

The third course at Golf La Moraleja in Madrid, Spain was designed by Chad Goetz, ASGCA Associate, of Nicklaus Design

The height of professionalism

For golf course architects, membership in ASGCA represents the pinnacle of the profession, requiring many years of experience and a track record of outstanding golf course design work. We find out more about this journey from the three architects who achieved associate membership status this year.

In 2015, the American Society of Golf Course Architects welcomed three new associate members to its ranks. To achieve this status, each had to complete a rigorous, multi-phase application process that includes peer review of four completed courses, discussions with project owners and a personal interview to assess the candidate's professional capabilities.

This process typically takes two years for an applicant to complete, but more often than not, ASGCA membership has been a goal for far longer than that. Take new associate member Nathan Crace, for example. He established Watermark Golf/Nathan Crace Design in 2002, but his ambition to attain ASGCA membership was formed long before then. "I was about 10 when I built a three-hole course on my parents' land in southern Indiana, because there was no

golf course in my home town. I studied books about golf courses intently, either from the city library or bought for me by my mother. In one of those books, I came across a reference to the ASGCA and I told my parents that when I grew up, I was going to be a member. Imagine that: my friends were all going to be astronauts or the President or professional ball players and here I was telling everyone I was going to be a golf course architect when I grew up!"

For another new associate member, Thad Layton, a senior golf course architect for Arnold Palmer Design Company, thoughts of design also started at an early age: "At 13, I learned to play the game during summer golf camp at a local muni in Gulfport, Mississippi, called Tramark. It was a pretty basic 18-hole layout with small pushup greens and two bunkers on the

entire course. The lack of features must have bothered me on some level as I was always making changes to the course in my mind. As my play improved, so did the quality of golf courses on which I got to play and my appreciation for the differences in each golf course grew. My dad was very supportive of my interests, taking me to play golf at different courses in our area. At 15, I picked up a book on golf course design and knew I'd found my calling. I've been pursuing that dream ever since."

His introduction to the ASGCA came while studying for a degree in Landscape Architecture at Mississippi State University. "I sent off for a brochure listing all the members. With the intent of learning more about the craft, I wrote to every member enquiring about a summer internship. It was through that process that I learned



Thad Layton, ASGCA Associate (right), works alongside Arnold Palmer, ASGCA Fellow

DESIGN INFLUENCES

We asked the three new ASGCA Associate members about their design influences



"I begged my parents into stopping for a few hours at Pinehurst on the way back from a summer vacation trip. I was maybe 13 or 14 and all I wanted to do was walk around and look at the courses. I was immediately hooked on Donald Ross! I have the utmost respect for all of the greats, but I wouldn't say I am an architect who tries to 'channel' dead architects from the past. I know it's cost me at least two renovation projects, but I think you have to respect their work while keeping your eye on the reality of the modern game and it's

my duty to a potential client to give them that opinion open and honestly. The clubs and balls, the agronomic practices—it's all light years beyond what the greats of the past had at their disposal. And I'd like to think that Ross and the others would agree that we have to adapt. You can renovate or restore a course to reflect and honor the past, but you have to do it in a way that fits the modern game. The modern day architects I find myself drawing inspiration from are ASGCA members, including Pete Dye for his boldness and willingness to push and exceed the envelope; Bob Cupp for his subtlety, depth perception, and angles; and Rees Jones, his longevity, the finished lines of his work—sometimes very understated—and his bunkers always seemingly in the right place at the right time (or wrong place if you hit a poor shot)." **Nathan Crace, ASGCA Associate, Watermark Golf/Nathan Crace Design**



"Ed Seay was a mentor. He was a born leader and taught me the art of clear and direct communication on the job site. Arnold Palmer taught me how to see the course through a tournament player's eyes and the importance of building features that help a golfer intuit the strategy of the course. Erik Larsen taught me some of the technical aspects of the business and how to travel and work effectively across 12 time zones. I've been equally influenced by the courses and people outside of APDC. My early travels lured me west to Cypress

Point where I gained a deep appreciation for the routing and striking bunkering of MacKenzie and Hunter. I also studied George Thomas' and Billy Bell's work in the LA area, the sculptural bunkering, bold design features, and efficient routing at Bel Air and Riviera left a lasting impression. While located in Ponte Vedra, I was fortunate to play TPC Sawgrass multiple times, gaining an appreciation for the pure strategy and gravity defying shapes of a Pete Dye design. More recently, I've gotten to know ASGCA members Bill Coore and Gil Hanse and their teams. I have a tremendous appreciation for the thoughtful and timeless work they are doing. Our upcoming work at Castle Stuart has us studying great links courses like St. Andrews, Brora and North Berwick."

