



# Golf's most influential developers

When it comes time to build a golf course, here are the guys who can get it done

by Jim Dunlap

Developers traditionally have brought golf courses to the people. Today, they bring people to the golf course.

The most influential golf developers nowadays are also homebuilders, resort owners or casino operators. And they're all aware that courses are the

sizzle, not the steak, in the golf industry's overall dining experience.

At last month's Golf Inc. Management and Development Conference, the magazine's editors recognized the 20 most influential golf course developers. And as the list clearly indi-

cates, residential or community development is the engine that drives new golf construction these days.

Major homebuilders such as Pulte, Toll Brothers, Lennar, Shea Homes, WC1, Bonita Bay Group, Ginn Co., Discovery Land Co., Bluegreen, Carl M.

Freeman, Medallist Development, Landmark Land, Creekview Land and Cooper Communities frequently dangle a golf course as a private or preferred access draw to homebuyers.

The National Golf Foundation estimated that 59

### Tom Powers

Division President  
*Bluegreen Golf, Atlanta, Ga.*

Recent projects: Chapel Ridge in Pittsboro, N.C.; Sanctuary Cove on St. Thomas Island, Ga.; and Traditions of Braselton, Jefferson, Ga.



### Bobby Ginn

President & CEO  
*Ginn Golf Construction - Celebration, Fla.*

Recent projects: Reunion Resort and Golf Club of Orlando; the RiverTowne Country Club in Mount Pleasant, S.C.; and The Club at Hammock Beach in Palm Coast, Fla.



### David Lucas

Chairman of the Board  
*Bonita Bay Group - Bonita Springs, Fla.*

Recent projects: The Club at Twin Eagles, Naples, Fla.; Old Orange, Ft. Myers, Fla.



### Jim McLaughlin

Senior Vice President  
*Intrawest Golf - Scottsdale, Ariz.*

Recent projects: Pradera in Denver, Colo.; The Raven Golf Club at Bora Bay in Collingwood, Ontario, Canada; and the Raven Golf Club at Verrado in Buckeye, Ariz.



### Tom Upton

Vice President of Sports and Hospitality  
*Carl M. Freeman Golf- Ocean View, Del.*

Recent projects: Bear Trap Dunes Golf Club in Ocean View, Del.; and The Bay Club in Berlin, Md.



### Bill Kubly

CEO  
*Landscapes Unlimited - Lincoln, NE*

Recent projects: Fiddlesticks Country Club in Fort Myers, FL; Laughlin Ranch in Bullhead City, AZ



### Randy Brucker, John Cooper

President, Cooper Land Development;  
President, Cooper Communities  
*Cooper Communities - Rogers, Ark.*  
Recent projects: Glade Springs Village in Daniels, W. Va.; Hot Springs Village, Ark.



### Frank Weed

COO  
*Medallist Golf - Jupiter, Fla.*

Recent projects: Savannah Quarters in Savannah, Ga.; West Bay Club in Estero, Fla.; and Fisher Island in Miami, Fla.



### Michael Meldman

Founder & CEO  
*Discovery Land Company - San Francisco, Calif.*

Recent projects: El Dorado in Los Cabos, Mexico; Mountaintop Golf and Lake Club in Cashiers, N.C.; and The Madison Club in La Quinta, Calif.



### Henry DeLozier

Vice President of Golf  
*Pulte Homes - Scottsdale, Ariz.*

Recent projects: Whisper Creek Golf Club in Huntley, Ill.; and Sun City Festival in Surprise, Ariz.



percent of all new courses which opened in 2004 were associated with residential developments. A number of the others were associated with posh resorts or the booming gaming operations on Indian reservations or the new gambling frontiers along the Mississippi and Missouri rivers or the Gulf Coast.

"Golf development is limited pretty much to the home-builders — Pultc, Toll Brothers, WC1 — that's about the only [kind of] development anybody wants to talk about these days," said M.J. Mastilir, president of Textron subsidiary Real Estate Capital.

"It all comes back to how strong is the home developer you're working with — that's the only thing with any viability these days," said Steve Sparks, a Reno, Nev.-based golf

industry consultant and appraiser.

Other developers, such as Intrawest and Marriott, find golf to be worth the cost to entice paying guests to their resort or fractional ownership properties. The same is true of gaming entities, which find a golf course's cost a small price to pay to lure visitors into their hotels and casinos for an extra day or two.

