

GOLF COURSE ARCHITECTURE

*The global journal of
golf design and development*

ISSUE **56** APRIL 2019



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ADAM LAWRENCE

As I write, in late March, the public inquiry into the proposed Coore & Crenshaw course at Coul Links, north of Dornoch in the Highlands of Scotland, has just concluded. The officials in charge of the inquiry will now go away and write their report, which will then – probably in the summer – go to the Scottish government, who will take the final decision on whether or not the course can go ahead.

It has been quite a ride. Given the strong local support for the project, and the unanimous vote in its favour by the local council (the responsible planning body, let us not forget), they could legitimately hope to be in construction by now, rather than waiting for a politician at Holyrood to give them the final yay or nay.

It was probably inevitable that a development of this kind, on a site of this nature, should attract national attention and be called in by the Scottish government. That, we can accept. What is harder to cope with, especially for those of us who know the people involved and how serious they are about doing a good job, is the lingering sense that Coul would not have had such a fight had it not been for the development of the Trump International course north of Aberdeen ten years ago.

Unlike Coul, Trump International was rejected by the local council, then called in and rammed through by the Scottish government. I am not qualified to judge whether, in planning terms, this was a wise decision or not, but post-facto evidence shows clearly that the mobile dune, the centrepiece of the environmental objections to Trump International, has indeed been destroyed.

I found it telling that GEO Foundation, hardly an example of a golf-hating body, was firmly against in the Aberdeen instance. GEO has not expressed an opinion on Coul. Someone who certainly has, however, is Dr Tom Dargie, leader of the Not Coul opposition group, who was a paid consultant on the Trump International project, though it should be said the developers rejected his advice. It is not surprising that, after this experience, Dr Dargie should have a bad case of buyer's remorse. But buyer's remorse is not a good basis on which to determine planning policy.

Adam

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ISSN: 1745-3585. Printed in Great Britain
by Buxton Press.

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in Los Cabos, Mexico

*Photographed by:
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MAIL BOX

Dear Editor

I was just reading your piece [issue 55, page 40] that included Tom Doak's Sedge Valley course. I first met Tom when he was the architecture writer for *Golf* magazine. I was a new PR guy from northern Michigan.

I called Tom to visit. That was the start of our 32-year friendship. He was going to teach me more than I ever learned in university.

A year later, he got his first commission, High Pointe, just four miles up the road. We spent a ton of time together. A few months into construction, I already was hooked on architecture, not that I understood it, but he sure liked my interest.

He lived in a crappy farm house, right on property. Topo maps and his slide projector. We'd stay up late and he would pull out slides, one at a time and project them on a blank wall. The links courses of Scotland and Ireland, the great sandbelt courses of Australia and his fascination with the heathland courses of Great Britain. Again, I was intrigued with all the complexities of architecture. Plus, I'm a pure numbers guy and I was taking in the costs of construction, irrigation and even then, Tom was taking into account the cost to maintain the course. I never thought about it, but I learned quickly. That's where all the money went. Spend too much and your business had no chance.

All through construction, I just kept asking questions. The few things that stood out were the strategy for good players that most would never know and that golf was hard enough, architects paid no attention to fun. Over and over again, fun. That was

1986. Being a 22-plus index, with a 120mph-plus clubhead speed, that's something I understood. I lost a fortune in balls and Tom hated golfers losing one. So the fairways were wide for us, but always much narrower if you were trying to make birdie. Not physically, but mentally. You had to be in the correct part of the fairway, usually challenging a single bunker. And not a shallow one either.

About 15 years later, I had the idea for a book about architecture and Tom, written by a very well-known writer. When I mentioned it to Tom, in person, I got, one of his famous stares! I knew it was coming. He said, "If this ever gets

done, I have the name: Golf is Supposed to be Fun." He was dead serious. So my point is, along with doing brilliant routings, that are the main ingredient, to minimalistic golf design, fun has always been his goal. That's why Sedge Valley is so important, to him and golf.

Dave Richards
Bloomfield Hills, Michigan

We are delighted to receive letters from readers, and the best in each issue will be rewarded with a golf shirt. Send to 6 Friar Lane, Leicester, LE1 5RA, UK, or email us at letters@golfcoursearchitecture.net

GOPHER WATCH



A bit of a surprise to us, the last *Gopher Watch*. We had thought that sitting Sandy atop the famous Cape bunker at Royal North Devon, or Westward Ho!, would be a pretty easy one, and result in a flood of correct entries. Actually that wasn't the case; we got plenty of entries, but most of them were wrong. Prestwick, another very old course with some iconic timber supported bunkers, was a popular choice, I guess not unreasonably. But the prize goes to Sean Berry, of Connecticut, USA, who identified the fourth hole on the legendary West Country links, home to JH Taylor among others. Congratulations Sean, a golf shirt is on the way.

This month, another quite old and rather legendary English course. Maybe not one of the most famous holes on that course, but we think this is easy enough that no more help is required. Usual drill: first correct entry out of the hat wins one of our fabulous GCA golf shirts. Answers by email please, to gopher@golfcoursearchitecture.net.

Alison's Hirono starts to re-emerge



Work is advancing on Mackenzie & Ebert's restoration of Hugh Alison's famous Hirono layout in Japan

The UK-based golf architecture firm Mackenzie & Ebert is now well in progress with its work to restore Hugh Alison's original design intent at Hirono Golf Club in Hyogo, Japan.

Martin Ebert told GCA: "The opportunity to view the course revealed a wonderful layout with no weak holes at all. The topography could be described



Construction in progress on Hirono's par-three thirteenth

as ideal for golf, containing enough movement throughout without it producing a tough walk.

"Following two visits to work up proposals and discuss the project with the Restoration Committee, we were commissioned. The strong brief was to restore the great work which Alison left although, at this point, reference

should be made to the significant input of Seiichi Takahata, who found the site and was one of the founders, and Chozo Itoh, the first course superintendent."

Mackenzie & Ebert's work is being informed by a rich archive of materials. Along with Alison's plans and the club's photographs, Ebert and the team tracked down old aerial photography

of the course from the 1940s and 1960s. "These showed that the greens had become smaller, the fairways had become much narrower and the bunkers had lost their shape, character and roughness," said Ebert. "Only one hole had been significantly extended and, in fact, that had happened twice with new greens being pushed back on

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Photo: Mackenzie & Ebert



Mackenzie & Ebert's visualisation for the thirteenth (top), inspired by historic photos and Alison's sketches, from the club's comprehensive archives

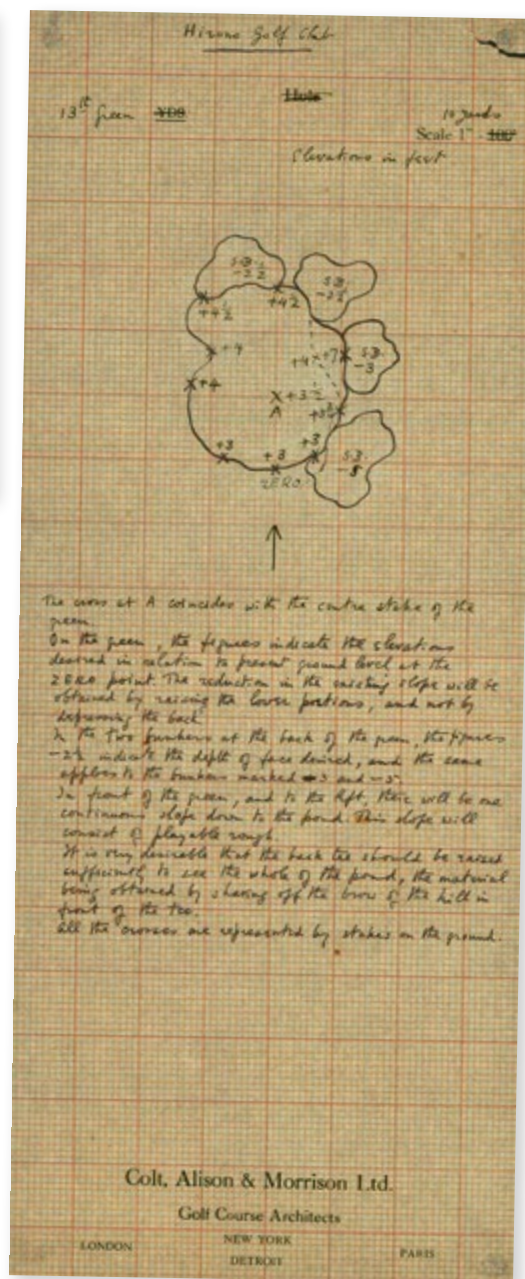
both occasions. That was the par-five twelfth and the second extension had led to the par-three thirteenth hole being played from a new tee at right angles to Alison's hole. The original playing line of the par three was something which the committee was very keen to restore."

The design team and club agreed that restoring the bunkering and rebuilding the greens were main points of focus. "Alison had drawn up green plans, but the greens had been rebuilt in the 1980s when they were converted to bentgrass," said Ebert. "It was not the easiest task to interpret Alison's plans, but he defined the general elevations of the greens and

the key features – often quite high mounds at the rear of the greens."

The architects and the club's committee members visited and played some Colt & Alison courses and others where the greens were good models for Hirono, including Swinley Forest, St George's Hill and Royal Portrush.

"We recommended that greens should be restored closer to their original sizes and to the shapes which Alison had drawn, although his drawings showed greens meeting with bunkers as was the style at the time," said Ebert. "Hence, we were constrained to some extent on this but the greens we have designed are much larger than those found on our initial visit.





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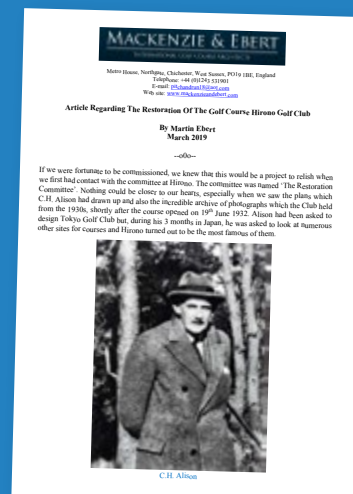
The seventh hole, above, as it was laid out by Alison; left, before renovation work began; and top, with the large hazard that Alison originally designed being recreated

“The same applied to the fairways. They had become almost ridiculously narrow over the years. We scaled Alison’s plans and overlaid them. They were enormously wide. The 1960s aerial photograph also showed much wider fairways although not as wide as Alison had drawn. Following consultation with the committee, we settled on significant widening of the fairways although there was concern that this would make the course too easy. We have countered that by adding fairway bunkers to tighten the landing areas for the better players. While this falls out of the ‘restoration’ concept, we feel that this is what Alison would have recommended if he had the opportunity to revisit the course today with a knowledge of how the game is now played.”

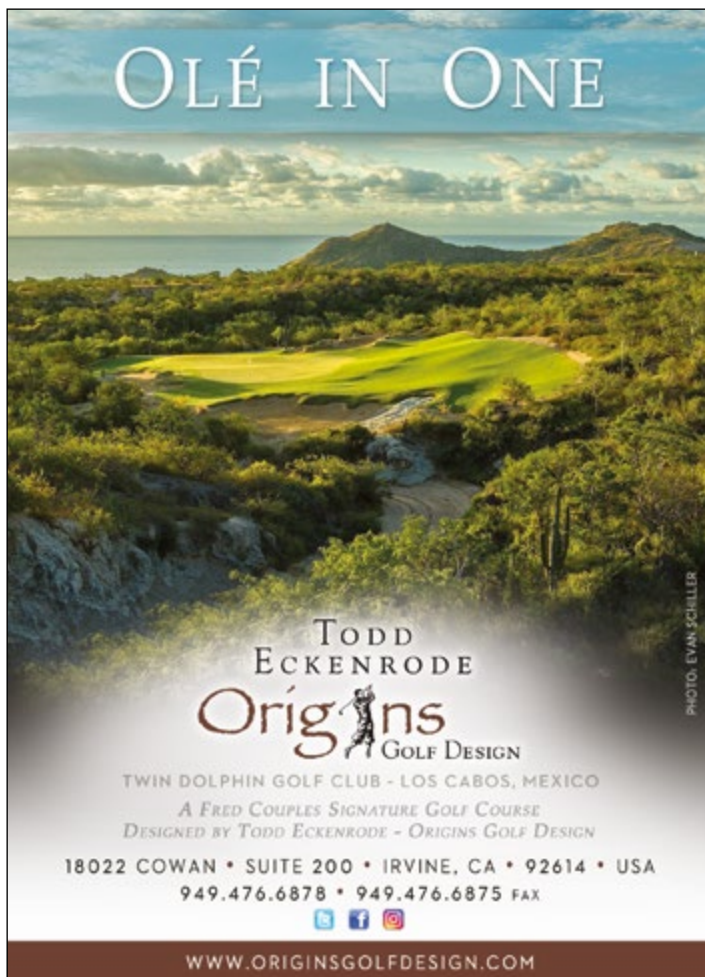
Careful consideration has been paid to tree clearance. “There is no doubt that we found too many when we made our initial visit and that significant clearance was required but the site Alison found did have a significant amount of trees and the original course was tree-lined to a large degree. Also, some of the trees which have grown or been planted have added to the beauty of the course,” said Ebert, adding that Japanese pine trees have been given more freedom to be admired.

Construction work, which was awarded to Japanese firm Takenaka, began in early January 2019, and the plan is for all greens to be seeded by mid-May with all other areas turfed. The reopening of the course is expected to be October.

