GOLF COURSE ARCHITECTURE

The global journal of golf design and development

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PHOTO: EVAN SCHILLER

"Any landscape is a condition of the spirit"

HENRI AMIEL

 $Bold\ spirit\ -\ Extraordinary\ designs$



WELCOME

Time travel



ADAM LAWRENCE

et me first say that my interest in the speed of play at professional level is not high. I don't watch a lot of pro golf, and except in weeks where the circus fetches up at a particularly interesting course, or to play for a historically important championship, I'm probably doing no more than looking to see who won on a Monday morning, and expressing a little bit of pleasure if a player I like has triumphed.

So slow play at pro level is to me like politicians who lie – it's unfortunate, but what do you expect? The point at which the rubber hits the road, though, is when habits created at pro level spread into recreational golf. In our social game, we don't have the nuclear button of penalty shots to impose on those who take unbearably long to play. Really, ostracism – declining to play with golfers we know to be slow – is our only comeback.

There's no doubt that most of the characteristics of slow play – lengthy pre-shot routines, stalking putts from all angles, extensive discussion with caddies about options – stem from the pro game. At that level they are an irritation, not even that at times. And yes, they probably do impact on golf's popularity as a TV sport. But at recreational level the problem is many times bigger, indeed existential. Lots of people simply do not play golf – or at best play less golf than they would otherwise - because of the pace of play. And we should not believe that tweaking around the edges to save a few seconds here and there would make much difference. We have argued extensively in this column before that golf needs to be a half day, not a full day activity if it is to really prosper. Getting round times down from four hours and fifty minutes to four and a half will not solve any of our difficulties. We need a quantum leap so that the average length taken to play golf is no more than three hours, the way it used to be many years ago. Can we get back there en masse, rather than just at the small number of clubs with a great fast play culture? I don't know. Maybe it means redefining what it is to play a round of golf. Be radical!

Adam



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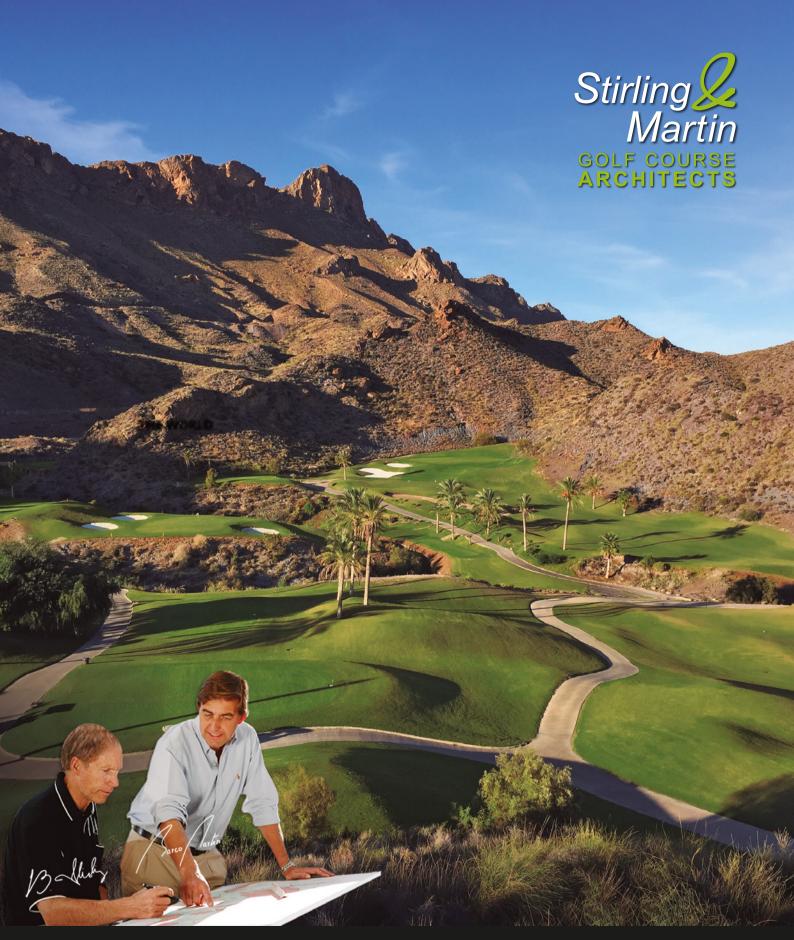
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President, Southwest Greens Construction





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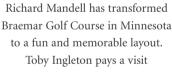
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MAII BOX

Dear Editor

Although I understand the position of those who support a roll-back of club and ball technology for professional golf, I think they are insane. Here's why.

First and foremost, the professional game is our window to the world. It's all very well to say 'Oh, no normal golfers hit the ball 350 yards, the problem only exists at a very tiny level of our game', but the fact is that it is the most important level, the level through which golf is seen around the world. Nobody cares about Mr Smith and Mr Jones' Saturday morning game, but millions and millions of sports fans want to know if Brooks, Dustin or Rory will win the Masters. How will golf look to those millions of people if the best players in the world are suddenly hitting the ball a hundred vards less? Because, let us not doubt it, this is the kind of roll-back that is desired by some. They think a good drive should be 250 yards, and an exceptional one should go maybe 275. Right. Imagine we are at the first big professional tournament after the introduction of these new regulations. Dustin Johnson, famously the biggest driver of a golf ball in the world, steps onto the first tee, winds up his swing, belts at the ball... and it trickles out about 270 yards. Our game will be a laughing stock, the only major sport in the world to change its rules to go backwards (I know about the changes to the javelin, but really, golfers, is that the status of sport you want?).

I don't believe it is beyond the wisdom of today's golf architects, bright people all of them, to come up with new ways of testing the golf skills of the elite. I remember Rees Jones saying, a few years ago, that because professionals expect to suck their balls back across a green on landing, the relative difficulty of pin locations has changed: no longer is a tightly guarded front pin the hardest to access, but a back pin, which requires the ball to pitch and release, rather than suck back, is now much harder for these guys. This is the sort of thinking we need more of.

So in short, I say that the future is bright, and we must embrace. Down

with those who want to drag our game back to some sort of imagined previous golden age! Forward to the future.

M. Tenant Paris, France

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



We were a little bit surprised that more readers didn't recognise the spectacular view of the green on the tenth hole, Lundar Law, on the beautiful Golf House Club at Elie Scotland, about ten miles from St Andrews. A truly classic links, Elie famously opens with a blind drive over a hillside, and the club has provided its starter with an old submarine periscope to check that the way is clear.

Notwithstanding the attempts of one golfer who was present when the photo was taken – always a *Gopher Watch* disqualifying factor – and another regular entrant putting Sandy on the opposite side of the Forth at Gullane, there were a slew of correct entries. And it was a practising golf course architect, Alex Hay, formerly of European Golf Design and now, having emigrated to Canada, the international arm of the firm Lobb + Partners, whose entry was first out of the ceremonial hat, and who wins the coveted *GCA* shirt.

This time, Sandy is back on links habitat. An interesting wee view this one – a new hole on an old course. We shall be interested to see the response. Entries, as ever, to <code>gopher@golfcoursearchitecture.net</code>.









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new golf course designed by Robert Trent Jones II at Hoiana Shores Golf Club in Vietnam has opened for preview play. Robert Trent Jones Jr said that when he first visited the site in Hoi An, he was immediately struck by its potential: "I thought, 'my god, I'd kill for this.' Architects are lucky to get a single property like this one in an entire career."

Six of the holes come into direct contact with the beach, with views of the East Vietnam Sea and Cham Islands in the distance.

"The rhythm of the holes is tremendous," said Jones. "The front nine is more crafted and man-made. The back nine was a matter of just laying the course down on the earth. It will seem like movements from the same symphony."

"Everyone talks about the ocean holes, but the inland holes show more high-quality golf architecture, in my view," said Bruce Charlton of RTJ II. "We've done some very creative things on the water at Hoiana, but these holes right out of the box are really good. You've got the handshake on the first, but then two, three and four are as good as anything out there. I was blown away by the strategy. We also had a long ridgeline of dunes that provides a great sense of scale to holes two, three and six, and part of the fifth. We wanted to give the player the feeling they are playing in big-time width – the Pine Valley concept where, in other words, if you can't hit it on a golf hole that wide, then you pay a price."

Jones said: "Width makes the course manageable and fun for resort players. It's not like a private club where members know every inch of the place. Resort players need to be able to hit it, find it and hit again. That said, we really opened up the sand dunes and allowed the greens to settle into them. I wanted greens nestled into the dunes early in the round. When players get closer to the water, we wanted to open up vistas to the sea. But you can't overdo that! You can't ever forget the invisible

hazard – wind – on a site like this, because then it will play an undue role."

Construction began in late 2017 under direction of Hong Kong-based course builder Linksshape, led by Stuart Stone. "On the sixteenth and seventeenth, where the wind is coming right off the sea, our fine shapers carved out the shapes, and then we let Mother Nature further shape it," he said. "Then the team came back, refined it and finalised it. Ultimately, we created truly windswept areas there that were quite different from the original shapes."

"The client asked us to create a championship golf course that would be fun for resort players and still maintain a good pace of play," said Trent Jones, COO of RTJ II. "On the other hand, they wanted a course that allows for a wide range of set-up options should Hoiana host a major tournament. Our designers created wide undulating fairway corridors that present players with a variety of strategic options. Large gallery logistics

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and set up for sizeable tournament were also accounted for during the design development at Hoiana."

Hoiana Shores plays firm and fast on native, well-drained sand; the ground game is a viable option on most of the holes. Hoiana Shores exhibits many of the same linksland playing characteristics found in the British Isles, but in a tropical setting. The design team says a 'tropical links' has emerged, highlighted by restored coastal dunes and the dramatic Cham Islands looming a few miles offshore.

The course has also been developed in accordance with sustainability principles laid out by the UK-based GEO Foundation. "In Southeast Asia, there are no other golf developments at this stage of construction that are going through this programme," said GEO executive director Sam Thomas. "I think it's fair to say that, if they continue on this path, Hoiana Shores

will be first past the post, the market leader in this regard."

Agronomics were managed by Turfgrass of Ireland. Greens are grassed with TifEagle bermuda, and all fairways and tees feature Zeon Zoysia – sourced from Sports Turf Solutions' turf farms. more than 1,000 rooms, suites and villas managed by Rosewood Hotel Group, four kilometres of beach, numerous pools and restaurants, a beach club, an entertainment facility managed by Suncity Group, and an array of retail partners.

"The client asked us to create a championship golf course that would be fun for resort players and still maintain a good pace of play"

"Zeon Zoysia frankly freed up the architects and shapers to manufacture some wonderful shapes and contours – a lot of created architecture that could not be rushed," said Rob Weiks, golf course superintendent at Hoiana Shores.

The golf course will be the first facility to open within the new 985-hectare, US\$4 billion Hoiana Integrated Resort, which will include Mike Gorman, senior architect at RTJ II, said: "We have built many unique elements within this course design that golfers will appreciate. There are three distinct alternative loops, a six-hole 'beach loop' and a three-hole 'sunrise loop' that are seamlessly designed within the 18-hole course. These details and a family short course option add fun and flexibility to the playing experiences."



Harradine completes Arosa remodel

Harradine Golf has completed a project to remodel nine holes at Golf Club Arosa in Switzerland.

"The main reason for the remodelling was due to the fact that the lack of the appropriate machinery in 1947 produced a few blind holes and a nearly impossible finishing hole," said Peter Harradine, who has overseen the work. "The members and the golfers will be extremely happy with the improvements as there are no blind shots any more."

The project was carried out on the original nine holes, which were designed and built by Harradine's father Don in 1947. The second nine at Arosa was designed by Peter Harradine in 2001 and has not been impacted by this project.

"The weather at 1,800 metres is very unpredictable as it can snow during the summer months with frequent thunderstorms that can bring 20 millimetres of water in one hour," said Harradine. "It was therefore not easy to remodel the course, especially as

the contractor had to work under the strict supervision of Harradine Golf and environmentalists who ensured that the strict conditions demanded in the construction permits were followed throughout the construction period."

Seven new greens and 12 new tees have been built as part of the project.

The contractor has stripped and stocked the topsoil over an area of nearly 70,000 square metres as well as cutting and filling a total volume of 36,000 cubic metres. They took the soil mixes – which they prepared – and the topsoil from the previously stocked positions and spread and fine-shaped it on to the remodelled subsurface. Drainage and irrigation systems have also been installed.

"All the preliminary earthworks, irrigation and drainage had to be completed in 2018 before it snowed as the capping of the topsoil, soil mixes

Peter Harradine said "the logistics were quite daunting" for the contractors undertaking the Arosa remodel, due to the unpredictable weather and site conditions

GOOD READ

Sustainable Golf Development: Public Facilities Guidelines

and sowing had to be completed by the end of July 2019," said Harradine. "Construction work started on 17 September 2018 straight after the last competition but unfortunately work had to stop on the 26 October as the dreaded snow had already fallen!

"Such a short working season definitely presents many problems as the works in 2019 only started on 13 June due to the heavy winter snowfalls and sowing had to be completed by the end of July, if one wanted to give the grass any chance of growing. The logistics were quite daunting, and it was a race against time!

"Cows are allowed to graze in the rough and we had to ensure that the same area of grazing land with the same or better slope steepness was still available after the earthworks," continued Harradine. "The environmentalists also obliged Harradine Golf to specify the stripping and stocking of ten thousand square metres of sods of grass used by the cows and install the sods back on to a clearly defined and newly shaped area in the rough."

Five thousand metres of cart paths were built to accommodate the golfers and ensure that the cross-country skiers did not cross the greens, tees and fairways, as the marks left by the tracks can be seen way into the short playing season.

"I eagerly wait for the players' comments when the course will open during the soft opening at the end of August 2020," said Harradine. "The management will also be very pleased as the new holes will definitely speed up play!"



The Preserve at Oak Meadows is one of the projects profiled in Sustainable Golf Development: Public Facilities Guidelines

This publication from GEO Foundation provides guidance and best practice examples targeted at decision makers who are considering the impact of proposed public golf developments and renovations to an existing facility.

