

DESMOND MUIRHEAD

(1939 -)

BACKGROUND

Born in England, studied architecture and engineering at Cambridge, then moved west and attended the University of British Columbia. Worked for several years as a land planner in British Columbia before moving to the United States in the late 1950s to work on residential communities.

Never more than a high handicapper himself, he recognized the need to make golf courses and housing developments compatible with one another. Laid out his own design within a real estate project in 1962.

Tried to adapt various landscape and art principles to golf architecture. His early works looked different than those of rivals. By the early 1970s had established himself as a rather unconventional designer.

Teamed with legendary golfer Gene Sarazen, who did little more than offer endorsements, and then with Jack Nicklaus, who worked closely with him on several projects.

In the mid-1970s, Muirhead left America and moved to Australia, where he did virtually no golf design work. A decade later he returned to the States, resumed his design practice and immediately created a stir with radical designs.

DESIGN PHILOSOPHY

Never content to simply provide places to play the game, Muirhead has attempted to give his work, especially his later courses, additional meaning by basing design strategies upon bits of Gestalt psychology, oriental religion and art interpretation. His early works featured tees shaped like boomerangs and tuning forks, water hazards with capes and bays, and island fairways and greens. His more recent designs incorporate various symbols, such as bunkers shaped like various animals, greens representing Norse helmets or dragon's heads and holes intended to represent mermaids and tomahawks.

IDENTIFYING CHARACTERISTICS

The unconventional. Fish or fowl bunkers. Island bunkers. Boulders in bunkers. A tree growing from a green. Grass bunker shaped like a giant bear paw print. Anything unexpected.