GOLF COURSE ARCHITECTURE

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Golf Course Architects



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WFICOME

Heath revival



ADAM LAWRENCE

merican golfers, for whom large-scale course renovations, often costing millions and seeing courses closed for a year to complete the works, are now relatively commonplace, often look askance at the way courses in the UK go about improving themselves. But there is much to be said for the British way of slow and steady.

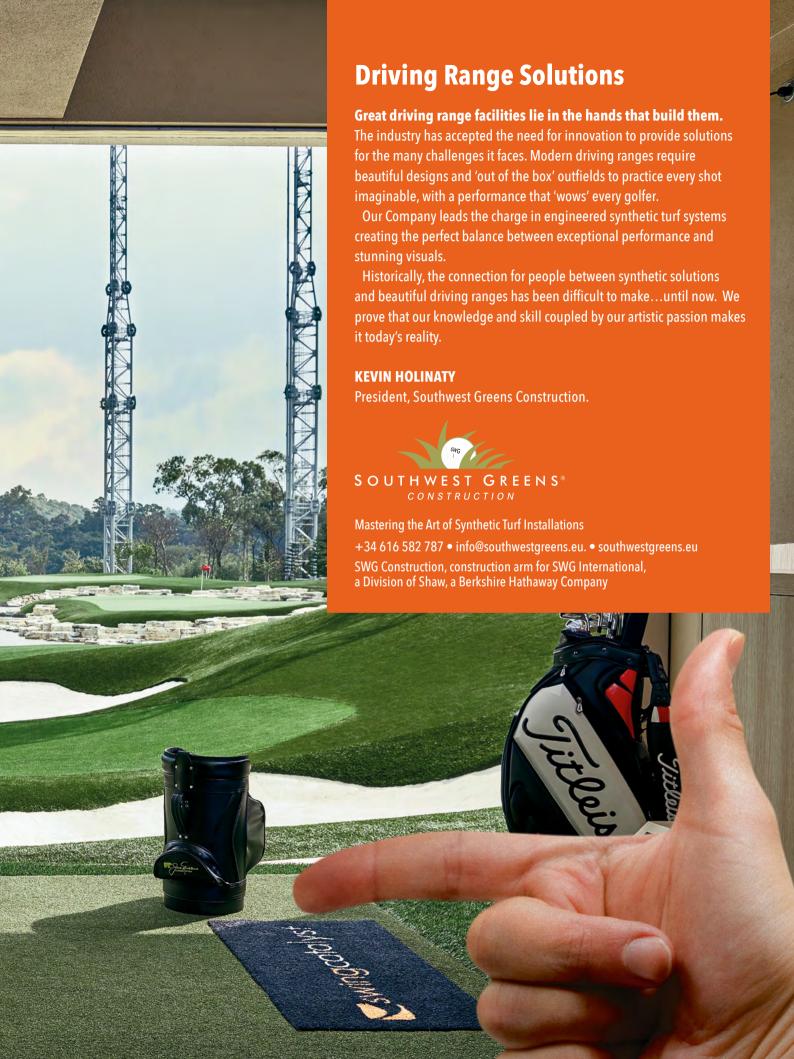
Golf in the UK has never been as big a money business as in the US, and so, for most British clubs, the thought of closing the course for a full year and spending seven figures on it is a complete impossibility. And it is notable that the very few 'American-style' renovations carried out in this country (I'm thinking about the recent projects at Loch Lomond and Chart Hills primarily; the work at Stoke Park following its recent acquisition by Indian billionaire Mukesh Ambani might fit the bill, but that project is so shrouded in mystery that no-one really knows what is going on) have been carried out at courses whose business model – one a recently sold proprietary club and the other a super-private luxury retreat – is a long, long way from the traditional members' club.

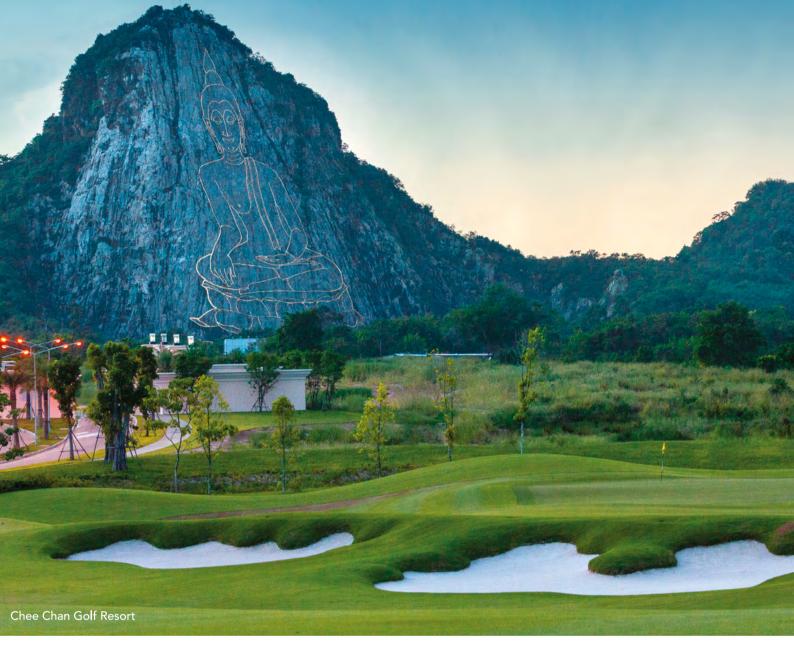
As the article on historic Woking GC in this issue explains, though, it does seem as though the Brits are starting to catch up with the Americans in terms of the ambition of their renovations. Woking's ongoing work to enhance its heathland is, along with the current restoration of Addington by Clayton, DeVries and Pont, clear evidence that British golf clubs are serious about renovation. As we have said many times in *GCA*, heathland, the location of the first great inland golf courses ever built, is a fragile landscape that requires careful management if it is not to revert to poor quality woodland. Heath was a landscape created for grazing; once there are no more animals eating the tree seedlings, it needs greenkeepers to step up and do the job.

So I applaud Woking, and Addington, for being brave enough to recognise that and embarking on major projects to allow the heathland to shine. And I congratulate the architects, course managers, owners and committees involved. I hope it sets a trend.









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MAII BOX

Dear Editor

Bifurcation. Who uses the term outside of science and golf?

Just whisper bifurcation in a golf setting and the room ignites. Golf's bifurcation proposes to resolve a gap in player expertise by adjusting the specifications of the equipment based on how that equipment is used. If you are a tour pro or high level competitor, perhaps your ball will travel a little less far than the ball used by players in a Saturday skins game. This is proposed to tighten the professional field of competition while enhancing the recreational player's golf experience.

We already bifurcate in golf architecture. We are uniquely able to offer the casual player the opportunity to play the same venue as the world's top professionals via design and architecture. Golf courses are configurable in ways that allow for the delivery of recreational entertainment and stiff 'competition' within the same footprint.

John and Jane Doe-Public cannot wander onto Wembley Stadium or Lambeau Field in Green Bay and spark up a game. In our game, anyone with the green fee is free to play multiple iconic places such as the Old Course at St Andrews, Pebble Beach, Bandon Dunes, and other championship venues. Golf bifurcates some of its best playing fields to enhance the experience of all skill levels of player.