Sam Thomas, director of sustainable golf development at GEO Foundation said: "This guidance aims to help public golf decision-makers to effectively review operations and make renovation plans to create stronger businesses and provide

more services to society."



Case studies have been included to convey the opportunities and challenges that a golf facility may face, as well as ways to achieve their goals. Examples include Augustin Pizá's project at San Bartolo in Peru, Greg Martin's work at The Preserve at Oak Meadows in Illinois, and a Ken Moodie-designed nine-hole course at the Kevin Duggan Academy in Luton, England, which is free for disadvantaged young people to play. www.sustainable.golf

THE BIG PICTURE

The seventeenth hole at the new Dumbarnie Links course on the south coast of Fife, Scotland, is a short par four with multiple play options.

"The seventeenth will become a distinctive and memorable hole, punctuated by the 300-year-old wall passing through it," said golf course architect Clive Clark, a former Ryder Cup player. "Golfers can play left of the wall to a generous fairway, leaving them a shortiron second shot.

"The alternative is to drive over the wall and dice with ten pot bunkers. The prevailing wind follows on this hole, and it can be a good opportunity for birdie or even eagle. However, a poor tee ball can rapidly lead to a double bogey. It's like playing chess, you have to weigh up the odds before making your move."

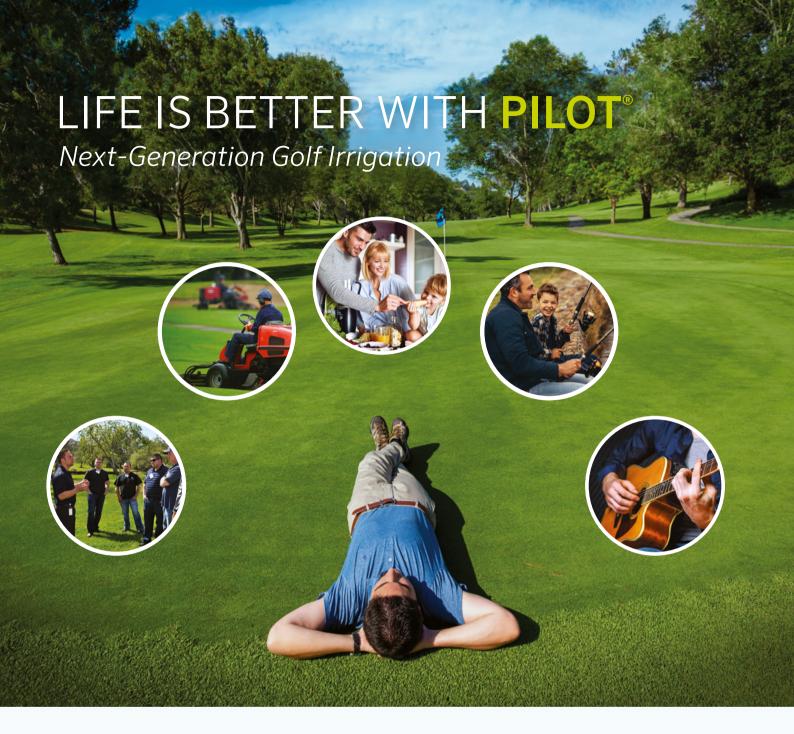
The course is expected to open in May 2020. Its 345 acres of sandy linksland offer unobstructed views over the Firth of Forth – a 10-mile wide stretch of water – and of Muirfield, North Berwick and Edinburgh.

Clive Clark's team on the project includes course manager Grahame Taylor, golf course project manager Paul Kimber, construction firm Landscapes Unlimited, and Llewellyn Matthews from Ecobunker. The development will be managed by OB Sports.

Lord Anthony Balniel, whose family has owned the Balcarres estate since the sixteenth century, said: "When we began this ambitious undertaking, our goal upon completion has always been to provide an unparalleled, memorable golf experience – not just the playing surface, but the service level, as well. I think we're well on our way to achieving that goal."









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Eckenrode completes La Jolla renovation

Todd Eckenrode has completed a golf course renovation at La Jolla Country Club near San Diego, California.

All bunkers have been renovated and all green surrounds reshaped, introducing short-cut approaches and varied chipping areas.

Some new greens have been built, including the ridge-top tenth, which was relocated to its original location. Several greens were expanded, reclaiming lost hole locations in the process.

The project has also seen the reshaping of tees to more natural forms, in keeping with Billy Bell's design, and an expansive tree removal programme has allowed for views of the Pacific Ocean throughout the property.

A highlight of the renovation for Eckenrode has been the restoration of the lower canyon holes – eleven and twelve. "These holes were so beautifully routed along this coastal canyon floor, offering respite and variety to the dramatic blufftop holes found throughout the rest of the course," said Eckenrode. "It's this kind of variety that is paramount to good golf."

Under the direction of Eckenrode and Andy Frank of Origins Golf Design, Landscapes Unlimited oversaw the construction. Shapers Kye Goalby and Matt Smallwood helped create the features while superintendent Dennis Fowler and his crew oversaw the progress and grow-in.

Eckenrode said: "It has been a privilege to work on another William Watson and William P Bell gem, two of the most influential golf course designers in California. This was a project that we couldn't be more pleased with. The members are sure

to experience a more interesting, enjoyable round now with a more classic feel to the course and a tip of the cap to its treasured history."

Don Rushing, president of La Jolla Country Club, said: "La Jolla Country Club is extremely pleased with the beautiful golf course renovation designed by Todd Eckenrode and Origins Golf Design. In six short months, we were able to deliver to our members a course that evokes the best elements of the original Billy Bell design, providing wonderful view corridors to the village of La Jolla and the Pacific, and challenges our members with variety and shot alternatives. The project was delivered on time and on budget. The club is deeply appreciative of the efforts of Origins Golf Design to bring our course project to fruition."



FROM THE ARCHIVE

Ebert studies Colt plans for Hamilton renovation

The UK-based golf course architecture firm of Mackenzie & Ebert has started renovation work at Hamilton Golf & Country Club in Ontario, Canada.

Planning work has included a thorough study of historic materials in the club's archives, which included many of Harry Colt's original sketches.

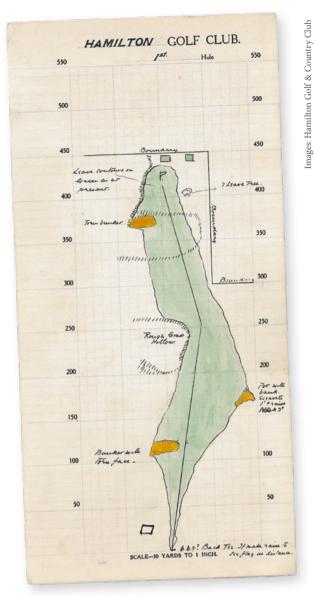
Colt's layout of eighteen holes, now known as the West and South nines, opened in 1916. The East nine was added in 1975 by Robbie Robinson.

"The plan is to reconstruct each nine in turn, keeping the members playing eighteen holes throughout, albeit for some periods to nine temporary greens while the new greens fully establish," said Martin Ebert.

"Reconstructing the bunkers is a significant aspect of the project. Over the years, the bunkers have become very refined. Hence, the bunker style to be adopted for this project will be rougher, in line with Colt's original intentions, with fescue edges, while acknowledging that the players of today demand rather more in the way of a manicured finish."

Work on the East nine aims to result in holes that fit more closely to the character of the original Colt course.

Hamilton hosted the RBC Canadian Open for the sixth time in 2019. With the tournament scheduled to return to the club in 2023, the renovation project is expected to be complete by 2021.







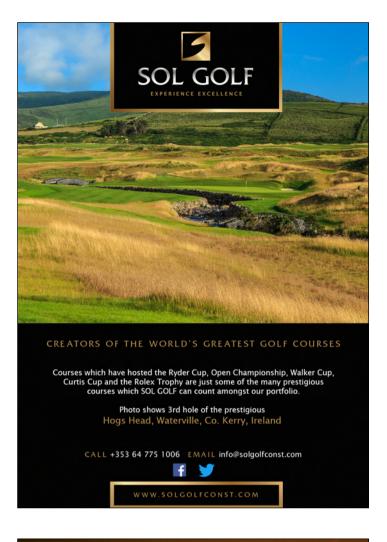


tectment, the Director red Lave no fear or these account. In exceptionally hot weather, however, care shall be taken not to set the triere of the moving moving mechines low when the higher portions are being Petting freens. The fitting freen may forsibly Love suffered through lack of meterial and suffered by the do not appear to be lacked during the war, but they do not appear to be quite so good so they should be. The foints in Shick ther even to me to be defective are :-OWELD. Rose are a considerable mumber of dantelions, which should be removed by hand. De remainder of the weeks can like to removed by Land, or Killed with Sulfhate of Simmonsa, or Early photographs of Hamilton show an open landscape, as seen

course and the plans

Points of Condition

(top) on the eleventh during the 1919 Canadian Open; left, aerials of the layout in 1934 and 2014; above, a letter from Colt's partner Hugh Alison following an inspection of the completed course; top left, Colt's original sketch of the first hole





First nine at Altaona set to open



The first nine of a new 27-hole course designed by Stirling & Martin Golf Architects at Altaona Golf and Country Village in Murcia, Spain, is set for a November opening.

Marco Martin, partner at Stirling & Martin, said: "When Blake Stirling and myself began to study routings for the huge residential resort of more than 800 acres, we admired the great work of the land planners dedicating more than 300 acres for us to design three loops of nine holes, a golf academy and a nine-hole par-three course.

"It is a really good example of how golf and a residential community can co-exist under the umbrella of maximum safety and premium views for all residents of the course's beautiful holes."

STS reports success for Zeon Zoysia in Asia

Sports Turf Solutions has reported a successful year for its Zeon Zoysia in Asia.

"Zeon Zoysia has taken off better than we could ever have hoped for," said Brad Burgess of Sports Turf Solutions. "In the past 12 months we have secured over 12 new projects throughout Vietnam, Singapore, Philippines and Korea."

Burgess puts the success of the Zeon Zoysia down to the playability of the grass. "The ball sits up and players can make great contact with the ball and it will roll out when cut tight on links style courses.



Located six miles away from the new Región de Murcia International Airport, the design duo have aimed to create a sustainable golf course. Martin said: "Earthmoving on the site is mainly conducted to catch most of the runoff water coming from the infamous 'Gota fría' – heavy rains that can bring more than 10 inches of water in less than 24 hours, just one day of the year."

The course has been grassed with Pure Dynasty paspalum. "We decided to minimise the grassing area and, at the same time, work with a well-defined landscape plan to maximise the playability and fun for all levels of golfers," said Martin. "The creativity of the green complexes, gentle shaping on fairways, and wide desert and waste areas surrounding the fairways make a real frame design for every hole."

GTM Golf is handling construction, with work on the second nine now under way.



"The maintenance costs are way down. Virtually no chemicals are required to combat insects or diseases, and once the turf is established, it is virtually weed free. Mowing frequencies are down over 50 per cent which means machinery can last longer and less fuel and parts are required and the big-ticket item that is becoming a global issue is less water requirements. As water is becoming scarcer and more valuable, the more this turfgrass is going to be in high demand."

Städler completes greens renovation at GC Hannover



Städler Golf Courses has overseen a greens renovation at Golfclub Hannover in Germany.

The focus of the renovation – which was overseen by project architects Christoph Städler and Philipp Fleischhauer – was to renew green complexes and expand the water supply.

Work began in November 2018, on the course originally designed by Dr Bernhard von Limburger. "Our planning did not only include the renewal of the actual green areas, but also the extensive redesign of all the surrounding areas," said Städler. "In general, the greens were shaped relatively softly, but through changing slopes and clearly distinguishable green sectors, the green complexes are now much more varied and aesthetically more appealing than before."

The club made use of sand from their own golf site for the construction of the greens, including the rootzone layer.

"This was unavoidable because the only access road to the golf course leads through an open-air recreational site where no permit would have been granted for the transport of several hundred sand laden trucks," said Städler. "Therefore, suitable sand had to be taken from the golf course site, which fortunately was available."

Construction was completed in late August ahead of the greens being back in play for the 2020 season.



McLemore Club opens dramatic new course

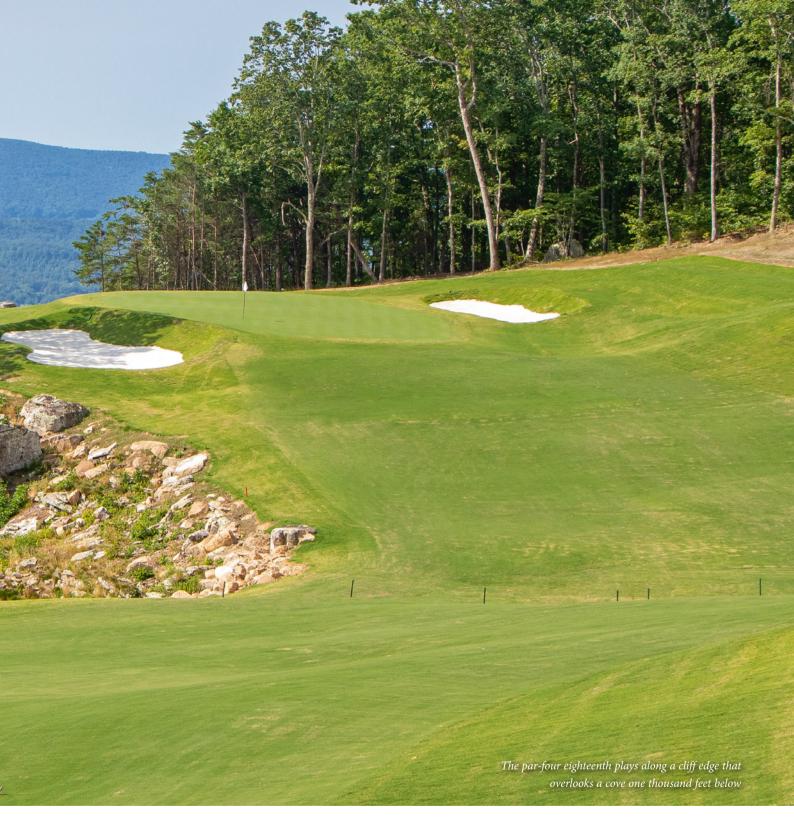
McLemore Club in Rising Fawn, Georgia, has opened its new Highlands course, designed by Rees Jones and Bill Bergin.

