOSOPHY

Tom Fazio established his objective as "quality golf," which he defined as spectacular and playable courses. Working in recent years with generous budgets has made it easier to accomplish his objective with each course, but his popularity proved double-edged, as fans expected him to top himself with each new course. Never shy to experiment, Fazio has designed everything from modest-budget low-profile layouts to mega-budget creations that reshaped flat earth literally into mountains and valleys.

IDENTIFYING CHARACTERISTICS

Very hard to pin down because of his constant experimentation. Does indulge in considerable earth movement from tee to green on every hole. Used very stylized bunkering, often requiring hand maintenance, tailored to each site; large expanses of waste areas in pine barrens settings; beach bunkers sloping into lakes on Florida layouts; old-fashioned bunkering on northeastern designs. His most common characteristic is green contours that flow seamlessly into their surrounds.