“Donald Ross once wrote, 'My work will tell my story,' and that’s how I hope to be remembered. I find the greatest satisfaction in believing that I have somehow contributed in making the game I love a more exciting one to play.” - Pete Dye

11 of the top 60 Florida golf courses were designed by P.B. Dye, Perry Dye, Pete Dye & Alice Dye

Part 1 - The Florida Golf Architecture of The First Family of Golf, P.B., Perry, Pete & Alice Dye

As voted in Florida Golf Magazine’s Readers’ Choice Survey from Jan. 1, 2011 to Dec. 31, 2011, 18.3% of the top 60 Florida Golf Courses were designed by members of the Dye family, P.B. Dye, Perry Dye, Pete Dye & Alice Dye. See all 11 courses listed here. Photos provided by Ken E. May & Rolling Greens Photography

by Joe Stine, Editor - Florida Golf Magazine

TPC at Sawgrass - Stadium Course
Ponte Vedra Beach, Pete & Alice Dye, 1981

At TPC Sawgrass, it’s the Island Green that gets most of the attention. But the golf course as a whole is tough. Posting a respectable score requires a player to combine good shots with good decisions. The requirement of strategy execution, and patience are what makes this design, like so many Pete Dye designs, exceptional.

It should be noted that Alice Dye, co-architect of so many of her husband’s legendary creations, was the impetus behind his single most notorious construction. The island green 17th was originally planned as a simple par-3 with a small adjacent lake. But the fine quality of the sand next to the green site kept the crew digging, using the fill on other fairways.

Pete Dye’s Valley Course at TPC Sawgrass that he designed in 1987 with protegés Jerry Pate & Bobby

TPC at Sawgrass - Valley Course, Ponte Vedra Bch
Pete Dye, Jerry Pate & Bobby Weed - 1987
Weed is an outstanding test of the game. Though the Valley is considered among Florida’s top 20 layouts, which is no faint praise in a state with over 1200 golf courses, it still can't help but pale in the shadow of the iconic Stadium Course.

The Valley Course at TPC at Sawgrass is an extremely solid layout. It's full of testing tee shots, beautifully framed fairways, and diverse pin placements. It's a super quality course, and if it existed as a stand-alone facility elsewhere in the state, or in Alabama or Georgia, people would kill to play it.

Amelia Island Plantation - Oak Marsh
Amelia Island    Pete Dye    1973

Eight years before the Stadium Course was built, and some 50 miles north, Dye produced a fine members’ course at Amelia Island Plantation. Now almost 40 years later, Dye’s original 18 holes at Amelia Island Plantation, now known as Oak Marsh Golf Course, still exist and offer a staunch but enjoyable challenge to members and resort guests.

At Oak Marsh, the waving marsh grasses along the western edge of the property are beautiful. The closing holes by the marshland are tough, and the last three holes, with their long, low-country vistas and scoring difficulty, are both gorgeous and dangerous concurrently. It is a stellar conclusion to a real sleeper of a golf course.

PGA Golf Club at the Reserve - Dye Course
Port St. Lucie    Pete Dye    1970

The Dye Course was the final piece of the puzzle at the PGA Club, a classy, well run, and extremely popular 54 hole resort facility in Port St. Lucie, Florida. The Dye Course is unusual by Florida standards - almost bereft of water, linksy, open, windswept, and thought-provoking. It features wide fairways pocked with heart-sinking pot bunkers and large greens with severe pitch and roll.

On this pristine Audubon International Certified Signature Sanctuary Course, mid-fairway markers provide a sense of direction in an otherwise spare landscape. The scorecard says Port St. Lucie, but it often feels like Portmarnock, outside of Dublin, with the snare-drum fairways, scatter-shot pot bunkers, and out-of-nowhere mounding covered with pampas grasses.

Walkabout Golf & Country Club
Mims    Perry Dye & Jan Stephenson    2002

Walkabout Golf and Country Club will satisfy a golfer's palate of any magnitude. Rich, lush, rolling fairways weave throughout undulating landscape, surrounded by serene lakes, and Florida's indigenous flora, fauna and wildlife. Walkabouts greens are sometimes wildly undulating, but always quick as
lightning, and well guarded by strategically placed bunkers and collection areas. The 18-hole, par 72 course plays 7,115 yards off the Champion tees with a course rating of 74.3 and a slope of 143. With five sets of tees, low scores are achievable, especially from the much shorter White tees where the course plays just 5,587 yards with a rating of 66.9, though still maintaining its par of 72.