Development firm Scenic Land Company has completely overhauled and rebranded the former Canyon Ridge club, located on a plateau of Lookout Mountain, to create a destination that attracts both resort guests and second-home owners.

The design team was tasked with exposing the natural drama of the course while making it more conducive to enjoyable golf. A new eighteenth hole is perched on a cliff edge. "Hole eighteen may become one of the most photographed holes in the Southeast"

said Bergin. "By moving the clubhouse site to the ground occupied by the original eighteenth, we were pushed to discover and build a golf hole on an amazing lower shelf along the eastern rim of the property.

"The new clubhouse now sits on the edge of the upper brow, looking over the eighteenth all the way to the



base of McLemore Cove some one thousand feet below. The old fairway area has been completely repurposed as a delightful six-hole short course – the perfect spot to start or end an amazing day at McLemore."

For the remaining seventeen holes, existing hole corridors have been used, with the team reworking green complexes, optimising angles to green locations and overhauling fairway and greenside bunker placements.

"All new greens complexes and bunkering throughout the course presents an original style and increased playability," said Bergin. "The area around every green complex has been expanded, offering diverse recovery options and allowing players to attack or navigate their way around the many challenges natural to this rugged site."

"We first worked together with Bill at the Country Club of Winter Haven in 2013," said Jones. "And when the opportunity to work with him again at McLemore arose, we saw it as a chance to really deliver something special



Throughout the course (seventeenth hole pictured) green complexes have been enhanced and bunkering has been overhauled

for [Scenic Land Company president] Duane Horton and the entire team.

"The collaboration works because we share common ideas about strategy, playability and the way a golf hole should fit the land."

Forward tees have been added on every hole and the maintained areas have been widened. This combination is designed to make the course more playable for golfers of all abilities, while improving pace of play and reducing the number of lost golf balls.

"As a group, the par fives are the most improved holes," said Bergin. "Three

offer distinct scoring opportunities and one is a stern test for all players. Starting with the opening green on the edge of McLemore Cove and finishing with the magnificent eighteenth on an amazing cliff edge, McLemore offers fantastic golf that takes each player on a journey strewn with boulders and native grasses. Wildlife is abundant and golfers often find themselves above the clouds and looking down on majestic birds soaring over McLemore Cove."

Horton said: "We could not have asked for a greater spirit of

collaboration and creativity on the McLemore project than what Rees and Bill brought to the table.

"From planning through execution, the expertise and artistry were matched only by their shared vision and passion for the course. Equally impressive was their understanding of our site's unique mountaintop setting, respect for our overall master plan, and stewardship of the land. We are confident members and guests will appreciate and enjoy McLemore for generations to come as a result of the partnership of Bill Bergin and Rees Jones."

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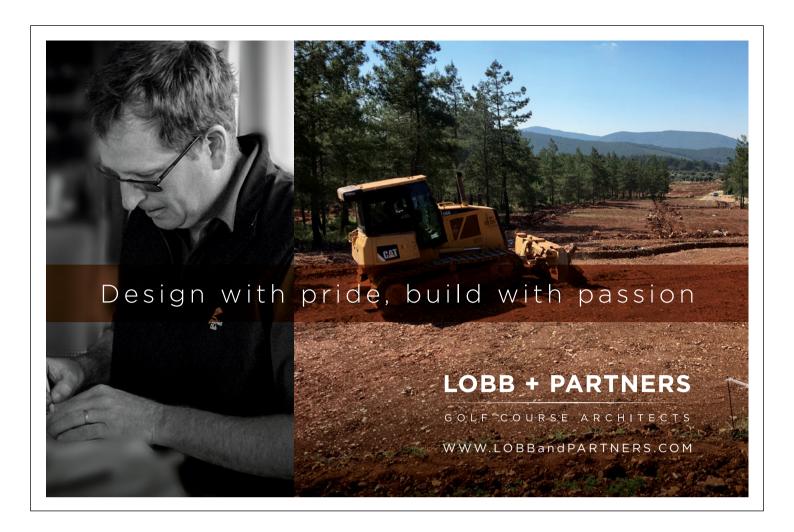
- Eric Bauer, Director of Agronomy, Blueiack National

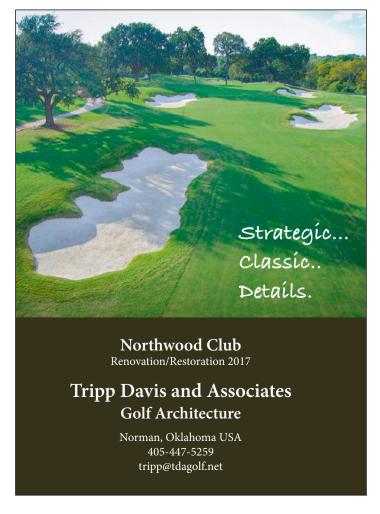
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Jeff Howes has created a "spectacular" new par-three hole at Malahide Golf Club in Dublin, Ireland, to replace another hole and make room for new practice facilities.

Officials at the club asked Howes, their architecture consultant for over 15 years, if he could devise a way of accommodating a high-quality practice area. "Despite having many positives to the facility, such as location and 27 holes, the one thing they didn't have was a decent area for practicing," said Howes. "Naturally, it should be close to the clubhouse. With no spare land I suggested sacrificing the weak opening hole on the Yellow nine for the practice area and creating a spectacular par three as a replacement."

Approval from the membership was granted this year and construction firm DAR Golf began work in August, creating a new 250 metre range with a 50 metre buffer at the end. It includes



both grass and artificial practice tees and three target greens.

Howes described the former first hole on the Yellow course as "about as ordinary a par four as you would find anywhere. Medium length, flat, slight dogleg to the right and a very nondescript green." The new par three hole is 145 metres from the back and will favour a fade. "The green is elevated and protected front-centre and right by three circular traps," said Howes. "Any shot missing the green will be a challenging up and down."

COURSE BLUEPRINT

The Pfau course at Indiana University

Construction of the Pfau course, a new layout at Indiana University designed by Steve Smyers, is complete and the course is growing in ahead of a spring 2020 opening.

Smyers' brief was to design a course that could host highcalibre championships, require golfers to execute a variety of shots, would preserve and enhance the environment, and would be economically sustainable.

"From a golf architect's perspective, I was very fortunate," said Smyers. "I was given almost total freedom to create whatever I thought best for the property and project."

"The course was routed to take advantage of the topography and



Three clusters of bunkers protect the approach to the first green

diverse landscape settings," said Smyers. "The strategy and shotmaking of the course emanate from the movement of the land and the journey around the property from landscape room to landscape room provides variety in the settings of the golf holes.

The par-71 layout will have at least five tee options, with total length ranging from 4,563 to 7,833 yards.

"There is tremendous variety built into the length of the course demanding use of all 14 clubs even for the longest of hitters. The course is planned with multiple landing areas on each hole so that the golf holes can be set up with greatly varying length from one day to the next. This will require not only high-level execution but proper planning before each hole is played."

Smyers collected data to help give him a firm understanding of how elite golfers plot their way around a golf course as well as what challenges and stimulates them. He also considered what hinders the everyday golfer too.

"In order to create the desired course, we understand that a great emphasis should be focused with proper positioning of the tee shot," said Smyers. "We felt it important that even the most off-line hit for all golfers should be easily found but would require a creative recovery.

"Realising that execution is only part of the equation we wanted to place a large emphasis on understanding the proper shot for the situation. We wanted the golfer to be able to control the spin for an approach shot or to be able to anticipate how a shot will react from an uneven lie or a ball resting in light rough.

"To further test the golfer's ability to create and identify the ideal shot for the occasion, several different situations were created around putting surfaces," continued Smyers. "We developed a balance of fairway and rough height cut of grass along with a blend of downhill and uphill shots.

"With fast running Zoysia grass fairways, light wispy fescue roughs and low-profile subtle green complexes that have generous openings in the front, the everyday golfer will easily be able to manoeuvre his or her way around the course. The different shotmaking situations will encourage and stimulate all golfers to attempt and learn new golf shots."

The course's bunkering has varying depths and shapes; while slopes within the bunkers vary.

"Because of the variety and creativity in shotmaking there was no need to develop forced situations," said Smyers. "All but one green – the eighteenth – is low profile and open in the front, allowing for and encouraging use of the ground game. The eighteenth will play very short for the everyday golfer and they will be approaching the large punchbowl putting surface with a lofted club."



Curley designs 'Wall of Death' for Siam's new layout

A fourth course at Siam Country Club in Pattaya, Thailand, is set for a soft opening this year. The layout has been designed by Brian Curley and it features a 19-foot-deep bunker complex called the 'Wall of Death'.

The course, named Rolling Hills, joins the club's other three layouts – Old course, Plantation and Waterside. Siam CC also has a fifth course in the works, the solo design debut for Toby Cobb, on a site southeast of Bangkok.

"As is the case with all the Siam CC courses, the layout is a 'core' design with no real estate element," said Curley. "This is further enhanced with a generous amount of land dedicated to the design, resulting in a very comfortable and playable feeling for players.

"Like the Old course, the annual site of the Honda LPGA Thailand, there will be an abundance of trees planted to create deep forested framing on some holes and offering desired shade for players and spectators when hosting large events.

"The course differs from the others in its attempt to emulate a more irregular and natural use of turf and bunker lines, transitional bunker edges and mini-fairway tee complexes as opposed to typical individual tees," continued Curley. "While the course design is far removed from many of the rugged and natural designs in fashion today, it is a bit of a hybrid between formal and natural design, especially with its

dominant transitional bunkering edges employing native carpet grass that produce a strong contrast in colour and texture."

Curley has designed the course to ensure players find their ball. "The large property enabled us to route holes that leave massive areas in between holes, sometimes planted in thickets of trees and sometimes left open in wide corridors for long views," said Curley. "The result is a widely varied sequence of holes that are easily distinguished and memorable.

"Green sites are quite varied in their design with some at grade, some built up, and some with strong fall away grades. Also incorporated are distinct lobes set in bowls, kick slopes,







backstops, and fairway cut surrounds that use gravity to repel wayward shots. I believe the course will be the most distinct of the four layouts and will give the Old course strong competition for favoured status."

For this project, Curley worked with a sandy site – unusual for inland Thailand – which provided him with areas to harvest material for sandcapping and creating large waste areas. "The material was easily excavated, a great thing since our reservoir was so deep," said Curley. "Very little native vegetation and trees existed prior to work so we relied on the large earthmove to create big landform movement and a significant

planting of surrounds of trees that will grow quickly, given the climate. There was one large interior lake that we incorporated into the routing and main clubhouse view but otherwise the design relied upon a created earthmove, not an integrated design 'finding' holes."

Curley has overseen the reduction of initial turf limits and conversion of rough from turfgrass to native carpet grass, to reduce irrigation demand and conserve water.

"We did deviate from our initial concept to incorporate massive swaths of pine straw-based sandy expanses as it proved too difficult to obtain the pine straw material," said Curley.

"We did, however, keep with large forested areas of casuarina trees as the backbone tree and these will, in a short time, create this bed of pine straw on top of the native carpet grass.

"I was very vocal in the initial design discussions to create unique and recognisable design features that would set the course apart from others in the region. This led to many distinct features like the 'Wall of Death' and its 19-foot-deep pit, intending to create a buzz with visiting golfers and lure those up to the challenge.

"I do believe there is great variety from hole to hole and features seldom seen in Asian courses, especially the Thai market."

THE INTERVIEW with Art Schaupeter



"We were able to take probably the most unpopular hole and make it really interesting"

GCA spoke with Art Schaupeter about his renovation work at Westwood Country Club in St. Louis, Missouri.

What was the driving force behind the project?

When the bunkers were renovated twenty years ago, the focus was on improving their maintainability. St. Louis gets a fair amount of annual rainfall – it tends to come in heavy doses through the summer. These rain events are devastating to bunkers, especially if the sand is flashed up on the bunker face.

To improve maintainability efficiency with the bunkers in the 1990s, they were shrunk down in size. The sand was kept on the bunker floor and the bunker faces were grassed with Zoysia, which would require less-frequent edging. This approach did a good job of reducing the maintenance impact, but since the sand in the bunkers is only in the floor area, it's not visible as players approach the greens. Thus,

the course loses a lot of its potential aesthetic appeal with these smaller, unseen bunkers.

How has your recent work addressed this?

By adding a liner under the sand, we would be able to control subgrade soil erosion so that the new sand wouldn't get contaminated as quickly, if at all. After the club's superintendent Corey Witzman and I met with the various representatives at the Golf Industry Show, we decided to go with the Better Billy Bunker liner.

I wanted to address the maintainability issues and I also wanted to improve the aesthetic appeal by using the new 'design tools' of improved liner technology and improved sand availability. By flashing the sand up on the bunker face I would be able to create bunkers that would be seen by the players, improving the aesthetics of the golfing experience. The bunkers are generally smaller in size at Westwood, so I kept the shaping of the bunkers simple, with subtle lines of movement on the edges.





I also went about reallocating the positions of bunkers, removing some of the greenside ones to add variety at the green while adding some fairway bunkers elsewhere to improve strategic considerations on the golf course.

Was the project purely a bunker renovation?

We also needed to repair severe erosion on the slopes of the drainage channel that ran along the length of the short par-five eighth hole. Corey and his guys completed all of the erosion improvement work. Because this was going to impact the entire length of the hole along the right side, the decision was also made to completely redesign and rebuild the green.