With the joy of bifurcation comes opportunity and responsibility. We don't know how long the golf boom is going to last but if golf is to leverage and extend the glow, it should focus on consistent delivery of excellent

experiences across golf's largest point of entry, the public golf course. The time is now to imprint positive golf experiences in the minds of new golfers of all abilities, demographics and genders.

If you are selling more rounds than ever, tune up your architectural features and conditioning. Continue to force excellence into the municipal sector. Cobb's Creek in Philadelphia, the multiple programmes housed at Houston's Memorial Park, investments in the Forge by the city of Bettendorf, and the Wee course at North Berwick are all showing the way to celebrate the positive quality of life aspects of publicly accessible golf.

Golf's bifurcation of accessibility is fantastic and unique. Its benefits are

magnified when with a focused effort to deliver great golf and conditioning. In closing, if all countries of the world remain free of pandemic-enforced lockdowns, and as long as we are up and running, let's keep the newcomers and returnees with a commitment to use the spoils of the boom to fix bad golf and expand the good.

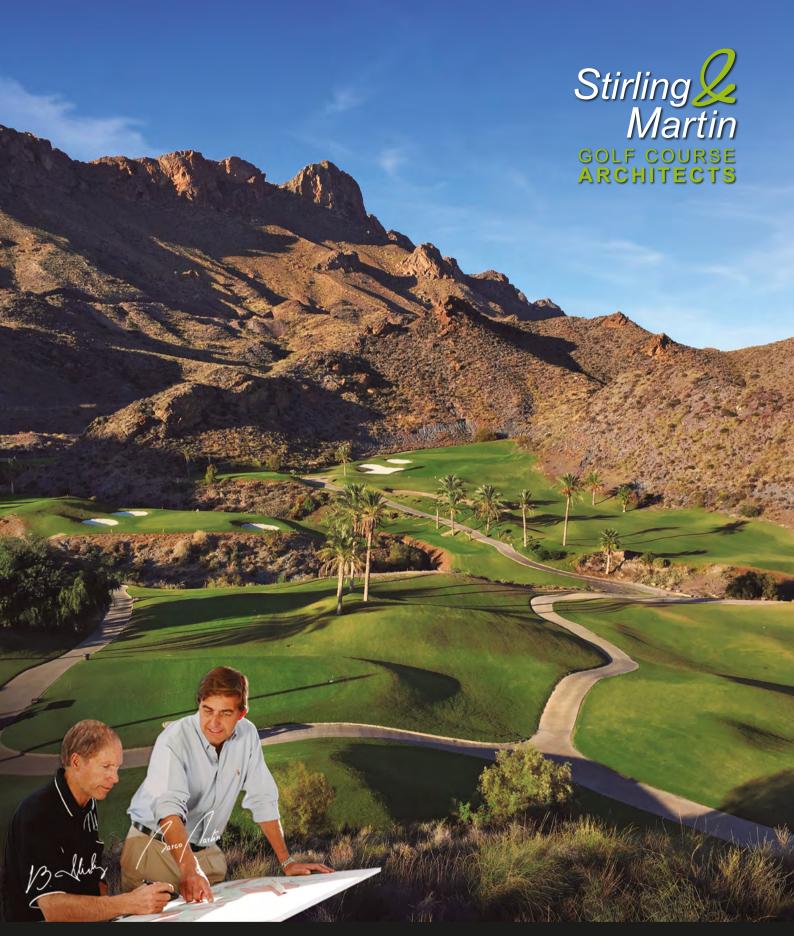
Vaughn Halyard Milwaukee, Wisconsin

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



Sandy was in Portugal last time out, on the par-five sixth hole of the RTJ II-designed Atlântico course at Penha Longa outside Lisbon. A number of eagle-eyed readers figured it out, but congratulations to Christopher Mack Fisher, who was first out of the hat – the shirt is on the way.

It's back to his favourite habitat, the links, for Sandy in this issue. Golf has been played over this land for the best part of 200 years, though the club that now controls it celebrated its 150th birthday quite recently. As ever, if you know the hole, and you'd like one of our sought-after *GCA* golf shirts, email your entry to, *gopher@golfcoursearchitecture.net*.



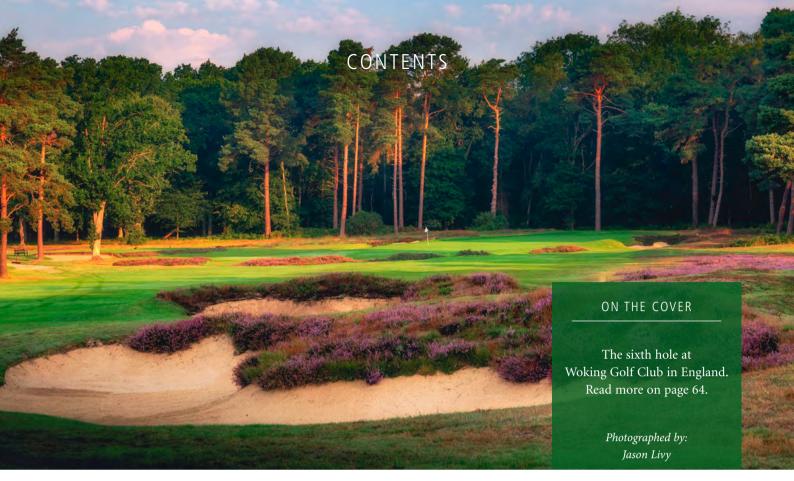
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This issue's Tee Box opens with news of Andrew Green's renovation of Scioto, and includes reports of recent projects from around the globe

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Are fescue grasses the ideal choice for areas between holes? Ryan Book considers the example of Laurel Links, where they have taken an _____ alternative approach

We speak with six young golf course architects to find out how their careers began and what they consider to be the keys to developing a career in the industry



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Adam Lawrence pays a visit to Les Bordes in France, which has recently opened its Gil Hanse-designed New course

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We report from Woking in England, where superintendent Andy Ewence and architect Tim Lobb are overseeing a heathland transformation

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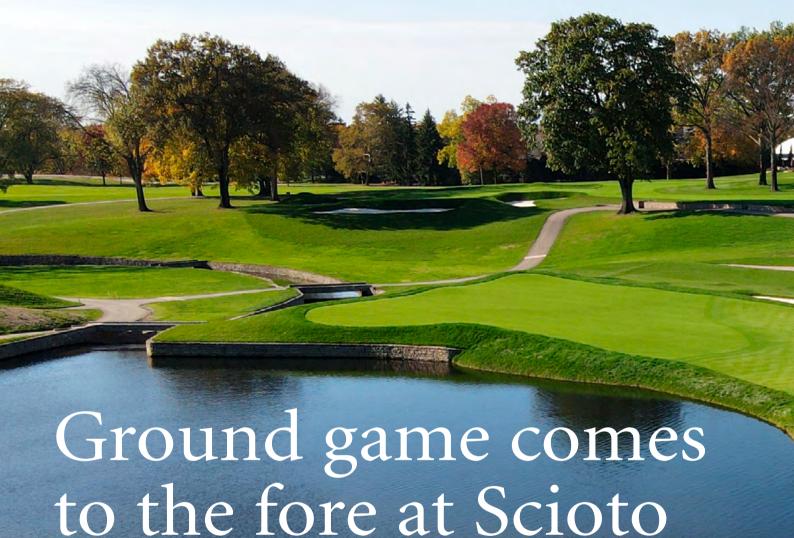
Verdura Resort in Sicily has worked with Kyle Phillips to reimagine its two courses after extensive flood damage

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We hole out on this issue with a look at a dramatic new putting course at a Colorado club

TEE BOX

NEWS EDITOR: RICHARD HUMPHREYS



Andrew Green completes renovation of Ross design in Ohio

ndrew Green has completed work at Scioto Country Club in Upper Arlington, Ohio, that focused on restoring the design intent and interest of the course that was originally designed by Donald Ross in 1916.

