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JANUARY/FEBRUARY 2018



Architect of the Year

After a decade of starts and stops, Tiger Woods' course design career has finally started to take off. He heads our list of 10 architects recognized for their achievements in golf course design during the past year.



AT THE TOP OF THEIR GAME: 2 thru 10

Tiger Woods isn't the only course designer who kept busy in 2017. Here are nine other architects with notable achievements.

The golf development industry is not as robust as it was a decade ago, but many architects are still finding work in the U.S., Europe, Asia and Down Under. And while Tiger Woods' burgeoning design business may have captured much of the attention this past year, several other architects — some familiar and other not-so-familiar names—were busy with a variety of projects around the globe during 2017. We profile them in no particular order.

Gil Hanse

Hanse Golf Design

If architects, like fashion designers, go in

and out of style, no one is more au courant right now than Gil Hanse. Some might have thought that the Pennsylvania-based architect's career peaked in 2016, when he won near-universal praise for his design that hosted the revived Olympics golf competition in Rio de Janeiro. But 2017 proved that the Olympic assignment was just a warm-up.

Last year, Hanse finished work on a new short course, The Cradle, at the venerable Pinehurst resort in North Carolina. In addition, on the site of a former phosphate mine in central Florida, his



Black Course at Streamsong Resort (which he described as "a ton of fun") opened to rave reviews. And to top it off, his renovated North Course at Los Angeles Country Club hosted this year's Walker Cup Match. Hanse also wrapped up work on Mossy Oak Golf Club in Mississippi and is working on a course in Cobbtown, Ga., which he describes as "one of the nicer pieces of property we've ever seen." And he continues to hold out hope that Mike Keiser will someday get started on the long-overdue fifth course at Bandon Dunes. Outside the U.S., Hanse is already at work on a design in Dubai for Trump Golf.

Hanse has also become a go-to guy when it comes to restorations of golden-age classics. He's currently involved in projects at several historical properties, including Winged Foot, Merion and Aronimink, which will host the 2027 PGA Championship.

Jack Nicklaus

Nicklaus Design

No architect is more prolific than Jack Nicklaus, whose firm now lists more than 400 course designs worldwide. While Nicklaus has in recent years focused much of his attention outside the U.S., he stayed close to home with his latest creation, Banyan Cay Resort in West Palm Beach, Fla., a redesign that opened in early November. As far as international work goes, last





Schmidt-Curley Design's FLC Ha Long Bay in Vietnam

year Nicklaus finished the Royal Blue course at Baha Mar, the first Nicklaus-branded layout in the Bahamas. Another recent opening was his first property in Denmark, the Great Northern course, a project financed by an heir to the Lego empire.

Nicklaus' firm is also under contract to design 10 courses in Vietnam for BRG Group's ambitious CEO, Nguyen Thi Nga, and has launched work on its fourth course in Malaysia. The course is for a Chinese developer at the futuristic Forest City community outside Kuala Lumpur. Co-designed with son Jack II, it is scheduled to open in early 2018. While no one is more respected for his

accomplishments in the world of golf, some felt the Golden Bear tarnished his legacy last year when he finalized a deal with the tyrannical president of Turkmenistan to design golf courses in the former Soviet satellite. The first of those courses opened in 2017.

**Brian Curley/Lee Schmidt
Schmidt-Curley Design**

Arizona-based Brian Curley and Lee Schmidt are one of the few design teams operating in Asia who survived the business downturn and continue to prosper, with more than 50 courses on the continent. The team soared to

celebrity status in Asia nearly a decade ago, when they designed or co-designed courses for two of Mission Hills Group's megaplexes in China and cemented close relationships with the Chu family.



Brian Curley

The lion's share of Schmidt-Curley's work nowadays is in Vietnam. The latest design, the Mountain Course at FLC Golf Links Quy Nhon, opened early in 2017. It's their third course in Vietnam for FLC Group. They are finishing up another for FLC along Ha Long Bay, one of the most photogenic places in the world.

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Hixson's Wine Valley



Dan Hixson

Dan Hixson Golf Design

Though not a high-profile designer – he doesn't even have a website – Dan Hixson is a well-regarded architect whose name is attached to several courses in the Pacific Northwest. His most notable tracks – Bandon Crossings in Oregon and Wine Valley Golf Club in Washington – opened nearly a decade ago. But Hixson was back in the spotlight in 2017 with the debut of an 18-hole, reversible course at Silvie's Valley Ranch in Oregon. His current project is the design of a new 18-hole course in the Roseburg, Ore., area.

A former tour player and club pro, Hixson also was active in two redesign projects at Oregon clubs: Emerald Valley Golf & Resort and Shadow Hills Country Club. His recent work includes design of a new short-game practice area for Oregon State's golf teams at Trysting Tree Golf Club in Corvallis and

supervision of improvements at nearly a dozen golf venues in the region.