The green was very small, only about 3,900 square feet, and it had a small front shelf with a general pitch from the front-edge back towards the middle. With the approach shot being uphill and with a fronting bunker, it was an impossible hole location. The

club couldn't afford to have a third of the green being virtually unpinnable.

Vegetation had also grown up over the years to the point that it created a virtual wall along the right edge of the fairway that would serve to keep players and carts away from the edge. Any ball hit to the right was instantly lost in the deep vegetation.

The first part of the renovation project was the complete removal of the vegetated 'wall' of trees, which opened the view of the creek channel and opened airflow and visibility throughout the hole. Stabilising the slope removed the liability concern that the club had to worry about while also creating some additional playable space along the right and reducing the frequency of lost balls that the players dealt with previously.

Three oak trees short-right of the green were removed and replaced with two small bunkers cut into the upslope. The fairway approach was expanded down the slope to the right of the green, and the fronting bunker was put back in at the front-left of the green. The green was then enlarged with the surface shaped so that the front plateau above the bunker was shaped and sized to accommodate an effective and challenging hole location.

What has been the reaction since the completion of the project?

The most substantial renovation that impacted the overall quality of the hole was on the eighth. I like that we were able to take probably the most unpopular hole and make it really interesting – it will be fun for all members to play with all of the options they will now be able to consider.

I am very happy about the improved visual impact of the bunkers on the golfing experience. The members have been amazed at how visible they are now, even as you gaze across the property from the various high spots. It has completely changed the visual character of the course.



Palmer team completes second course at Lakewood National

Arnold Palmer Design Company has completed the second course at Lakewood National Golf Club near Sarasota, Florida.

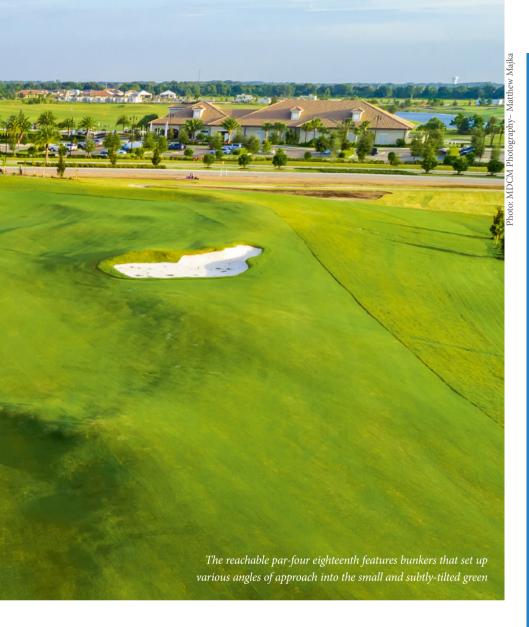
APDC completed the first course at the development, by homebuilders Lennar, in 2017. The second course is expected to open towards the end of the year.

"In contrast to the bold slopes on the first course, the client wanted a more subtle golf experience that was still creative and fun to play," said Brandon Johnson, vice president and senior golf course architect at APDC. "Playability and enjoyment for the membership were phrases we talked about frequently with Lennar. The client also stressed the importance of reduced maintenance inputs on the second course."

Clearing started in September 2018 with construction in full swing by January 2019, allowing APDC to work primarily in the dry season and complete most of the grassing prior to the wet summer season. The Palmer team were assisted by shapers Danny Peacock and Jody Mosley, who also helped Angel Garcia on bunkers, with Ryan Golf as the golf course contractor.

The finishing stretch plays along the Little Braden River wetland preserve. "The contours and shape of the fourteenth green will make shots from the array of tee complexes, wrapped around the fronting lake, play completely different from one day to the next," said Johnson.

"At the fifteenth, a dividing spine meanders down the length of this long, wide hole, terminating at a bunkerless square green whose inspiration was drawn from the 'double plateau' template hole. Holes sixteen and seventeen run through the lowest



portions of the site. The large oak and pine trees in the bordering preserve provide a feeling of enclosure on this portion of the course. The on-grade subtly-contoured sixteenth green is one I'm excited to putt on when fully grown in. The reachable par-five seventeenth has one of the tighter tee shots on the course, which opens to an oversized second landing area. Large oak trees guard the left-hand approach while a spine from the right helps guide players to a green with a singular small pot bunker tucked against the wetland.

"There is a big contrast to how the two courses finish," continued Johnson. "The first course ends on a big, bold, visually stimulating par five. Sweeping contours and large bunkers create a heroic finish. The second course, in

its own heroic style, ends with a short, reachable par four. Meaningful width was created by placing a select number of small yet strategically-placed bunkers that set up various angles of approach into the small and subtly-tilted green."

Johnson says that greens on the second course are smaller than those on the first, with green surrounds, feeding slopes and fairway contours also more nuanced. The bold slopes on the first layout help to feed balls from one side of the fairway to the other, or on to the green. In contrast, Johnson said: "Subtle landforms, lows, ridges, in addition to directing your ball onto or away from the target, serve a dual purpose and will, on occasion, open up or slightly obscure your view to the target depending on what side of the fairway you are on."

GOOD READ

"We are trying hard to make golfers think"

The latest issue of *By Design* magazine – produced for the American Society of Golf Course Architects by the team responsible for *GCA* – sees ASGCA members sharing their views and experiences of designing golf courses for US academic institutions.

"We have certainly considered all players, but have paid closer attention to how the course might be set up for high level play when needed," said Scot Sherman, about his layout for Love Golf Design that is in construction at Boar's Head Resort, which will be the home course for University of Virginia golf teams. "We are trying hard to make golfers think. After all, isn't that the point of the college experience?"

The article also includes insights from Steve Smyers, who is in progress with Indiana University's new course, and Chris Cochran, part of the Nicklaus Design team that is renovating Florida State University's course. Drew Rogers, Tripp Davis, Nathan Crace, Mike Hurdzan and Mike Gogel also contribute. "I'm not sure I'll ever have a more personal attachment to a project," says University of Kentucky graduate Gogel, on returning to design The Jayhawk Club.



To read more, download the latest issue and subscribe to By Design via www.asgca.org



New Faldo Design layout opens in Cambodia

Vattanac Golf Resort in Phnom Penh, Cambodia, has opened its East course, the first of two Faldo Design layouts planned for the resort, which will also include villas, a hotel, shops and a school.

The 7,500-yard East course opened in May and the second course, the West, is set to be completed later this year.

"Vattanac Golf Resort has been one of the more challenging but rewarding projects Faldo Design has undertaken, as we literally had a blank canvas with one or two trees on a flat plot of land that used to be occupied by rice paddy fields," said Andrew Haggar, lead architect at Faldo Design. "The opening of the East course was a proud moment for the design team – the golf course looks absolutely superb and the design features will soon become a talking point around the world."



#S #9

Construction under way on new Yas Acres course

Construction is under way on the first nine holes of the Yas Acres golf course in Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates, designed by Fry/Straka.

"This first phase is a 156-acre site and is all core golf and serves as the centrepiece for a new housing development on Yas Island," said Dana Fry. An additional nine holes will be added at a later date.

"We have lots of space to play golf and create memorable golf holes. We are also creating a few big ridgelines up to eight metres in height that bisect through the centre of the property and create separation between golf holes and help frame them too."

Fry expects grassing to be complete by late summer 2020, with the course to open in early 2021.

New golf course in Nigeria expected to open in 2020

Castle Rock Golf Club in Yenagoa, Nigeria, designed by Ron Garl Golf Design, is expected to open in 2020.

"We have been involved with so many master-planned communities throughout the years – we could bring what's working in the USA to Nigeria for an American-influenced golf residential community," said Ricky Nix, a senior designer at Ron Garl Golf Design. We incorporated the best design ideas and concepts into the master-planned community at Castle Rock." Total Golf Construction is handling work on the course, which is expected to be complete by the end of 2019.





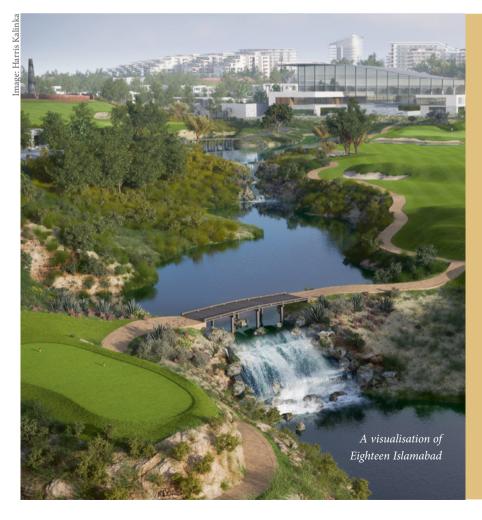
Club de Campo Villa de Madrid reopens short game and practice area

Club de Campo Villa de Madrid in the Spanish capital has reopened its short game and practice area following remodelling work by Stirling & Martin Golf Course Architects.

The project has also seen the addition of new tees in time for the 2019 Mutuactivos Open De España in early October.

"Our goal as golf architects in this special renovation was to bring back the spirit of Javier Arana, father of golf architecture in Spain and designer of 36 holes at CC Villa Madrid," said Marco Martin.

Remodelling work on the course's bunkering will be the next phase of work in the coming months.



IDG breaks ground on Eighteen Islamabad course

Ground has been broken on Eighteen Islamabad, a new golf course designed by International Design Group, located in Pakistan's capital.

The project is part of a vast community development, rejuvenating a light industrial zone, and is a joint venture between Egypt's Ora Development Group and Pakistan's Saif Group.

"The design team have worked hard to produce an exciting and very challenging layout which contests the status quo," said Jon Hunt, director of IDG. "Technically, the course has been challenging to design with very heavy monsoon rains to deal with as well as the prospect of flash floods and the steep topography."

The first phase of the project is due for completion in April 2021 with the golf course ready for play by July 2021.

PROFILED



HILLCREST COUNTRY CLUB, LOS ANGELES, USA

Star treatment

Behind an inconspicuous gateway across the street from Fox Studios, a Hollywood star has been under the knife. Toby Ingleton discovers more

roucho Marx made an exception to his own rule – "I refuse to join any club that would have me as a member" – for Hillcrest Country Club. Established in 1920 with eighteen holes laid out by Willie Watson, Hillcrest has long been counted alongside the courses at Riviera, LACC and Bel-Air as one of Los Angeles' finest, and is home club to many of the city's leading lights.

Occupying 141 acres just south of Beverly Hills, the club's original front nine sat in a valley that runs east of a hill on which most of the back nine played. This combination of terrain afforded Watson nice elevation changes, as well as long views towards Los Angeles and the surrounding oil wells.

Like most top-end US clubs, Hillcrest prides itself on pristine playing surfaces, and there is an expectation that agronomic improvements will be undertaken on a periodic basis. In the mid-2010s the club was faced with a number of deferred maintenance needs, including a new irrigation system, and they were also on the hunt for a new architect. Considerable research was conducted by the greens committee at this time, and a strong proposal was received to re-work the greens and bunkers by an architect who had recently done excellent work at a nearby country club. However, before approving the greens committee recommendations, the club's board asked general manager Miles Tucker



and director of golf John McMullen to help provide alternatives to the proposal on-hand. "We knew that water management strategies needed to be central to any significant investment into the course, and also that we had opportunities to improve both our practice facilities and overall golf experience," says Tucker. "So we worked to identify the delta between what was being proposed in terms of maintaining the existing facility, and what we really wanted, which was a facility that would differentiate us from the other clubs in LA and help us to continue to enhance our reputation as one of the best familyoriented clubs on the West coast."

The club invited several architects to pitch for the work and ultimately

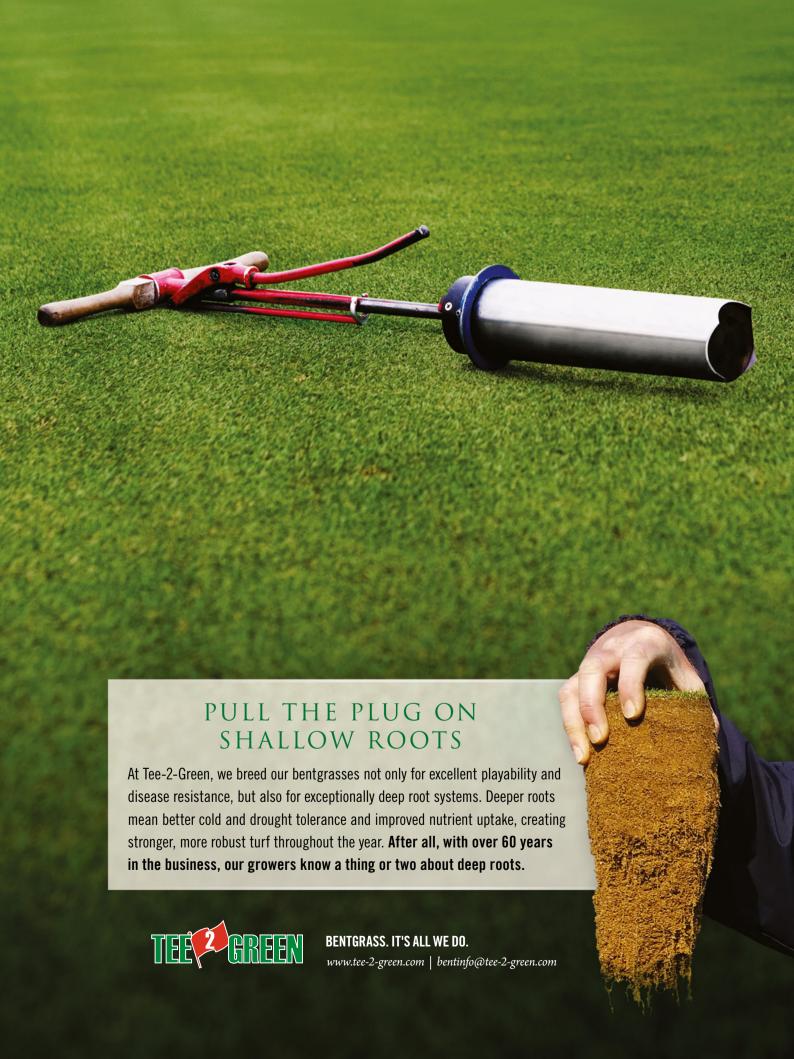
selected California-based Kyle Phillips. "We felt that the customised design approach Kyle takes on each property he is given would create something uniquely appropriate for our site," says McMullen. "We were also really impressed with his commitment to his design philosophies. It can be all too easy to bow to some of the many voices that have an opinion on what should be done, but Kyle showed a clear belief in what he felt would prepare us best for the next 100 years."