READ MORE



Download a report on Hirono prepared by Martin Ebert for GCA at: www.golfcoursearchitecture.net/hirono



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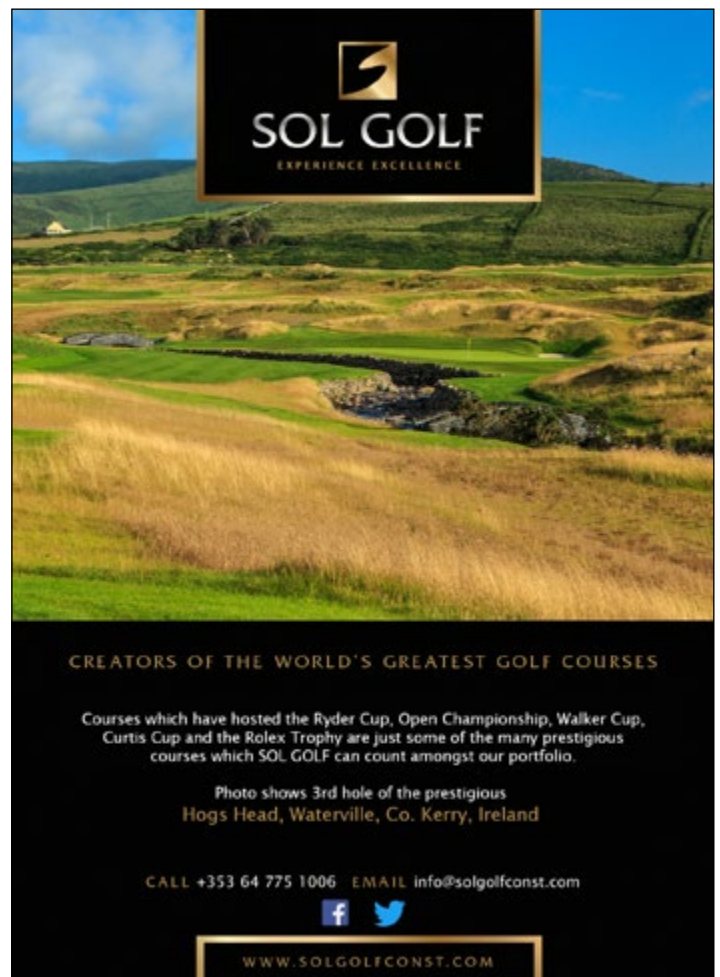
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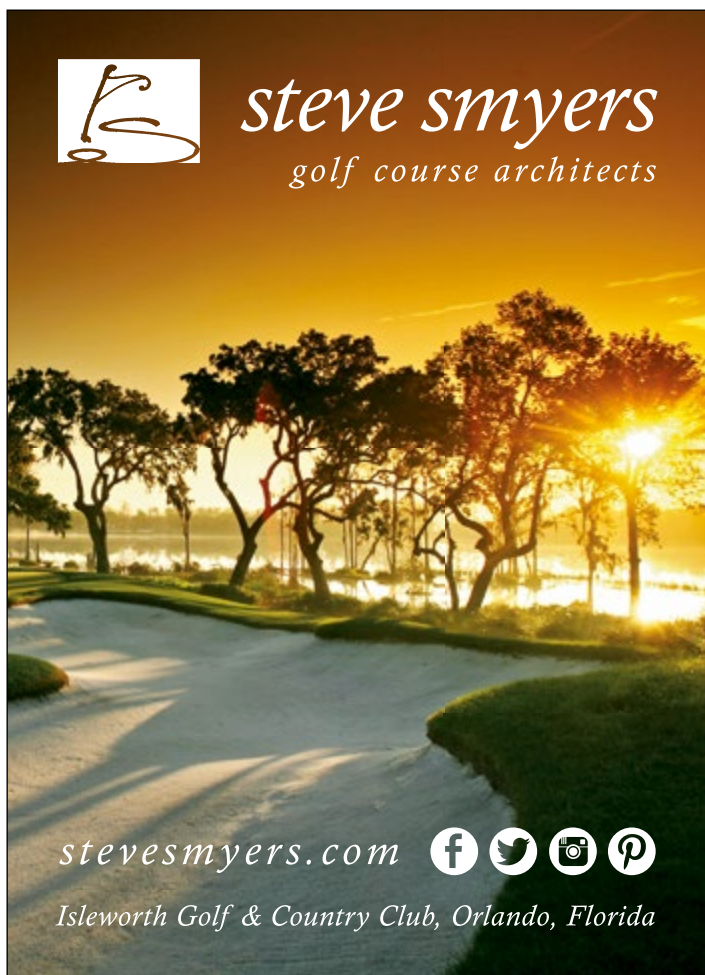
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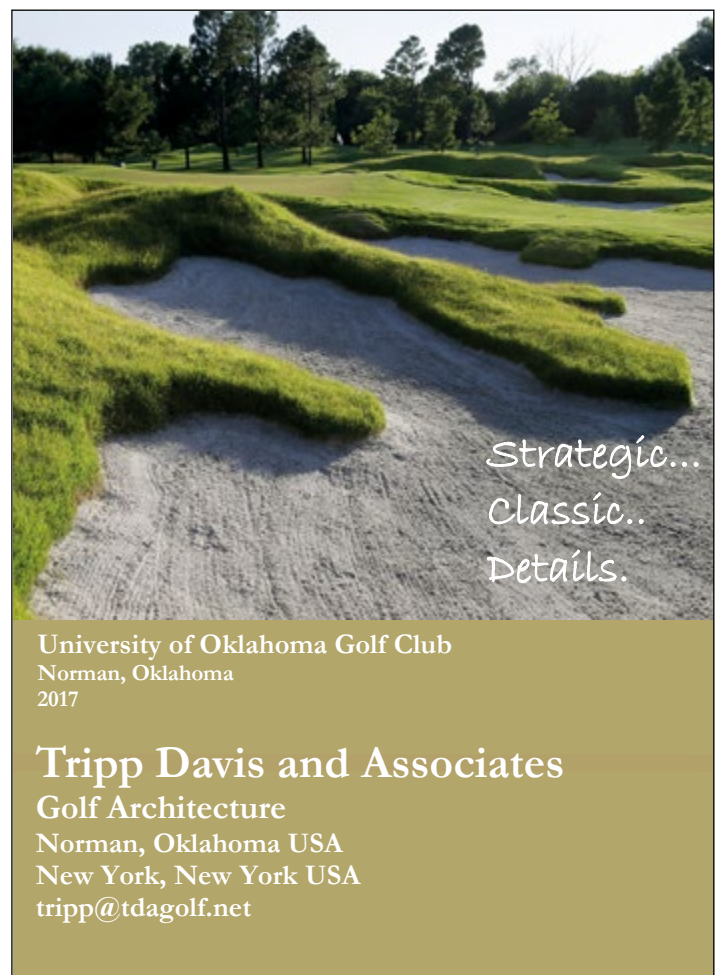
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Photo: Philip Spogård

Spogård sees Ålands among Europe's best

Philip Spogård of Spogård & VanderVaart says the Castle course at Ålands Golf Club, which he is currently renovating, could become one of Europe's best.

"To me it will be an iconic project and a top 25 course in Europe when fully completed," said Spogård. "I cannot name a single course in Europe which has as much going for it as this one has."

The club, located on Finland's Ålands islands, has two 18-hole courses – Slottsbanan and Kungsbanan (Castle and Kings), both originally designed by Jan Sederholm – as well as a six-hole Prinsessan (Princess) layout.

"The project is a complete redo of the Castle course, where only a majority of the fairways remain intact," said Spogård.



"It has a wonderful location right on the sea, with majestic old trees, rolling terrain, Viking graves, dramatic rocky outcrops and spectacular views of the neighbouring Kastelholm Castle, which dates back 700 years.

"The existing course did not optimise the close relation to the sea, with more or less no holes feeling closely connected with the shoreline. The new layout will push the golf holes right onto the shore, with several holes giving the golfer the chance to bite of as much of the sea as he or she dares."

The club's project team is led by Joakim Isaksson and head greenkeeper Johan Englund, with Nelson & Vecchio as the contractor.

All greens – including the practice area and aprons – are being renovated to USGA standards, and all bunkers will have edging from Durabunker. New tees have been added, and a new Rain Bird irrigation system has been installed.

"The design is trying to look authentic so that the course fits into its historic setting. Great attention is put into creating small settlements in the ground, so it looks 'shaped by nature'. I think it will look like a course that has been there for a century once opened."

Work is expected to be complete in summer 2019, and the course is scheduled to open in May 2020.

The new ninth and tenth holes at Ålands will play directly over the coastline

THE BIG PICTURE

The Hills opens ‘elastic’ par three course

The Hills Golf Club in Arrowtown, New Zealand, has opened The Farm, a new nine-hole par three course designed by golf consultant and writer Darius Oliver.

Oliver describes the course as “an elastic, ‘choose your own adventure’ style” layout, with a flexible design that allows golfers to choose from multiple tee locations, distances and angles of approach.

“I told Sir Michael Hill when we first met that I didn’t think a par three course would add much to the appeal of the club for the serious golfer – sure they might bring kids and beginners there for the odd game but would be unlikely to want to play it themselves regularly,” said Oliver.

“Then I walked the site and immediately changed my mind. What I didn’t expect to see were nine ready-made and incredible par threes sitting there already on the ground – but that was the case. The routing really only took a couple of hours to figure out, and once I’d walked the property, I called Sir Michael and the club’s general manager and superintendent Brendan Allen for a look, and they almost immediately bought into the concept.

“The site is really the star attraction – and in particular the views and the Arrow Irrigation water race, which runs through the property and is used numerous times in design,” said Oliver. “Five holes – the first, second, seventh, eighth and ninth – tee off either alongside or on top of the race and three – the first, seventh and eighth – play across the water. All nine holes are outstanding and unique in their own way. I love hitting all nine tee shots, and love hitting from at least two ‘areas’ on each of the holes. There are four great angles/shots into the second hole alone.”





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“The main goal of the redesign was to include more variety, strategy and challenge to the greens” said architect Thomas Himmel

Berlin Wannsee ready to reopen after greens redesign

The 18-hole Championship course at the 27-hole Golf- und Land-Club Berlin Wannsee – one of the oldest golf clubs in Germany – is expected to reopen this month.

“The project started out with the plan to rebuild the greens according to modern USGA construction with the intention to keep the design as it was before,” said Matthias Pötter, project lead for construction firm Josef Pötter Golf. “Through the planning stages, it was then agreed to change some of the green designs to optimise water movement and to bring a more modern game. At this stage it became clear that the project will be under enormous and extraordinary time pressure.”

Golf course architect Thomas Himmel

said: “They were pretty much round-shaped and mainly flat, not fitting to the course itself with its broad undulations and to the prestige and quality of the club. The main goal of the redesign was to include more variety, strategy and challenge to the greens – mainly by incorporating ‘sections’ that would create different pin positions with different grades of challenge.”

A bunker renovation, including the Better Billy Bunker system, had already been completed, so the greens work was on the putting surfaces only, and the first two-to-three yards of collar.

A turf nursery was established in October 2017 so that the greens could be turfed and ready for play as soon as possible after construction work began.

Pötter Golf’s site manager Darryl Spelman has overseen the movement of over 15,000 tonnes of materials on the site, and Mark Turner was responsible for shaping.

Construction work began in October 2018 and was completed in February 2019. In the space of two months, from October to December, Pötter Golf handled 95 per cent of the total project, including turfing.

“We are very happy and proud with the progress we have made in such short amount of time,” said Pötter. “Proper planning of logistics combined with a professional relationship between the workforce on site and the club were key factors to this achievement.”



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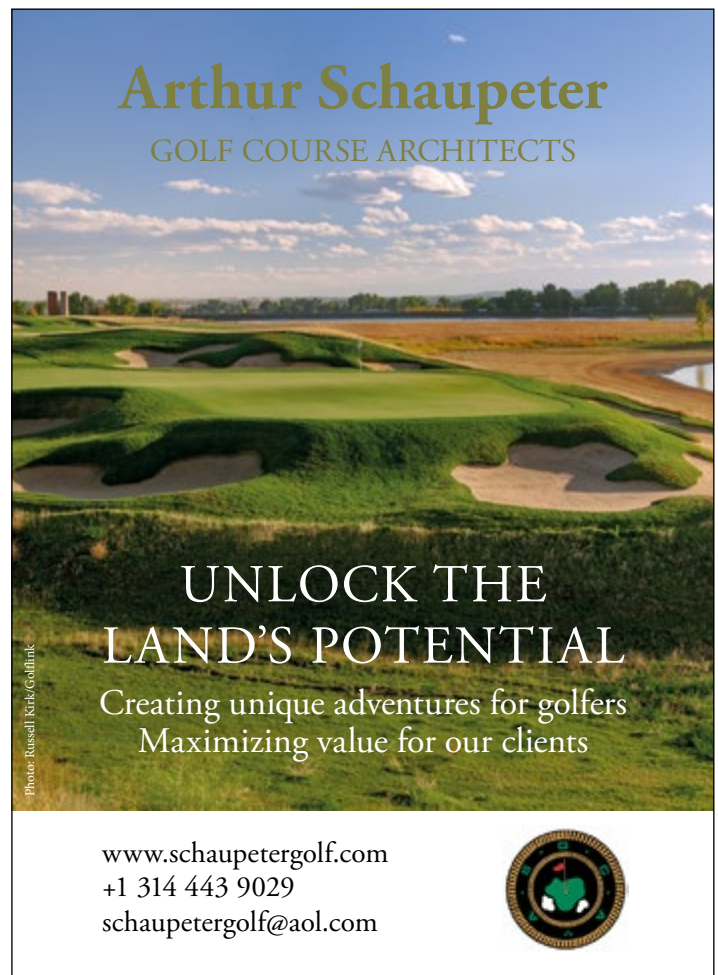
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Rees Jones returns to LedgeRock for renovation work

Rees Jones, Inc. is returning to its design at LedgeRock Golf Club in Mohnton, Pennsylvania, for targeted renovation work.

The firm is currently working on the downhill par-three tenth and the uphill par-four seventeenth – with plans to adjust other holes going forward.

“Every golf course needs to be re-evaluated from time to time,” said Rees Jones. “At seventeen, we are taking out the cross bunker to make the hole more playable for every calibre of player. On hole ten, we are building more tee locations to create more shot variety on a daily basis.”

Jones’s design associate Bryce Swanson will direct the renovation work. Swanson said tree clearing on the tenth got underway in 2018, with ground broken this spring.

There will be six new angles and elevations to play from at the tenth. “These new tee positions make sense agronomically – more sun, more air movement, spreading the wear and tear around more tees – but they will also create some really cool, new angles of attack,” said Swanson. “The club

deserves credit for taking the initiative here. They’ve demonstrated a real sophisticated vision for LedgeRock.

“What they did with that teaching facility, for example, was way ahead of its time – clubs just weren’t doing that sort of thing ten years ago. We relish the opportunity to complete that vision with the renovation of these two holes.”

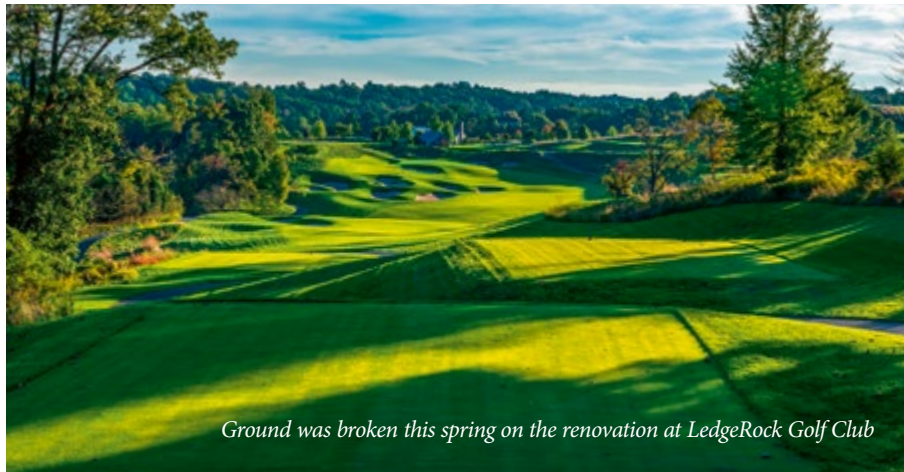
LedgeRock opened in 2006, on 212 acres of terrain featuring elevation changes and several brooks.