"The course has always held its original Donald Ross routing and hole sequence but lost a great deal of its uniqueness when Dick Wilson and his team renovated all the greens and bunkers in the early 1960s," said

Green. "In the process, a great amount of fill dirt was brought from the state house parking garage. This soil was used to elevate every putting surface and reshape a good deal of the natural topography. The results of this work reduced the elements of the ground game and transformed the course into a more modern presentation."

Green's goal was to bring back the originality and variety of the 1916 design, which played host to the 1926 US Open and the 1931 Ryder Cup.

"Every green has been lowered back closer to its original grade — where only soil from the immediate area was utilised to create the golfing elements," said Green. "The relationship between the ground and golf has been reintroduced and now the golf course will ask the player to execute a range of shots — it also provides a wealth of options for all skill levels to enjoy the game."

One primary resource for the renovation was a 1920s drawing by





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A 1920s drawing by Dudley Fisher Jr proved to be a valuable resource for Andrew Green's renovation

cartoonist Dudley Fisher Jr, titled 'As the Dodo Bird Views the Scene of the National Open Championship 1926'.

"It is stunning in its detail and relevance," said Green. "We know he utilised an aerial photo or an actual trip up in a plane to create the image. It does a great job of laying out the shapes and positions of the critical golf features. In overlaying the drawing on a modern aerial, we were able to confirm the work as authentic, as the spatial relationships worked out beautifully. This became our guiding document, as we did not have any drawings from the hand of Donald Ross. We paired this dodo bird drawing with photos from the air and ground.

"History was a primary focus of the green complexes – shapes, sizes and surrounding elements. Fairway bunkers and other features along the line of play were inspired by history but situated to make the modern player think. We had very few historic documents for the green contours. We used a few photos from the 1931 Ryder Cup programme to aid in the development of the green slopes and concepts, but a good portion of this

work was interpreted and developed from what each hole was asking the player to accomplish."

With contractor McDonald & Sons, all tees have been levelled or rebuilt using existing greens mix, while fairways were adjusted to widen



Green slopes and contours now better reflect what Ross's original design intent



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Bunkering (as pictured at the sixteenth and, right, eighteenth) has been renovated with one eye on history and the other on the modern game

landing zones. All bunkers were rebuilt with liners from Better Billy Bunker, and to ease access.

Approaches have been capped with greens mix and have internal drainage, while a new irrigation system, designed by Mike Kuhn, has been installed by Leibold Irrigation.

Green was also assisted by Scioto's course superintendent Bob Becker and his staff throughout the project.

"The player will find the golf course to be a very interesting and dynamic golf experience," said Green. "Each hole and green complex will ask a different golfing question and provide such a wealth of variety that was not part of the previous version. The reintroduction of unique elements on the par threes will make them stand out, including the restored version of the Postage Stamp seventeenth green. This hole was written about a great deal leading up to the 1926 National



Open and was often considered a great part of the lore of the club."

Chris Brooks, green committee chair and project leader for Scioto, said: "One of the things that stand out was Andrew's ability to recapture some of Donald Ross's quirkiness and early architectural features while still being mindful of the modern game as seen in the placement of remnant bunkers, cross bunkers and hummocks. I also feel like Scioto now

has one of the strongest sets of par threes anywhere in the country.

"The reaction from the membership has been overwhelmingly positive. It's been especially interesting to see some of our members' viewpoints and opinions change as the project progressed throughout the year. I feel confident that the level of excitement will continue to rise among our members and golfing community once we are open for play in 2022."

THE BIG PICTURE

The newly opened Tieke Golf Estate course near Hamilton, New Zealand, was designed by Brett Thomson and Phil Tataurangi. This photograph by Kahu Tataurangi shows the new ninth hole in the centre, with the parthree third (left) and the eleventh (right) alongside the river.

Tīeke was established following the merger of two clubs, Lochiel and The Narrows, and NZ Transport Agency's subsequent decision to build a new expressway through the site of The Narrows course. With a sale agreed for The Narrows' land, the club has reinvented itself around a complete redesign of the Lochiel course.

"The rerouting enabled a simpler and more instinctive flow to the order of the holes," said Tataurangi. "The old jinked and jived a bit and in doing so had a few awkward holes and transitions.

"We now have an interior front nine and an exterior back nine. A handful of new holes were created to enable this but being alongside New Zealand's longest flowing river, The Waikato, we could reveal this to golfers later in the round, making it a more memorable experience.

"The ninth is one of several holes that plays down through 50-yard-wide valley corridors. It's a medium-length par four on which, despite all the sandy waste around the tees, hitting the fairway is not as challenging as it appears. We extended short grass as far as we could up the escarpments to enable as much play as possible from short grass. There's a slight turn to the right with the approach but we pulled the green down into the valley, providing a gathering or 'members bounce' from the left side for the running ball."

Read more about the Tieke Golf Estate course on the GCA website



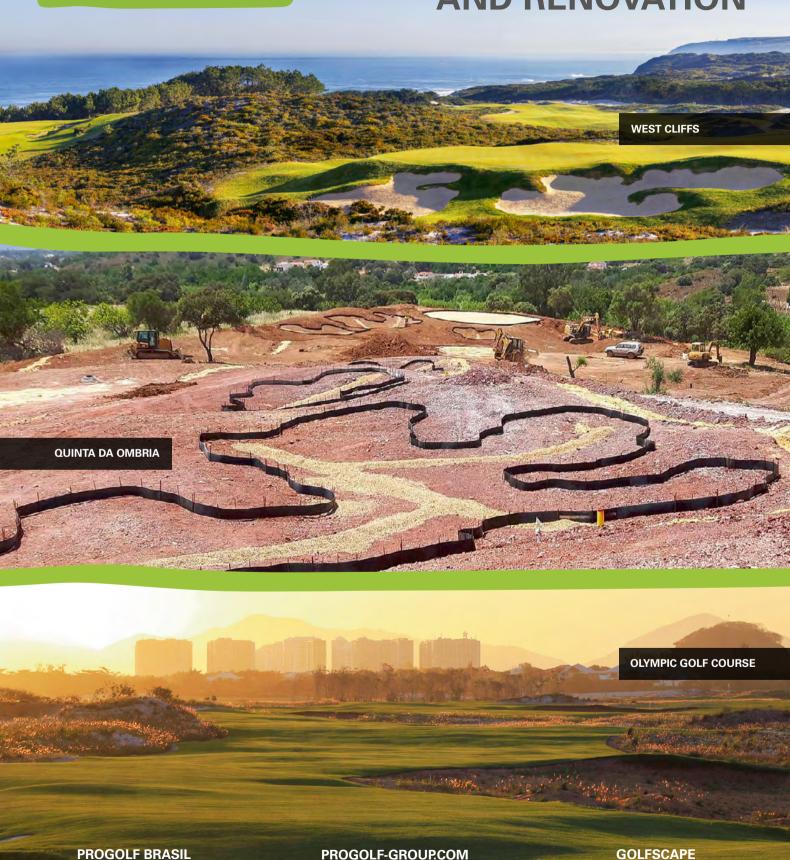




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GOLF COURSE CONSTRUCTION AND RENOVATION

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Costa Navarino prepares for opening of new Olazábal courses

The Costa Navarino destination in the south-west of Greece will open two new golf courses, created by Olazábal Design, in February.

