



Photo: Courtesy of The Sea Pines Resort

# The innovator

Legendary golf architect Pete Dye transformed course design in the 1970s and 1980s. But his legacy goes much further than island greens and railway sleepers. Now in his eighties, Dye remains passionate, opinionated and active. Richard Wax spoke to him and wife Alice to get the Dye gospel

Ask any golf designer which of his fellow architects has had the biggest influence on the game in the last forty years, and the answer will almost certainly be Pete Dye. From reintroducing the influence of traditional Scottish and Irish links golf forms to the worldwide game to training some of the greatest designers in the game at the moment – men like Tom Doak and Bill Coore – the former insurance salesman from Indiana is a towering figure in the profession. Now, at the age of 82, along with associate Tim Liddy, Dye is building his first golf course in Europe for over twenty years, at Caesarea in Israel. In an exclusive interview, Pete, his wife and longtime collaborator Alice, plus associate Liddy, shared the Dye philosophy of design, life and golf with GCA.

**GCA: Your career has been seen by some as playing a crucial role in the revival of golf course architecture and the return of the Golden Age principles of strategic design that we've seen over the last decade and a half. How do you react to this view?**

**PD:** The golf courses that were built years and years ago are still there and still great. There's really nothing new in the game of golf. There was a period of time in the United States when there was a tremendous need for golf courses. And they generated different types of golf courses. They didn't go back to the old style.

When I went to Scotland with Alice in 1963, I played a lot of golf. We saw all the old golf courses and we brought that back to

Dye remains an active architect in his eighties



The dramatic seventh hole at Whistling Straits. Inset: Dye on site in Wisconsin

# SUSTANE

## Golf Courses around the World Naturally grown in with Sustane Organic Fertilisers

**SUSTANE** The best organic on the planet...

Sustane Europe Ltd, Lower Farm Barns, Wasing, Nr Aldermaston, Berkshire, RG7 4NG UK

Tel: +44 (0)118 971 0995 Fax: +44 (0)118 971 0990

E-mail: [growth@sustane.eu](mailto:growth@sustane.eu) Web: [www.sustane.eu](http://www.sustane.eu)

the States and expanded it. There were railroad ties in Scotland, there were railroad ties in Ireland, I didn't start people using railroad ties!

I think a lot of today's designers have gone back to the way the golf courses were built forty or fifty years ago. In lots of places, the older architects were given better pieces of ground. Nowadays because of the environment and the cost of land, architects are faced with government regulations, and they are given swamps or other areas that are not really great for golf. So they have to manufacture. That's how a lot of golf courses are being built in our country today.

**GCA: (to Alice) Would you describe how you combine your talents to produce the best golf course possible?**

**Alice Dye:** My speciality is making sure that the golf course is manageable for women. I go out after Pete's been working all day, look at the holes and I say: "You know, Pete, this hole isn't going to work for ladies. Let's see if we can put something in or take out this forced carry or move this tee."

**GCA: How would you like your contribution to golf course architecture to be recalled?**

**AD:** I have worked hard on making forward tees shorter and more manageable for women. They used to be really, really long and then courses started watering fairways! So courses became unmanageable for women. So I think I've gone down in history as someone who has championed making courses more manageable and fun for women.

**GCA: Your golf courses are very rich strategically. Do you view it as a challenge to create eighteen games of chess for a player?**

**AD:** I think that's the fun part — making each hole different and fun. You want it

to play differently on different days too. We take the wind into consideration so we try to make our holes have different wind directions. It's really tough to make 18 special holes. You really have to rack your brains sometimes but we're pretty good at that, I think!

**GCA: Do you feel that technical advances in the club and the ball are ruining the game?**

**AD:** Yes, definitely! I mean how do you build a hole for the distance these young men are hitting the golf ball? It's not only men — I noticed how far the young women hit it when they played the Women's Amateur at Crooked Stick. We're just out of space.