Head golf professional Zach Halvonik said: “Folks know it as a pure, golf-only club where Rees Jones did some of his

very best work – over dramatic terrain. When we finish these renovations, it’s going to be close to perfection.”

General manager Gerry Heller said: “It’s a very lively, social place but our members are here for their golf. They’re devoted to it.”

Renovations to the tenth are expected to be complete by Memorial Day weekend (25-26 May). The club’s course superintendent Alan FitzGerald will oversee the project using in-house construction crews. The plan for the seventeenth calls for construction is to be completed in late 2019.



Ground was broken this spring on the renovation at LedgeRock Golf Club

Photos: Larry Lambrecht

FROM THE ARCHIVE

Olympia Fields hires Andy Staples for master plan

Olympia Fields Country Club has selected Andy Staples to create a master plan of renovations for its South course, originally designed by Tom Bendelow in 1915.

Staples has recently completed a renovation of Meadowbrook Country Club – a 1916 design by Willie Park, Jr., who designed Olympia Fields' North course – and a master plan for University Club of Milwaukee, a 1921 Bendelow design.

In an interview with GCA, Staples said: "To me it seems like my proposal had all the pieces Olympia Fields was looking for, and the timing couldn't have been better. There wasn't another single person alive that had done more research so recently than I had on Park Jr., Bendelow and Watson [who worked at Olympia Fields from 1916 to 1919], and the club recognised that.

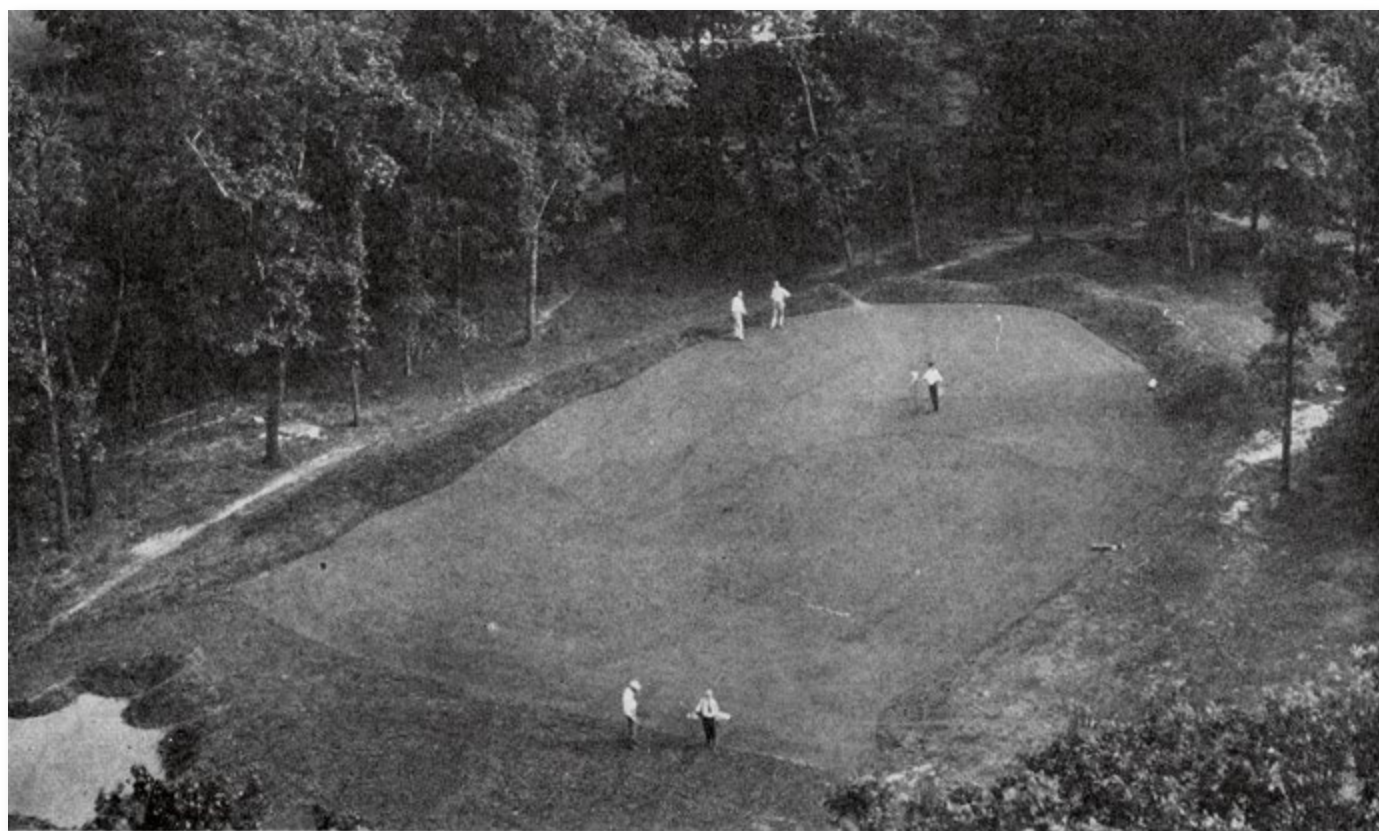
"Our focus will be on making the South course more playable during times of prolonged wet periods through increased drainage, addressing tree growth and some ongoing shade issues, improving bunkers, and looking for ways to make the course more enjoyable for members."

Since the last renovation of the South course, which focused on improving bunkers and adding length, the club has acquired photographs dating back to the 1920s. "We're going to compare the current course to those original course photographs to see where we can bring back the best parts of Bendelow's original design," said Staples. "Bendelow placed much of his attention on the approaches to the green, and how the slope and contour of the putting greens can give a hole its strategy, and we're hoping to reintroduce much of this philosophy."

Planning for work on the South course is now under way, with any construction likely to begin after the 2020 BMW Championship, which is played on the North course.

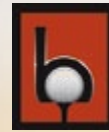
Read GCA's full interview with Andy Staples at www.golfcoursearchitecture.net.





FIRST GREEN OF No. 1 COURSE FROM THE WATER TOWER.

Archive materials from Olympia Fields, including: above, a photograph of the first green, as originally laid out by Tom Bendelow; top, a photograph overlooking the eighteenth green; and left, a 1938 aerial of the entire property



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Seeding begins at new public course in Paris

Seeding work is under way at a new public golf course adjacent to Charles de Gaulle Airport in Paris, France.

The €20 million Golf International de Roissy-en-France project involves the construction of an 18-hole course and a six-hole short course, both designed by Michel Niedbala of Golf Optimum, a clubhouse and a maintenance facility.

Work on the 18-hole course began in June 2018. “At this stage of construction, eleven holes and the driving range have been built,” said Niedbala. “Five of these holes and the driving range have been seeded, with the next three holes to be seeded before the end of April.

“We also have three holes in rough/fine shaping, and four others that are in the general earthmoving process,” said Niedbala. “The project is really interesting as it is the biggest public investment in golf in Europe.”

Of the 90 hectares of available land for the project, 21 hectares have been designated as sensitive archaeological areas. “Those areas are protected,” said Niedbala. “There will be no excavation of this

existing ground. For the building of the golf course contours, we are using at least one metre high of fill material to re-cover the areas, and then we’ll build over the golf course features.”

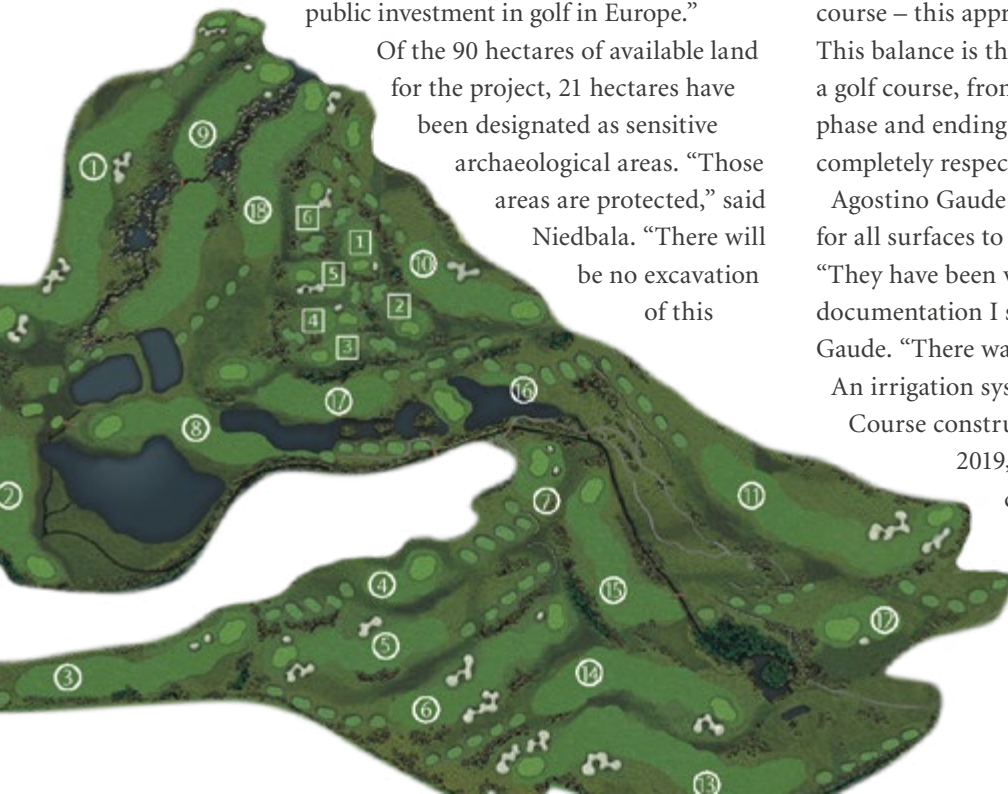
Niedbala said: “The insertion of the golf course on the site relies firstly on its proximity to the land, not only from the topographical point of view, but also by adding – more intimately – the layout and shapes into the hydro-geological characteristics, as well as in the numerous and different features of the landscape, where all the wealth of Mother Nature is nestled. The maintenance of the new course must remain constantly in the architect’s vision.

“The balance between the golf course and the protection of nature is the target to reach when you are designing a golf course – this approach will definitely create its originality. This balance is the keystone in the process of developing a golf course, from its concept, through its construction phase and ending up with its maintenance, which should be completely respectful of the environment.”

Agostino Gaude of Tee-2-Green proposed grass solutions for all surfaces to Niedbala and the project agronomists. “They have been very open to consider the data and the documentation I supplied in support of my proposal,” said Gaude. “There was a total agreement on the way to proceed.” An irrigation system from Toro has been installed.

Course construction is expected to finish by October 2019, and the whole project is scheduled to be completed by June 2020.

“The balance between the golf course and the protection of nature is the target,” says architect Michel Niedbala



Harradine gets green light for Tunis project

Harradine Golf has received approval for construction of a nine-hole course in Tunis, the capital city of Tunisia.

The course, part of the Tunis Sports City development, has been in planning for over 10 years.

“We are extremely happy to proceed with this project, which has been on

our drawing boards for such a long time and is finally coming to fruition,” said Peter Harradine.

One of the conditions in the new building permits was to increase the area for the golf course relative to real estate. Harradine said that the new design allocates the real estate in

such a manner that it will be largely unobtrusive and as safe as possible.

“The land is rather flat, but this golf course will be an enjoyable and interesting 3,170-yard par-35 with the provision of multiple tees, three artificial lakes and the preservation of many existing trees,” said Harradine.

Dye Designs advise The Shire

Dye Designs is providing recommendations and guidance to The Shire London in Barnet, England, for renovation work on its 18-hole Seve Ballesteros course.

Over the next few years, all greenside bunkers will be renovated with revetted walls using recycled artificial turf from EcoBunker and liner from Capillary Concrete to reduce the occurrence of washouts, soil contamination, plugged lies and other maintenance problems.

“So far, I have redesigned the greenside bunkers on holes eight, nine and thirteen and I am confident the new changes will impress members and guests alike,” said Cynthia Dye McGarey.

“We are delighted to be introducing EcoBunker technology to The Shire London. The maintenance will become a lot cheaper and a lot less time consuming, meaning more can be invested in other parts of the club.”

The Shire has also interseeded greens on both the Ballesteros and its nine-hole Academy course with bentgrass from Tee-2-Green.

The club’s owners The Bridgedown Group are also working with the Dye family on other golf interests in the UK capital, including the planned Dye London course.

Lester George begins renovation of Audubon Country Club

Golf course architect Lester George has begun the first phase of a renovation project for Audubon Country Club in Louisville, Kentucky.

The course was originally designed by Tom Bendelow in 1908. George's master plan seeks to improve and modernise the golf facilities and infrastructure. The first phase sees bunkers renovated.

"I fell in love with the property the first time I toured it, and I think the club leadership saw my passion for its potential," said George. "Prior improvements to the course diluted the character of the original Bendelow design."

"Our vision was to reinstate classic strategy using the unique terrain features and bunkering aesthetics to enhance the overall playability of the golf course. The development of a long-range plan for future improvements has given Audubon the opportunity to evaluate course strategy, practice facilities, turf varieties, aesthetics, drainage, and overall facility efficiency. We held focus groups to hear what the membership had to say about the facilities and amenities, and we worked that information into the comprehensive master plan for Audubon."

Director of golf Eric Gilliland said: "This is the first time we have done any significant work on the golf course since 2004-2005, and we were due to take a hard look at the course."

I met Lester at a PGA conference about practice facilities, and two people recommended I talk to him about improvements to Audubon because of his excellence in working with small spaces and his reputation for honouring the history of a property. The board brought him in to look at the range, and we ended up asking Lester to create a full master plan for the golf course. The entire restoration is a US\$1.7 million project, and the bunkers are just a quarter of that.

"Our membership had no idea how Lester could do so much with so little. With every week during this bunker phase of the project, the golf course changes. It's amazing how much of an effect this has on the aesthetics and playability of the course. It has become more difficult for the expert golfer while at the same time becoming more playable for beginners. I believe this project will have a positive effect on membership retention and growth."

The first phase of the renovation sees Lester George working on bunkers



COURSE BLUEPRINT

Construction of fourth course at Siam CC nears completion

Siam Country Club in Pattaya, Thailand, is in the final stages of construction on its fourth course, designed by Schmidt-Curley.

The club already has three layouts – Old, Plantation and Waterside. The Old course was designed by Ichisuke Izumi in 1971 and renovated by Schmidt-Curley in 2007 and hosts the LPGA Honda Classic. The Plantation course was designed by Schmidt-

Curley, and the Waterside course was designed by Brit Stenson of IMG. The new course, named Rolling Hills, is located in a valley at the foot of the three courses.

