

Designer

BY DAN O'MEARA

STAFF WRITER

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Jim Dewling's job as a golf course architect is to take what Mother Nature gives him and refine it.

The end result is a product that is challenging yet playable for most golfers, environmentally friendly, aesthetically pleasing and, as often as the landscape will allow, unique.

Dewling is president of and a partner in the Milford firm of Conroy-Dewling Associates Inc., which specializes in the design and development of golf courses.

His company has three signature courses in southeast Michigan: Mystic Creek in Milford, Timber Trace in Pinckney and Boulder Pointe Golf Club in Oxford. The last is under construction and is part of a 1,400-acre residential development.

"The challenge is really the vision and the opportunity to create," Dewling said. "Of all the aspects of golf that I've been involved in, whether as a competitor or a manager of property, I think the most exciting and rewarding part is the opportunity to create and build something from nature's creation."

Dewling's approach to designing a course is to take advantage of all the natural characteristics of the land and make the best possible use of it.

"We work with the topography, as well as the vegetation, to come up with a

routing and design that is enhanced by the features of land," he said.

"At the same time, we're delivering a product that is playable for all levels of ability without taking the hazards or that aspect of it out of the playability of the golf course."

Environmental concerns are a major factor in the design of a course and the No. 1 issue an architect has to deal with in building a course.

"Whether it be wetlands or woodlands, we work hard to protect all aspects of that," Dewling said, adding such work is done under the watchful eye of the Department of Environmental Quality.

The fast pace of urban sprawl makes the environment a concern in all matters where land is in demand, he added.

"Certainly, a lot of it is being driven by the fact we're using up a lot of sites in the metro area," Dewling said. "There aren't too many left. You have to go out farther and farther."

"Having been in the golf business a long time, there are areas I never envisioned that type of sprawl (would occur). But most people never envisioned Chrysler World Headquarters would be in Auburn Hills, either."

At the same time, there are natural characteristics of the land a course designer can use to his advantage.

"You're always looking for a specimen



STAFF PHOTO BY LAWRENCE R. MURPHY

Proud fathers: Jim Dewling, left, with partner Patrick Conroy, standing at hole No. 2, a 210-yard par three on the "Peaks 9" course.

tree and situations that really enhance a particular golf hole," Dewling said. "In some situations, we've literally re-routed sections of a golf course."

"After you've laid it out on paper and get out in the field, you find something very unusual about a site or the vegeta-

tion or trees, and you work to take advantage of those situations."

An example of that is what Conroy-Dewling has done in building its 27-hole course at Boulder Pointe, which sits on

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