**GCA: Does it give you pleasure when your courses are not just played by the happy few but welcome many who come for the experience?**

**PD:** Every once in a while someone will come to us and say: "We want to build this special club. We're only going to have 50 members." I say: "Well, that's great but we're not interested." We've built golf courses for universities such as Virginia Tech or Purdue and built lots of resort courses. I don't want to build a golf course and just have fifty or a hundred people play it. So I've always felt that if we have a chance we like to build golf courses that have a combination of a resort course, tourists, outside play and membership.

**GCA: How did you come to love the game? Why did you choose golf?**

**AD:** As a young girl I belonged to a club that had swimming and tennis. They also had a golf course which didn't interest me very much at all until I had the opportunity to get into a swing class. There was something about swinging the club and hitting the ball and then going out and playing a few holes — I was just enamoured with the game and it's never changed. I just got through playing in a match at the club here in the championship. I got beat but that's OK!

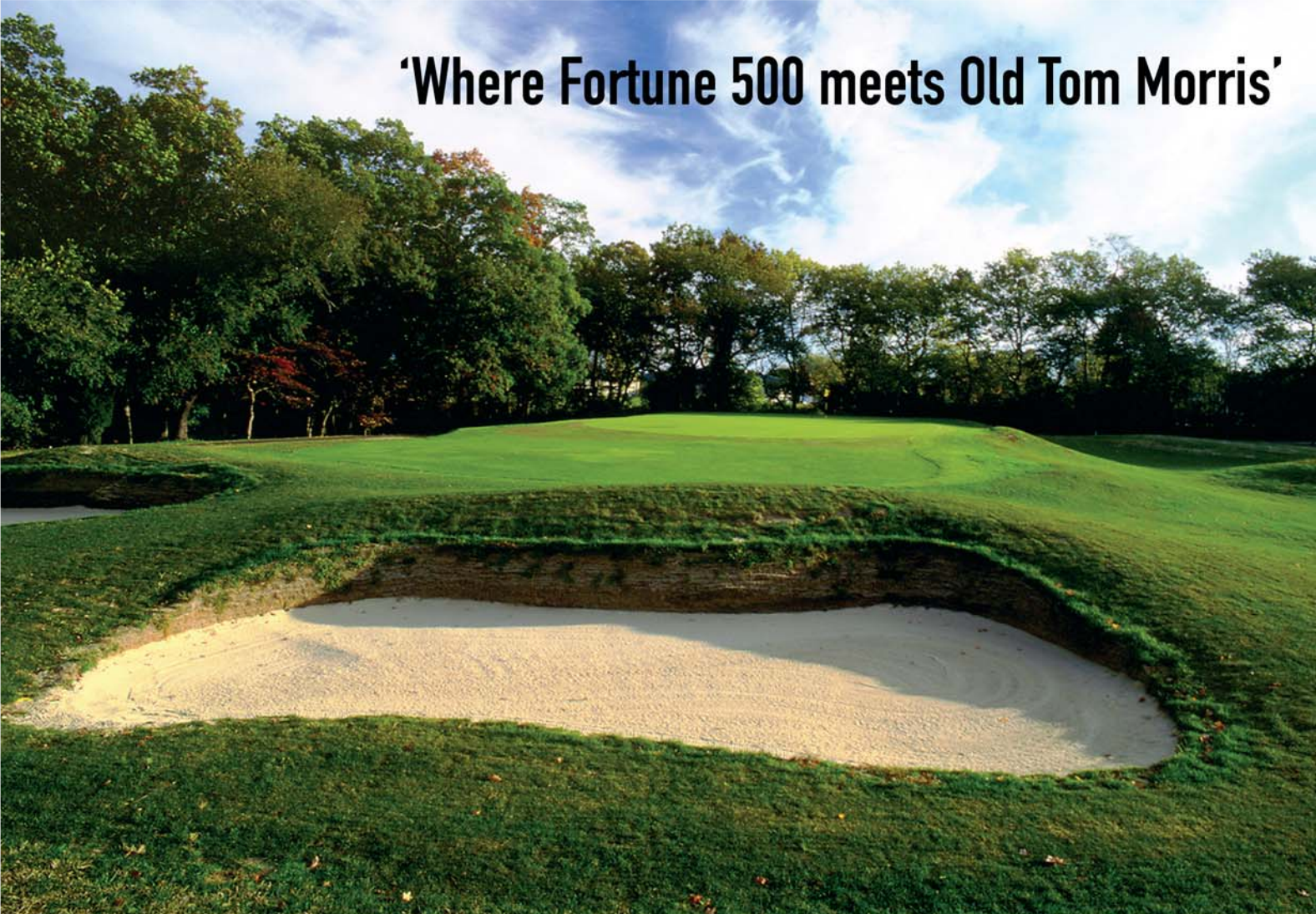
**PD:** My game started with my father. I can't even remember when I started. My father loved golf and he became a very good player. Every Tuesday, even though I worked on the golf course, I had to caddie for my mother. My brothers and my sister, everybody in our family played golf, it was a family game. Then I met Alice in college. She was a good player and I caddied for her in one of the major championships. I was rooting for her to win. She hit a bad shot, I got a little bit upset and threw her golf bag in a ditch. But we still love each other and we're still playing golf!