To collect water runoff from the massive watershed, a 25-acre lake was dug, averaging at 13 metres deep. “This generated a tremendous amount of cut that has been placed on the course, which was concentrated into one huge

landform creating a dramatic change in elevation on the final four holes,” said Brian Curley.

“Most courses move dirt to frame holes with mounds, but here we chose to put the dirt under the golf to achieve elevation change not normally seen in courses in Thailand.”

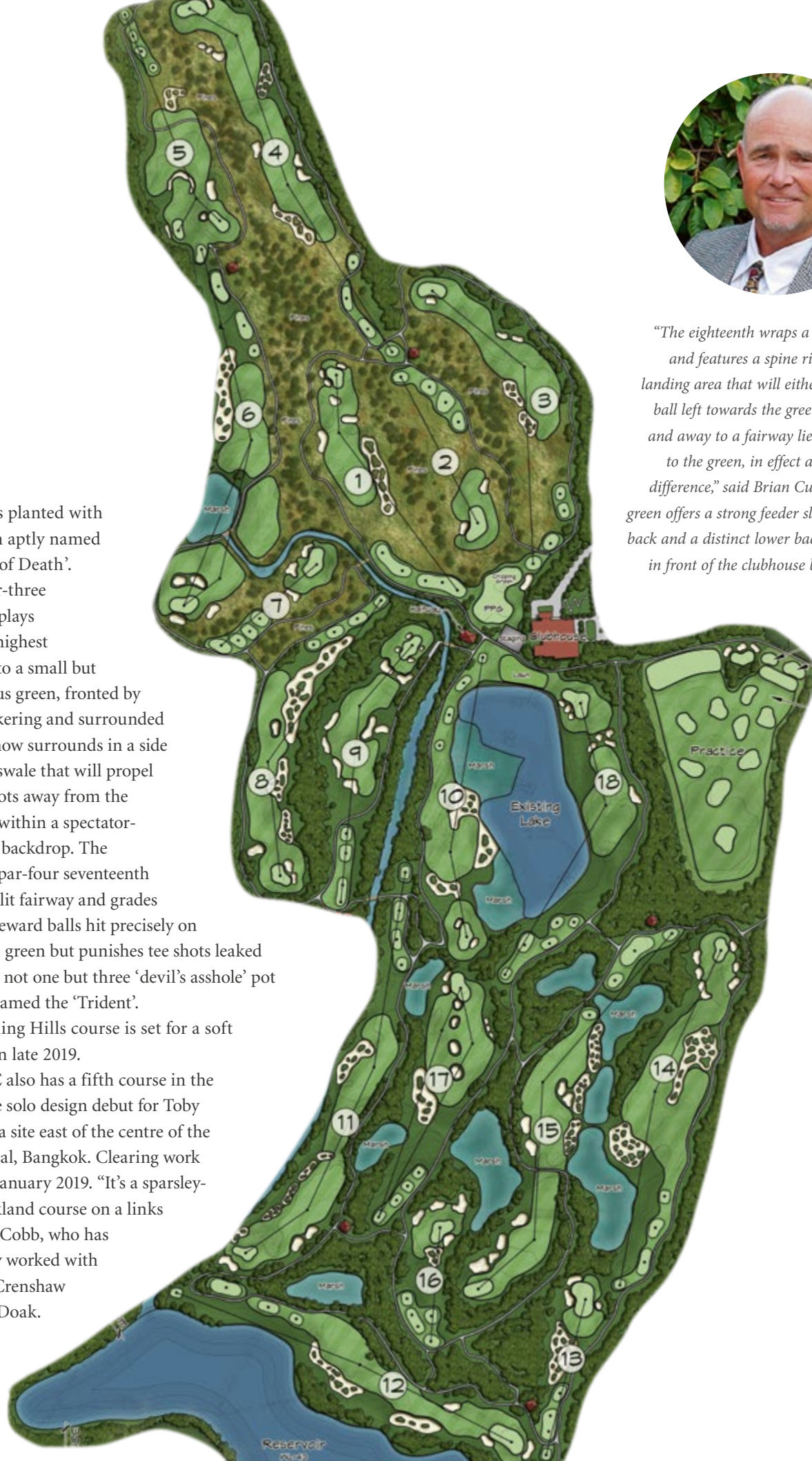
The earthmove allows for the creation of dramatic spectator viewing in many key areas of the course, with the club’s intention of hosting a LPGA event.

“The site has a natural sandy base in some areas and this material is being used to create large sandy expanses with islands of native tropical carpet grasses. The holes often offer angles of attack that reward aggressive play, many have an abundance of centreline hazards that create strategy and visual excitement.

“Greens vary greatly with kick slopes, punchbowls, both perched surfaces and receptive feeder slopes, fall-away slopes to slightly blinded lobes, etc,” continued Curley. “The core golf course meanders over a large parcel with ample room for play and to create forests of trees as found on the Old course.

“The final four holes will create tournament excitement, beginning with the double dogleg par-five fifteenth, which features a 20-foot-deep bunker complex short of the green that has two levels of railroad tie





"The eighteenth wraps a large lake and features a spine ridge in the landing area that will either feed the ball left towards the green or, right and away to a fairway lie but blind to the green, in effect a four-club difference," said Brian Curley. "The green offers a strong feeder slope at the back and a distinct lower back lobe set in front of the clubhouse backdrop."

bulkheads planted with vegetation aptly named the 'Wall of Death'.

"The par-three sixteenth plays from the highest elevation to a small but treacherous green, fronted by deep bunkering and surrounded by tight mow surrounds in a side and back swale that will propel missed shots away from the green, all within a spectator-mounded backdrop. The driveable par-four seventeenth offers a split fairway and grades that will reward balls hit precisely on line to the green but punishes tee shots leaked right with not one but three 'devil's asshole' pot bunkers named the 'Trident'.

The Rolling Hills course is set for a soft opening in late 2019.

Siam CC also has a fifth course in the works, the solo design debut for Toby Cobb, on a site east of the centre of the Thai capital, Bangkok. Clearing work began in January 2019. "It's a sparsely-treed parkland course on a links site," said Cobb, who has previously worked with Coore & Crenshaw and Tom Doak.



Erin Hills unveils new putting course

2017 US Open venue Erin Hills will open a new 18-hole putting course, designed by Fry/Straka, in August.

The course covers 62,000 square feet and has 12 feet of elevation change. “It’s unbelievably dramatic,” said Dana Fry. “You might have double-breaking putts that break 10 feet one way and five feet the other way. Over a hill and then up eight or nine feet. The tee might be up high and you’re putting down a steep slope.”

The course was built on the original location of the back tees of the first hole. “The forward two tees before the wetlands stayed,” said Fry. “The back three tees were eliminated. We filled that whole valley floor up and basically spread the dirt over a two-acre area, probably 100,000 square feet, and that’s where we built the putting course.

“We built some new tees to the left, sort of over by the practice putting

green. It changes the angle dramatically. It becomes a hard dogleg.”

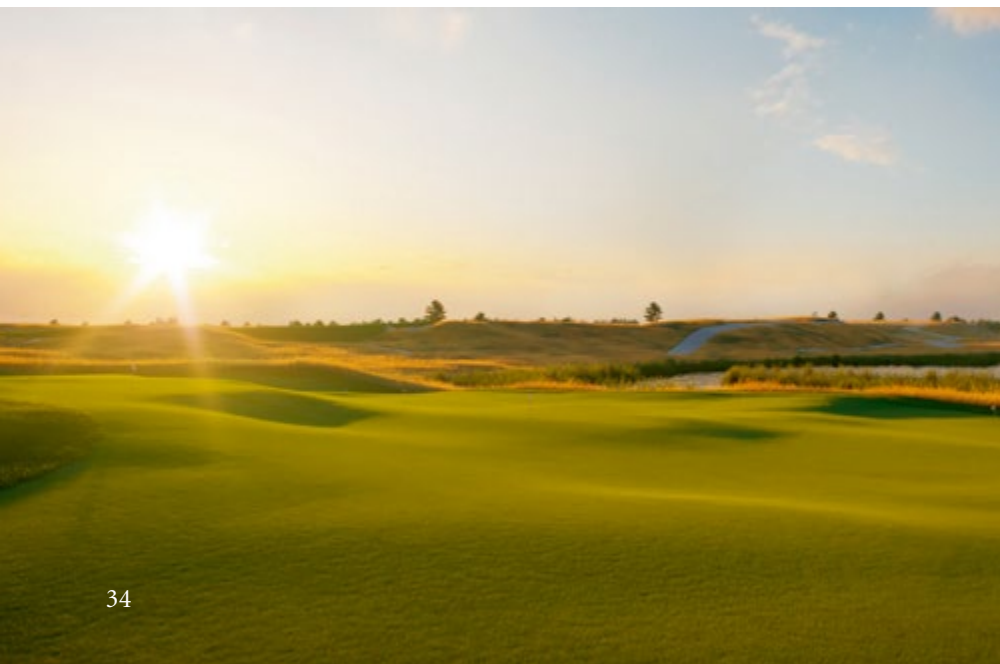
The putting course has been built with A-4 bentgrass – Fry expects the speed of the grass to be slower than the greens on the course, which typically run at 11 to 12 feet on the Stimpmeter.

“My guess is they would be never more than 10,” said Fry.

Erin Hills competitions and marketing director John Morrissett said: “It’s just another way to expand the experience, whether for daily golfers or for overnight guests. If someone doesn’t want to play 36 holes in a day but wants to spend one or two nights there, there are still other things to do.

“Part of the hope is that players will face putts that they haven’t faced before. It will be entirely for fun.”

The course will be lit at night, Fry said: “I think you’ll have people putting into the late hours of the evening and some gambling going on. You’ll have guys trying outlandish putts.”



Photos: Harris Kalinka

Alice Dye: “a trailblazer for the world of golf”

Alice Dye, matriarch of the Dye family of golf course architects and the first female president of the American Society of Golf Course Architects, passed away in February 2019.

Working alongside husband Pete and sons Perry and PB, Alice was instrumental in many of the Dye family’s designs. She famously suggested that the par-three seventeenth at TPC Sawgrass should have an island green.

Alice was also a champion of amateur golf, representing the winning US Curtis Cup side in 1970 (as pictured, right) and winning two senior Women’s Amateur titles, in 1978 and 1979.

“She was a wonderful lady in a multitude of ways and a trailblazer for the world of golf,” said former Dye associate Lee Schmidt, in the Spring 2019 issue of ASGCA’s *By Design* magazine. “Alice will truly be missed by all who knew and loved her.”

Alice was a pioneer in design for female golfers, creating a ‘Two Tee System for Women’. Golf course architect Jan Bel Jan told *By Design*: “Alice’s ideas for fairness were avant-garde when she first discussed them. Alice well ahead of the ‘Tee it Forward’ movement.”

Read more in the latest issue of *By Design*, available via www.asgca.org



Photo: courtesy of Rolling Green Photography/Ken May

GOOD READ

Golf and Law

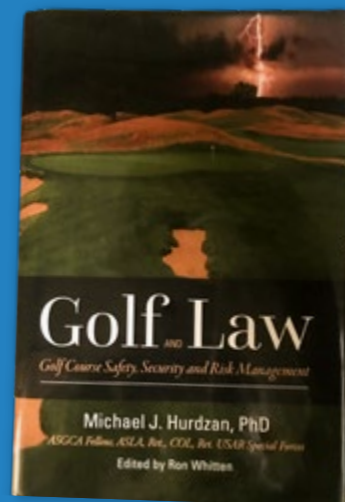
Golf course architect Dr Michael Hurdzan leans on his experiences from a career of over 400 golf projects to write about an important issue for golf courses: safety, security and risk management. This is not a topic covered widely, nor has there been an information source solely dedicated to golf course issues.

Edited by *Golf Digest*’s architecture expert Ron Whitten, himself a former

lawyer, the book examines the process of minimising risks of accidents and offers practical suggestions to protect golfers, golf course employees, owners and operators.

Hurdzan shares that information in a practical way intended to allow others to develop their own methods, procedures and protocols for protecting others, their employers, and themselves.

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THE INTERVIEW

with Tom Doak

“Many bunkers add difficulty for average players but are superfluous for the Tour player”

GCA spoke with Tom Doak about the renovation of Memorial Park golf course in Houston, which will host the PGA Tour’s Houston Open



Tom Doak is working on a renovation of Memorial Park golf course in Houston, with a brief to make it an exciting venue for the PGA Tour’s Houston Open, while keeping the course playable for the 60,000 residents who play annually.

What is the extent of the work?

Only the par-three second hole, and the tee for the third, are out of the original corridor. However, eight of the eighteen greens have shifted position; the par-five eighth is lengthened and the ninth changes from a par four to a par three; the par-

five thirteenth – which lost ground at the tee for a road in the park – becomes a driveable par-four, and the next hole becomes the par five.

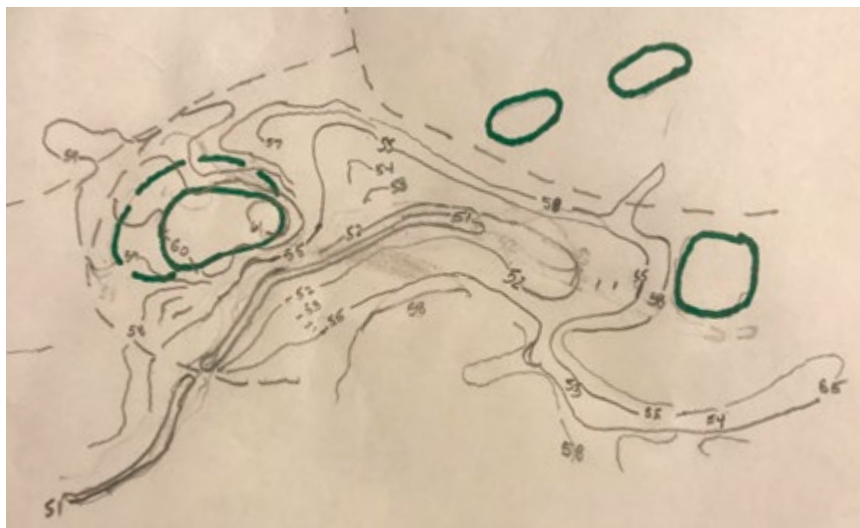
We have also tripled the size of the irrigation pond, to capture rainwater and reduce the use of city water for irrigation, using the excavated material [about 100,000 cubic yards] to improve surface drainage and add relief to the property.

Are there aspects of the existing course that you were keen to emphasise?

The two features of the property that were underutilised on the existing course were the ravines in between holes on the front nine, which were nearly all hidden in dense trees, and the many beautiful trees that had no influence on play. We have shifted tees and fairways to bring the ravines into play on holes two-to-seven, thinned out the trees and shifted greens so that key trees may be an obstacle for players who have driven in the rough.

What do you hope will be the outcomes for Houston’s public golfers?