Thad Layton, ASGCA Associate, Arnold Palmer Design Company



"Since I've been a part of Nicklaus Design for 16 years, my career and design personality has been molded significantly by Jack Nicklaus and the various talented design associates who work for the company, especially Chris Cochran, ASGCA. They have particularly opened my eyes to the strategic side of design and how we as designers can encourage players to think their way around the course, rather than to try and constantly overpower it. I still find myself learning something new every time I collaborate with them.

Outside of the company, I draw influences from across the history of the profession. While I try not to tie myself to a particular designer or style, I have always admired the aesthetic talents of Dr. Alister MacKenzie and some of the ground-breaking strategic concepts of George Thomas."

Chad Goetz, ASGCA Associate, Nicklaus Design

“Becoming a member of the ASGCA has always been a career goal of mine. This dates back to my high school years when I wrote to the society for advice on how to pursue a career in the field

enough about the society to know that it was the benchmark for golf course architects to aspire to, and something I wanted to become... it's hard to believe that was 20 years ago! As with all things that take time and effort to achieve, it was well worth the wait."

Chad Goetz also achieved associate membership status in 2015, having 16 years' experience with Nicklaus Design, since graduating from Kansas State University with a degree in Landscape Architecture. "Becoming a member of the ASGCA has always been a career goal of mine. This dates back to my high school years when I wrote to the society for advice on how to pursue a career in the field," says Goetz. "I was extremely fortunate to be a part of a great junior golf program where I learned the game and also was allowed very affordable access to a nearby golf course. The course itself

was nothing terribly inspiring, and my interest in golf design grew out of comparing it to the amazing courses I saw in magazines and on TV. I did well in school and wanted to pursue a career that would get me excited to go to work every day. As we all know, golf design is not the largest, most accessible profession, but after a lot of study and consideration, I decided to go after my dream."

For Goetz, the journey to ASGCA membership was via Europe: "I was a member of European Institute of Golf Course Architects, but upon my transfer from our European office to the main office here in North Palm Beach, Florida, the region of my work changed somewhat. While I will continue to be involved in some international work, my focus is becoming more and more domestic. The EIGCA is a wonderful

organization, but becoming a part of the ASGCA has always been a professional goal of mine and it allows me to be part of an organization a little closer to my base."

There have only been 282 members of the ASGCA since it was founded in 1946. Its original charter membership of 13 included some of the industry's most influential figures, including Donald Ross, Stanley Thompson and Robert Trent Jones. So it is perhaps no surprise that acceptance to the ASGCA requires the very highest standard of work. Each of the new ASGCA associate members submitted details of a range of golf course design projects as part of their application process.

Crace's portfolio of courses had already received multiple accolades, including the renovation of Ole Miss Golf Club in Oxford, Mississippi, that was named one of the top three renovations in America among public courses by *Golf Inc.*, and the new course design of Copper Mill Golf Club in Zachary, Louisiana that was voted the Best New Affordable Public Course in America for 2004 by *Golf Digest*,

For Goetz, his submission for ASGCA membership included some of the

most noteworthy new designs in Spain in recent years, including Las Saurines de La Torre, Mar Menor, El Valle and Hacienda Riquelme in southern Spain, and the new third course at Golf La Moraleja, one of Madrid's most prestigious clubs.

"Of the courses in my submission for membership, I'm most proud of our recently completed course in Brazil called Fazenda Boa Vista," says Layton. "It is the culmination of everything I've come to learn and believe about golf course architecture over the past two decades. The golf course has a rugged, natural beauty that doesn't impose itself on the landscape. Native grasses were planted in the outer roughs, providing a low maintenance ground cover requiring no fertilizer or irrigation. The fairways are wide where it matters most and hazards are used sparingly, offering multiple angles of play for golfers of every caliber. A wide variety of green sizes and shapes give the course an almost unlimited array of setup options and the surrounds provide a multitude of recovery options. I've played it at least a dozen times now and I never tire of the experience." ●