**AD:** I don't know, Pete, that I've totally forgiven you for that yet!

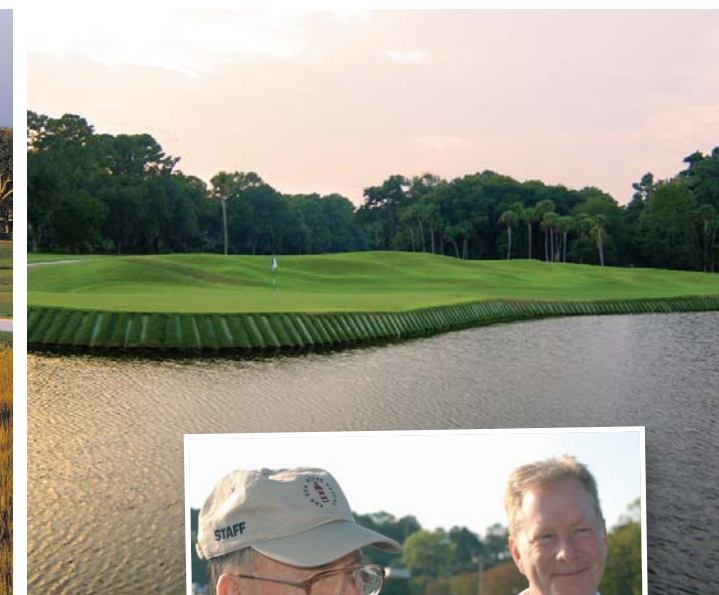
**PD:** But in some way, it brings everything out of you. All our family plays golf. Our two sons are both in the golf business. What's amazing is that their brides didn't play golf at all!

# 'Where Fortune 500 meets Old Tom Morris'

INTERVIEW: PETE DYE



Photos: Courtesy of The Sea Pines Resort



Harbour Town was Dye's breakthrough. He has recently returned to Hilton Head to build the new Heron Point course. Inset: Pete with Tim Liddy



**GCA: Why Israel? You haven't built many courses outside the United States, so why suddenly Israel?**

**PD:** When Tim came back from his visit, I said: "Israel's got to be a natural for golf!" Golf is expanding all of a sudden all over the world. Every once in a while I've been offered a job in Scotland. But there are so many great courses in Scotland, so you want a great piece of ground so you can compete with all those great courses. But in Israel we have the sea close by and the sand and nobody else is there!