A lot of the money is being spent on drainage and sand capping, to make the





"If we were going to have it, we decided we might as well put it right in the players' faces." Tom Doak on water at Memorial Park

course more playable through rainy weather. But we think many players will be shocked to see just how dramatic the ravines were underneath the trees on the front nine, now that we've brought the holes up against them.

With the plan to host the Houston Open, do you approach the design much differently to other projects?

It's not often that I worry about players who can drive the ball 350 yards or making greens flat enough to handle speeds of 12-13 on the Stimpmeter. But we still have to handle the full range of golfers who play at Memorial, so the process isn't that different otherwise.

What do you expect Brooks Koepka to contribute to the design process?

He's shared a lot with me about what he does and doesn't like about the typical PGA Tour venue; what makes

it interesting for a player of his calibre, and what sorts of skills aren't rewarded on other courses. Brooks has given me a lot of subtle ideas to make it harder for the professionals – like giving them awkward lies and stances in the rough – that the average player won't even notice. We both felt that many bunkers add difficulty for the average player but are superfluous for the Tour player. Plus, washouts on bunker faces are one of the main things that disrupt a tournament after heavy rains, so we are building radically fewer bunkers at Memorial Park than you're used to seeing. I think the final number will be around 25, but there are only nine bunkers on the back nine – and none at all on holes thirteen, fifteen, sixteen and seventeen!

What else would you highlight?

I'm not a big fan of water hazards on most of my courses, but the expansion

of the irrigation pond meant that we would have water in the home stretch at Memorial, and if we were going to have it, we decided we might as well put it right in the players' faces. There's a small stream at the short fifteenth – balls that miss the left side of the green will bounce down a steep bank and may wind up wet.

The par-five sixteenth has water along the right all the way, and then across the front of the green and to both sides of the green, so there is no safe side to bail out for golfers who want to play for eagle. And then the short par-four seventeenth has water all along the right side and wrapping around the back right of the green, leaving a scary pitch when the flag is on the right, or a go-for-broke possibility if they move the tee up to 300 yards for one of the two weekend days.



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An aerial photograph of the Moortown Golf Club course in Leeds, England. The image shows a lush green golf course with several sand bunkers, a winding red path, and a dense line of trees in the background under a blue sky with scattered clouds.

Moortown achieves firm conditions with irrigation overhaul

Moortown Golf Club in Leeds, England, has updated its irrigation system to achieve greater control over its playing characteristics.

Golf course architect Ken Moodie has been responsible for overseeing design work on the club's Alister MacKenzie layout, which hosted the first-ever Ryder Cup in 1929.

"I have visited each year since 2014 to advise on smaller scale improvement work including altering mowing lines for greens, to reinstate their original shapes, new tee positions and the further development of heather areas," says Moodie.

"Our architect likes Moortown to play like an inland links whenever possible with run offs and tight turf around the greenside and bunkers," said course manager Steve Robinson.

"We were having terrible problems with the old irrigation system through the 2015 season – it was completely outdated prior to this, with appalling reliability and performance," said Robinson. "But it all came to a head that year with massive failings with the borehole pump, water storage tank, pump house and controller, resulting in no irrigation for a period."

Having explored their options, the club decided on a new irrigation system from Hunter Industries. "Their system was competitive, and I was mainly taken by how easy the Pilot-CC Central Control PC based system was to use," said Robinson.

"Our new system, with the Hunter G885D decoder in head series, enables single head control, and pinpoint accuracy over all our greens, approaches and surrounds surfaces.

"The club opting to do a phased approach to install the system, Hunter was fantastic with providing us with the controller, hub, PC, decoders, etc, to run our old system for a season until the installation of the complete new system started in September 2016."

Photos: Moortown Golf Club



The club has been using the system for two seasons including the summer of 2018.

"There has been fantastic reliability, with impressive uniformity of coverage, performance and efficiency – even through drought conditions of 2018," said Robinson.

"The lack of rainfall and consistent high temperatures above 25 degrees that year would have resulted in huge turf loss if we had not upgraded prior to that period.

"We were well supported over those initial years directly by Hunter's Mark Ganning, in terms of Central Control support, database accuracy and general educating through this process."



Photo: Jonathan Gaunt

Whittington Heath project to bring back Golden Age look

Construction work is in full progress to create a “memorable and remarkable” course at Whittington Heath Golf Club in Lichfield, England, overseen by golf course architect Jonathan Gaunt.

The project is required to accommodate the new ‘HS2’ high speed railway line. “It goes right through the entire ninth hole – from tee to green – and it severs the eighteenth hole in two,” said Gaunt. “HS2 also affects the second, third, sixth, seventh and tenth holes.”

The first nine holes of the course were built in 1886, and in 1929 it was redesigned and extended to 18 holes by Harry Colt. Gaunt’s design will reroute some of the existing holes and create five entirely new holes on adjacent farmland.

“The project involves the reconstruction of significant features on the existing course, including some new greens, all the bunkers, new

tees, and some remodelling of green surrounds,” said Gaunt. “There will be five new holes on new land as well as a new practice area, short game practice zone and putting green.”

Construction work began in early January 2019. Eighteen holes will be kept in play throughout the project and contractor John Greasley Ltd – headed by Charlie Greasley – is working with four specialist shapers to complete as much work as possible on the existing course by the start of April. “At that point, they will start work on the new land,” said Gaunt. “At the end of September, they’ll drop back onto the existing course to finish any remaining work. Construction work will continue until March 2020.

“We’re looking to bring back a much more open, heathland character to the golf course, with wider views of the landscape, as it would have been

when Harry Colt was working there in the 1920s. We expect that when the golf course establishes, it will begin to take on that ‘Golden Age’ look – broad expanses of hinterland with rolling features and dramatic areas of wilderness edging into the playing areas.

“We’re creating something that isn’t just a golf course, it’s going to be an entirely new habitat,” said Gaunt. “The new land has been intensively farmed for the last 100 years, so we’re transforming it from a monoculture – growing wheat, barley, potatoes and carrots [depending upon the year] – to a mixed landscape of native grasses, acid grassland, heathland, woodland, wetland areas, eco-ponds, open sandy scrapes and grassy waste areas.”

Read GCA’s full article and interview with Jonathan Gaunt at www.golfcoursearchitecture.net.

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Photo: Joann Dost

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Global round-up

Tiger Woods and Gil Hanse to develop Mākaha courses

Golf network Pacific Links International has selected Tiger Woods' firm TGR Design and Gil Hanse to design courses for Mākaha Valley Resort on the island of Oahu, Hawaii.

"At TGR Design, we focus on finding spectacular locations to design distinct and memorable golf courses," said Woods. "The cathedral-like setting of the property is framed with big ocean views to the west and towering mountains to the east. We are designing a golf course that will take advantage of this spectacular setting yet still be fun and playable for golfers of all abilities."



Photo: Pacific Links International

Monte Rei announces second Nicklaus layout

Monte Rei Golf & Country Club in the eastern Algarve, Portugal, has announced it will be developing a second golf course, by Nicklaus Design.

"We are excited that Monte Rei has asked us to design their second course as they continue to improve and develop the club, which is already considered by many as the best in Portugal and one of the finest golf destinations in Europe," said Jack Nicklaus.

The North course was originally designed by Nicklaus's firm in 2007 and since then has regularly ranked in the top 10 in Europe.

"The South course will have many similar features, great trees, wonderful topography, beautiful vistas, and has the potential to be another sensational course. Our mission will be to maximise the existing terrain and natural features, so we can create an experience that has its own distinct personality, with the same commitment to excellence that golfers expect when they visit Monte Rei."

Construction of the new course is expected to begin in June 2019.



Photo: Monte Rei Golf & Country Club

Soweto Country Club reopens for play

Soweto Country Club in Johannesburg, South Africa, reopened in March following a renovation by Gary Player Design.

All tees, greens and bunkers have been reconstructed, two new holes have been introduced, and a new irrigation system from Hunter has been installed. Player's firm designed the course in 1972 and waived its design fee for the renovation, which began in early 2018.

"We intentionally kept the overall character of the course intact, while also implementing some meaningful design improvements," said Jeff Lawrence, of Gary Player Design. "All the green complexes were redesigned to capture more visual strength as well as improved strategy. Our approach was to keep the course playable and maintainable while also allowing the course to be more challenging when hosting tournaments."

Photo: Soweto Country Club



Photo: Legacy Golf Course Architecture



Construction to begin on Vladivostok's first golf course

Construction work on the first golf course in the Russian city of Vladivostok, a co-design by Jari Rasinkangas, Ronald Fream and George Philpott, is scheduled to begin in April.

The 18-hole course will be the centrepiece of the Vladivostok Golf Club & Resort development on the 300-acre site.

"As this is a resort development, in our design we chose to include wide fairways, multiple teeing options/lengths, and contouring that encourages a variety of shot options," said Philpott. "Strategic bunkering and interaction with the existing creeks will keep the players engaged in their round and thinking about their play options."

Photo: Marc Westenborg



Westenborg creates new dunescape

Marc Westenborg has completed a renovation project at Southport & Ainsdale Golf Club in Lancashire, England.

"The bulk of the project involved the formation of new dunes between the eighteenth fairway and driving range, and between the eighteenth tee complex and

boundary," said Westenborg.

"We recommended this work because when playing the eighteenth hole, the range was clearly in view – very much spoiling the aesthetic qualities of the hole – while around the tee complex, there were extensive areas of weed trees which

were completely out of character to a links golf course.

Construction work was handled by DAR Golf, who began in October 2018, which was completed in mid-February with the club hoping to reopen the three holes by the end of April.



ELLIE PARRY

Future-ready irrigation

Ellie Parry provides an insight into the implementation of a Rain Bird irrigation system that prepares Royal Bled in Slovenia for the long term

There cannot be many finer backdrops to any game of golf than at Royal Bled. The majestic rise and fall of the Julian Alps give way to the picturesque tranquillity of the destination's courses. The King's is the oldest and largest in Slovenia, dating back in its original design to 1937 and renovated by Donald Harradine in the early 1970s. This was complemented by the addition of the nine-hole Lake's course two decades ago. Vistas from both layouts take in the iconic precipice-perched Bled Castle, which overlooks Lake Bled.

Howard Swan had worked at Bled for some ten years, for a Slovenian conglomerate which owned and operated the club and hotels in the town. But it was when the Šolak family acquired the club that the long-planned renovation got underway in 2015.

Over the next three years, Howard and his son William directed the design process to revolutionise what had been laid out before, leading a project team of foresters, earthmovers, shapers, lake lining specialists, drainage experts and constructors from 17 nations, as well as local specialists. The redesign extended



Photo: Royal Bled

The par-four sixth on the King's course at Royal Bled

the course to championship length – over 7,400 yards from the tournament tees, one of five sets on each hole – reconstructed tees and greens, and saw ten new lakes designed to create a dramatic and spectacular course.

Key to the design principles practiced by the Swans in the rebirth was a focus on protecting the natural environment and important habitats as the holes were built. Fundamental to this was comprehensive planning in the management of water for the courses: where it came from, where it was to be stored, how it was to be used and how its quality could be sustained. This was embodied in the system design specification developed in collaboration with Rain Bird Europe and its authorised service partner In-Aqua, based in Zagreb, Croatia, to provide Royal Bled with one of Europe's most advanced irrigation systems.

The design concentrated on conserving, harvesting, recycling and optimising the use of water on the golf course. The comprehensive and long-term strategic plan drew together these interdependent elements of best practice and related them to the wider environment of the course, given its proximity to the Triglav National Park.

One of the requirements set out by the architects was to create a system to encompass the wholesale King's course renovation and the future development of the Lake's course. This was reflected in the pump station sizing and design as well as mainlines and cables. Royal Bled pays for irrigation water supplied from a lake at the hydropower plant some five kilometres away, but supply pipe limits the daily volume available. Consumption reaches 1,500 cubic metres per day at peak, so In-Aqua was also asked to prepare a water

management study proposing options for supplying water from a nearby river and for the movement of water through lakes at the course. They also installed temporary flow measurement at a nearby spring to establish its capacity.

The irrigation system proposal included water sourcing and lake management, in addition to irrigation system design, pumping and pH control, central control programming, advanced weather and soil sensing features, and other adjacent systems. Critical to In-Aqua being commissioned for the project – alongside its ability to provide wider water management support and a comprehensive programme for the King's course – was Rain Bird's capacity to deliver the requirements and its consistent commitment to its systems.

Slovenia is prone to lightning strikes, recorded as often as three or four days

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The proposal for the irrigation system covered water sourcing and lake management

of the week, so a Rain Bird IC System was specified, eliminating the use of satellites and decoders and providing multi-function real-time response along with powerful diagnostics and end-user control. It enables the course superintendent to run a status poll and voltage check of the whole site in three minutes – invaluable for fault detection and rectification after a strike. Having the system in the ground during construction also provided an

with two sensors per green for soil monitoring. Other features include a weather station and a Rain Watch rain gauge all feeding data to the control system in real time. Golf contractor All Golf Services was subcontracted for the physical installation.

In-Aqua partner Damir Čizmek says: “The architects looked to the long-term future in all aspects of the project and were prepared to advocate to the client being ‘future-ready’. They really

“Having the system in the ground during construction also provided an invaluable way of monitoring the site”

invaluable way of monitoring the site, flagging up if machinery hit cables. Once the system was integral again, contractors could move on to the next hole. This time-saving, problem solving monitoring wouldn't have been possible with a decoder system.

A Rain Bird Stratus II Central Control operated via PC at the facility and on a mobile device from anywhere in the world is enhanced with the largest Rain Bird soil sensing system in Europe,

understand irrigation and were able to put forward robust proposals.”

Owner Gordana Šolak likened the skilfully remastered King's course to Sleeping Beauty when it was revealed to the golfing world in 2017. Reawakened after years of neglect, the new jewel in Europe's golfing crown was opened by HRH Princess Jelisaveta Karadordevic of Serbia and instantly tipped as a future Ryder Cup host, while ascending rapidly into Europe's Top 50.

Photo: In-Aqua



Photo: Swan Golf Designs



The project's success is testimony to the talent of all those who worked under the Swans' direction and guidance, and was underpinned by their master plan and the owners' long-term view. Their vision for the Lake's course remains to be realised in the years to come, but the irrigation infrastructure is in place for when that day arrives. **GCA**

Ellie Parry is a turf industry marketing specialist

FEATURE

The future of muni golf

MUNICIPAL GOLF

Written by Adam Lawrence



With governments around the world under pressure to save money, can municipal golf survive?

It is a common criticism of golf that it is a game for the wealthy. And, let us not beat the bush about it; through most of golf's history, that has largely been the truth. The early Scottish clubs – consider the Honourable Company of Edinburgh Golfers – were posh because, in the days of the featherie

ball, only the wealthy could afford the equipment. A skilled ballmaker could make only a small number of featheries in a day, so they cost between two and five shillings – ten to twenty US dollars each in modern money – and thus golf was largely confined to the elite. It was only after the invention of the much

cheaper gutty ball in 1848 that golf became a true game of the people in Scotland. And it is not a coincidence that the second half of the nineteenth century saw the first great golf boom.

