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MICHIGAN

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MICHIGAN'S BEST ARCHITECTS

Matthews, Hearn, DeVries, Hills, Smith and more

Interview with Tom Doak

THE COURSE
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Mike DeVries



“I want the land to dictate the design and not the opposite.”

Mike DeVries has worked with some great architects, notably Tom Doak and Tom Fazio, but his best training came during his early years, growing up playing at Crystal Downs Country Club, a classic design of the great Alister MacKenzie.

“Crystal Downs, it really influenced me,” he said. “It led me to say, ‘This is what I want to do, design golf courses.’”

DeVries, 42, of Traverse City, has made a name for himself since he helped pull together Pilgrim’s Run in the late 1990s. With his deft touch, the Kingsley Club near Traverse City transformed into a classic almost overnight, offering naturalistic features of links golf balanced by the strategic element of the holes. Golfweek magazine ranks it as one of its Top 100 Modern Designs built after 1960.

The effort handed DeVries another gem. He beat out more than a dozen other architects for the Greywalls course at Marquette Golf & Country Club. Sensory overload comes in the form of 60-foot rock walls and elevated tees that stare off into the horizon.

The Mines in Grand Rapids, which opened in 2006, and Diamond Springs in Hamilton, built with friend Kris Shumaker and opened in 2003, are also generally well liked. DeVries said his design philosophy is dictated by the land.

“Every piece of property has a unique quality,” he said. “I try to maximize that quality. I want the land to dictate the design and not the opposite. It’s reactionary architecture.”

A perfect example would be the punchbowl greens DeVries crafted on the fourth, fifth and 18th holes at the Kingsley Club. “The drainage is there. People think we are nuts, but it works there,” he said.

DeVries loves his courses like Kingsley and The Mines to play firm and fast. “If you provide conditions for a ground game, if you don’t put a bunker in front of every hole, it leads to more creative golf and makes it more exciting and challenging on a daily basis for every golfer,” he said.



Greywalls