**GCA: How involved are you going to be in the project? Is it going to be a Pete Dye course by name only?**

**PD:** Most of my competitors have a staff of five, ten, fifteen, twenty or thirty people. With us, it's Tim and me, period! And Tim knows more of what I'm supposed to know than I do right now! We never have more than two or three projects going at once. Most of my competitors do a great job, but they'll have 30, 40 or 50 projects going on at one time. We've never done that, so you've got to put up with one of us or the other! In Tim, I've found somebody who thinks the same way I do, and I can keep pretty good control of!

**GCA: Does an architect have to see the land before he makes plans as to what to do with it or can he do it by proxy?**

**PD:** I'm always amazed when people have an outside contractor come in and develop a golf course and don't control it. You can spend a lot of money building a golf course but if you have people on site they can change it three or four times and it doesn't escalate the cost either of maintenance or construction.

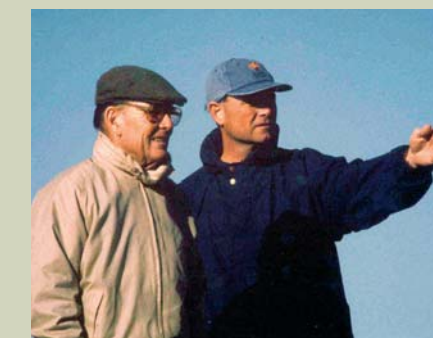
**Tim Liddy:** I love to get a golf hole 80 per cent prepared, get the skeleton, the framework and then have Pete look at it and do what he's so good at.

## Working with Pete

Both my partner Lee Schmidt and I consider Pete Dye our mentor. We were extremely fortunate to cut our teeth with Pete during a period of time when he was doing some of his most influential designs, like Casa de Campo, PGA West's Stadium Course and the Ocean course at Kiawah Island.

Even though Lee and I have headed our own design company for more than ten years, we still relish opportunities to work with Pete. Our most recent collaboration was the Pete Dye Course at Mission Hills Golf Club in Shenzhen, China. Mission Hills' 12 courses make it the largest golf club in the world and the epicentre of the country's golf craze. It was Pete's first design in China and features many of his typical hallmarks including small pot bunkers, tee-to-green waste areas and railroad ties. It also has the most-contoured greens of any layout at the club, such as the fifteenth, shaped like a tennis racket and aptly nicknamed 'Flyswatter.' At just over 6,800 yards, it emphasises shot-making and strategy, much like his designs at Harbour Town and TPC Sawgrass.

Pete is fun and makes everything fun. With his background in sales, he was always able to get his way in a very



endearing manner using his Midwestern charm. Part genius and part knucklehead, he could not only come up with crazy ideas but convince a client to buy into it. And he's always had a knack for dispensing advice in a folksy and memorable manner. For instance, I've always enjoyed drawing, but Pete once told me: "The most important thing you can draw in this business is a pay cheque."

Nobody in this business comes close to Pete in combining creative work and a unique personality. Nobody ever will.

*Brian Curley is a partner in Schmidt-Curley Design, based in Scottsdale, Arizona, USA*

## Testimonials

"Hunters Oak — what a test of golf; you might as well be right in the middle of Scotland"  
Gary Player. Golf legend.

"Hopkinton is so reminiscent of playing golf on the courses in the United Kingdom and Ireland — a great achievement"  
Ian Woosnam. Masters Champion.

"Scott-Taylor and Latshaw combine the classic British architecture of Ross and MacKenzie with the American agronomy of 'The Masters' and 'The U.S. Open'. A formidable team in the golf development world.  
Tony Leodora. Editor of Golf Styles — Philadelphia and Host of Golf Styles Live.

## Services

- Golf Course Design and Renovation.
- Golf Course Agronomy and Tournament Preparation.
- Golf Course Reports — Golf Course Architecture and Agronomy



Telephone: +1 410 819 0528  
Website: [www.ianscott-taylor.com](http://www.ianscott-taylor.com)

IAN SCOTT-TAYLOR

## Turf Equipment & Irrigation Solutions



One great result.

1-800-877-8777



The new Dye course at Mission Hills in China (left), and TPC Sawgrass.