A lot of the oldest Scottish courses are located on common land, and are therefore essentially public – famously,

Jay Blasi is helping to guide the restoration of Dr Alister MacKenzie's Sharp Park layout in San Francisco

all the way up to the Old course at St Andrews. But the nineteenth century golf boom was largely driven by private clubs, as would-be golfers banded together to create a venue for their sport. And, as golf began its spread around the world, that spread was a top-down rather than a bottom-up

process. The first golfers, and the first clubs, in most new locations, were affluent and posh. It was only after golf had been established in a location for a time that less well off individuals discovered the game – largely, in the first instance, through caddying.

Municipal golf, which started to come

along at the end of the nineteenth century, proved to be a success in both Britain and America. Many millions of golfers got their first taste of the game on a muni, and they were a cash cow for the local authorities that ran them. Unfortunately, the golf building boom of the late twentieth and very

Travis's reversible masterpiece

Mike McCartin describes the possible restoration of East Potomac Park

In the first few years of the twentieth century, Washington DC had developed a master plan for the area that is now the Mall, building on Pierre L'Enfant's design for a grand public space within the city (this was called the McMillan Plan – Olmstead, Daniel Burnham and many other big names were part of the commission that put together the plan). The Mall and its surrounding area is actually a national park called Potomac Park. The McMillan Plan split the park into two sections: West Potomac Park would be the national gathering space which now houses the monumental core of the city (Washington Monument, all the major memorials, the Smithsonian Museums, etc); East Potomac Park was set aside as a site for locals

“The original Travis design is mostly gone, though some details remain here and there”

to enjoy active recreation. The idea was to build a municipal recreation facility at East Potomac Park that could be a model for the rest of the country to follow and of a standard that it would complement the monuments it shared space with.

The first component of East Potomac Park to be built was the golf course and the city hired Walter Travis to design it. I should note that East Potomac Park exists on a man-made peninsula in the Potomac River and the land is relatively flat. Turning that potential weakness on its head, Travis designed a reversible course

(the first nine – A/B – opened in 1920 and the second – B/C – in 1923). Travis's design was replete with three-ten foot elevation changes, contoured greens and a complex, highly strategic bunkering scheme. The reversibility, scale of the contouring, wild greens and numerous hazards make it impossible to imagine that Travis wasn't inspired by St Andrews.

The original 18-hole course was extremely popular and well regarded. It hosted the second ever USGA Public Links in 1923. It routinely did more than 100,000 nine-hole rounds per year and was so popular that William Flynn was brought in to build an additional nine holes – the E/F course – which was also reversible.

The original course, and the facility in general, has deteriorated since the 1930s despite remaining extremely popular. The original Travis design is mostly gone, though some details remain here and there throughout the property. The course's deterioration comes down to two major factors. First, the National Park Service, which owns the course, is not set up to manage golf courses. The NPS used a concessions system that essentially limited golf course operators to leases of no more than seven years at a time, which precluded major infrastructure investments on the property. Second, the standardisation of design in the 1940s to 60s was not kind to Travis's unique design – it was during this time that the reversibility was abandoned and changes were made to the course to facilitate one-way play. What's left over from an architectural perspective is pretty bland and uninteresting, but the facility itself is full of character and, in my opinion, one of the great places in golf.

early twenty-first century, which added hugely to the course stock, mostly of proprietary courses, created such a flood of supply that the munis ceased to be the profit centres they had been, and became a liability.

It isn't too hard for local government to justify the provision of municipal

golf if it makes money, or at least breaks even. A popular recreation for local people that is also profitable? Bring it on. When the course is losing money, matters change rather. If the choice of ways to spend council money is schools, roads or golf, golf loses every time. And so, a lot of municipal

courses have closed in the last ten years, and others have come perilously close. Tynedale, in Hexham in the north east of England, and Bowring Park in Liverpool, two of the country's oldest munis, are good examples of this: Tynedale lost a grant from the county council and was on the edge of



Walter Travis designed a reversible course for East Potomac Park in Washington DC

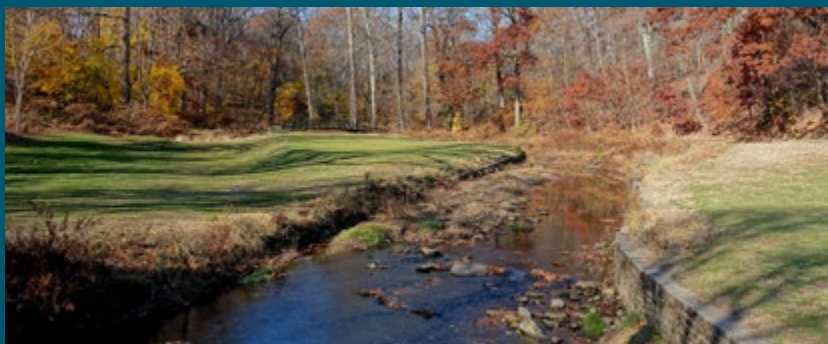
East Potomac Park and the other two DC golf courses under the National Park Service umbrella (Rock Creek, a William Flynn design, and Langston, one of the first 18-hole courses built specifically for African American golfers) are about to be available for a long-term lease of 50-60 years. The idea behind the plan is to enable the types of long-term investments in the courses that the concession system made impossible. I'm hoping that the result of all this will include restoring East Potomac's reversible Travis design. We have almost all of Travis's original plans for the course and the as-built (seen in aerials and ground level photos) tracks extremely closely to the plans.

I'm trying to get the word out publicly about East Potomac, its history, and the opportunity to restore the Travis course there with this new lease. To me, the combination of the federal government's decision to build a municipal golf facility to be a model for the

rest of the country, an extremely cool course design by a great architect, the course's unparalleled location in the heart of the capital connected to the monumental core of the city, the amazing history that played out on the course (from the 1923 US Public Links to the civil rights movement), and the National Park Service's mission to preserve and protect makes for a very compelling story that we should be able to build momentum around. If we do a good job telling those stories, we can shape the direction of what happens with the courses so that restoring the original designs and keeping the courses affordable/accessible becomes the obvious route. Just in the past ten years, I have heard several hare-brained schemes that involve turning the course into a PGA Tour venue or the 'Augusta National of the Mid-Atlantic'. I'm afraid if someone doesn't effectively make the case for an alternative that the chance to honour the history of the course will be lost for good.

Dreams becoming reality

Architect Jim Wagner of Hanse Golf Design reveals what the chance to restore Cobbs Creek would mean to him



Photos: courtesy of the Bausch Collection at MyPhillyGolf.com

Growing up in Philadelphia there were always discussions and debates regarding golf. Whether it was with friends who caddied at the old classics such as Merion and Aronimink or playing companions at the great public courses like Paxon Hollow or Cobbs Creek, golf was always at the heart of our gatherings. We would dream about playing all 18 holes of the local private clubs (our fences memberships did not allow us to play more than a random few) or discussing changes to our favourites.

Looking back on it I'm not sure whether it was true understanding of architecture or through osmosis but there was plenty to learn about architecture, golf and life playing a round at Cobbs Creek. From the dramatic short creek holes to the demanding long holes there was much to see, appreciate and stumble upon throughout the property.

Sadly, as time wore on it became less desirable to make trips to Cobbs as the creek holes were literally washing away, the strategy and conditions were being choked out by overgrown vegetation and financial neglect was eating away at the bones of this great design. But little did I know there were others who had the same individual dreams and life experiences at Cobbs. People like Joe Bausch and Mike Cirba; the Friends of Cobbs Creek; Chris Lange and the Maguire Foundation; and the many golfers located throughout the Philadelphia area. Over the past several years these people have worked tirelessly on the hopes that restoring Cobbs Creek will bring it back into discussions of architecture, play and life. I recently heard a quote by Yoko Ono that could not be more appropriate about my experiences with Cobbs Creek from the first time I played the course to where we sit on the verge of making this restoration a reality: "A dream you dream alone is only a dream. A dream you dream together is reality."



closure until club and council did a deal (to the club's credit, it has rebounded from this and is now thriving), while Bowring, which like many munis, had been handed over to a management company, suddenly shuttered its doors last year when that management company went bust. Fortunately, the local authority, seeing the value of the course, took it back into public management, and has since launched a major renovation project of the park in which it is contained. But not all have been so lucky.

America, in the lead as it usually is in these matters, is seeing an interesting trend develop; the restoration of the historic muni. From coast to coast, the threat to old municipal courses has got local golfers thinking about the memories that were formed there, and wondering what could be done to help them continue to thrive. At Sharp Park in San Francisco, designed by Alister MacKenzie, a number of Macphiles have been working for years with architect Jay Blasi on a restoration project. Blasi reports: "Last year we were able to use a 1931 irrigation map to help us properly identify the original green boundaries. After flagging out about a half dozen greens to review, we settled on two greens, the current tenth and eighteenth, to have the maintenance team start to mow out. The transformation is amazing. The current eighteenth green was 6,042 square feet and is now 9,393 square feet. One of the wonderful things about Sharp Park is that not much work has been done over time, so the original contours are there and when you mow out to the original edges the character jumps out."



The gospel of municipal golf is spreading to some unlikely quarters, including the city of Samsun in north-eastern Turkey

At Cobb's Creek in Philadelphia – other than Merion East, Hugh Wilson's only design – a similar project, with Jim Wagner of Hanse Golf Design in charge, is getting ready to go. And in Washington DC, architect Mike McCartin is trying to rouse interest in a similarly-ambitious project at East Potomac Park, located on an island in the Potomac River (Walter Travis's original design, heavily influenced by St Andrews, was reversible!).

So the future for the muni is likely to vary. For those with a history sufficiently storied to rouse golfers' interests, the possibility exists for a very grand future. For others, it may be more difficult. But one thing is certain, the muni will not be going away any

time soon, and the gospel of municipal golf is spreading to some unlikely quarters. Who would have thought that a city in north-eastern Turkey would

activities along the entire waterfront. It has miles of pathway along the beach connecting all waterfront activities via bike, roller blade or jogging/walking.

“America is seeing an interesting trend develop; the restoration of the historic muni”

build a municipal golf course? But that's what the city of Samsun has done over the past few years, with golf course architect Kevin Ramsey. Developed and owned by the Samsun municipality, the linky Samsun Golf Club is located on reclaimed land at the edge of the Black Sea. Ramsey says: “The town has been very proactive in creating sporting

They have built many outdoor parks with soccer facilities, tracks and other indoor sports venues in this area as well. It seems to me that they want to be known as the sports city for the people. This is now the home of the Turkish Golf Federation, again adding a strong public flavour to the course as it is where the national team plays.” **GCA**

THE PIONEER



RON PRICHARD

The father of restoration

Jeff Mingay and Vaughn Halyard look at the career of Ron Prichard



The restoration of original golf course designs from the pre-World War II era has become relatively big business. A number of contemporary golf course architects exclusively work at reversing the effects of natural evolution and redesign at aged courses these days, restoring bunkers, removing trees, expanding green surfaces and widening fairways back out to their original parameters.

Restoration was not, though, part of golf's lexicon in 1983 when Texarkana Country Club asked golf architect Ron Prichard to have a look at improving its historic course. Texarkana Country

Club is a stone's throw over the Texas state line in neighbouring Arkansas. Following stints working as an associate to golf architects Joe Finger, Desmond Muirhead and Robert von Hagge, Prichard had recently established his own practice based in the Woodlands outside Houston.

By 1945, at the conclusion of the Second World War, most of the pioneer golf architects in North America had died. Custodianship of their golf course designs had disappeared, too. Finger, Muirhead and von Hagge were part of a new legion of golf architects who filled a post-war void and

subsequently ushered in a new design philosophy. Led by Robert Trent Jones, and his infamous redesign of Donald Ross's South course at Oakland Hills Country Club in suburban Detroit, a new era of progressive architects, including Finger, Muirhead and von Hagge, were looking forward, not back.

"Joe definitely represented the new American school of golf architecture," says Prichard. "He was brilliant... an engineering graduate of MIT and a decent golfer, too. But Joe never went to Scotland or studied the great American courses that preceded his work. He really had no interest."



Photo: Vaughn Hayard

The sixth at Cedar Rapids CC, whose Donald Ross course was restored by Ron Prichard in 2018

Muirhead also told Prichard that none of his predecessors influenced his work. “Desmond’s influences were modern artists,” Prichard adds. “He was influenced by people like Constantin Brancusi and Henry Moore... sculptors. Desmond thought of himself more as a land sculptor than a golf architect.”

In contrast to the works of their predecessors, Finger, Muirhead and von Hagge emphasised length and difficulty. Inspired by Jones’ work at Oakland Hills, which was carried out in preparation for the 1951 US Open, this new legion of architects favoured comparatively narrow courses flanked

by penal hazards off the tees. They elevated greens to thwart terrestrial approach shots. During the 1950s, the ‘best’ golf courses were considered to be the longest, most difficult ones. Existing layouts were being redesigned accordingly. The power of televised golf had an effect, too. Beginning in the 1960s, television brought views of a dashing young Arnold Palmer and the lush, leafy fairways of Augusta National into millions of golfer’s homes. Suddenly, golf course owners and club members wanted their courses to be like Augusta. Theirs was a skewed perspective, though. Early

television technologies could not accurately convey the massive width of Augusta’s tree-lined fairways.

This is the environment Prichard was working in during the 1970s while mostly supervising the construction of new courses designed by Finger and Muirhead. But Prichard’s thinking couldn’t have been more different from his bosses’. “Growing up in northern New Jersey, the history, architecture and art of New England had a big effect on me,” he says. “I developed a pretty strong sense of history at a young age. I find that too many people these days think that we’re now the

best at everything. Unfortunately, not enough people recognise the genius that preceded us. It's too often forgotten."

Led by his strong sense of history and an admiration for the works of his predecessors, Prichard took advantage of his travels while working for Finger and Muirhead. He visited many of the most admired courses throughout the United States and quickly realised that some great architecture from pre-World War II was being damaged, destroyed and, in some cases, lost entirely to natural evolution and so-called progress. This led Prichard to start thinking seriously about golf course restoration. Not only did he sincerely believe that restoration was the right approach to improving many courses originally designed by pioneers like Ross, but it was potentially a good business strategy relative to differentiating himself from his competitors at the time. Still, Prichard's career has been more of a mission than a business interest. "I knew early on that I wanted to restore golf courses," he says. "I wanted to help people appreciate and celebrate the heritage of their historic golf courses."

