

ROBERT von HAGGE

(1930 -)

BACKGROUND

Son of an Indiana superintendent. Attended two years at Annapolis, then transferred to Purdue and obtained a degree in Agricultural Engineering in 1951. Played several years on the PGA Tour, worked at a club, and tried his hand at acting in Hollywood, using the name "Joe Palooka."

In 1957, joined Dick Wilson's golf design firm in Florida. In 1963, he established his own practice in Delray Beach, FL, and his reputation as an elaborate showman. Changed his surname to von Hagge, toured course sites in a gold lame cape and built visually spectacular layouts.

In the mid-1960s made the acquaintance of professional golfer Bruce Devlin, and formed a design partnership, von Hagge and Devlin, in 1968. Practiced together until 1987, when Devlin left to prepare for a bid on the Senior PGA Tour. Then formed von Hagge Design Associates based in Houston, with a group of young designers including Rick Baril, Alan Lenz, Kelly Moran and Mike Smelek.

DESIGN PHILOSOPHY

Early in his career, von Hagge developed a standard formula for each of his courses. The formula, he said, contained 21 separate examinations of the skills of professional golfers, 16 examinations of average golfers and 12 examinations of high handicappers. Though he never publicly revealed the formula, it included such requirements as a faded tee shot, a long iron approach shot and a sharply breaking putt.

IDENTIFYING CHARACTERISTICS

Heavily-bunkered fairways and greens. Long serpentine bunkers full of fingers of sand separated by mounds of turf. Many mounds also lining fairways and encircling greens. Fairways and greens replete with dips and slopes.