

Open for Business

Paul Albanese's work on Mill Creek gives him professional footing in New York

BY ANTHONY PIOppi

Paul Albanese took his love for golf and building and turned them into a career as a golf course architect. Now he's looking to use his experience in the Northeast where he was born and raised.

The New Jersey native has partnered with Chris Lutzke, who worked with Pete Dye, to form Albanese and Lutzke, a firm specializing in both design and construction management of golf courses. Formed in the early part of 2004, the company maintains offices in Michigan, where Albanese has spent the majority of his career, and in Virginia.

One hallmark of the new company will be the amount of time spent on site, according to Albanese. "Some people do their designing on site. Some people do it on paper. We do both," Albanese says. "We want to make sure what we designed on paper comes to fruition."

After graduating from Cornell, where he captained the golf team his senior year, Albanese earned a masters in landscape architecture from Harvard. He then went to work for Michigan-based architect Jerry Matthews in 1992, where he remained until joining the firm of architect Ray Hearn in 1996. He was made a partner in 2001. It was while working with Hearn that Albanese began to design on his own, eventually earning entry into the American Society of Golf Course Architects.

For those New Yorkers interested in checking out an Albanese design, the Mill Creek Golf Club in Rochester opened at the end of the 2004 season. The official grand opening is this year. Although officially listed as a Hearn-Albanese design, Albanese is the architect of



Paul Albanese's work includes designs in New York.

record on the project.

The course is located on the highest point in Monroe County and offers views of the Finger Lakes and the Rochester skyline. Playing from under 5,000 yards to more than 7,000 yards, Mill Creek also features a 22-acre practice facility and a nine-hole par-3 short course.

Albanese's latest New York-based project is renovating the Holiday Valley Golf Course in Ellicottville. The master plan for Holiday Valley wasn't expected to be completed until this spring. Albanese says it will be up to the owners on how they want the plan implemented and if the work will be course-wide—bunkers, greens and tees—or if it will be in specific

areas. He said it is possible that holes could be rerouted as part of the improvement plan.

Albanese has experience working on a golf course connected to a ski resort when he came up with a master plan for Crystal Mountain resort in Thompsonville, Michigan. In 1997 Crystal Mountain began to implement the plan on the Betsie Valley course. According to Albanese, the Crystal Mountain owners' method is for Albanese to redo one hole per year.

No matter the route Holiday Valley chooses, Albanese says the goal is to make the layout compatible with the current golf technology. "Golf has changed and the idea is to bring the course up to date so it meets modern golf course expectations," Albanese says.

Thanks to caddieing and playing the Hal Purdy-designed Fairmount Country Club in Chatham, New Jersey—where his father was a member—Albanese was able to play many of the great layouts in his home state,

continued on page 49



The eighth hole of the Mill Creek Golf Club reflects Paul Albanese's goal of creating "a unique and memorable experience."

including Baltusrol Golf Club and Plainfield Country Club.

The design style of the architects responsible for those two classic layouts—A.W. Tillinghast and Donald Ross, respectively—heavily influenced the designs of Albanese. "They worked hard to have the land and the golf course work together," he says. "I don't like repetitious design. We want to create a unique

and memorable experience."

As for modern designers, Albanese praises the work of Hearn, Matthews and Tom Doak. While he worked for two established architects in Hearn and Matthews, Albanese said his biggest influence in the United States is Doak's Pacific Dunes masterpiece in Bandon, Oregon, which Albanese feels reflects the design style of the great

Scottish courses. Albanese says his favorite examples of great Scottish golf courses are Royal Dornoch, St. Andrews' Old Course and North Berwick's West Links.

While he and Lutzke were aware they were going out on their own under tough economic conditions, Albanese believes they can succeed in a highly competitive environment. "It's one of the craziest businesses you can get into," Albanese admits. "We believe that we have enough passion and dedication to get through the tough times." ■

For more information on the **Albanese and Lutzke** design firm, please call 248/435-0142 (Michigan office) or 540/639-4947 (Virginia office), or email them at either paul@golf-designs.com or chris@golf-designs.com.

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