The 6,961-yard International Olympic Academy course and the 6,867-yard Hills course are part of the Navarino Hills development at Costa Navarino, joining layouts by European Golf Design and Robert Trent Jones II to give the resort a total of four courses.

"Our brief was to create two eighteenhole golf courses and state-of-the-art practice facilities that blend seamlessly with the wonderful surrounding macchia/garrigue Messinian nature," said Olazabal Design lead architect Toni Ortner. "We drew inspiration from the already existing Dunes and Bay courses as well as from tree-lined heathland courses such as Sunningdale Old and Liphook. Instead of the well-draining sandy turfs of typical heathland courses we faced heavy clay on top of rock on the Hills site.

"Existing rock walls and rock outcrops have been incorporated in the design. Virtually every hole is played in splendid and beautiful solitude, and in harmony with nature. There will be subtlety, a part of drama and a richness of the one fundamental ingredient: pleasurable excitement."

Both new courses overlook the Bay of Navarino and offer panoramic views of mountains, valleys and the Ionian Sea. "The setting at Navarino Hills is one of the most spectacular that I have seen," said José María Olazábal. "The characteristics of the site are wonderful for golf, and it surely ranks among the most beautiful properties we have ever had the chance to work on.

"The International Olympic Academy golf course is the longer and tougher of the two. It's more compact and, in style, different to the Hills course, which is set in the valley and has more room, especially off the tee."

A new clubhouse, located between the two new courses, has recently been completed, and the Navarino Hills practice facilities will include a driving range with capacity for 60 people and a short-game area.

The International Olympic Academy golf course offers views over the Bay of Navarino and the Ionian Sea, as seen here on the par-three twelfth





Cabot acquires World Woods and plans redevelopment

Development group Cabot has acquired World Woods Golf Club in Brooksville, Florida, and will transform the property as part of a major redevelopment.

The 45-hole public facility will be renamed Cabot Citrus Farms and its two 18-hole courses, Pine Barrens and Rolling Oaks, and nine-hole par-three layout, all designed by Tom Fazio in the early 1990s, will be completely renovated, beginning with the par-three layout, putting green and practice facilities.

"I couldn't wish for a better location for our first US development," said developer Ben Cowan-Dewar. "The property is a nature lover's paradise that rivals the most spectacular sites I've seen across the world."

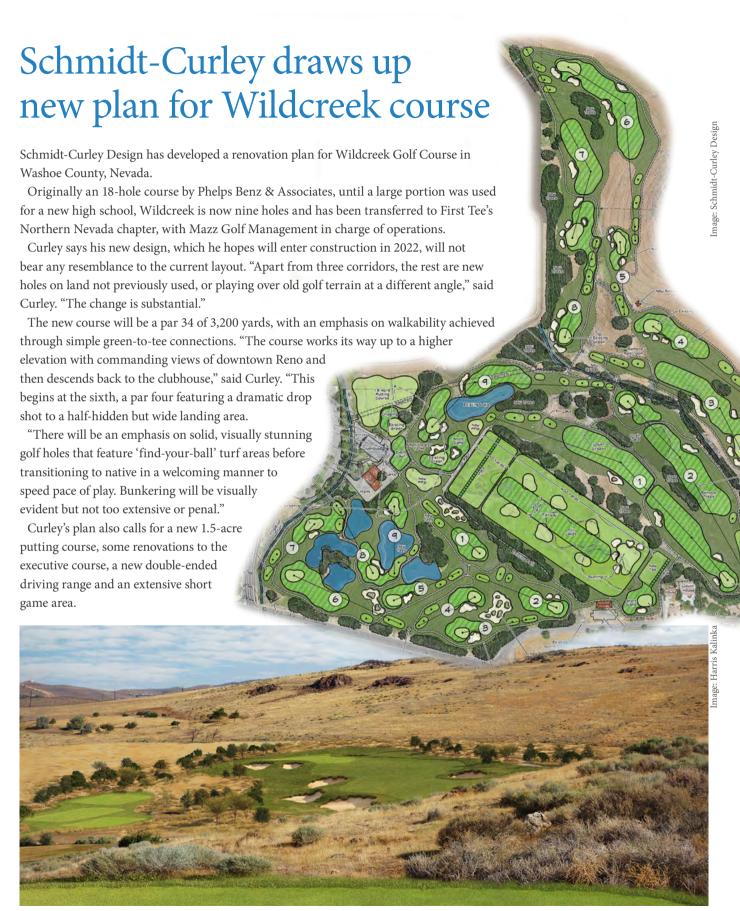
Architects have not yet been chosen, but a decision is expected to be made by the end of March, with Cabot intending to select a separate designer to work on each course.

The facility, which will continue to remain open for play and operate

as World Woods until June, when it will close for around 18 months while renovations take place.

The developer also plans to build accommodation, a new clubhouse, shops, restaurants, a spa, fitness centre and a farmer's market.

Cabot's growing portfolio of destinations includes Cape Breton in Nova Scotia, Cabot Saint Lucia, which will open in late 2022, and Cabot Revelstoke in British Columbia, which is expected to open in 2024.



The sixth will play from an elevated tee towards a wide but slightly hidden fairway

THE INTERVIEW with Lassi Pekka Tilander



"Players will be able to get very creative out there"

GCA spoke with Lassi Pekka Tilander about his new par-three course for Rae Golf near Tallinn, Estonia

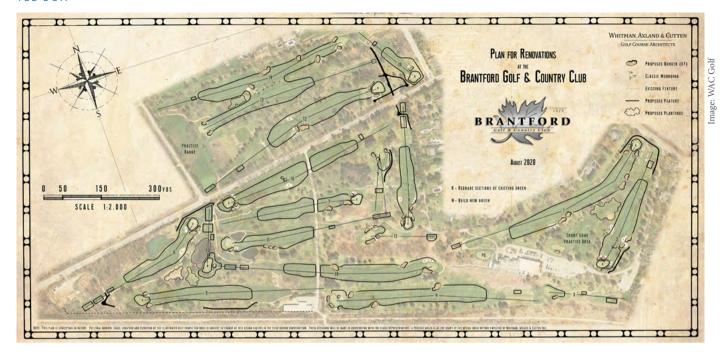
How has this opportunity come about?

The idea of a short course was part of a development plan I created in 2017. A good amount of land was left close to the clubhouse and for the new owner, it was important to have facilities that attract new golfers. Somehow the flat, treeless and compact area reminded me of the Himalayas putting course at St Andrews. During golf architecture studies, we spent hours studying its forms and soul. This led to the idea to make the course look like a huge putting green.