**PD:** Take Donald Ross. He's supposed to have built 600 golf courses in our country. There's no way to get from A to B to 600 golf courses. But he had three men who were brothers who were named the Mashburn brothers. Each course those fellow were on were the ones you hear about being Donald Ross' great courses. Those are the ones where he controlled the building. So if you can keep your operation in that aspect, you usually get the end result you want.

**GCA: You had a great impact in the Dominican Republic. Do you expect the same kind of impact on Israeli golf?**

**PD:** You can't remotely compare the Dominican Republic to Israel. It was a very poor country when I went there in 1968. There was no golf, but they had the climate and the sea. I kept telling people to build there, even though there wasn't a paved road within 35 miles, there wasn't an airport or anything!

They built the golf course. The locals called the rock next to the shore 'Dientes de Perro' — the teeth of the dog. I thought: "What a great name for a golf course," but the owner wanted to call it Cohillas after the cashew tree, so it took me a long time to get the name back to the 'Teeth of the Dog.'

Once the golf course was built, all of a sudden people started to come, even though they had to drive along the dirt road and there were just cabins to stay in. They built a little hotel, and kept expanding. Now we're building the sixth course on that same property and there are probably 50 new courses in the Dominican Republic.

**TL:** That project has been an inspiration

for me in Israel. I came back and said to Pete: "It's not going to be the same, but the potential is there for golf in Israel."

**GCA: I believe you place a great deal of importance on maintenance?**

**PD:** Maintenance is a big thing for any golf course. I've always been interested in maintenance since I was a kid. It's not hard to get the right people running the show and to set up a programme. As far as we're concerned, that's our simplest job. If you build it right, then the superintendent has a fighting chance to maintain it. He has to be of a certain background.

**GCA: So you see it as part of your job to find someone to take care of the course?**

**PD:** Right.

**GCA: How involved are you for the first four years after the golf course is built?**

**PD:** The courses that we've built, we always try to make arrangements to go back and be part of it. Sometimes that works out. We've gone back to older courses more than anybody in the industry. We like to do it. You try to convince them they are either right or convince them they're wrong. It's a lot easier to convince them they're right than it is to convince them they're wrong!

At Whistling Straits, Mr Kohler gets these ideas for what he wants and I have to go up there and convince him he's wrong, so that's a fight! When you build up a golf course, it matures. You see the people play. Maybe because golf courses, they grow and they change and they modify so you've got to stay on top of it.

**GCA: What do you have in mind when you think of a hole or a course? Do you think about pro or the average player?**

**PD:** Alice keeps talking to me about the lady golfer and how we're going to get her around the course. She's beaten that into our heads! But, you know, lady players are easier to manoeuvre around a golf course than a lot of these 85-95 shooters, maybe young people who hit it this way and that.

Very rarely do we put a bunker in front of the green. Then on the par threes, Alice will say: "You haven't made this hard enough!" Because on a par three you know where the lady golfer is coming from and you can get her on the green, but on a par four or five, you never know where she is coming from. Some architects have built island greens on par fives. That might be great for the pros but for Joe Public or ladies? Even if you have an island or a severe green on a par three, you can build a tee for the ladies.

**GCA: Do you enjoy your reputation as the Wicked Designer from Hell? Do you feel misunderstood?**

**PD:** Sure! Every golf course we've built has more play than anybody else's. They can call me anything they want!

**GCA: How do you identify human traits and weaknesses with your design?**

**PD:** Tim and I work hard on trying to make an optical illusion, so that the

# Meet the team.



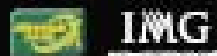
At European Golf Design, we always believe in supporting and investing in the local community - wherever we design a golf course. It is part of our responsibility as an international company to ensure that we involve local people, services and solutions. Meet some of the team in Bulgaria - this course will be a part of their lives from now on, just as it has been part of ours. Let us help you create something life-changing.