One of the exceptions to today's trend is municipal golf. It too is provided as an amenity — for taxpayers and constituents — but unlike its residential, resort or casino relatives, it is expected to pay its own way. With diminishing availability of land within city boundaries, municipal golf development is declining, but some cities are still taking the plunge.

"Municipalities may have been tapering off in the last year or so, but in the late '90s and early 2000s, cities were building courses to amenitize their cities," said Marty Benson, a San Francisco-based consultant.

A number of other developers who are not included on the Golf Inc. list also have the resources, track record and vision to make golf developments a reality. Companies such as Lakewood Ranch Golf Co., which has three Arnold Palmer-designed courses at their Schroeder Manatee Ranch development in Florida and a Ritz Carlton Tom Fazio design coming on line nearby; Cliffs Communities, with 90 holes of Tom Fazio, Tom Jackson, Jack Nicklaus and Ben Wright-designed courses in their North Carolina communities; and

Mike Ross of Rarity Communities, with Bob Cupp and DeVictor Langham-designed courses in their communities in Tennessee's Smoky Mountain region.

And another developer that has found a unique and profitable niche is Lindsay Communities, an Arkansas and Missouri-based developer which uses golf as a draw for its communities, which consist primarily of apartments.

"I still don't know of any [new] golf course that makes economic sense [as a stand-alone]," Sparks said. There are occasional exceptions — generally in the private course market — but the overall numbers support that conclusion.

Here are profiles of Golf Inc.'s most influential developers.

**Jeff Hinkle**

Vice President of Community Development  
*Shea Homes - Scottsdale, Ariz.*

Recent projects: Blackstone Golf and Country Club in Peoria, Ariz.; Trilogy at Vistancia Golf Club in Peoria, Ariz.; and Trilogy at Glen Ivy Golf Club in Riverside, Calif.



**John Cannon**

President  
*Sunbelt Golf Corp. - Birmingham, Ala.*

Recent projects: The Shoals in Muscle Shoals, Ala.; and Ross Bridge in Hoover, Ala.



**Dave Richey**

Vice President, Golf and Country Club Division  
*Toll Brothers - Huntington Valley, Pa.*

Recent projects: The Regency Club at Dominion Valley in Manassas, Va.; and Mountain View Country Club in La Quinta, Calif.



**Craig Johnson**

Vice President of Community Development  
*Lennar Corporation - Houston*

Recent projects: Blackstone Country Club in Aurora, Colo.; Stonybrook Golf Club in Bradenton, Fla.; and Heritage Hunt in Gainesville, Va.



**David Fry**

Senior Vice President, Amenities Division  
*WCI Communities — Bonita Springs, Fla.*

Recent projects: Tuscany Reserve in Naples, Fla.; Old Palm Golf Club in Palm Beach Gardens, Fla.; and Parkland Golf and Country Club in Parkland, Fla.



**Tim Hawes**

Vice President of Development for Properties  
*PGA Tour Golf Properties - Ponte Vedra Beach, Fla.*  
Recent projects: TPC Louisiana in Avondale, La.; and TPC at Craig Ranch in McKinney, Texas



**Ernie Vossler**

President  
*Landmark Land Co. - Indian Wells, Calif.*

Recent projects: PGA West in La Quinta, Calif.; Landmark Golf Club in Indio, Calif.; and Kiawah Island Resort in Kiawah Island, S.C.



**David Southworth**

President and CEO  
*Willowbend Development - Newton, Mass.*

Recent projects: Costa Caribe Golf and Country Club in Ponce, Puerto Rico; Starr Pass Country Club and Spa in Tucson, Ariz.; and The Ranch Golf Club in Southwick, Mass.



**Eric Bergstol**

President  
*Empire Golf - Pomona, N. Y.*

Recent projects: Hollowbrook Golf Club in Westchester County, N.Y.; and Bayonne Golf Club on Bayonne, N.Y.



**Mark Isakson**

Operating Partner  
*Creekview Land Co. - Sheridan, Wyo.*

Recent projects: The Powderhorn in Sheridan, Wyo.; The Club of Scottsdale, Ariz.; and Red Jacoby Golf Course in Laramie, Wyo.