Prichard arrived at Texarkana Country Club five years before Rees Jones' restorative-based work at the Country Club at Brookline outside Boston was showcased during the 1988 US Open. Jones' efforts to restore William Flynn's work at Brookline is held up as one of the first attempts at a sincere restoration of an original golf course design. At Texarkana, Prichard learned that the club's William Langford-designed course had been reworked on at least two



Above, Prichard's master plan for the 2009 restoration of Mountain Ridge in New Jersey; facing page, one of his field sketches from the restoration of Portland CC in Maine

occasions since it opened for play during the mid-1920s. Prichard was given Langford's original plan for the course. He claims it was immediately obvious that the boldness and creativity of Langford's original design had been lost. So, rather than reinvent Texarkana again, Prichard decided there was a genuine and worthy

Texas native whose storied career as a touring professional is legendary, was familiar with Langford's course at Texarkana and effusive in his praise of Prichard's restorative-based work, there. The two remained lifelong friends until Nelson's death in 2006.

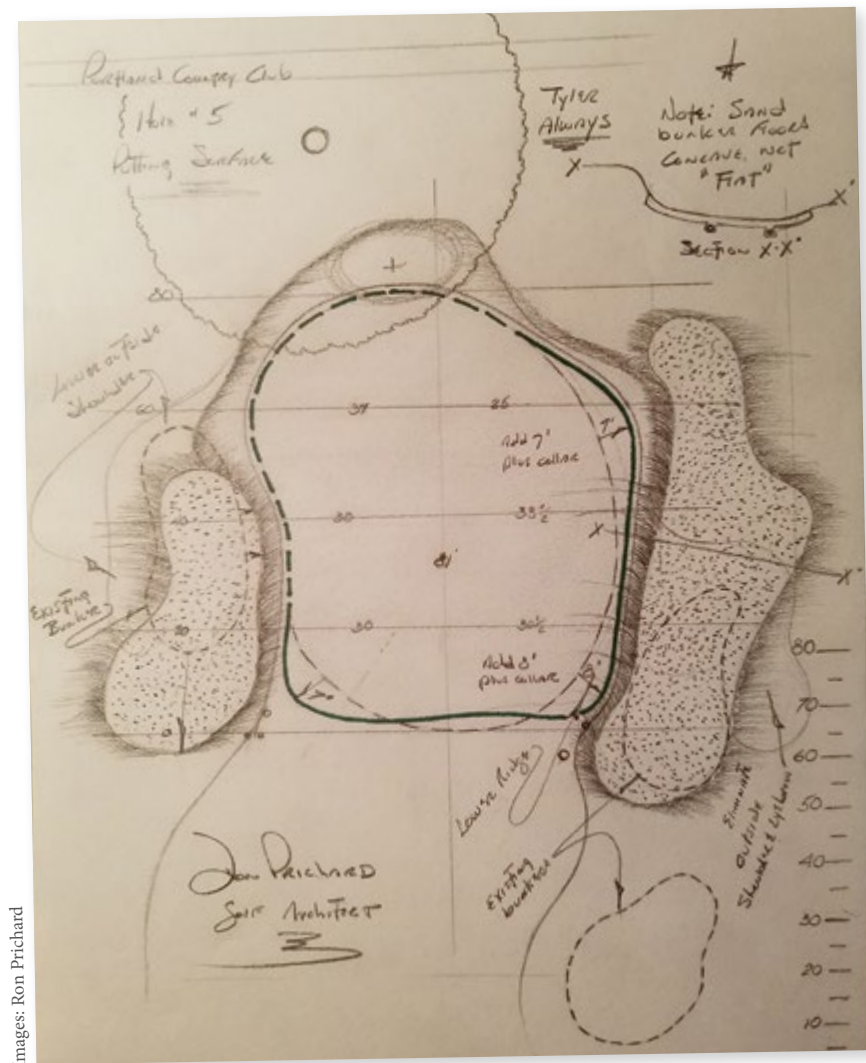
Through his golf affiliations in Texas, Prichard also became well-acquainted

"I wanted to help people appreciate and celebrate the heritage of their historic golf courses"

opportunity to take a restorative-based approach to improving the club's course.

"I'm not immensely proud of what I did at Texarkana these days," Prichard says, three decades later. "I was still trying to figure out what I was doing and how do it properly." Byron Nelson was impressed, though. Nelson, a

with 1981 Open champion, Bill Rogers. During the mid-1980s, Rogers introduced Prichard to a prospective Tournament Players Club development near San Antonio. Prichard still speaks highly of the course's potential, but it was never built. A few years later, the PGA Tour gave Prichard another chance near Memphis. With input



Images: Ron Prichard

from major champions Hubert Green and Fuzzy Zoeller, Prichard designed TPC Southwind, which has hosted the PGA Tour's FedEx St. Jude Classic annually since 1989.

Since, Prichard has mindfully restored many of America's pioneering golf course designs from the pre-World War II era: from Maine (Portland Country Club) to Florida (Mountain Lake), Boston (Charles River Country Club) to Iowa (Cedar Rapids Country Club) and New Jersey (Mountain Ridge Country Club). "I've never gone into a meeting trying to sell anything," Prichard explains. "I've only ever tried to offer some wisdom about the importance of preserving and, when necessary, restoring what's been damaged, destroyed or lost. I've simply tried to convince these old historic clubs that in some cases they've made some

mistakes that should be reversed."

Expressive and opinionated, Prichard is modest. He's never had a stomach for self-promotion. There's no Ron Prichard Golf Architect website, no business cards or other promotional materials to be had. All of Prichard's projects have come via word of mouth referrals, which he takes great pride in. Now in his mid-70s, Prichard is as passionate about his work as ever. "I'm trying to slow down a bit," he says. "But I still enjoy what I do. I love working with clients who are fun and will listen and, hopefully, learn. I take pride in delivering work that they'll take pride in, and along the way demonstrating that maybe I do know a little more than the average green committee member at most clubs."

A graduate of Middlebury College in Vermont, where he studied economics and fine arts while lettering in

golf, Prichard is a true artist. "Ron intricately sketches features on paper to give shapers, like me, an exact three-dimensional image of what he wants to accomplish," explains Tyler Rae, who has mentored under Prichard as a golf architect and feature shaper over the past seven years. "Ron's method is similar to Tom Simpson's, the way Simpson sketched his holes and green sites and bunkers during the 1920s and '30s."

Prichard's hand-drawn sketches are sought after by golf course architecture aficionados, along with a collection of beautiful golf course master plan renderings he's produced with his closest friend and long-time collaborator, Marilyn Milner. Prichard and Milner met in Texas during the early 1980s, about the time he was establishing his own practice. "Marilyn's been the key to my success," Prichard says with sincere joy.

"My work has been really gratifying," he adds. "I enjoy working with people. I've appreciated every opportunity I've been given to teach golfers to appreciate the history of their golf courses, and to encourage them to celebrate and preserve that heritage."

There are more famous courses than William Langford's original design at Texarkana Country Club. But it was there, in Arkansas, that for the first time, a contemporary golf architect looked back to guide a golf club into its future. **GCA**

Jeff Mingay is a golf architect based in Canada, while Vaughn Halyard is a filmmaker and was greens chair during a Prichard-led restoration of his Donald Ross-designed home course

INTERVIEW



KYLE PHILLIPS

Creating landscapes

Kyle Phillips has built a reputation for creating landscapes that appear to have been formed by nature. Toby Ingleton finds out more



How would you describe your design philosophy? Are there some key principles that you try to employ in all of your work?

My design philosophy stems from the belief that golf courses should have their own character and personality derived from the existing natural features each site, as well as its location and history. I take a customised approach to each of my designs. This results in different architectural styles within our portfolio. The common threads are that the style of each course be sympathetic of its location, sits naturally in the land, evokes the traditional playing qualities and

strategic elements rooted in links golf, all within the context of being enjoyable for players of all levels.

At the front end of each of our projects I work with our owners to create our own unique story to that particular location. The headlines of that story guide us in making the many detailed design decisions required to achieve a top result.

We are actively engaged in the entire design experience, from the moment you enter until the moment you leave the property. It is common for us to take the lead in the development of the site plan. Through the construction we provide

our expertise with the integration of buildings, roads and parking into the landscape. We support the design team, architects and engineers with our expertise of visualising three dimensionally on a large scale. It is common that we are able to provide earth-based design solutions that are more beautiful and far less expensive, which allows us to organically integrate buildings and other rigid elements into the landscape.

We always seek to use the natural landforms where they exist. Where they do not exist we have shown an unparalleled ability to create landforms that appear natural. It has



Photo: Ioann Dost

The par-three sixth hole at South Cape Owners Club in South Korea

been this ability to transform less-than-perfect sites into some of the world's finest courses that seems to have distinguished my work from other designers.

How has the work of Golden Age architects influenced you, and have any of your renovation projects unearthed a special appreciation for any particular architect?

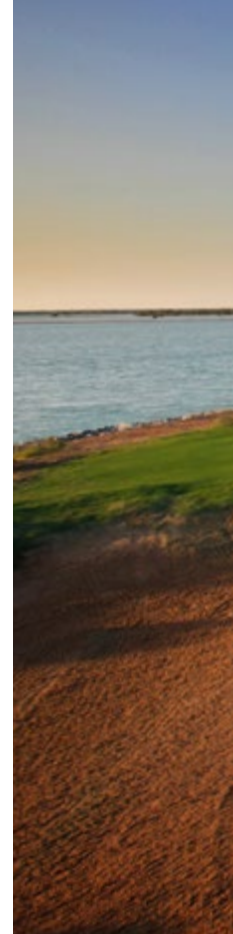
Albert Tillinghast influenced me the most in my youth, when I played regularly on one of his designs. When I came to California, I had the opportunity to know well the works of Alister MacKenzie and became

intrigued by his flamboyant bunkering and green complexes. Spending more of my professional time and playing more golf in Europe, I also became exposed to the works of Harry Colt and Tom Simpson. As green speeds have increased dramatically, I have come to find their work, particularly their green complexes, quite applicable for today's game. At California Golf Club we restored the 1928 MacKenzie bunkering and at Morfontaine we have continued to pay tribute to Tom Simpson in the work we have done there. In Los Angeles, we are currently reimagining a 1920 Willie Watson by stripping back several generations of

modern alterations and restoring the essence of his Golden Age design.

Talking about Cal Club in the January 2018 issue of GCA, Ian Andrew said you did an outstanding job of tying new holes into the original architecture. Would you ever see a case for a pure restoration, or is a hybrid always likely to be the best option?

For various reasons, sometimes it is not possible to literally restore a course. In the case of Cal Club, portions of the site had been lost through the state of California taking a portion of land in the 1960s for a four-lane connector road. As a result, only 13 holes could



The seventeenth hole at Tazegzout in Morocco and (right) the par-three seventeenth at Yas Links in Abu Dhabi, where Phillips constructed an entire coastline

be literally restored. Twelve holes were restored and by eliminating the remaining hole, opportunities were created for a full-length practice range, a far better, strategic, new par-four cape-style hole, a wonderful downhill par three, as well as the ability to bring back the essence of the original strategic qualities on the remaining four holes.

Certainly the backstory of courses that were created a century or more ago are interesting to us that are deeply involved in the game. Within that historical context, the first priority is to design the best quality course for today. Ian did an excellent job recognising this in his article.

What does literal restoration mean? What should it mean? Particularly on Golden Age courses, there are those who define a literal restoration as a copy-and-paste of the exact original course back onto the property. Given the reality of modern technology, this approach dismisses the restoration of the strategic intent of the original designer. The mission of any true

literal restoration should be to bring back not only the architectural style, but also, to the extent possible, restore the strategic playing characteristics of the course to the original architect's design intent. To accomplish this within the context of today's technology, elements of the course must be repositioned accordingly.

Since launching your firm two decades ago, you've had success throughout the globe. Do you have to change your mindset across different regions?

Even though the same golf design principles apply everywhere, the golf experience expectations of the players can vary considerably, particularly in operational items such as speed of play; clubhouse facilities; walking, riding and caddies; rest stations; interaction between groups of players; and practice facilities, to name a few. For example, speed of play expectations can vary from 3.5 hours for 18-hole rounds, to a game of golf being an all-day event with a full lunch after the first nine holes.

The permitting process, including the level of pre-construction documentation and time to acquire permits, varies as much on a regional level as a national level. Contractor quality tends to vary more country-to-country rather than by continent. The speed of construction also tends to vary not only by weather conditions, but also by the number of holidays and working hour restrictions. By working in so many different countries, with different consultants and contractors, I learned that there is more than one way to get something built with a quality result.

To what extent are your hole designs planned on paper, as opposed to being designed on-the-fly in the field?

It is true that those in our industry who come from more of a shaping background tend to work almost exclusively on natural sites, where numerous potential holes naturally exist. This process identifies a routing plan and then moves directly to the commencement of shaping.



Photo: Kevin Murray

Coming from a design background, our process provides as much detail as we can at every level of design, both on paper and in the field. Our level of detail throughout the construction process has not only allowed us to have great success on natural sites, but also on sites degraded by agriculture or past developments. This has allowed us to not only restore the historic landforms, but to obtain a net positive result by creating large amounts of new nature to be integrated into and adjacent to the golf course.

In addition, with this level of detail we are able to obtain competitive bid pricing for our clients and then spend the majority of the construction period focusing on design details with our site representative/shaping specialists. I spend a lot of time on site working on the details and provide a series of sketches that are continually refined through the step-by-step processes of a golf course construction. Mark Thawley, who has been with me for many years, is

also periodically on site to work on important design details.

Which of your courses brings you the most pride, and why?

Certainly there is a sense of pride in every creation. Our process brings about the birth of a course, but it is in the hands of our owners that our creations mature and are presented to the world. It is always a pleasure to visit one of our 'children' and see the level of pride that our owners or club members have in the course. Of course, it is also rewarding when our creations such as Yas Links, Cal Club, Kingsbarns and South Cape are embraced as one of the best by the world of golf.

It is satisfying to see how we have been able to consistently transform land into literal nature parks of golf that contain an abundance of new nature, in the process creating and restoring landforms that have been altered by farming or development in a way that are indistinguishable from nature. Recently, I was listening

to a live television broadcast of a tournament being played on a course I had designed, where the commentator was celebrating how naturally wonderful this rumpled course was for golf. After a pause, rather than correcting him, his fellow commentator began to describe how the course was actually 'created' by design with all of the marvellous characteristics of an old course.

Can you tell us about the projects you are currently working on? And what does the future hold?

We recently completed the lovely new Bernardus Golf located in the Netherlands, which the golf world will certainly be hearing more about in the near future. Now open, it will host the KLM Dutch Open from 2020-2022.

In addition to the courses we have in design, we are currently building new 18-hole courses in Bangkok and Prague, as well as a complete reconstruction and reimagination of Hillcrest Country Club in Los Angeles. **GCA**

Natural selection

TWIN DOLPHIN GOLF CLUB, LOS CABOS, MEXICO

Golf course architect Todd Eckenrode's naturalistic approach has paid dividends for the new Twin Dolphin layout, as Adam Lawrence reports

Los Cabos, on the southern tip of Mexico's Baja California, has been a popular tourist destination for Americans for many years. Initially a mainstream destination – popular for spring break trippers, with many resorts aimed at that market – Cabo became of interest to golfers when the Ocean course at Cabo del Sol, one of the Nicklaus company's most successful designs, opened in 1994.