Phillips' proposal involved combining the valley and hill experiences into each nine and a mix of original, familiar and new holes. "Six holes remain in their original location but are substantially improved. Another six use existing hole corridors. And there are six completely new holes," says Phillips.

The key to the new routing lies within the integration of two areas that had historically been used as turf nurseries. "These areas had been hidden from the course for decades by large shrubs, so many members did not even know the land existed," says Phillips' senior design associate Mark Thawley.

Both areas now occupy prime locations on the course, including the new par three fourth hole, which enjoys a panoramic view of the Los Angeles skyline and the Hollywood Hills.

By bringing these areas into play and being more efficient with the routing in general, Phillips was able to convert





The fourteenth hole (above) can play in excess of 200 yards; right, the new fourth green site, previously home to one of Hillcrest's turf nurseries, looks out over Los Angeles

the land previously occupied by the old netted range, the par-four tenth and a portion of the par-five eleventh into the world-class practice facilities that the club desired. In turn that freed up the site of the old driving range tees – in prime view from the dining area – for the new eighteenth green. Alongside that are tees for a completely new first hole, which runs parallel to the eighteenth.

"The new range is still convenient to the clubhouse and first tee," says Phillips. "Occupying nearly six acres, members can now hit shots over 300 yards without the need for safety netting. A five-hole par-three course – "The Five" – has been laid out adjacent to the range and is focused on family play and fun." Between the range and short course is a new teaching centre designed by Hawkins & Marshall, who



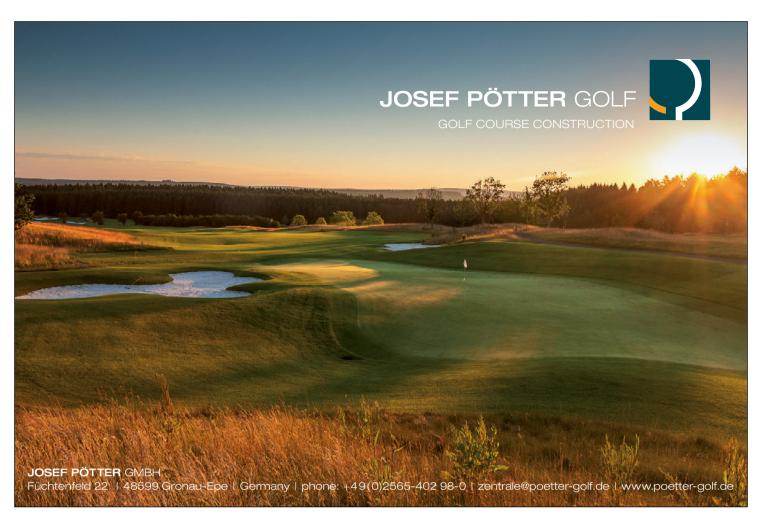
also created a new halfway house.

Tucker says that while members will coo over the new practice facilities and guests will rave over the halfway house, real golf aficionados will be "stunned" by the new course. "The memorability of the new course is defined by the par threes, which are all iconic," says Tucker. From the new 155-yard second, with its sunken green, to the massive Biarritz green at the twelfth, which plays 260 yards from the back tees, Tucker says all the

par threes are great fun to play.

The redesigned course provides a varied test. "Par fours range from 290 to 495 yards, so – like Riviera – will test every club in the bag," says Tucker. "Three of the par fives are wonderfully strategic; challenging to reach in two. The eighteenth can go to 600 yards if required, culminating in one of the most stunning green complexes on the course."

Even though the total number of trees is the same, Phillips has opened up





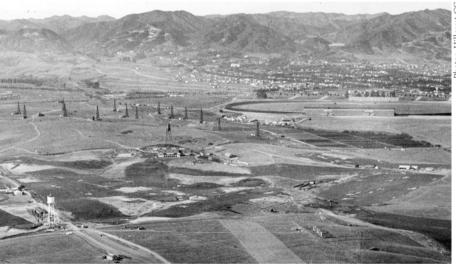


The course has returned to a more open feel, with adjacent fairways separated only by clusters of bunkers and stands of trees; Right, Hillcrest shortly after it opened in 1920

interior views, with many fairways now interconnected, separated by bunkers and stands of trees. "We put a lot of time and effort into tree management," says Tucker. "Undesired species have been removed, beautiful specimens have been relocated and new trees have been planted on the perimeter for increased set-backs and privacy. The course has a much more open feeling."

"Walking was also a priority for the membership, so the green-to-tee relationship has been improved and grass walk-offs added," says Phillips. This relationship is particularly evident at the start of each nine, with the back tees for both the first and tenth connected to the practice putting greens.

With the project complete and reopening scheduled for October, Tucker highlights the "incredible partners" that he, golf director John McMullen and the club's chairman of the project committee Arnold



Rosenstein have worked with. In addition to Thawley, Phillips' team included on-site design representative and shaping specialist Dave Smith. "In addition to shaping a stunning golf course and practice area, Dave was quick to bring any opportunities or concerns to the team's attention, rapidly proving himself to be an integral part of the broader project team." says Tucker.

Not to be confused with Dave, David Smith from Golf Projects International played a key role in managing the project from initial permitting to completion. Landscapes Unlimited was the general contractor, Brent Harvey designed the irrigation system, and planting design was by Ken Alperstein of Pinnacle Design Company.

The project wasn't without its challenges – not least that rainfall was double the historic averages during the year-long project – but Tucker is delighted with the end result. "We had very high expectations, but they have been far exceeded. Our members are absolutely blown away by the changes, and Hillcrest's golf brand is set to really grow." GCA







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DAVID BILY

Excellence at entry level

David Bily highlights two projects in Switzerland that are attracting new golfers with high quality entry-level experiences

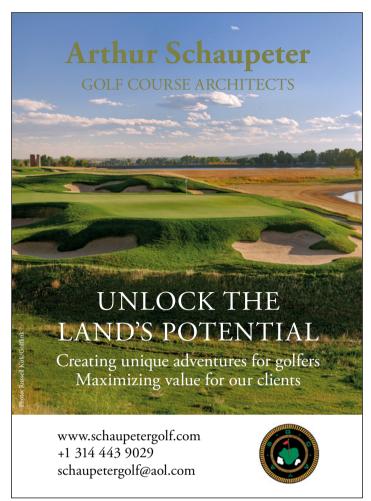
n the last 25 years, Swiss supermarket chain Migros has built eight different public golf facilities across the country, offering golfing experiences ranging from putting greens to full 18-hole courses. In doing so, they have taken a big step in making golf more accessible, because of the public nature of the facilities and that they are often short courses. It is good thing for the future of golf in Switzerland.

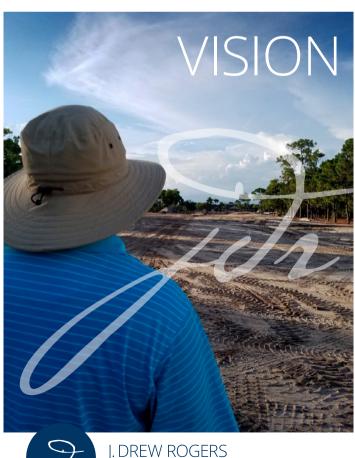
Short courses take less time to play and are easier for beginners entering the game. Steiner & Partner designed and built its first pitch-and-putt course at Ruswil in the early 2000s. Since this first project, we have continued to propose simpler short courses in harmony with the environment.

The small extension at Migro's Golfpark Oberkirch is one example where a club is investing in shorter golf alternatives and, in doing so they are contributing to creating a gateway to golf for young, old and new players to learn and play the game under their motto, 'golf for everyone'.

This particular project at Oberkirch involved extending an existing short course from six to nine holes, with two par fours and one par three designed by Steiner & Partner in collaboration with (re)GOLF. These new holes bring something extra to the existing layout, providing different challenges to the higher handicapper while offering fair and playable holes. The new downhill par three is only 110 yards but it's

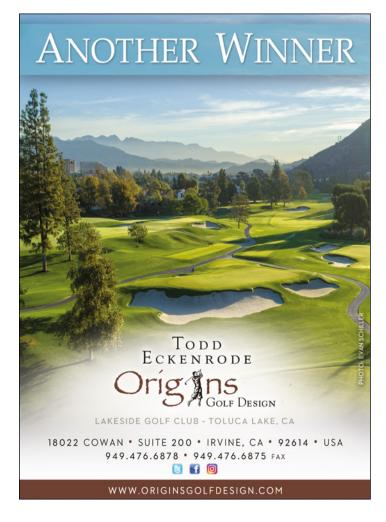






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Steiner & Partner extended the short course at Oberkirch (above) to nine holes, and at Holzhäusern introduced The Alps putting green (right), inspired by the Himalayas at St Andrews

tricky. Designed as an infinity green, it will see long balls in certain trouble. It provides a different challenge and makes players think.

The two par four holes each provide very different feelings; one uphill with very little direct visibility to the green, while the other plays downhill. A creek crossing the fairway at about halfway between tee and green offers higher-handicap golfers some food for thought and keeps the game interesting, without being too punishing.

Last year Oberkirch also finished construction of a pitch-and-putt course that we designed around their existing practice range. Golfers can use traditional equipment or play FunGolf with a larger, lighter ball and a simple multi-purpose club. This course is one of Migro's main venues for initiating 'not yet' golfers to the game.

Our firm has also been working with Golfpark Holzhäusern since 2005 on numerous renovation projects, with the goal of making the course more playable for all levels and more cost effective to maintain. In recent years,

it has also focused on renovating and extending practice and short course facilities – now offering one of the finest golf academies in Switzerland.

The Swiss version of St Andrews' Himalayas putting green was the first step in this process, finished in 2017 and called The Alps. A co-design between Steiner & Partner and (re)GOLF, this fun practice green right beside the restaurant and clubhouse is a great way to bring new golfers into the game.

But the big work at Holzhäusern has been the complete redesign of the new training academy. The new building at the heart of this project integrates the proshop, meeting rooms and club and cart storage together with a double-decker driving range. Surrounding this new building is an enormous putting green, chipping green and pitching green complex.

Steiner & Partner has converted the six-hole executive course into a nine-hole par-three course with the addition of three new tee complexes and three new giant greens – nearly 900 square



metres each. The idea behind these monster greens is to place two pins on each green, one with a regulation size hole and the other with a 15-inch diameter hole. Golfers playing together can opt for the pin that is appropriate for their ability. Of course, the larger greens also allowed us to design some interesting contours and fun putting. We hope that the larger green surfaces will give golfers a better chance of hitting the green, more satisfaction, and increase the likelihood of them returning for more.

If we want to welcome more players to the sport, we simply need to offer more attractive entry experiences. GCA

David Bily is a golf course architect at Steiner & Partner



Throughout the history of golf course architecture, the greatest compliment that can be paid to any architect is that a course works and is a fun challenge for every level of golfer, from hack to stick. But does changing club and ball technology mean that this goal is now outdated and impossible? Adam Lawrence reports



hen George Crump conceived Pine Valley, still a century on generally accepted as the world's greatest golf course, he was breaking the mould in more than one way. Crump's stated reason for creating Pine Valley was that his home city of Philadelphia had no courses which he felt were difficult enough to train champion golfers.

Now Crump, as a rich amateur, could afford to pursue his goal. But, throughout the history of golf course design, the supreme target of the architect has been something else: a course that is playable by and fun for any standard of player – in other words, something merciful enough not to constantly beat up the hacker while having enough teeth to keep the

best interested. Call it the Old Course Effect if you like: a key reason why St Andrews is still so venerated by architects is its unmatched capacity to accommodate any standard of game. With few forced carries, from its forward tee a player who can only bunt the ball can get round without leaving several sleeves of Pro V1s as an offering to the golfing gods; but with



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its enormous and lavishly contoured putting surfaces, get the surfaces firm and tuck the pins and there is plenty of challenge there to keep Open Championship contestants interested.

But there is another side to this. St Andrews, as the most famous course in the world, and one that hosts golfers of all levels every year, is surely the most obvious example; to remain challenging in the world of 460cc drivers, the championship tees have been pushed back so far that, on several holes, they are actually out of bounds in the traditional measuring of the course. And yet, when the Open comes to town, the big hitting pros can drive the greens of several famous old par fours, and have only the shortest flick to many others. The course despite its unmatched short game

challenge – is being overpowered.

We should note here that the point of this article is not to advocate for a rollback of the ball. It's true that I believe a shorter ball for tournament play to be the simplest and best solution to the problem of distance, but let us not consider that option any further. Nor is it a question of winning scores being too low, least of all in relation to the wholly artificial context of 'par'. No; the issue with pros overpowering famous old courses is the variety of skills required to play top level golf, especially the ability to hit long approaches to tightly guarded greens. There would not be a plaque in Merion's eighteenth fairway if Hogan had hit a seven iron to the green in 1950.

South African architect Andrew Goosen, currently at work on a new

nine hole layout that is designed specifically to attract beginners as well as expert golfers, says: "I think we have to focus on what the definition of fun and playable is for the weaker golfer, as it is relatively 'straightforward' to design for the long hitting pro. The new/weaker golfer, like the seasoned professional, wants to experience the thrill of successfully negotiating a penal hazard – but not too often, and not over too far a distance. They too want to be able to feel free to swing the driver as hard as possible every now and again as well. Some of this can be achieved through multiple teeing areas offering variety in hole length and the angle from which it is played. But the divide between the distances a seasoned pro hits and the average club player is massive - 100 yards with a driver, if not more. Which



results in insanely long courses with large areas of 'dead ground'.

