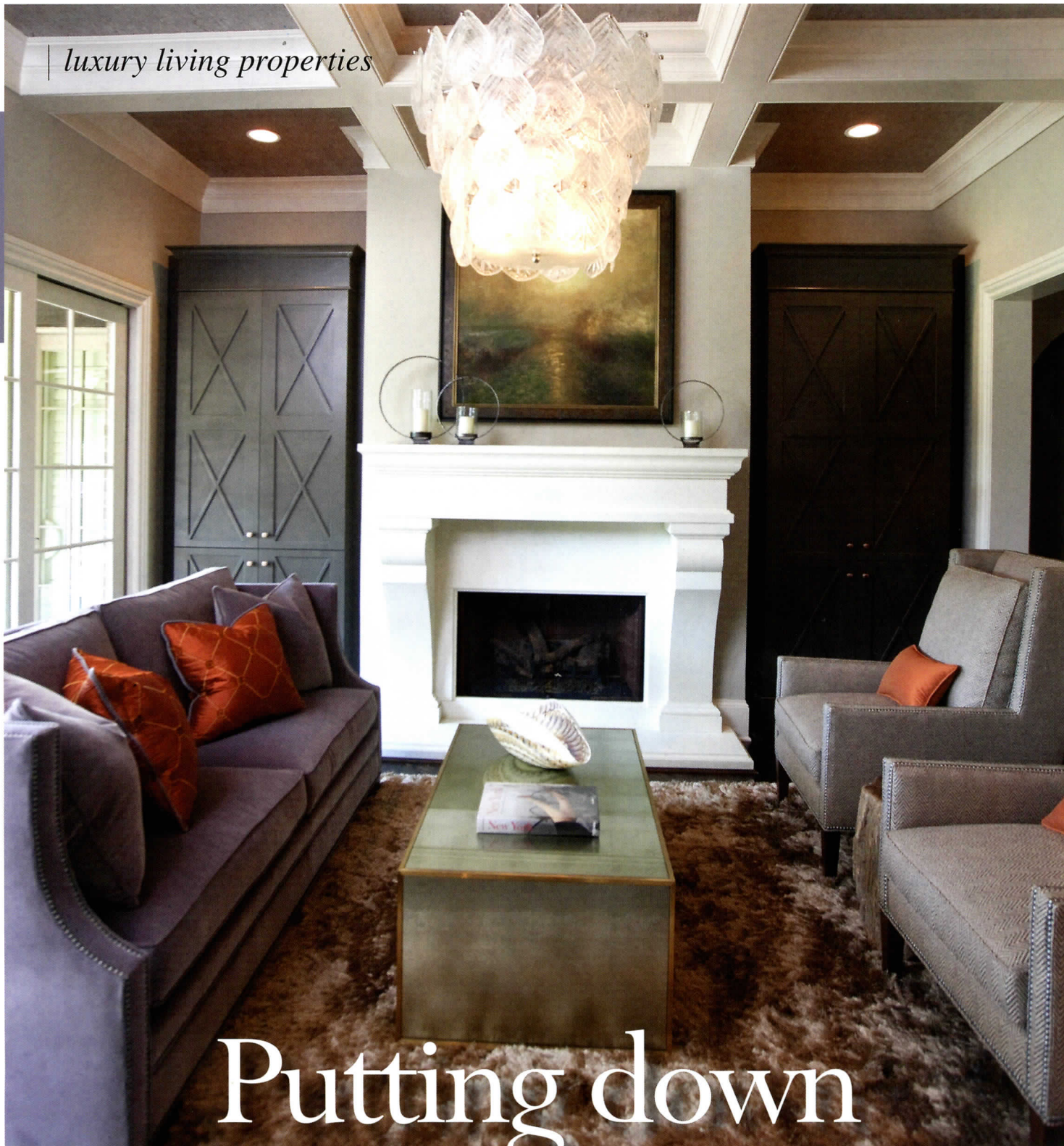


luxury living properties



Putting down Carolina roots

PANTHERS TIGHT END GREG OLSEN AND HIS FAMILY SETTLE
INTO THEIR NEW HOME WITH A MAJOR RENOVATION

BY EMILY HEDRICK | PHOTOS BY JOHN W. ADKISSON



Greg and Kara Olsen with their son, Tate, in the newly renovated kitchen of their home.

Let it not be said the Olsen family does anything halfway. And they'll likely look back on 2012 as a milestone year.

In May, Greg and Kara Olsen bought a 6,500-square-foot house in The Club at Longview, a golf and country club community in Weddington. Having moved to Charlotte a year ago when Greg was traded from the Chicago Bears to the Carolina Panthers, they had been living with their 1-year-old son, Tate, in a rental home in Ballantyne. With Greg's NFL career on solid ground, now seemed a good time to put down Carolina roots.