Tilander recently created a new par-three eighteenth hole with an island green for the club's main course





WAC Golf renovation to bring original design character back to Brantford

Whitman, Axland & Cutten (WAC Golf) has completed the first phase of a renovation project at Brantford Golf & Country Club in Ontario, Canada.

The club commissioned WAC Golf partners Rod Whitman and Keith Cutten in 2018 to study its course and recommend renovations. Their proposals focus on improving infrastructure, ensuring the course is fit for modern players, and bringing back a look and feel that celebrates the original design style.

Brantford was laid out by Thompson, Cumming and Thompson – a partnership of brothers Stanley and Nicol Thompson and George Cumming, the head professional of Toronto Golf Club – in 1919, following the purchase of land to expand the historic club's nine-hole course above the Grand River. A major renovation by Robbie Robinson in the 1960s included some rerouting, new greens and the addition of fairway bunkers. "In combination with holistic irrigation system upgrades by the experienced Tim Fredericks, WAC Golf's plan focuses on improving the quality, playability, continuity, sustainability and maintainability of the golf course," said Cutten, adding that the work comprises "a thoughtful combination of green expansions and surrounds upgrades, improved mow lines and angles of play, and additional teeing areas.

"Furthermore, a bunker style more consistent with the course's design

pedigree will be restored. The strategic value of the bunkering scheme will be greatly enhanced, yet they will be more maintenance friendly and accessible for golfers, plus the visual impact of bunkers will be heightened."

The first phase of WAC Golf's work has focused on rebuilding greens and bunkers at the sixth (pictured, below), sixteenth and seventeenth holes, which the architects felt were the most flawed.

Work will continue in 2022 and is expected to be complete in autumn.



Photo: WAC G



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"The paths have held up well through the first season, they look great and there are no washouts, no dust and they are quiet. They blend in with their surrounds and have helped to tie-in and complement all the other work we've done on the course."

Brian Moore, Course Superintendent for Glen View Club



New bentgrass delivers firm and consistent greens for Raleigh CC

Raleigh Country Club in North Carolina is enjoying positive feedback after becoming the first golf club to introduce the new Pure Eclipse creeping bentgrass exclusively from Pure Seed, powered by Tee-2-Green, on its greens.

"It was risky, but we wanted to be trendsetters," said the club's longstanding superintendent Billy Cole.

The new surfaces were introduced as part of a 2020 renovation overseen by Kyle Franz that, in addition to expanding and resurfacing greens,

included work on bunkers, the irrigation system, tree removal, and new tees to add length to the course.

"RCC greens are well known as being very demanding and I am highly confident that our reputation will remain in place," said John McConnell, president and CEO of McConnell Golf, which purchased the club in 2003.

Cole selected Pure Eclipse following several visits to the Pure-Seed Testing East facility in Rolesville, North Carolina, to view bentgrass trials. He says the membership likes the firm, consistent surface of Pure Eclipse and he's able to mow it low. "Management-wise, I can only build on the foundation of the great genetics of this bentgrass," he said. "I look forward to seeing how it performs as it matures in years to come."

"The new greens at RCC were seeded beginning in the late spring 2020, through late July," said Cole. "The grow-in went well and the first year has been very successful."





El Caballero Country Club in Tarzana, California, has reopened its golf course following a nine-month restoration project by Rees Jones.

All turfgrass on the 18-hole El Cab layout has been replaced with hybrid bermuda grass that, alongside the expansion of native landscaping areas, will save the club more than 35 million gallons of water per year, a 30 per cent decrease.

Jones and his design associate Steve Weisser sought to retain the challenge originally laid out by Robert Trent Jones Sr, while adapting the course to modern players, equipment and maintenance practises.

"Steve and I looked at every feature and made decisions on what we should modestly change, dramatically change and what we should just leave alone," said Jones, in a panel discussion to celebrate the course's grand reopening.

Comparing the restored course to his father's original design, Jones said: "I think our green contours are much like how my father would have intended: sections, with contours and sweeps. But some of the harder holes don't have severe contours, so it's a change of pace, whereas I think my father built tough contours in his greens on every hole. Green contours are what the members will find different, probably more manageable. The green speeds when my dad worked here in the 1960s were around six or seven on the Stimpmeter. Now they will be around nine-and-a-half to 12, so you have to really consider the contours of greens when you restore a golf course like this."

Construction work, which was completed by contractor Wadsworth Golf and lead shaper Steve Crotty, included some tree removal, regrading fairways, repositioning bunkers and redesigning all greens. The total length of the course has increased to just over 7,000 yards.

"There are a lot of minor changes that make a big difference"

Jones highlighted changes that were designed to make the layout more playable. "We opened the entrances to a lot of greens because we wanted to allow, for the player that doesn't hit the ball very far, a better chance to access the greens."



The design team's work on bunkers focused on playability and improving access, so members are able to walk more easily into them. The intention was to still present the same degree of difficulty, but without them being quite as deep.

"Members will still recognise the course but there are a lot of minor changes that make a big difference, and there are some major changes like the sixth and tenth greens that are dramatically better and receive shots more readily," said Jones. "The tenth hole was really tough; you'd hit the right side of the green and your ball would disappear. We added a lot of fill to the left side of that hole, now you can hit short, there's a bailout area, there's a little pocket before the bunker, and now we've got this upsweep at the back of

the green. El Cab is now quite different from other California courses because of these backboards and sideboards that we've introduced."

"The course's redesign will give players a state-of-an-art experience, providing them with the tools they need to improve their skill level," said head golf professional Tasha Bohlig.

"We are excited to relaunch
El Caballero and position our
championship golf course for the future,
especially in light of recurring drought
conditions in California and the need to
be a responsible environmental leader
in the golf community," said general
manager Phil Lopez. "Now more than
ever, we all need a sense of community
and shared experiences to sustain us
during these challenging times. We
know our members feel that at El Cab."



The green on the par-four fifth has been expanded to provide a tricky new back-left pin position, while new bunkering leaves space for ground-game approaches



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Construction begins on Seven Mile Beach

Construction has started on the new Seven Mile Beach golf course in Hobart, Australia, for tour professional Mat Goggin's development group, The Golf Preserve.

Mike DeVries is co-designing the 18-hole layout with Mike Clayton, and will be on site for the next six months. "The reveal of the site without trees has reaffirmed my suspicions of its greatness," he said. "The diversity of the landscape combined with the views and intimacy of the

routing will make for a compelling and lasting golf course." Construction and seeding will continue during 2022 with the opening set to take place in 2023.

"Walking over the site in its cleared state and seeing the holes from tee to green has confirmed our hopes," said Clayton. "This is the rarest and most beautiful of sites. I am convinced that it can be worked into a truly world-class course."

GOOD READ

Golf Course Architecture is the Art of Embracing Nature

When Michel Niedbala found himself, like most golf architects, spending more time at home than usual because of pandemic travel limitations, he took the opportunity to put pen to paper and spell out (in both his native French and English) what is effectively a manifesto for his personal philosophy of golf course design.