"The bigger challenge is allowing these two types of golfers to play from the same tee box, as a large percentage of the enjoyment of the game is the socialising – much of which takes place on the tee. This is where it becomes incredibly difficult. Play it too far forward, and even with handicaps, the strong golfer will significantly outplay the weaker golfer. Play off the tips and the weaker golfer will likely not enjoy the round at all. The new handicap system has made some positive impact in this regard, but not enough.

"I don't know what the solution is to be honest, besides regulating tech and/ or maximum club usage for varying handicaps from the tee.

"If we architects are truly honest with ourselves, I just don't think it is possible these days to combine these two design objectives with any great amount of success. The stronger golfer is hitting it further and further, while the weaker golfer is hitting it wider and wider. What is a challenge to a good golfer? Bunkers certainly are not, unless very deep – but then they are too penal for the club golfer. Rough? Not really, unless it is stupidly long. And water only really comes into play if it is very close to the playing areas. So defining what is a hazard to the different levels of golfer too comes into it. Raked vs unraked bunkers - raked bunkers make it easier for the good golfer, but there is not a great difference between how a club golfer plays a raked

bunker versus an unraked one.

"There is a par five at Clovelly in Cape Town, the tenth. Most days, I go at the green in two – if I cut the corner well from the tee – with a 5-7 iron. A normal club golfer plays a long iron/wood at best; often they are hitting a short iron third. So the club put a pond short right of the green to make it tougher for 'me'. But on what planet does that level the playing field? It only widens the gap."

Robin Hiseman of European Golf Design makes a key point. "Golf architecture is almost irrelevant when the ball is in the air," he says. "No bunker, pond, or mound has value, other than aesthetic, when the ball is sailing over it a hundred feet above. When the ball is on the ground and rolling, architecture really comes to the fore, which is why the imaginative design of green surfaces and surrounds will become ever more important. Technology rules the skies, but architecture rules the earth. Intricately contoured putting greens and closely mown chipping areas working in tandem will always provide a fun and invigorating challenge."

American designer Jeff Brauer suggets a radical approach: just ignore the pros. "The tools to use? Feigning ignorance and ignoring that one per cent of golfers in favour of designing for the real golfers of the world. There are enough courses out there for those big guys. Give them a map to find them," he says, at least semi-seriously.

His compatriot Rick Phelps concurs. "Brauer has it right that we can basically ignore the one per cent because there are enough golf courses for them to seek the level of difficulty that suits them," he says. "Part of the challenge is the difference between high swing speed, long hitters, and low handicap (highly skilled) players. If you include all of the 'long-hitting' group, you are probably talking about closer to 10 per cent of the male golfing population. I've seen plenty of guys who can hit the ball 300 yards regularly, but they can't control it, so they are stuck in the 8-15 handicap zone. Still better than average, but far from the one per cent.

"In any case, the other conundrum that has been around since before my time, is the theory that the '10 per cent' group does at least 60 per cent of the word of mouth advertising for a given course. The 10 per centers are



"If you're friends with everyone, you're doing something wrong"

Mexican architect Agustín Pizá says we are all missing the point

Throughout the history of golf architecture, the supreme challenge for any designer has been to produce a course that is an interesting challenge for a high-quality player, while still being fun and playable for a weak golfer.

But unless you are designing a wow-factor course on a site like Cypress Point, the idea of a catering to both the top golfer and the beginner is pure myth.

Please, ignore the marketing hype that says the course is easy for the high handicap golfer and challenging for low. It's either or, which is it?

I would prefer to describe the wow-factor course by saying: "For the skilled player, it's challenging. For the average golfer, it's a great place to lose balls and take loads of pictures of the amazing views."

I don't care how far back you bring the tees, real scoring begins from the second shot onwards. If you are creating a golf course that is a complete challenge to a top golfer, honour it and create tight lies, fast and undulating greens, thick rough, tricky approaches and runoffs and deep bunkers with a distinct challenge – like a downslope to a green that slopes towards another bunker or a water hazard.

But designing for the one per cent is the worst thing you can do for a successful business model. The one per cent usually play for free!

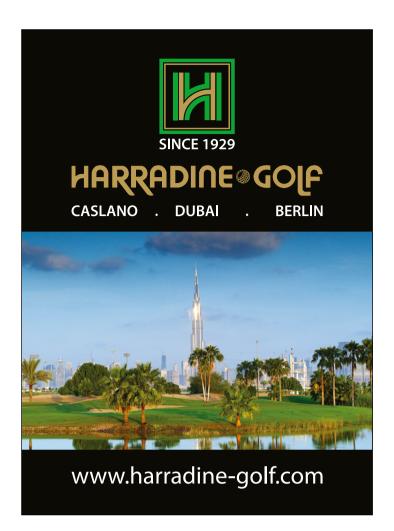
In my neck of the woods, which is probably yours too, the course needs to create revenue and our designs need to cater to the average 24-handicap golfer who travels and pays for golf, hotels, shirts, drinks and eats. The one that at the end of the day leaves behind 1,000 buckaroos per round.

I learned this from two of my mentors, Robert von Hagge and Gary Player, and since 2006 I have designed my courses with 210 metres from tee to first landing area, then I add back tees. This results in very happy members/resort players. Top players still enjoy it, but it's not catered for them and we don't pretend it is.

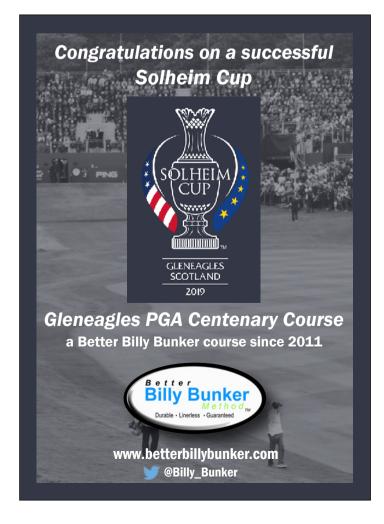
We don't need to challenge the high handicapper, they will challenge themselves. The majority of golfers in the world just want to break 100 on a Saturday morning and go for dinner with a smile on their face.

There are three factors that create difficulty on the course: the nature of the site, the architecture and the maintenance setup.

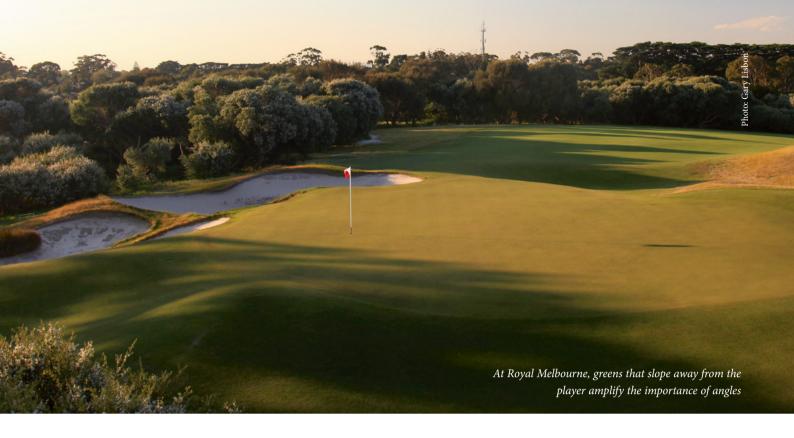
If your course is not managed to tour conditions 24/7 then it's not catered to the championship golfer experience and if it is, then it doesn't cater to high handicap. I prefer a little honesty and believe in defining the objectives from the start in order to hit the market right at the bullseye. The rest will be like the old saying: "If you're friends with everyone, you're doing something wrong".











avid players who tend to travel a lot (they see a lot of different golf courses), their opinions are valued by their less-skilled friends, so what they say is bad, good or great, makes it so. Golf writers have done a tremendous job of exposing average golfers to courses that have sometimes been panned by the 10 per cent group, by talking about variety, fun and excitement as it presents itself to the average player.

"My dad [architect Dick Phelps] made a career out of designing courses for the average player. His courses were rarely trumpeted by the low handicappers, but they were, and still are, almost always the busiest courses in their given market segment."

Jay Blasi, one of the world's leading young architects, takes a different view. "It can be done," he says. "For me the key is green complex design and ability to recover. I've had this same design brief twice on existing courses (SentryWorld and Santa Ana). Both times the course rating went up from back tee (indicating the course was more difficult for scratch players) and the slope went down from middle tees (indicating the course was more

playable for normal golfers). This was achieved by widening corridors and removing penal bunkers/trees/rough/ water that wasn't in play for scratch players. The green complexes feature open entrances and lots of short grass around greens. This allows regular players to approach and recover. Scratch players find short grass around greens more challenging on approaches and recoveries. Good design can achieve both goals and there are examples with objective results."

Australian designer Scott Champion of Harrison Golf says that the best answer can often involve looking back. "The best tools at our disposal need not be new ideas," he says. "They are ingrained in the make-up of the great courses that continue to be enduring tests of golf. The tool I believe to have the most value in combating distance is the use of angles.

"Place greater importance on where to position your ball, rather than how close to the hole you can hit it. A 150yard shot from a particular part of the fairway should be easier than a 120-yard shot from another. Provide sufficient width to let scratch golfers figure out where they need to be to access certain pins, while providing the bogey golfer ample space to enjoy their round without continually hacking out of long rough.

"Firm greens are an essential ingredient for this strategy to be effective. If you are served the usual lush, soft greens that we see most weeks in professional golf, it doesn't matter which angle you approach from – or whether you are even on the short grass – because you will be able to stop the ball with a short iron regardless.

"The greens should emphasis these angles, and in some cases require different angles to different pins. The use of downslopes within greens is a feature that is not utilised enough today – nor are greens that slope away from you. These amplify the importance of angles and ensures that accessing certain pins from out of position is very demanding. Want to see the best example of this? Go to Royal Melbourne. However, with the distance modern professionals hit the ball today, even Royal Melbourne is not immune to being overrun in benign conditions." GCA

A model club

ROYAL NORWICH, ENGLAND

Royal Norwich is capitalising on a unique opportunity to develop a club experience for the modern golfer, from the ground up. Richard Humphreys reports





e are frequently told the barriers to golf's growth: it is too hard, takes too long and is too expensive.

Some clubs have retrofitted their courses in an attempt to overcome these challenges, adding new forward tees, reconfiguring their routing so shorter loops can be played, and introducing pay-as-you-play schemes to keep costs down.

But Royal Norwich in England has grasped a bigger opportunity. Rather than trying to adapt its existing facility to the modern golfer, it has started from scratch – thanks to a move from the city centre site it has occupied for 125 years.

Their relocation has been on the cards since the 1980s, when the club was first approached by a homebuilder interested in their prime

real estate. Its James Braid layout was already becoming compromised by surrounding development, so they were open to the idea. That deal – and a number of subsequent others – never quite made it over the line, but planted a seed with the club that would ultimately bear fruit. In 2013 paperwork was signed with Persimmon Homes and the move could begin.

The club had already evaluated a number of new locations, and settled on a site on a country estate in the village of Weston Longville, about ten miles out of town. As early as 2006 they had engaged European Golf Design to evaluate the possibilities, and together they began to form a vision for the model club of the future: welcoming, family-friendly, accessible, inclusive, appealing to beginners and

experts alike – and capable of being enjoyed in shorter timeframes and at a reasonable cost.

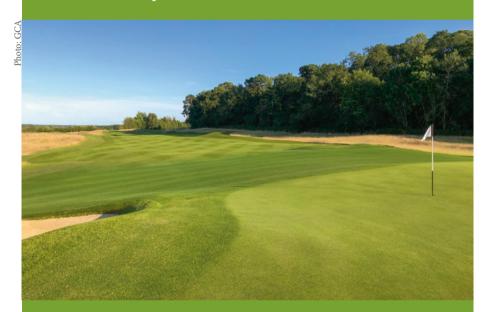
The clubhouse – a former stables block – will play an important role in this – eschewing "photos of dead people and lists of names adorning the walls" for welcoming and modern dining options, spaces for fitness classes and a relaxed dress code. But crucially, EGD's Ross McMurray has also designed the golf facilities with these principles to the fore.

His design revolves around what general manager Phil Grice describes as a 'central hub'. Directly beside the clubhouse is an outside seating area that overlooks a large putting green. To the right is a short game area, beyond which are the tees for a large driving range. Ahead are the tees for the first hole; and to the left the tenth,



A firm foundation

Healthy and firm turf will bring the best out of Royal Norwich's new golf course design. Gavin Kelly explains how Profile Products has helped the club establish a rootzone to achieve this



Situated in one of the UK's driest regions – receiving less than 700 millimetres of rainfall a year – Peter Todd and his team at Royal Norwich needed agronomic solutions that would enable greens to deliver predictable maintenance requirements.

Peter and golf course architect Ross McMurray considered a few different options. They discounted using peat pretty early on, because sustainability was an important part of this project, and looked at green waste and other inorganic amendments.

The design team came to Profile Products and together we ultimately agreed on Profile Porous Ceramic (PPC) Greens Grade rootzone amendment in both greens and tees. It has been used in greens and renovations for over a decade, but Royal Norwich would be the first time the product has been used in a UK new build.

The PPC particle found in Greens Grade is 74 per cent pore space with 39 per cent capillary (water) pores and 35 per cent non-capillary (air) pores. Blended with sand in a greens mix, it can improve water- and nutrient-holding capabilities, increase oxygen levels at the rootzone, and facilitate drainage when soils are saturated.

The folks at Royal Norwich are dedicated to creating a course that's going to excel in the long-term. Using PPC in its greens, Royal Norwich will see an improvement in filtration as well as air and water porosity. In the end they are going to see some very healthy deep rooting root zones.

as well as the closing greens of each nine. A pathway leads to a six-hole academy course.