Further golf followed, but it's in the last ten years that the twenty miles of coast between the towns of San Jose del Cabo and Cabo San Lucas has truly become a golfing hotbed, with the opening of Tom Fazio's Chileno Bay and Nicklaus's Quivira, and the Diamante community (both actually

to the west of San Jose del Cabo) with its dramatic Dunes course by Paul Cowley and Davis Love III's firm, and El Cardonal, the first Tiger Woods course to make it to opening day (designed, as has been all of Tiger's work so far, principally by architect Beau Welling).

What the area has also seen over the last few years is a definite shift upmarket. Those spring breakers are still there, but with the new golf courses all incorporating expensive real estate or resort components (or both), the Cabo scene is definitely changing. And the latest new development to hit the market, the Twin Dolphin golf course and its associated facilities, located between

Photo: Evan Schiller Photography



The par-three eleventh at Todd Eckenrode's new Twin Dolphin layout





Eckenrode (left) on site with Fred Couples, the signature designer for the project

Chileno Bay and Cabo del Sol, is for sure the most upmarket yet.

The facilities at the development are already extremely impressive. There is a 120-room, five-star Montage hotel, located down by the water's edge at the south-eastern corner of the property, while there are two separate housing offerings, though these are not yet fully built. The 52 Montage Residences are, though part of the hotel complex, actually for sale, while the Maravilla community, occupying the south-west part of the site, includes villas, homesites and townhouses. They are extremely high end too, with villa prices starting at several million dollars. Only homeowners in one of the two communities will be able to join the golf club, while the hotel also has access to tee times.

The golf course itself is set slightly inland, above the highway that connects the two towns. This is unlike, for example, Diamante, where the Dunes course occupies prime

oceanfront land, but I don't think it is that much of a compromise. The land is dramatic, basically a desert hillside, but cut through by many dry river beds (arroyos). The ground rolls in all directions, and is frankly a golf architect's dream.

The architect of the Twin Dolphin course, southern California-based Todd Eckenrode of Origins Golf Design, was paired with PGA Tour star Fred Couples as signature designer on the project. Eckenrode says he enjoyed collaborating with Couples, who has done a variety of signature projects with other architects, and that his involvement was pretty active – on several occasions as we toured the course, he says things like 'We had a bunker there, but took it out at Freddie's suggestion', and flags up his involvement with the second green, where an initial, roughed in concept, was blown up and reshaped to be wider, to make the hole more playable.

Eckenrode identifies as a naturalist in design terms, and that, to me, was

the most immediately striking aspect of the golf course. Although a fair amount of earth was moved during construction – and the whole course was sandcapped, as the desert soils do not drain very well – it takes an experienced eye to see where. There are, for example, very few drainage basins, with Eckenrode preferring to use the cant of the land to surface-drain the course into the arroyos which flank most holes. Although the course is new, it already looks very mature, thanks to an enormous revegetation scheme managed by landscape architect Ken Alperstein of Pinnacle Design (see box). This has been a triumph. Trees and plants that were removed to build the golf course have been replanted in a brilliant scheme, and there is absolutely no non-native vegetation to be found anywhere on the golf course. The course is still a few years away from true maturity; but considering how good it looks now, I'd sure like to see it when it has achieved his goals.



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Salvage operation

Preserving native trees, shrubs and cacti on the Twin Dolphin site

Photo: Evan Schiller Photography



The naturalistic feel of Twin Dolphin is down to two principal aspects: the shaping for surface drainage and the management of vegetation. For the latter, the development team called on California-based landscape architect Ken Alperstein, president of Pinnacle Design. Alperstein says that when he first saw the site, he was excited to get another project that was covered with such amazing flora, so that he and his team could take advantage of reusing that same vegetation along the edges of the new golf holes. Knowing that a design concept is only a concept without the proper implementation, Alperstein swiftly stressed to the client the importance of, prior to grading the fairways, hiring a very competent landscape company to salvage all the healthy trees, large shrubs and cacti within the proposed limits of the grading disturbance.

The developer agreed, so Pinnacle began the task of walking down the centrelines of each proposed golf hole and tagging trees, shrubs, and cacti that were healthy and high in aesthetic value. The clearing operation was performed using a three-step process. First, they cleared and salvaged plants 50 feet on each side of the centreline of the golf hole. Second, Pinnacle walked the hole with Eckenrode and set the limits of disturbance and the contractor did a second pass of salvaging

and clearing staying inside that limit by 20-30 feet so that final clearing can be made when the shapers were making their final tie-ins to the natural grade. As the golf hole edges were being tied-in, the final step of salvaging and clearing occurred, with additional walkthroughs and direction by the designers, removing all unwanted vegetation needed to create the necessary play space for golf as well saving key plant material to remain in place because the plants accented golf but did not hinder playability.

Once the landscape teams were two or three holes ahead of the shaping operation, they were able to go to future golf holes and directly relocate the tagged plant material to the revegetation areas on the finish shaped golf holes.

The same 20 native species were used everywhere. Alperstein said: "As we spotted these plants along the golf holes, it was important to look at the existing flora along the preserved edges and try to match the plant varieties and densities. Each planting area had its own micro-environment – different elevations, sun angles, wind factors, all affecting minimum and maximum temperatures – so it was imperative to pay attention to what nature next door was telling us, because what works in one area, might not work in another."



The course is dramatic from the starting hole, a big par five that plays from a high tee across a deep arroyo and then sweeps uphill and left to a green tucked on the edge of the corridor. It's an intensely strategic hole, bunkered extensively up the left, low side, the inside of the dogleg, and not at all on the other. This is a theme that repeats itself throughout the course; the short route to the hole is protected by hazards, but there is ample width to bail out, and no sand on the wide side to harm you. I generally find myself looking at holes with bunkers on the outside of the dogleg and thinking 'What is that doing here? You're already out of position', so I congratulate Eckenrode on his commitment to making his bunkers strategic.

The third is a delight, a downhill par four which uses a natural valley that chokes down to a very narrow slot about 300 yards off the back tee. Big hitters might be best placed to club down here. But the hole then opens out again, and the green is set in a large area of short

grass, with plenty of room to miss and plenty of short game interest if you do.

Eckenrode's greens are pretty complex without, mostly, going to the extremes. One hole that pushes against normal boundaries is the par-three eighth (pictured on the cover of this issue), whose green, set up on a ledge, sheds balls to both front and back. The happy medium is small, but the challenge and ridgetop nature set it apart from the other par threes. They generally are a fine set, with the eleventh playing sharply downhill, and the long fourteenth reminiscent of a number of Bill Coore/Ben Crenshaw long threes, such as the fifteenth at We-Ko-Pa in Arizona or the twelfth at Bandon Trails – a hole with lots of trouble on the direct line to the flag, but plenty of space out to the side, enabling the player to bounce the ball in. This ground-focused approach is a theme throughout the course; greens are open and there are many helping slopes. Eckenrode says: "After the tenth, every hole on the back nine has slopes that help golfers

bounce the ball in. I think it's mostly a function of the land and routing, but it's probably one of the reasons I think the back nine is so much fun."

Twin Dolphin was built by Eckenrode in collaboration with a high-class group of shapers, including Jonathan Reissetter, Kye Goalby, Blake Conant, Clyde Johnson and Cliff Hamilton. I have to say that I thought it was a delight. The combination of naturalness with a terrific routing – that must have been very difficult to find, given the nature of the site and its pre-existing vegetation – truly make for a course that is a joy to play. Eckenrode himself said, in publicity material, that he thought they might have built the best course in Cabo; this is high praise, as (just to pick one) Diamante Dunes has been as high as 36th in *Golf* magazine's list of the world's best. I have not seen enough of Cabo to comment, but I will say that anyone who values naturalism in golf will have to go a long way to find better work than this. **GCA**

ON SITE

America's Scottish Everyman



Photos: The Biltmore Hotel Miami-Coral Gables



THE BILTMORE, MIAMI, USA

Adam Lawrence visits the Biltmore Hotel in Miami, where Brian Silva has just finished a restoration of the Donald Ross-designed golf course, and reflects on the Scottish exile's influence on American golf

It is appropriate that Harry Colt and Donald Ross should have met, early in both their careers, on the Old Elm Club job in Chicago in 1912. Ross really was at the start of his long march to bring quality golf to much of America, while Colt, as I guess is inevitable since he was working several thousand miles from home, had already earned himself a reputation as an expert in the nascent world of golf design.

The aptness of the story is ruined a bit by Colt's well-known failure to get Ross's name right – in his report to the

founders of the club he referred to him as 'Douglas' Ross, though he did speak with enthusiasm about his abilities. Nevertheless, despite their radically different backgrounds – Colt, captain of Cambridge and an R&A member at 22, Ross the son of a Dornoch stonemason who arrived in America in 1899 with two dollars in his pocket – the two men went on to play remarkably similar roles in the story of British and American golf. They were the men who brought quality golf to the ordinary golfer; to this day, if you are playing an old British course that

you don't know much about, and you find it way better than you expected, odds are it has a Colt heritage. Similarly in the United States, the almost 400 Ross courses make him by far the most important architect in the country's golfing history.

Whether by intention or by necessity – because they were both so busy – Colt and Ross both evolved the golf industry's first systemised construction models. Colt, by persuading road builders George Franks and Claude Harris to start the world's first specialist golf course contractor in



Photo: The Biltmore Hotel Miami-Coral Gables

1914, was of central importance here: throughout his incredibly busy period during the 1920s, up to the Wall Street Crash, Franks Harris built the majority of Colt's courses (and lots for other architects too). Ross, too, pioneered the use of contractors in the US, though he never had so close a relationship with one firm of builders as Colt with Franks Harris. However, via his trusted associates JB McGovern and Walter Hatch, Ross was able, even at his busiest, to exert a reasonable degree of control over the teams that were building his courses, so he got the results he wanted.

Ross came to the newly incorporated city of Coral Gables, Florida, in 1925. Coral Gables was one of the first planned communities in America, and

at its heart was an enormous luxury hotel called the Biltmore, designed by the New York firm of Schultze and Weave, part of hotel magnate John McEntee Bowman's expanding chain of the same name. For two years the tallest building in Florida, the hotel was a popular hangout of the great and good, but was requisitioned and served as a hospital during the Second World War, and was later used by the University of Miami and as a VA hospital until 1968 when the building was abandoned. The city of Coral Gables took ownership of the building in 1973, but it remained unoccupied until 1983 when the city started a full restoration; the hotel reopened in 1987.

The hotel is a delight, with a feel very like a European grand hotel, and

extremely unusual, in my experience, for America, where posh and old don't often go together. Its hospitality is exemplified best by the frankly over-the-top Sunday brunch, where dozens of stations serve all manner of treats.

Now, to the golf. Florida, as is well known, is mostly very flat, and that is certainly true of the Biltmore property. The only real feature – apart from a few grand old trees – is a waterway (a river) that passes through the site, and Ross's genius is clear to see from the amount of value he gets from that watercourse, for example on the seventeenth hole, where the green is set right on the water's edge. Unusually for a south Florida course, though I suppose less surprising given its vintage, there is no other water on the course. Had a



modern-day architect been presented with the same site, he'd surely have dug a number of ponds to provide fill to create some contour. While contour is worthwhile, it is a pleasant change to be in the Sunshine State and not dealing with water hazards on every hole.

Instead of water, Ross used fairway bunkering quite extensively at the Biltmore. It's these bunkers especially which have been restored in the recent project under Brian Silva. Biltmore director of golf Bob Coman spent time in the Tufts Archives at Pinehurst – where many of Ross's papers are held – and found the original plans for the course. This discovery prompted the hotel to call Silva, who had led an extensive project on the course in 2007, back in to complete the job.

In that 2007 project, Silva said, the absence of documentation meant he was proceeding essentially by feel – restoring greens to the size and shape that the original fill pads implied, and restoring bunkers that had just been grassed over and therefore could still be seen (proof these were originally bunkers was obtained when the construction crew, having removed the grass, hit sand). But, he explained, the plans found by Coman in Pinehurst showed where additional bunkers that were not restored in 2007 had been. It's this now-complete set of Ross fairway bunkers that primarily defines the strategy and challenge of the golf course.

Additionally, Coman's discovery – which, as well as plans, included

Ross's handwritten notes on the design – inspired some additional works to greens. For example, on the par-three fourteenth Silva put back a thumbprint depression in the rear centre, creating a far more challenging putting surface. And, speaking of challenging putting, he was also able to restore the magnificent eighteenth green, by a distance the course's most exciting and exacting. Tucked into the left of the corridor, on a hole that already has a substantial right-to-left dogleg, the 10,000 square foot putting surface is compartmentalised – high on the right, low on the left – and means that a game is far from over when the player reaches its expanses. It's a fitting end to a fine round planned by a great architect. **GCA**

Where the buffalo roam

A family of new recruits is helping Laguna Golf Lăng Cô tend to its course, as Richard Humphreys discovers

Greenkeeping staff around the world use a variety of resources to keep their courses in good shape. Some are quite unique, like at Laguna Golf Lăng Cô in Hue, Vietnam. The club is employing the talents of a very special group of greenkeepers – a family of water buffalo.

Director of golf Adam Calver said: “We are pretty sure it’s a first in this part of the world to have animals performing such an important role on the golf course.”

“We looked at various methods to increase the aesthetics of the rice paddies between the harvests as continually mowing the fields to maintain vast rice terraces can consume a large amount of labour,” said Calver. “The water buffalo act as bio-mowers while also protecting the traditional Vietnamese landscape.”

The paddies contour the third and fourth holes and reappear between the thirteenth green, fourteenth tee and alongside the fifteenth fairway.

Father Tu Phat, mother Chi Chi and their calf Bao eat excess weeds and crops that would otherwise require machinery and manpower to maintain.

The paddies are also harvested twice a year, yielding up to 20 tonnes of rice that is used to support the organic farm at Laguna Golf Lăng Cô.

“The beauty of the golf course design at Laguna Golf Lăng Cô is that we have different and unique environments to work with – rice paddies, river, boulders, beach, sand dunes, mountain backdrop – something we are always looking for in Faldo Design projects,” said Sir Nick Faldo. “It helps keep golfers interested and gives the golf course that memorability factor.”

“With the water buffalo family that have been introduced to the golf course, they actually help the maintenance team and are ever-present right

throughout the season, keeping the rice paddy fields trimmed and the muddy areas neat. It’s a pretty cool feature and one that golfers who come and play here will remember for years to come.”

“We knew that having the holes weave through the rice fields would be a unique and memorable experience for golfers,” said Paul Jansen, who worked with Faldo on the design of the course. “And also, there would be potential to give back to the community in a sustainable and regenerative fashion. All the best golf courses have character and sense of place and we felt if we could adapt our surroundings then we would be close to achieving something really good.” **GCA**



Photos: Laguna Golf Lăng Cô

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