The resulting self-published book, illustrated with sketches, plans and photography of his projects (as well as his painting of rock legend Jim Morrison!), is a fascinating perspective on one man's approach to the craft. As the title suggests, Niedbala's core pledge is one of balance between golf and our natural environment. He delivers a strong argument for the

positive impact of golf, on the planet, our society and culture. "In my view, every project ought to be a place of innovative social experimentation," he writes.

In the section of the book devoted to

the new Le Golf De Roissyen-France course in Paris, a project we profiled in the January 2020 issue of *GCA*, we see how these principles have been applied in practice, to create a public golf course with the aim "to reach out to all social and economic sectors of the population".

Niedbala says: "There is much more to what we are doing than simply laying out a golf course." His book gives

us a compelling insight into what that is. €75 plus shipping

To order, contact Michel Niedbala at:

contact@golfoptimum.fr









OCM gets go-ahead for Medinah #3 renovation

Members of Medinah Country Club near Chicago, Illinois, have voted to approve a renovation of its #3 course by OCM Golf, the Australian design firm led by Geoff Ogilvy, Mike Cocking and Ashley Mead.

Their proposals aim to reflect the best elements of the course's history and current layout, while widening fairways and significantly rerouting the closing stretch. Four of the final six holes will play along or across Lake Kadijah. These include an entirely new par-three thirteenth hole (pictured) alongside the lake, a short par-four sixteenth where golfers will cut off as much of the lake as

they dare, and new seventeenth and eighteenth holes.

This work will also free up space for a six-hole short course, The Camel Trail, close to the clubhouse.

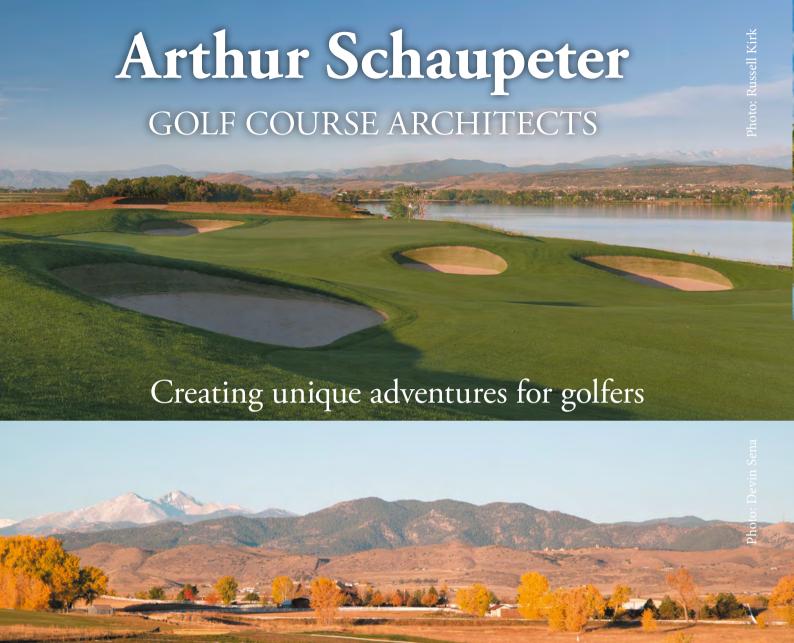
OCM will also address the course's infrastructure, with the aim of enhancing playing conditions and supporting professional tournament operations. The renovation "encapsulates a continuing vision to provide compelling tournament play and a world-class golf experience for members, guests, and the professional tournament player," said William Kuehn, club president.

The #3 course was originally designed

by Tom Bendelow and redesigned by Rees Jones. It has hosted three US Opens, in 1949, 1975 and 1990, two PGA Championships, in 1999 and 2006, and the Ryder Cup in 2012.

"We feel incredibly humbled and honoured that the Medinah Country Club membership voted in favour of our plan," said Cocking. "It's a huge sign of confidence that the members are as excited with our concept as we are, and we can't wait to get planning started in 2022."

Construction work will begin in late 2022 so the course can reopen in 2024, allowing the club to prepare for its hosting of the Presidents Cup in 2026.



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Regrassing project delivers highperformance surfaces for Playa Palmas

The regrassing of the nine-hole CCC Country Club Playa Palmas course in Ciudad del Carmen, Mexico, with Pure Dynasty seeded paspalum has delivered consistent and robust playing surfaces. The new grass was introduced during a redesign of the layout by Greg Letsche, who worked alongside Atlas Turf International on the project.

Letsche said it was "a no-brainer" to collaborate again with John Holmes of Atlas, having worked with the grass supplier on projects around the world for over 20 years. The architect said the project at Playa Palmas "has been another success, with members and guests enjoying the updated course and playing surfaces".

"John's focus has always been on the site and the scientific data when making grass selection," added Letsche. "That is why his grass selection excels even more in remote regions, and the paspalum has really made the difference at Playa Palmas. There wasn't room for a turf nursery, the course previously had a mixture of grasses that didn't really perform well, and we were basically on an island two metres above sea level with a lot of salt intrusion and wind, but the grass selected by John performed excellently."

Letsche's redesign involved changes to holes four, seven and eight to improve safety following the introduction of a new residential component alongside the course. All par threes were also adjusted and now play in a different direction, and greens and bunkers were redesigned.

"It's nine holes, but we have alternate tees so there is a lot of different shot values for players," said Letsche.
"Golfers are enjoying the updated green complexes and bunkering.
Previously, all the greens were somewhat elevated, so we lowered them to give players the chance for more bump and runs and flop shots. It's more user friendly now."



Greg Letsche has redesigned the Playa Palmas layout in Mexico

Tripp Davis begins transformation of Atlanta Athletic Club's Riverside course

Tripp Davis has started work on the renovation of the Riverside course at Atlanta Athletic Club in Georgia.

The project aims to update the course infrastructure and reimagine how to use the land in the best way possible. It includes work on tees, bunkers and greens, a new irrigation system, sandcapping and the subsurface drainage of fairways, enhancing surface and subsurface drainage across the course, installing new turf, and adding some new cart paths.

"We are taking advantage of the fact that everything is being rebuilt as new to move the strategic elements of the course – tees, bunkers, fairways, greens – to create a more strategically interesting golf course that will be very fun to play for the entire membership, while being flexible enough in set-up to be as challenging as they want," said Davis.

"One of our objectives is improving the flow of the course. The current first hole is a par five, with the third being a shorter par five that is too tough for the average player due to a lake forcing a long carry to the green. This is currently followed by two mid-length par fours that don't fit the land well. We are going to change things around to make the new third a short par three that sits in the landscape better, followed by a nice par four that plays to a new green location sitting right by the Chattahoochee River, with the new fifth being a mid-length par five that winds through the trees and rolling



Davis's sketch of the seventeenth, where the green will be redesigned to better fit the flow of the land

ground in a much more natural way. These new holes use the land better, and they create a more interesting and varied flow to start the round."

Davis is also transforming the existing par-four twelfth, par-five thirteenth and par-four fourteenth into a short risk-reward par-five twelfth, a par-four thirteenth that has a closer relationship to the river, and a potentially driveable par-four fourteenth with the river more in play.

"With these changes, and through placement of strategic features around the rest of the course, we are focusing on giving the course a more interesting flow from start to finish that will see some holes becoming better opportunities for players most of the time, while some holes will become more challenging at strategic points in the round," said Davis.