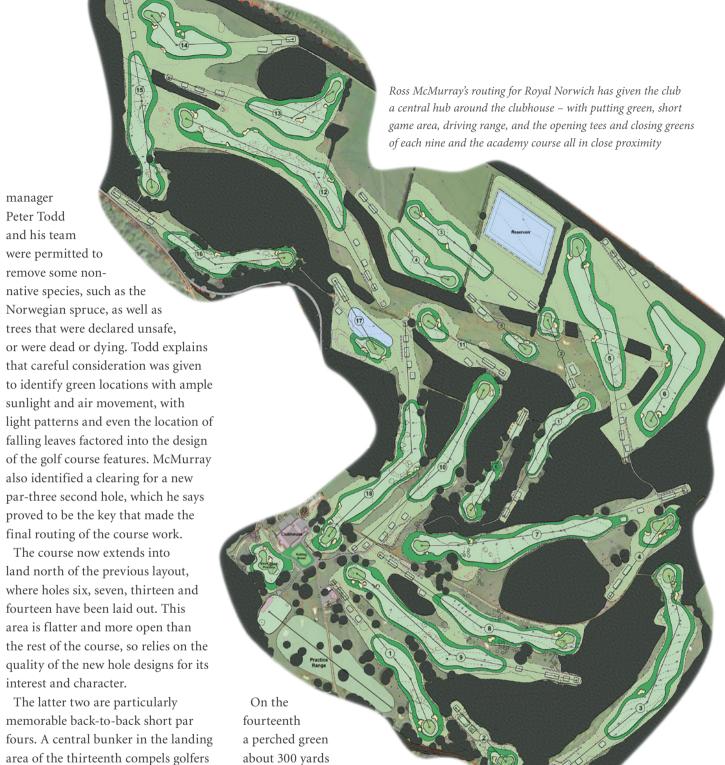
It is a hive of activity, where members can interact and spend as long as they like enjoying all aspects of the game, deep in the Norfolk countryside, among both woodland – with mature oaks, beech, lime and chestnut trees – and more open, parkland areas.

"The site is the star," says McMurray.
"It's not often you get to work with a site of this quality, so we didn't want to create a course that yells 'here's me' and imposes itself on the landscape.
We designed a course that golfers would want to come back and play the next day and would be fun for everyone, whatever their standard."

On the main course, the design allows for movement in both directions – width and length. "We have created generous fairways and holes that are easy enough for the better player to bogey, but a challenge to birdie," says McMurray. Those fairways are lined with light fescue which, with appropriate maintenance, should be thin enough to make it easy to find and play errant tee shots.

And Grice describes the course as "the longest in Norfolk, and also the shortest." Bronze tees play from just over 5,000 yards, but the Gold stretch over 7,200, with three more options in between.

The estate did have a golf course before, but all features – tees, greens, bunkers – have been completely redesigned and rebuilt. Some of the previous hole corridors have been used, essential given the tree preservation orders in place on the site. Estates

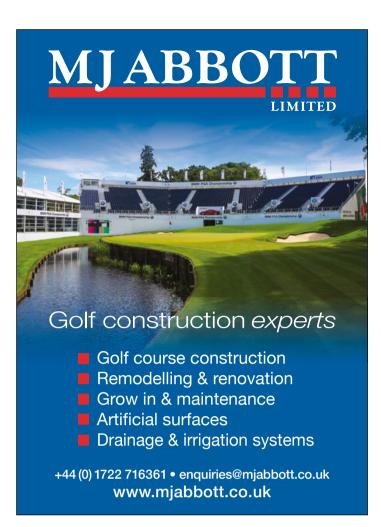


The latter two are particularly memorable back-to-back short par fours. A central bunker in the landing area of the thirteenth compels golfers to make a decision from the tee, which could be anything from a midiron short of the hazard to a drive that challenges the hole's dogleg. An enormous green extends at least fifty yards from front to back. But the toughest pin placement might be right at the front, in a spot guarded by a single bunker. A lofted approach landing short of a ridge in the green will be needed to avoid three-putt territory.

a perched green about 300 yards away, depending on your tee choice, might tempt long hitters. For everyone else, the primary challenge will be to avoid a string of bunkers that fronts an angled fairway. That will leave a short iron approach to a treacherous target that is protected by bunkers and a steep dropoff to the left side.

Elsewhere, the par-five third hole is a highlight. Good tee shots are rewarded with a generous kick forward that will be needed to consider going for the green in two. The hole sweeps to the left and rises and narrows towards the green, with two large bunkers on the right pinching the entrance further.

McMurray delivers width from the tee on most holes, but there are still a couple of occasions where golfers









may reach for an iron. The par-four tenth, for example, places a premium on accuracy from the tee. It's a long hole so laid-up tee shots will leave another long shot, but it has one of the course's most accessible greens, open right across the front and tilted from back-to-front. The fifteenth and

its narrowest; taking direct aim will bring the risk of a spoiled scorecard.

Throughout the course the quality of construction – by MJ Abbott – is outstanding: bunkering is used sparingly but is bold, and the green complexes are particularly striking. Most are open to a running approach

"Bunkering is used sparingly but is bold, and the green complexes are particularly striking"

sixteenth also require exacting tee shots, meaning golfers will need to hold their nerve as they approach the end of the round. The seventeenth is a short par three, but the only hole on the course where water is in play – a lake will need to be carried from all but the most forward tee box. When the pin is on the left of the wide green, the carry is at its longest and the target

and short grass run-offs have been employed extensively in the surrounds to leave an array of recovery options – it will often be possible to use a putter, but a more demanding shot may be required to get close to the pin. For this design approach to work, the course will have to play reasonably firm and the club and design team have gone to great lengths to provide the best possible

playing surfaces. Soil amendments from Profile Products have been used to promote turf health (see page 54), while moisture sensors and a new Rain Bird irrigation system give the greenkeeping team the ability to precisely control the application of water on the course.

In the UK, this may be one of the most significant golf projects of recent years, and we should be grateful that someone has taken on the challenge of reinventing the club experience. Early signs are promising. Even before the new course opened in October, Grice said that membership numbers had risen from 400 to over 1,000.

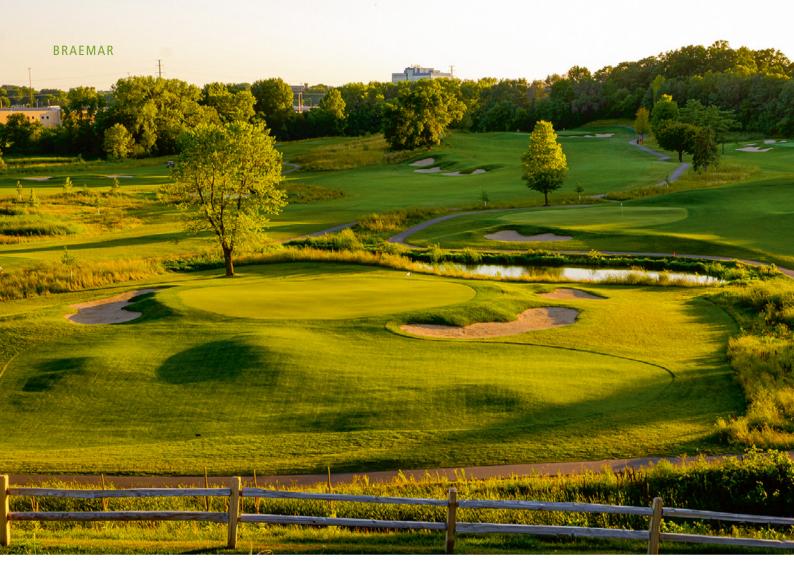
A welcoming environment that is focused on enjoyment seems like an obvious way forward for golf, and Royal Norwich could be the poster child for this movement. For others tempted to follow, it might be worth jumping before you are pushed. GCA



BRAEMAR GOLF COURSE, EDINA, USA

Richard Mandell has transformed a municipal facility with 27 tightly-packed holes into a memorable 18-hole layout with room for golfers, and the environment, to thrive. Toby Ingleton reports





or golfers with the ability to miss a target by a massive distance — thanks to suspect swing planes, an absence of clubface control and modern technology that means we can hit further off line than ever — the prospect of a courseful of claustrophobically narrow fairways can be pretty miserable. At most clubs, and certainly at public courses, the majority of golfers are not highly skilled. If you keep making us miserable, we will return less often, or not at all.

Officials at the city of Edina, near Minneapolis, Minnesota, realised this. They also questioned whether cramming as many holes as they could into a golf facility necessarily equates to more revenue, and the impact it had on the environment.

By the early part of this decade, conditioning at the city's 27-hole

municipal facility, Braemar Golf Course, had deteriorated to such an extent that golf was becoming unsustainable. Some holes were routed in boggy soils and the course frequently flooded, closing for days at a time. One loop was so bad that golfers would cancel their round if that nine was allocated when booking. Difficult forced carries and narrow fairways led golfers to choose other courses.

The city needed a radical plan, and in 2014 turned to Richard Mandell — who had recently completed a highly-regarded renovation at nearby Keller Golf Course, also a municipal — to provide it. "The problem was how to revitalise an under-performing and outdated 27-hole course on an environmentally-sensitive property dismissed by golfers, and seen by citizens as draining tax dollars," he says.

Mandell's solution was to replace the existing 27 holes with a brand new 18-hole course. It was a big ask for the city – removing a third of its holes would potentially remove a third of its revenue. The golf course would have to be very good for it to pay off.

Five years on, the new Braemar course has opened and is more than very good – it is an absolute joy to play.

The layout is extremely forgiving from the tee; even the most erratic golfer will have a chance of completing a round without losing a ball. That's not to say the course is easy. With width comes options, and good choices and accuracy are rewarded.

On the first, playing left will open the best angle to the green. On hole two, hug the creek that bisects the fairway for a shorter approach. The pattern continues, with each hole presenting



Above, the par-four opening hole. Left, the par-three thirteenth, which plays from hilltop tees. In the background is the fourth green and the par-four fourteenth hole

options that allow golfers to capitalise on precision play, without necessarily crashing out of the hole if that big miss rears its head.

With fewer holes to accommodate on the site, Mandell could eliminate areas with poorer soil and use the topography of the property to its best. In doing so, he has let the land dictate the routing. Any preconceived notions about pacing of holes were thrown out, instead he embraces the quirky results, notably a six-hole stretch from the third that alternates between par threes and par fives.

The course is all the better for it and passes the test of greatness: every hole is memorable, even after a single play. Some are particularly so. The par-three thirteenth, a mid-iron from the top of a hill in the centre of the property, is exhilarating. On the par-five fourth,

players are compelled to choose one of two very different routes to the hole separated by three bunkers cut into a hillside. I took the high route and didn't quite hit the distance required for the second shot to kick all the middle of the eighth fairway, about eighty yards short of the green, will curse you with indecision.

The par fives on the back nine will see fewer eagle putts. Elevated tees cut into the hillside invite you to grip-and-

"A six-hole stretch from the third alternates between par threes and par fives"

way to the green, but was left with a delightful bump-and-run shot down the hill to a plateaued green.

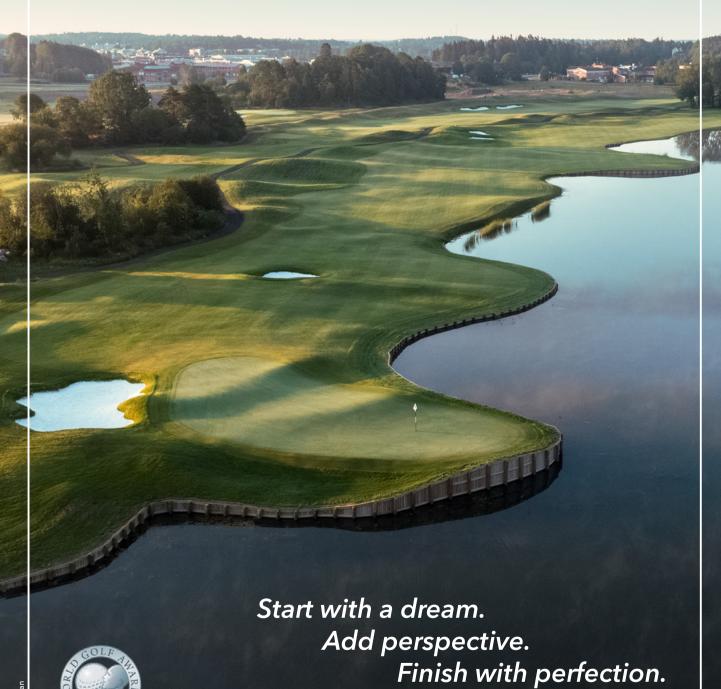
That fourth hole is the first of a remarkable set of par fives. The first three are reachable in two if you've chosen the correct tees from the set of six on each hole. But the undulating fairway of the sixth means you'll need to catch a decent lie, and an innocuous-looking bunker in the

rip from the eleventh tee, to the most undulating fairway on the course. The second half of the hole rises sharply uphill to a perched green protected by two deep bunkers.

The sixteenth is heroic. The tee shot plays over a large lake to a wide fairway (progressively less carry is required as you move up the tees, with the first two avoiding the carry altogether). If your drive comes to rest far up the left



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side of the fairway, you'll be tempted to take on a second water carry, to a narrow green over another section of the lake. You'll need everything in your favour to pull both of those shots off, but they will be forever etched into your golfing memory bank if you do.

Mandell's new layout, coupled with the massive driving range, short game area and putting green, plus an academy course designed a few years ago by Kevin Norby, are enough to make you jealous of the residents of Edina. Even at the full weekend rate, they will get change from fifty bucks.

A fantastic public golf course isn't the only payoff though - the redesign has also preserved floodplain, increased wetlands and restored oak savanna.

Mandell took an environmentfirst view of the project. "Richard's

approach was to engage

the regulatory agencies early and often," says Ann Kattreh, who was director of parks and recreation for the city at the time of the renovation. "He learned and understood the rules and regulations and worked clearly within them. He didn't push the rules, but

well within the limits, much to the delight of our regulatory agencies. Richard's approach quickly earned the respect of all agencies and made the approval process relatively quick and easy."