**EUROPEAN GOLF DESIGN**

+44 (0)1344 870300 enquiries@egd.com www.egd.com

The Golf Course Design Company of IMG and The European Tour  
The Designers of the 2010 Ryder Cup Course at the Celtic Manor Resort, Wales



Dye's Ocean course at Kiawah Island has been voted one of the most difficult in the world



whole golf course looks hard. If you make it look hard, it gets a reputation. Then people find out that ladies and ordinary players can get round the golf course. But you try to create the illusion that it looks hard. If you can get golf professionals to think, then you've won the game! Harbour Town doesn't look like a hard golf course yet it has that reputation. The pros keep telling me about it all the time.

We got the reputation of designing severe golf courses but women can play our courses and yet men say it's the hardest thing in the world. I don't know why. Well maybe I do know why, but I'm not telling anybody!

Take the TPC at Sawgrass. You can run the ball onto the green at holes one and two. The third is a par three, that's different. Number four has a ditch that Deane Beman wouldn't let me take out. You can run it up on five through nine, then there's the ditch on the eleventh. That's two aerial approaches on par four or five holes. You can run it up on 12-16, you obviously can't on seventeen and you can on eighteen. And you shot all those double bogeys! It's not my fault!

**GCA: Can you explain why you don't draw?**

**PD:** I can draw, but it's kinda sketchy! Tim interprets my sketches and he cleans it all up. I put some stuff down and we talk about what's there. When I draw, it takes someone to decipher it!

**TL:** I think Pete's work is more sculptural anyway. It's not about drawing on paper.

**PD:** We'll start with a drawing and sketches. Then Tim gets it precise. When you get the drawing the way Tim does it, you really start to see the hole. We let it sit

around a couple of days. Maybe the ones we tear up are better than the ones we use!

We start out and we have a formula we try to maintain, but a lot of the time the formula doesn't work. We're trying like the Devil to get diversification. Oftentimes you see similar bunkers through the golf course. Well, that drives us crazy! Maybe we're wrong and they're right. I don't know.

We try to make the bunkers fit the shot and the hole. We try to make the first hole so everybody gets off, a lot of people do that. Then we try to get a strong stretch between 12-14. We always try to take the course up and down so far as its strength is concerned. We try to get a couple of holes around the seventh and eighth that a good player feels like he should birdie, then you jump on them a little bit! We try to escalate 16, 17, and 18 as far as the look, or strategy, or difficulty is concerned.

**TL:** You approach it with layers. You start out a big layer on a big scale. Then you get down to the golf holes, the bunkers and greens and tees. But you start looking at the whole golf course. Pete is thinking about shot balance with left to right holes, right to left holes.

**GCA: Did you really want to have a pond on the left of the seventeenth green at Whistling Straits?**

**PD:** I remember building that hole. I was going to build a pond, but I got shot down. Alice said: "You can't do that!" That's why the bunker is so severe. The hole was roughed in, and Alice said it wasn't hard enough. Herb Kohler had come up with some wild idea, but I didn't listen to that! Alice convinced me we had

to make it much more difficult. She said the same thing at Kiawah and I finally gave way. So for you guys who have a hard time, go blame Alice, don't blame me!

Those two holes are Alice's really. So is the island green at TPC Sawgrass. Where TPC was built was originally a swamp with just one pocket of sand, so we dug it out to use for the course. That left us with a great big hole. Alice said: "Why don't you just put an island green out in the middle of the hole?" If you go over to the left and the ladies tee, you're hitting into the long end of the green and it's a much easier shot. From the back tee, though, it's a bit different!

I remember when the hole first opened. I hit a few eight iron shots down there, and I said to Alice: "This is not going to be a hard hole. Look, I've knocked three eight irons right into the middle of the green." She replied: "It's a lot different when the only things watching you are that frog down there and your wife!" **GCA**

*Golf consultant Richard Wax is a member of the GCA editorial board, and has been involved with many course developments over the last thirty years, including Kingsbarns Golf Links in Scotland.*