Tim Lobb

Lobb + Partners



Though his U.K.-based firm was officially born just a little over a year ago, Tim Lobb has more than 20 years of experience on more than 50 golf projects around the world. Lobb + Partners formed after golf legend Peter

Thomson retired from Thomson Perrett & Lobb. Lobb started his career in Australia and Malaysia and later designed several internationally known golf resorts with European Golf Design.

In 2017, Lobb's firm took major steps toward establishing its own international brand. He's been commissioned by St George's Hill Golf Club in Surrey and The Berkshire Golf Club in Berkshire to review their courses and restore features created by their original architects. Lobb also began

work on a new course design at Soma Bay on the Red Sea coast in Egypt. The resort-style, 18-hole course will complement Soma Bay's existing Gary Player course.

Jeremy Slessor, Ross McMurray, Gary Johnston, Robin Hiseman, Dave Sampson

European Golf Design

A powerhouse team since its founding in 1992, European Golf Design (EGD) continued to impress in its 25th year. The Great Britain-based firm, co-owned by the European Tour and IMG, includes architects Jeremy Slessor, Ross McMurray, Gary Johnston, Robin Hiseman and Dave Sampson. McMurray, who has been with EGD since it began, was elected president of the European Institute of Golf Course Architects in 2017.

EGD celebrated its U.K. roots with projects such as a 27-hole layout at the redeveloped Royal Norwich Golf Club. It enjoys a global reach, with an eye toward expanding markets.



Lobb's Soma Bay project in Cairo.



Greg Norman's Cathedral Lodge

Among its recent international projects: Irie Fields opened on St. Kitts; Dubai Hills in the UAE is near completion; and construction is ongoing at Puerto Azul overlooking Manila Bay. Over the years, EGD has designed, co-designed or redesigned most of the European Tour-affiliated courses around the globe, including the upcoming Ryder Cup venues in

France and Italy and the courses at the Tour's branded communities, as well as The Twenty Ten Course at Celtic Manor.

Greg Norman
Greg Norman Golf Course Design

It's easy to poke fun at Greg Norman for his

relentless (and often shirtless) self-promotion via social media. But few architects can match the broad global footprint of the Great White Shark's course design company. His most notable project that opened in 2017 was Cathedral



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Lodge Golf Club in his native Australia, a project for financier David Evans, who envisions the course as Australia's version of Augusta National.

In 2017 Norman also opened his third course in Vietnam at Cam Ranh Links Golf Resort. His first course in Colombia is taking shape on waterfront property outside Cartagena. He also finalized a deal with Ohba Co., aimed at signing up underperforming golf properties in Japan for redesigns. He also opened a new signature course that is part of the Vidanta Nuevo Vallarta resort in Mexico.

Darius Oliver

Darius Oliver Golf Course Design

Though largely unknown in the U.S., Darius Oliver seems to be golf's version of a Renaissance man. In addition to designing courses, he's a publisher (Planet Golf), a contributor to Australian Golf Digest and an industry consultant in his native Australia. As a designer, he's best known for co-designing (with Mike DeVries) Cape Wickham Links in Tasmania. In 2017, Oliver won the contract to design a highly anticipated course for The Cliffs, Kangaroo Island, the centerpiece of a forthcoming oceanfront community on Australia's southern coast.

In the meantime, Oliver is creating a nine-hole, par-3 track called The Farm for New Zealand's most exclusive private club, The Hills. It's unusual in that it won't have any bunkers or any tees; golfers can start anywhere they want. Oliver also worked with Ben Davey to design a new 19th hole that opened last year at Mornington Golf Club near Melbourne.

Tom Doak

Renaissance Golf Design

The man who many credit with reviving the less manicured, more natural style of golf course architecture is still setting trends. His newest course, The Loop at Forest Dunes Golf Club in Michigan, is a reversible 18-hole track like the Old



Mornington Golf Club

Course at St Andrews. The Loop opened last year, and Doak followed a similar blueprint with a new par-3 course at Ballyneal Golf Club in Colorado. It features 12 holes that can be played in 8- and 10-hole loops. Stoatin Brae, another minimalist, Scottish-style course by Renaissance Golf Design, opened for play last year at the Gull Lake View Golf Club & Resort in southwest Michigan.

Doak is perhaps best known for designing Pacific Dunes, one of the first courses at the Bandon Dunes golf mecca, but he's also one of the busiest architects around when it

comes to renovation work. He's leading a restoration of the 1925 George Thomas design at Bel-Air Country Club in Los Angeles, and he's in great demand in Australia. Among his projects there are the renovation of Yarra Yarra Golf Club and a major redesign of the Ocean Course at The National Golf Club in Melbourne. Doak is also working on a course overhaul at Concord Golf Club in suburban Sydney, and he serves as a design consultant to the prestigious Royal Melbourne Golf Club.

—Keith Carter and Katie Thisdell



Tom Doak's Forest Dunes The Loop