



Precise planning makes PR golf courses some of the best of the world

BY JOHNATHAN MAY

Stepping on the first tee at any of the multitude of golf courses in Puerto Rico might not make you immediately aware of the work that has made the heavenly experience possible. Before the first green is planted or the first bunker is filled, there is a minimum four-step process to complete. "Each golf course is its own little planet," said Greg Sherwood, president of Construction at Southworth Development, Greg Sherwood, "and has its own set of rules and boundaries."

The first step, according to Sherwood, is finding the right architect. "In general with architects you get what you pay for. You also need to find an architect who fits the personality of the developers based on their level of flexibility," he said.

The next step is conducting a survey of the land and obtaining the proper permits. "This stage is usually the most frustrating and a good team consisting of a good architect and a good developer can make all the difference," Sherwood said.

While the surveying and the permits are being done, the developer, architect and construction team usually start planning out the course. "This is where we plan the square footage of the greens, the size of the fairways, the landscaping, cart paths, etcetera," Sherwood said.

Once a rough plan of the details has been drawn up, the contractor and

the architect will draw up a "menu" for the developer. "The menu gives the developer choices for everything, with the price, so he can see how much the whole project is going to cost. For example he can choose cart paths with pavers, gravel, or concrete—all with different prices," Sherwood said. "Usually they have set a budget beforehand and it is just a matter of choosing which items they want to reach the budget."

The menu stage is also about the same time that the course superintendent is hired. "If the superintendent is going to be in charge of the course on a day-to-day level, then we like to bring him in at the menu stage so he can have a say on how things are going to be maintained," Sherwood said.

One of the biggest decisions in golf course development and golf course maintenance is irrigation. Costa Caribe in Ponce, for example needs a different amount of water than say, Coco Beach, according to Sherwood. "On the north side of the island courses get more natural irrigation from the rain. On the south side courses have to rely more on their own generated water," he said. "When we need to irrigate we use anywhere between 650,000 and 750,000 gallons of water per cycle," said Erik Krahn, course superintendent at Costa Caribe.

In addition, the amount and type of water make a difference in the grass that is used at the courses. ■



The famed 12th hole island green at Costa Caribe in Ponce