Landscapes Unlimited began construction in January with the support of club superintendent Lukus Harvey, his assistant Trent Inman, and Davis's shaper Jason Gold.

"Being an Atlanta native, the opportunity for me to have this relationship with the Atlanta Athletic Club, a club Bobby Jones called home, is a dream come true," said Davis. "I am pretty much moving to Atlanta for most of the project."

The course is expected to reopen in late 2022.



GOOD READ

"Alternative golf options are a resourceful way to be successful"

The cover story of the latest issue of *By Design* magazine – produced for the American Society of Golf Course Architects by the team responsible for *GCA* – explores whether the golf industry is ready to embrace golf courses that do not comply with the 18-hole norm.

"With land and water becoming more expensive, alternative golf options are a resourceful way to be successful and introduce people to the game of golf and provide a wider variety of options for future members and potential customers," said Jeff Lawrence, designer of the 13-hole par-three Mountain Top course at Big Cedar Lodge in Missouri.

The Winter issue of *By Design* also includes an interview with new ASGCA president Jason Straka and profiles of the golf course projects that have been recognised in the 2021 ASGCA Environmental Excellence Awards.

To download the latest issue and subscribe to By Design, visit www.asgca.org



Global round-up

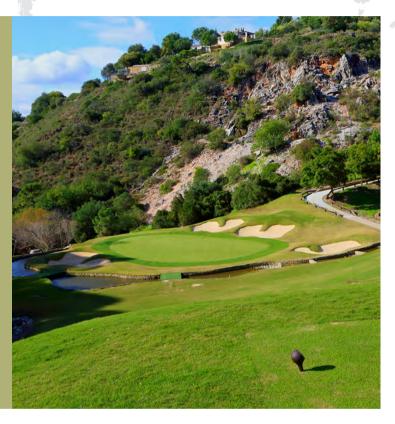
Jiobai Touliu-up

Westenborg and Cestino team up for Spanish projects

Golf course architect Marc Westenborg has partnered with Jacobo Cestino, CEO of La Zagaleta Group, to work on golf course projects in Spain.

"After many years working in the golf industry, many conversations with Marc, and exploring the market potential of new golf course projects in Spain and Andalusia, I have taken the step to partner with Marc because I believe there is a very hopeful horizon for new golf and renovations supported by the 'Covid effect' and the determined boost to the tourism sector," said Cestino. "Renewing current courses and building new ones of the highest quality from a design point of view has become a necessity for those who want to continue competing."

Westenborg has worked with Cestino before, having completed renovation work on the Old course (pictured) at the La Zagaleta development in Marbella in 2016.





Work begins on new Faldo course in Vietnam

Ground has been broken on the new Silk Path Dong Trieu Golf Course, the centrepiece of a large hotel and villa development 90 kilometres east of Hanoi, Vietnam.

Faldo Design will take advantage of the flatter land in the northeast of the site for the front nine, while on the back nine water plays a key role, especially on holes twelve, fourteen, fifteen and sixteen.

"The existing terracing seen on certain parts of the site provides a unique and local influence on the golf course design whereby fairways will become large terraced 'platforms', often with quite angular forms to reflect the land divisions seen around the area," said Sir Nick Faldo.

Construction of second nine continues at Vulintaba

Construction of a second nine is under way at Vulintaba Country Estate in the KwaZulu-Natal province of South Africa. The new holes are designed by Dino De Abreu of novoLGCA and are scheduled to open in the second quarter of 2022.

"The new nine is laid out on a section of the site known as 'the Hidden Valley'," said De Abreu. "It has untouched beauty flanked on all sides with spectacular rolling hills and mountainous peaks. Carved natural drainage channels dictate play and make for great risk and reward golf. Every time I walk onto the site I've said 'there's a golf course under here, peel away the upper layer and she's there'."





EGD to complete work on Dye project in London

The Menai-Davis family of golf developers has appointed European Golf Design to complete work on its new 18-hole golf course project in Edgware, London.

The course was designed by Pete Dye, who passed away in 2020. His son Perry, also part of the original design team, passed away in 2021. The project, which was announced in 2013 with the name The Dye London, will now be named The Legacy Club.

"We will be realising the vision which Pete and Alice Dye originally had for the golf course, including the routing, but we will provide the detail," said Jeremy Slessor, managing director of European Golf Design. "The Legacy Club will be enjoyable and playable for all golfers, but will also offer a challenge worthy of a Tour venue."



Pacifico course at Punta Mita reopens after first phase

Golf course architect Jim Lipe has completed the first phase of renovation work on the Pacifico course at Punta Mita, near Puerto Vallarta, Mexico,

renovating greens, surrounds, bunkers and tees

The second phase of the resort's five-year renovation plan is due to start in April

2022, concentrating on greens, surrounds and tees on its Bahia course. Phases three and four will include replacing grass on fairways with Trinity Zoysia.



RYAN BOOK

Fescue, fine or foe?

Are fescue grasses the ideal choice for areas between holes? Ryan Book considers an alternative

he sight of fescue blowing in the wind sets many a golfer's heart aflutter. Despite stealing balls almost as frequently as less-fashionable ponds, it's easier to accept a hazard that's been present on golf courses since the origins of the game.

Laurel Links Country Club, a 2002 design from Kelly Blake Moran, found that fescue outgrew its rustic appeal.

"It just started eating golf balls.

Looked like it could have eaten a golf cart too," says Jaeger Kovich, golf course architect and owner of Proper Golf, who has been leading the club through a multistage removal of its fescue fields during the past few years. "It's flat as a pancake out here and it's

a really dense area that was not really meant to be fescue."

If one referred to Laurel's fescue as 'native area', they should be sure to leave the 'native' in quotation marks. It's not indigenous to Long Island's North Fork region. Like many clubs across the United States, the native vegetation had been trees. The initial build involved opening up the areas between fairways by felling trees, a choice it doesn't regret. More problematic was the decision to fill those open areas with introduced fescue.

The tall grass quickly settled in and, as Kovich notes, began harvesting any ball sent its way. The membership's pleasure with the linksland aesthetic gave way to frustration as Pro V1s disappeared and rounds lengthened.

A lack of maintenance resources created a problem almost as relevant: The fescue required continuous trimming, expensive chemical spray applications and the maintenance hours could be better used almost anywhere else.

"They have a pretty small crew out here. It's really hard for them to find guys to work maintenance crews out here on the North Fork," says Kovich. "Having to continuously maintain this giant area of fescue was just driving them nuts."

Fortunately, a quality concept for replacing the fescue sat nearby. Friar's



The par-four eleventh hole at Laurel Links on Long Island is now framed by a sandscape

Head Golf Club, 10 miles down the road, features some spectacular dunes. They don't cover the entire property, however, so the existing farmland was converted to sandscape.

Laurel Links shared a similar soil type to Friar's Head: a finely textured grey clay and silt substrate that offers a linksy aesthetic but doesn't drain like true sand.