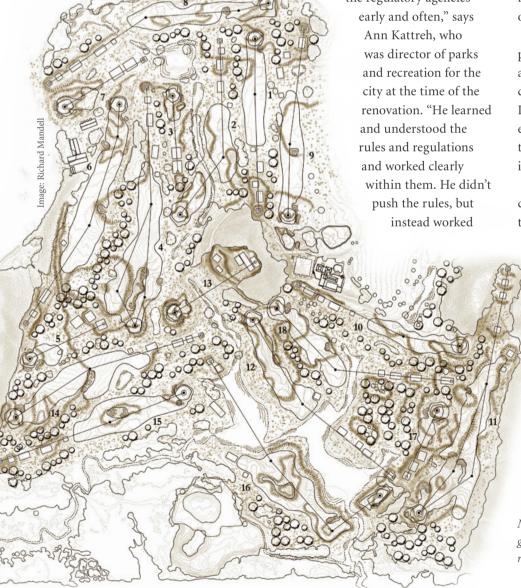
The results are impressive: nearly five acres of created, restored or enhanced wetland; over 30 acres of wetland buffer (only 20 acres were required for regulatory compliance); nearly 10 acres of former golf course set aside for a multi-use area; and almost 35 acres of oak savanna restoration.

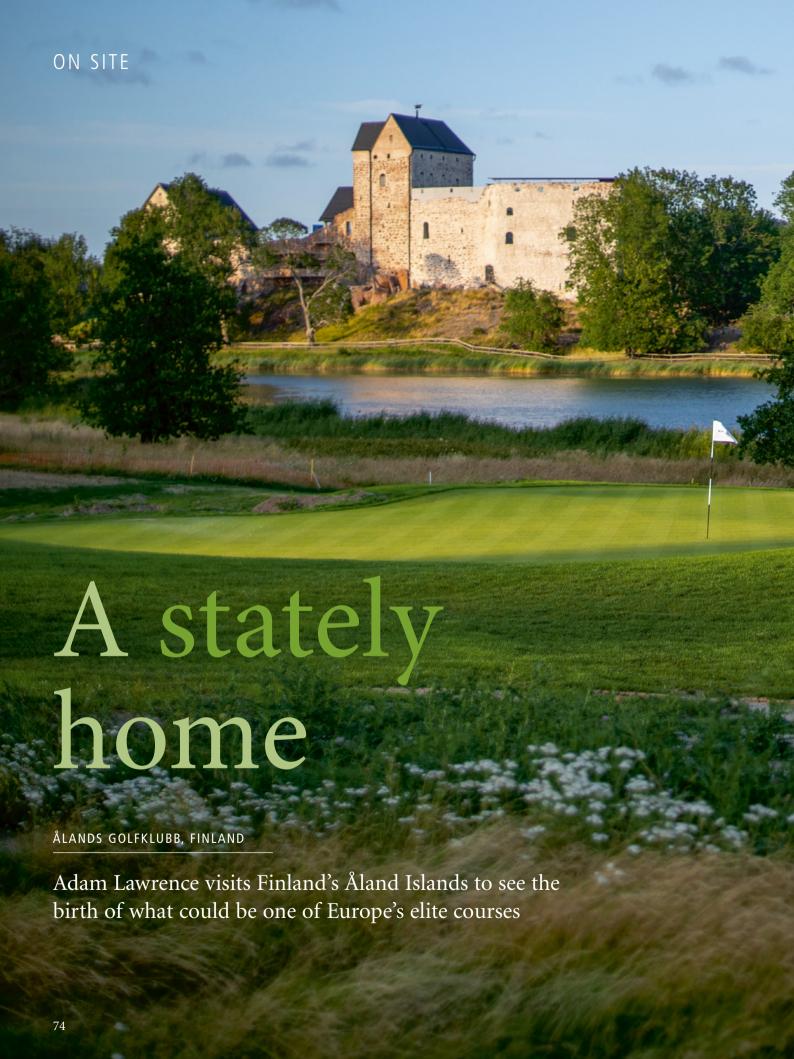
"The environmental aspects of the project are a great example of how golf and the environment can successfully co-exist," says Mandell. "The fact that I first sought to understand what my environmental limitations were, and then designed the course around them, is critical to the course's success."

What is so gratifying about the new course at Braemar – particularly for those interested and involved in golf

> course architecture – is that the thrill of the round is a direct result of an imaginative and intelligent golf course design. The site is perfectly pleasant, but it is no Banff Springs or Pebble Beach. There are no mountain backdrops or crashing waves to awaken the senses. But each hole is an invitation to enjoy the game. If Braemar returns from the brink, and I am confident it will, it's thanks to a great golf design. GCA

Mandell has delivered a vastly improved golf experience while surpassing the requirements of environmental agencies









he most important component in a top class golf course is usually the quality of the underlying land. Give the best architect in the world a flat farmer's field on poor soil with no natural features of note and, despite all the earthmoving techniques at his disposal, he'll struggle to produce anything better than good. Cypress Point is a global star because it was Dr MacKenzie who got to build it, but in truth even a less distinguished designer would have expected to do something pretty grand on that piece of land.

The fundamental reason for this is that as humans we know what to expect in a particular location, and if something is too radically changed it is hard for us, emotionally, to accept it. Harry Colt famously told would-be designers to enhance and work up natural feature, but not too much. If we step on to a golf course and it is obvious to us that

it bears no resemblance whatsoever to what surrounds it, it's hard for us to get over this lack of authenticity: it can be done, as courses like Shadow Creek or Calusa Pines prove, but they are the exception that proves the rule.

So the best way for an ambitious golf architect to build something stunning is to get his hands on a great piece of ground. In these days when most architectural work is focused on renovations of existing courses, this is harder to do. If another architect has had chance to work on a site before you, it's likely that he will have found most of what makes it great, and you are restricted to tweaking holes for incremental improvements – still important work, but not the kind of thing on which a global reputation is made.

Which is what makes the project currently going on at the Ålands golf

club in Finland so unusual. The Ålands are an archipelago of over six thousand islands sitting in the Baltic Sea between Sweden and Finland. They belong to the latter, though they have a great deal of autonomy, but are culturally linked with the former – the islanders speak Swedish as a native language. The golf club has two courses, Slottsbanan (the Castle course) and Kungsbanan (the King's course), both designed by the late Swedish architect Jan Sederholm from the 1970s.

As one might expect in a group of small islands, the sea plays a large role in the site of the Ålands club, though one might be forgiven for not knowing this if one had only seen the club in its pre-project state. The Castle course, named after the medieval royal castle that sits atop the property, guarding the shore, occupied land that flowed along the banks of the fjord, but really



did not interact with the sea in any meaningful way. When the club hired Danish architect Philip Christian Spogárd to upgrade the Castle course, the architect, on walking the site, naturally concluded that the sea needed to play a much larger role in the strategy and ambience of the golf course.

"The existing course did not optimise the close relation to the sea, with more or less no holes feeling closely connected with the shoreline," says Spogárd. "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 new course is radically different from the old, though it mostly uses existing hole corridors, at least in part to reduce the cost of grassing. Several of the corridors have been reversed, while other turf areas have been cleverly incorporated into new holes. It is a really smart piece of work, that will result in members getting an almost entirely new experience without the cost of regrading the entire property.

The first and most dramatic interaction with the sea comes at the new par three ninth. Spogárd recalls clambering through dense vegetation and realising



On the rocks

Kai Hulkkonen, director of construction firm Nelson & Vecchio, reflects on the Ålands build

The Ålands site is spectacular to look at, but under the surface was a challenge for the construction team. This project was the exact opposite to working on a sandy site; aside from a very small layer of soil, it was all rock. Previous drainage solutions were very rudimentary in places, and therefore not particularly effective.

Added to that were the logistics challenges you would expect of working on an island of just 27,000 people, particularly when it comes to sourcing machinery. But the client was wonderful – they live with this reality all the time and already had more equipment on hand than most clubs.

Avoiding blasting to maintain a reasonable budget, we had to be careful with the placement of catch basins so that drainage wasn't needed in areas of bedrock. Thankfully, a close working partnership with architect Philip Spogárd gave us some flexibility – he would give us clear guidance on how he wanted the greens, and how the holes would play, but gave us the freedom to develop a technical solution so the golf course would drain effectively.

One of the most pleasing aspects of the project was that the local authorities permitted us to create a kilometre of new coastline – where the ninth, tenth, sixteenth and seventeenth holes meet the sea. Previously the coastline had quite an engineered appearance, a relic from its farming past, but now we have been able to give it a much more natural look.

We had to be conscious of tidal movement and allow for the variance in water level at the shore, but by cutting inland the golf plays on the naturally higher ground away from the original coastline and as a result is now much less susceptible to flooding.

The end result is very special and thanks must go to the outstanding team of three shapers and fifteen construction workers we had on the project.

Ålands now has a very high calibre golf course and it is encouraging to see the club's approach to its new asset, such as the hiring of bentgrass expert Per Gundtoft – who has previously worked for Himmerland and Valderamma – as a grow-in consultant consultant. Ålands is now in a prime position to regain the interest of the large numbers of Scandinavian golfers who previously enjoyed short breaks there, but over recent years had been drawn to newer facilities.



Spogárd says incredible looking holes are actually very playable when you discover how to unlock their secrets

that he was on a small, rocky point of land that poked out into the fjord. It was not quite large enough for a green, but a judicious piece of blasting - despite the rocky site the only use of dynamite on the project – fixed that and created a quite remarkable short hole, where the further right the pin is located, the more golfers will need to take on the sea. Shaper Shane Ringwood, in grooming the hillside behind the putting surface so that balls will run back onto the green, used stone mined from the location to build a circular stone structure, which could be part of a halfway house complex, or could just be sold to golfers as a historical remnant (a Viking pissoir?). For sure on a nice day, this hillside – between the green of the ninth and the tee of the par four tenth – will be a glorious place to sit with a cold beer, watching friends take on the challenge of the ninth.

Ten too plays along the fjord, in the style of a classic Cape par four. When I visited, American architect Tony Ristola, creator of the Sand Valley course in Poland, was helping out the construction crew by finish shaping the green – which sits on fill in an area that was previously sea. Eleven to fourteen then leave the sea and pass by the clubhouse, while the fifteenth, a downhill par three to a green with Redan-like characteristics, returns the course to the water, as well as being the closest point to the castle from which the course gets its name. The sixteenth is an excellent par four along the water to another green created using fill in an area that used to be sea. Hit the tee shot left, close to the water, and the approach will be basically all carry over sea; further right is less terrifying, though players on this side of the fairway will be firing towards the water. Seventeen is another fine par three playing along the fjord. The well-guarded green features the first bunkers to be built on the course using the Durabunker method. One of contractor Nelson & Vecchio's shapers built them, and they are very pretty, a good example of more complex edges that can be created with revet; the artistic Spogárd would be less than satisfied with round pots.

"We want to give the golfer the feeling of success – and we try to achieve this by putting them in front of some incredible looking holes, which are actually very playable when you discover how to unlock their secrets," says Spogárd.

All in all, the new Castle course is clearly destined to be a very fine piece of work indeed, one of the best in Scandinavia, perhaps even among the best in Europe. The club, which already gets a lot of holiday golfers, is going to have to gear itself up to cope with more and more demanding visitors. For architect Spogárd and his partner Michiel van der Vaart, already recognised as one of Europe's most exciting up and coming design teams, it is another triumph. Golfers from around the world should be figuring out how to get to the Ålands, where they'll see something genuinely new and good. GCA



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Golf for all

Benjamin Warren of Artisan Golf Design explains how his redesign of a municipal short course in Minnesota is focused on accessibility for the entire community

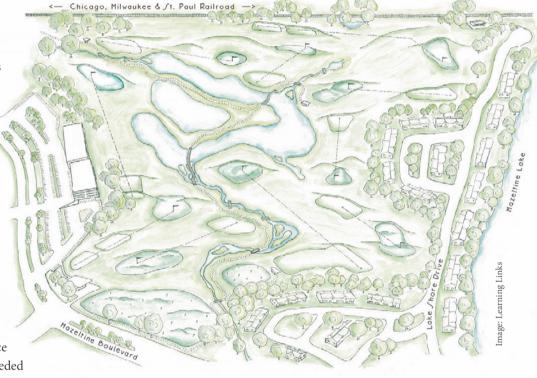
here seems to be some momentum in short course development. The developers of destination resorts have proven that these facilities are popular and profitable.

I consider the success stories at Goat Hill Park and Winter Park 9 to be more exciting though. Short courses are a perfect fit for urban lifestyles and can wipe their feet financially as part of a city's golf portfolio.

We're excited to have approval for our redesign of the Chaska Par 30 course in Minnesota, which is next door to Hazeltine National. After 50 years of service the Robert Trent Jones layout needed investment. Stakeholder engagement indicated that project goals should also embrace sustainability and accessibility. Local non-profit Learning Links is raising charitable dollars to supplement public funds. Could this model be a blueprint for other cities?

We're working with elite adaptive golfer Caroline Mohr to ensure that playing features on the new Par 30 are fun and safe for golfers with disabilities.

Caroline highlights the therapeutic benefits of spending time in green



space, herself coming back to golf after losing her leg. "It was freeing, healing and exciting," she said. "The golf course is a place to find your voice as a player, challenge your limits and grow. It is not only a place to practice your golf swing, but to actually deepen your knowledge about yourself, test your focus and learn about how you react to specific challenges. That's the interesting part about golf, it goes far beyond the game on the course."

Our new design for the course retains

the current par of 30 but features ten all-new golf holes.

We'll move the clubhouse over to Hazeltine Boulevard and build a Himalayas-style putting course inspired by the public putting greens in my hometown, North Berwick. These types of facilities are a tried and tested entry point to the game. Absolutely anyone can enjoy the feeling of trundling a golf ball towards a hole. There's going to be a lot of energy around the new clubhouse. GCA



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Åsa Nordström | Course Director, Ålands Golfklubb, Finland
Golf course architect: Philip Spogárd | Rain Bird Finnish distributor: Schetelig Oy | Contractor: Nelson & Vecchio



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