In the meantime, they also discovered that Kara was pregnant with twins, due in October. So the need to establish a permanent, comfortable nest became a bit more urgent.

They loved certain elements of the luxurious new house from the start. Kara, who worked in real estate in Miami and Chicago, appreciated the "bones" of the house. They both liked the family-friendly floor plan, the Old World-style of the surrounding properties and SouthPark-area amenities. Greg, who plays golf when he's not on the football field, liked having a golf course in his backyard.

The next step was to put their own stamp on the new house. "We found the house

and thought it was great. But we wanted a custom house without building from scratch," Greg explains.

To bring their vision for their dream house to life, the Olsens hired custom builders Peter and Louise Leeke of Kingswood Homes to take care of construction and design. Toward the end of the process, the Leeques brought in designer Layton Campbell of J. Layton Interiors to supply furniture and drapery. Louise Leeke made structural changes to the first floor of the two-story house as well as giving the second floor a cosmetic makeover.

The five-bedroom house, built in 2005-6, has generously proportioned rooms, including a home theater, playroom, nursery and space for a nanny. "It was dated," says Peter Leeke of the property. "We needed to enhance the level of sophistication and give it some more age-appropriate details" for the twenty-something Olsens, who love to entertain and often have family visiting from out of town.

Scale was a factor throughout the decision-making process. Campbell points out that Greg, at 6 feet 5 inches and 255 pounds, "couldn't put up with a lot of flimsy furniture, so there were some physical con-

straints where he was concerned. And with three active little ones soon to be bouncing around the place, we needed to keep their needs in mind as well."

From a carpentry standpoint, the remodel by Kingswood concentrated on four main projects: redesigning the master bathroom; rebuilding and refinishing all the wooden surfaces, including floors, ceilings and cabinets; opening up the dining area with a wider entry and reconfiguring the butler's

pantry to wine storage; and reconstructing architectural elements throughout the ground level to bring a "wow factor" to areas like the fireplaces and kitchen.

All the light fixtures on the ground level were also replaced to match the contemporary style, color and scale of the new furnishings.

The master bathroom got perhaps the biggest facelift. Stripping the room down to the studs, the Kingswood crew enclosed what was a powder room, opening up and bringing more symmetry to the entire space, enabling the Olsens to have a steam room as well as a shower and free-standing, 6-foot tub. Other strategic rearrangement of the space earned them some additional storage, including new, taller-than-average matching vanities (Kara herself is 5 feet 9 inches) and built-in shelves with sliding mirror doors to



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lighten up the room. Dark, ceramic tiles were replaced by white marble tile floors and a wall of contemporary taupe glass.

In the gathering room beyond the foyer, a new ceiling with silver metallic wallpaper inlaid in the coffers pattern now complements the new espresso-stained flooring. A custom-made Mirano chandelier with glass leaves added the finishing touch.

The heart of the house, the kitchen, flows into the keeping room at one end and the gathering room at the other. Dramatic fireplaces anchor both spaces. The Olsens retained the original copper farmhouse sinks, stainless steel appliances and granite countertops, but a new, larger island was built to improve efficiency and storage. Kingswood acid-washed the countertops to achieve a leathered look, replacing the original high-gloss shine not only with a textured surface but also changing the deep gold color to a coppery tone at a fraction of the cost of replacing them. The cabinets were given a fresh, sophisticated finish, the beverage center got new cabinets with glass doors and backsplash, and the range received a precast hood and backsplash of stone and mosaic tile. The result would not





The master bathroom was transformed with a steam room, free-standing tub and new vanities.

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Because nearly all of the spacious living areas on the first floor are viewable from one to another, it was important that the color scheme, furnishings and design details work together. "I felt it was important to recreate the entire feel of the house to suit (the couple's) personalities," says Louise Leeke. "By introducing a cool palette of taupes and grays and adding clean lines to the architectural details, the style of the house changed from traditional to an elegant contemporary style. Rich, dark, low-sheen hardwood floors and crisp honed white marble made the house feel like new construction – which was exactly what the Olsens were looking for."

And how did Team Olsen work together? "It has been really smooth and easy," says Kara. Peter Leeke adds that, unlike many husbands, Greg was an active participant from the start. "Oftentimes, the husband will tell me, 'Give the wife whatever she wants.' But Greg and Kara were both very involved in the selections all along."

"I wanted his opinion," Kara says.

"It's my home, too," Greg chimes in. "It's our home." 



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