

# Perfectly Suited

An all-star team imagines a well-tailored home for a football great.

WRITTEN BY LISA BINGHAM DEWART | PHOTOGRAPHY BY LAURA MOSS







Reclaimed beams define the ceilings in this Paradise Valley home's family room and adjoining kitchen. The design team selected custom-upholstered seating by Anthony Lawrence-Belfair with coverings ranging from a rich Elizabeth Dow midnight-blue suede to a powder blue Colefax & Fowler cotton-linen blend on the sofas.

O

n any given Sunday over the past 17 NFL seasons, fans who tuned in to watch the Arizona Cardinals play have witnessed the matchless brilliance of wide receiver Larry Fitzgerald at work.

Watch him speak to the media after a game and you'll see that his sartorial game is equally strong. The three-piece suits he favors are impeccably tailored, made of luxurious fabrics and fit his athlete's frame to a T.

It should come as no surprise, then, that the Paradise Valley home he commissioned would be similarly bespoke and outfitted to his personality. "I was blown away by him," says Sara Doto, who led the search for properties and served as his designer. "Larry is gentle and quiet, with a dry sense of humor and a passion for excellence." As the pair looked at houses, Doto parsed his style. "I remarked, 'When I see you before and after a game, you're wearing a suit and tie,'" she says. "He responded, 'That's what I love,' and I said, 'That's what your house should be—a well-tailored suit.'"

Doto introduced Fitzgerald to architects Mark Candelaria and Meredith Thomson as well as kitchen designer Christopher Peacock, who all quickly picked up on their client's passion for fine details. "The directive was always that everything needed to feel right," says Thomson. "There was an emphasis on great finishes, good proportions, privacy and capturing the view." Adds Fitzgerald, "I wanted clean lines and timeless elegance—more European in design. Those houses have been in situ for centuries and don't look dated."

With that in mind, the architects took the house in a French-inspired direction, in part by cladding the structure in limestone quarried from France after samples from Texas didn't make the grade. "We had stonemasons on-site to cut the slabs coached by a mason we flew in from France," notes general contractor John Schultz. Furthering the Gallic vibe are bullseye windows at the entry and tall windows punctuating most of the façade, allowing light to flood the home. Candelaria also

notes, "We positioned the house so you drive down a long road and feel like you're transported to the French countryside." The task of making sense of that backward approach fell partly to landscape architect Jeff Berghoff. "The trick was to allow the garden spaces to unfold and disorient the viewers from knowing they were entering through the backyard until they arrive at the formal cobblestone auto court," he explains. "We created a winding, pea-gravel driveway and formal walls that embraced the cobblestone courtyard to let you know you have arrived."

Inside, the architects designed the home on an axis with a long hallway connecting the pavilion-like main suite with the public spaces and kitchen—designed by Peacock, who also turned his attention to the main bathroom and Fitzgerald's closet. Peacock tweaked the kitchen's layout, putting the range on a wall opposite the sink so that multiple people could easily move about without crowding. To enliven things, he opted for a mix of materials. "When we discovered the beams would be oak, the natural progression would be oak cabinet elements to connect everything," he explains. "The goal was to warm it up."

With the structure in place, Doto, along with her associate Sue Lord-Peters, took on the interiors, choosing the finishes and furnishings right down to the luxurious linens on his bed. Doto went custom for most of the pieces, opting for simple forms along with a palette that leans neutral with the occasional splash of blue. "Comfortable furniture," says Fitzgerald, "was a must." Doto also worked with her client to build an art collection. "We started collecting pieces before a shovel went in the ground," she recalls, and their efforts resulted in a collection that includes works by Larry Poons and a Tyler Shields photo of a dancer's feet. "Larry said it was what his body felt like with his uniform on—that he did a lot of dancing on the field," she notes.

The home took more than four years to complete, and the team reveled in the luxury of time. "There wasn't a rush," says Thomson. "We could think everything through in really great detail." The result fits as perfectly as one of Fitzgerald's suits. ■





**Above:** Steel doors by Ventura, California-based Riviera Bronze yield a conservatory effect in the dining room. The custom table and chairs in a Holland & Sherry fabric, centered beneath a Porta Romana chandelier, allow for sophisticated dining while taking in views of the grounds by landscape architect Jeff Berghoff.

**Opposite:** Designer Christopher Peacock worked closely with the team to create a functional and stylish kitchen. Lanterns by Remains Lighting cast a glow on the Calacatta Gold countertops from Everest Marble in Norwalk, Connecticut.



A carpet by Azadi Fine Rugs and an abstract painting sourced through Isabella Garrucho Fine Art in Greenwich, Connecticut, inject a contemporary note in the living room while still harmonizing with the more traditional lines of the architecture by Mark Candelaria and Meredith Thomson. On the sofa and armchairs is a crisp Larsen solid.







**Above:** Generously scaled outdoor spaces, such as a covered outdoor living room appointed with RH seating and a hanging Remains Lighting lantern, are perfect spots from which to take in the expansive, estate-inspired property.

**Opposite:** RH chairs ring a custom table of reclaimed oak on the outdoor dining terrace. The rough-hewn French limestone flooring also appears throughout the interiors, making for a cohesive feel.







**Above:** Peacock also brought his talents to the main bath, paying special attention to the indoor-outdoor connections. He conceived quarter-sawn oak cabinetry that contrasts with the Blue de Savoie stone chosen for the vanity top and flooring. The fittings are by THG.

**Opposite:** The main suite's secluded position in one wing of the house ensures a sense of quiet retreat, which is reinforced by Benjamin Moore's Horizon on the walls and a plush silk-and-wool Holland & Sherry carpet. Italian linens from Lynns in Greenwich, Connecticut, dress the bed.



Paris Ceramics supplied the fireplaces both inside and outside the home, including one for the pavilion overlooking the pool. An array of RH seating makes the location perfect for evening entertaining.