Not even 6,900 yards from the tips, but with a 145 slope, and with 6,400-yard middle markers sloped at a staunch 138. There is a surfeit of water and encroaching wetlands on virtually every turn. At West Bay, birdies will be rare, but eagles (of the bald variety), wild boar, bobcats, herons, snowy egrets, and alligators are all present, affording plenty of distractions if the golf becomes frustrating.

Not only is the golf course an Audubon International Signature Sanctuary, but taking it one step further the Clinic for the Rehabilitation Of Wildlife (acronym – C.R.O.W.) has released hundred of wild animals on site, figuring they'll thrive in the protected environment encompassing West Bay Golf Club.

This wonderfully spacious golf course west of Jupiter, represents a softer, more user-friendly side than one normally associates with Pete Dye. “We aimed at making a different kind of course here,” the designer says. “I tried to give the course a clean, well-defined look. South Florida is dead flat, so the golfer needs some help to see the shape of every hole from the tee.”

Joe Webster, the visionary behind the project chose to honor his longtime friend and business associate, a man whose skills he has admired for decades, and named the course “The Dye Preserve.” Alice, witty provocateur, was comically aghast. “You’ll never sell any memberships,” she cautioned, half-kidding. “Don’t you know how many people curse my husband’s courses?”

P.B. Dye’s attraction to the original job isn’t hard to understand. “First of all,” said P.B. “it’s in the heart of Miami, which is unusual enough. Even in the late 1980s, the property we built on was really valuable, well over a million dollars an acre.”

Though the architect had previously been instrumental in helping his father build some of his most
celebrated courses on vast tracts of land, this was a different situation entirely. “It was a real challenge to fit nine holes and a driving range in just forty acres,” says P.B. Dye. “And, it was also great fun to use all the designing tricks I know that are usually spread across 18 holes, and fit them into nine.”

“Fisher Island is a unique location, there’s nothing really like it. A place like that deserves a golf course that’s equally special.”

Pete Dye said in regard to Old Marsh Golf Club, “My first glance at the proposed site made me wonder whether a roaring lion might appear from deep within the high grass, since the marshland’s rich vegetation and abundant wildlife reminded me of Africa.”

There are no lions to be found, but exotic birds – forty species in all – call Old Marsh home. Anhinga, ibis, sand hill cranes, blue heron, the shrimp-spearing roseate spoonbill, woodstork, and dozens of others make Old Marsh not only a friend to the Audubon Society, but an ornithologist’s reverie. Golfers will be shaken from their reverie quickly, though, as one forced carry after another lies in wait.

It is fair to call Delray Dunes the Dye Equivalent of Donald Ross’s Pinehurst #2, the magnum opus with which the legendary Scot never grew tired of tinkering? For though Pete Dye might never reveal which of his many courses is the closest to his heart, it is an absolute fact that Delray Dunes is closest to his home in nearby Gulfstream, Florida and that’s got to count for something.

“Both Alice and I have a special feeling for Delray Dunes, the first course I ever designed in Florida,” says Pete. “I’m always interested in what’s going on over there. I guess that’s why I’m always stopping by, offering suggestions, and making improvements. I want the course to be the best it can be, and it’s a labor of love for me to continue refining it.”

The River Ridge Course at Harbour Ridge Yacht & Country Club isn’t even 6,700 yards from the tips, but the slope rating is a sky-high 148. The blue markers tip the scales at a seemingly anemic 6,200-and-change, but are sloped at an ultra-formidable 142. The white tees are
pegged at a distance normally associated with senior tees – less than 5,600 yards, yet with a 129 slope. And bear in mind it’s a regulation par-72 course.

The river views are limited to the par four 420 yard 3rd Hole. While the panoramic river view is fleeting, environmentally protected wetlands encroaching on the fairways are an enduring fact on the River Ridge Course, so bring extra golf balls.