



The Golden Touch

By Dave Lockhart and Dave Weretka



No one has done it

as good as Jack Nicklaus. I am not just talking about his golf prowess. Indisputably, he has made the best transition from professional champion to successful golf course architect. Jack knows golf.

Muirfield Village Golf Club has always been his baby. In 1966, when Jack Nicklaus was just 26 years-old, he surveyed the rolling farmland just west of his hometown of Columbus, Ohio, and declared within an hour, "OK, guys. No need to go any farther. This is obviously it." Situated on 220 glorious acres of sloping landscape that features meandering meadows, sleepy streams, and towering

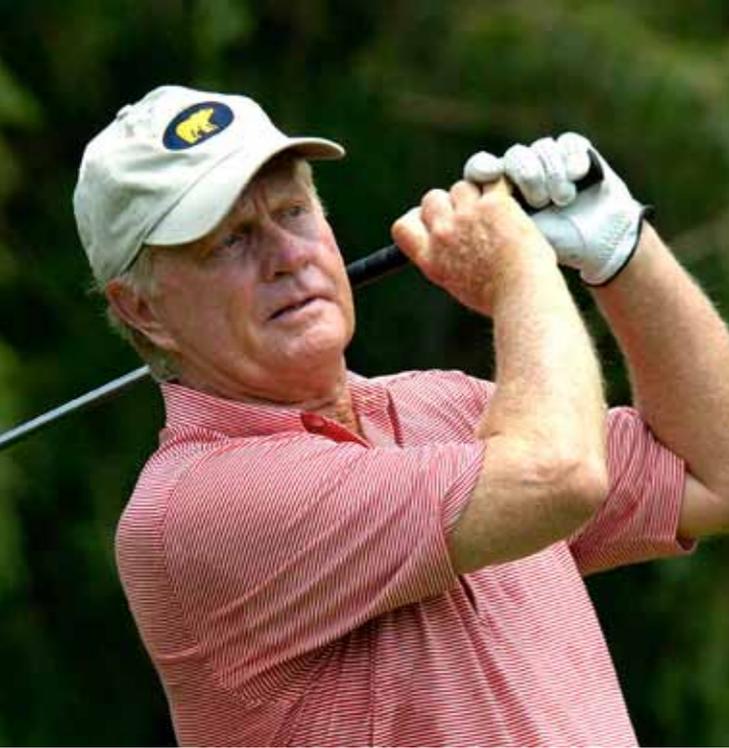


timbers, the Columbus countryside terrain captured his soul like another undulating layout down in Augusta, Georgia. The creation of Jack's baby did not begin until 1972, and was hosting golfers by 1974. The Memorial Tournament came along

in 1976, and Muirfield Village has been a staple on the PGA Tour ever since.

Location, location, location. Admittedly, Columbus is not known as a tremendous golfing hotbed around the world, or even in America for that

matter. However, there are some terrific private clubs (think Donald Ross' Scioto), and some well-respected public layouts (Weiskopf/Morrish's Double Eagle GC) which are a joy and challenge to play. While Nicklaus loves Pebble Beach, he is



not shy about comparing the two courses. “If you take Muirfield Village hole-by-hole, shot-for-shot and compare with Pebble, this is a much better golf course. But, of course, Pebble has the ocean...” Jack Nicklaus feels Muirfield Village falls into the old Rodney Dangerfield axiom regarding respect. He believes Muirfield should be rated higher. Still *Golf Magazine* ranks the Buckeye’s efforts 19th in the United States and *Golf Digest* ranks Nicklaus’ baby at number 26.

Despite not having an ocean, there is plenty of water to avoid at Muirfield Village. There are thirteen holes where water is directly in play. A beautiful clear stream plays a prominent role on a few holes, most notably the fifth hole, a 527-yard dogleg, where the stream cuts directly down the middle of the fairway affecting



strategy on your lay-up. The 567-yard eleventh hole is another demonstration where Nicklaus makes fine use of stream. The stream crosses the fairway at about 300 yards, then juts off to the right side of the fairway, and subsequently cuts directly

in front of the green. Nicklaus was a player who was known for his tremendous ability, but he also knew how to outthink his competition. The world’s most popular architect hopes his courses require more than a simple bomb-n-gash approach, he

wants you to be analyzing your options. “I’ve always felt when you stand on a tee you are asked to do something; through the design you try to do it with bunkering, fairway line, tree line, and water. You try to tell somebody this is the way I’d like you

to play this shot—these are the options you have.”

The par 3s at Muirfield Village are not pitch-n-putts. Each one-shooter varies in length between 184 yards and 215 yards from the championship tees. The hills and slope of the course make it very important to pick the right club. The shot values here are huge, and if it all possible, try to stay below the hole.

The challenge of building a course like Muirfield Village is making it tough enough for the best players in the world, yet playable enough for members and guests. Over the last thirty years, Jack has done more than his share of tweaking to accommodate every style of player that comes through the gate.

From top to bottom, you cannot beat staying and playing at Muirfield Village. Here they treat you more like family, as opposed to just another guest. From the comfortable accommodations in either Lodge or The Villas, to the knowledgeable caddies, to the likeable staff, Muirfield Village is a special place—Jack’s place.



Jack Nicklaus Design has offices in the U.S., Mexico, Belgium, and Hong Kong. For the second straight time, in Asia they have been awarded the Golf Course Architects of the Year for their work in China, Korea, and Indonesia. Jack is also excited about golf coming to The Olympics in 2016. His design firm is making a play to build the course that would host the games in Rio de Janeiro.



If you are in Columbus, perhaps going to an Ohio State game, be sure and stop by The Jack Nicklaus Museum. Located on the campus of The Golden Bear’s alma mater this is a must-see for any golf fan. Pictures, videos, and Nicklaus’ artifacts from greatness fill this treasure chest of memories and Majors. Jack is also an ardent Buckeye fan, and even helped the celebrated band by dotting the “i” at halftime a few years ago. There’s even a great picture on Jack’s Facebook page where he dons a retro leather OSU football helmet. Very funny and cool at the same time, showing that Jack does have a lighter side.