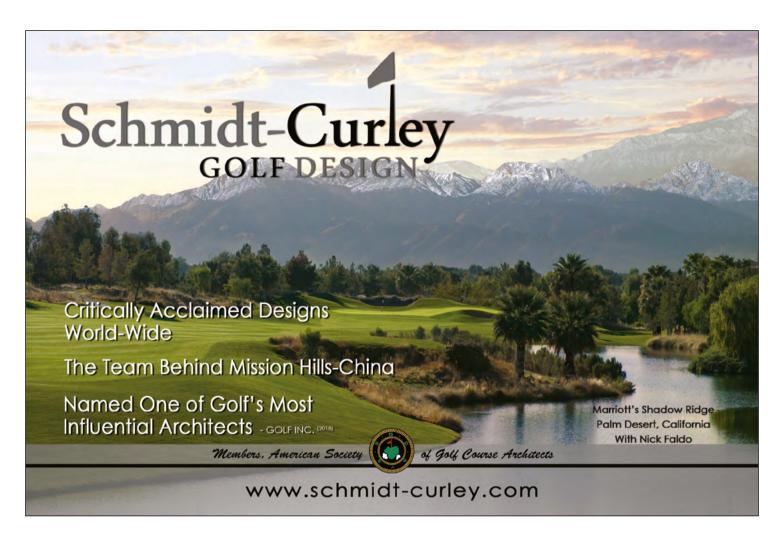
The true sand lay four to five feet below the surface, which Kovich personally mined on his bulldozer. Keeping playability as the focus, the softer pure sand – or a blend of sand and the silky surface soil – was kept in areas farthest from play. Additional sand, combined with screenings, was brought in to create a more solid surface nearer to the fairway so that wayward balls would plug less frequently (playability remained a focus, with sand as with fescue).

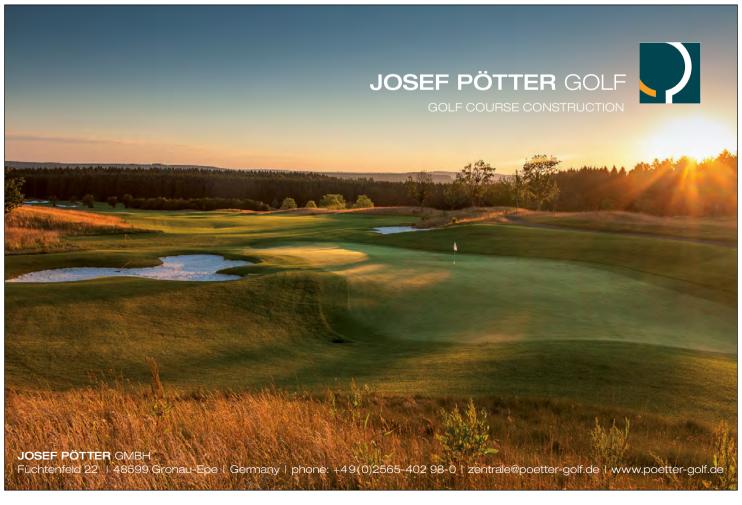
"They have all the right ingredients," says Kovich, who has handled similar sandscaping projects for Gil Hanse at Streamsong Black and Pinehurst No. 4. "They're just mixed up the wrong way."

The right ingredients now mixed in the right way, Kovich began shaping. He created a variety of shapes, from small pockets or more sizable landforms, created by chunking, that emulate a blown-out bunker. A few islands of fescue were left, to divert flows of water around the landscape during wet periods.

The project has included tying holes into their new surroundings, with both aesthetic and strategic purposes. On the fourth, for example, Kovich replaced a series of small bunkers with one large blowout bunker, which transitions nicely into the new waste area to its right. The work on the thirteenth involved removing trees along the inside of this dogleg left so that players would be more inclined to challenge the waste area. A constructed dune ridge behind the par-three twelfth green protects players on the thirteenth tee from overzealous tee shots.

The current trends in golf course architecture, at least those reflected







A dune ridge has been constructed behind the par-three twelfth

in rankings, have demonstrated a move toward the removal of trees from the areas between holes. This leaves the question as to what should fill that space. Although some would prefer wall-to-wall fairway, allowing the oft-cited width and angles to take precedence over penalty, this is an unlikely option for clubs with more realistic maintenance budgets. Native areas appeal to the minimalist eye, another trend in current ratings.

Many parkland courses won't have the sand base to create an alternative such as Kovich's work at Laurel Links. Waves of fescue, blowing in the wind, seems like an ideal solution, especially considering its idealistic link to the links of old.

But it's an idea some clubs may want to think about with regards to the long term, and not just a simple aesthetic. Golf has always had spiritual associations with certain plants (particularly those that keep to the ground). None has had a more profound influence than fescue, which has led many clubs – including, until recently, Laurel Links – to wear it as a badge of honour. It's a strange contradiction for an industry that has increasingly embraced indigeneity when creating golf courses (see Kovich's use of local sand).

There's an undeniable appeal in teeing off at Pacific Dunes' par-three seventeenth with a backdrop of yellow gorse, making golfers feel like they're playing in golf's homeland, and not the Oregon coast.

That said, some research into Bandon's backstory will provide a dramatically different outlook regarding the plant's existence. The gorse at Bandon is an

invasive species, introduced by an Irish immigrant more than a century before Mike Keiser stepped foot on the land. As Keiser negotiated with the local community to seek permission to build his golf resort, he promised to remove the vast majority of gorse so that native species could thrive again.

One of those species, coincidentally, was fescue, which now thrives – naturally – among the dunes at Bandon.

The Oxford English Dictionary defines thriving as the act of "developing well or vigorously". The new, sandy waste areas are helping Laurel Links reach a new peak, 20 years into its existence.

It's a club that's thriving, even if the fescue isn't. **GCA**

Read more from Ryan Book on his blog www.bethpageblackmetal.com

Making a name

DESIGN CAREERS
Written by Adam Lawrence

Getting a start in golf course architecture is hard enough. But suppose you've managed that, and worked on some cool projects with some great people. How do you turn that into a career, and win your own work?

olf architecture is a tough career choice. At no point in the game's history have more than a few hundred people at once earned their living entirely (even largely) through designing golf courses, and there are many, many more who would surely like to. This level of competition tends to weed out those for whom it isn't a true vocation.

Routes into the industry, as we have explored previously, basically fall into two categories. One can join an established, traditional design-andcontract firm, often as someone who mostly sits in an office and draws plans for more senior designers (a role unkindly known in the business as a 'CAD monkey'). Alternatively, in some cases more glamorously but with its own downside, a lot of young people have entered golf design by way of construction, either for a traditional contractor or for one of the designand-shape firms that provide, at least in part, their own construction crews for jobs - principally Coore & Crenshaw, Renaissance and Hanse.

In the last ten years or so, the second of these routes has offered significantly more opportunities to new entrants to the industry than the first, as design firms reacted to the 2007/8 recession by downsizing dramatically; now, the sole practitioner is by far the most common golf design firm, and if CAD help is needed, it can be bought in from paid-by-the-hour subcontractors. Nevertheless, there is still the odd CAD gig going in the (now smaller) number of larger design firms and several people who had previously been in that role have transitioned into feeearner positions.

The question is how to make that transition. In some ways, if you are a young shaper/architect who has been working for a design-and-shape firm, it is probably a little bit easier: you will have spent several years out in the field, a place where you can network, possibly on quite glamorous jobs (although you had better be somewhat nomadic, because you probably won't have a place you can call home for much of the time).

We spoke with six young architects, from both sides of the industry, to ask how they are turning their start into a lifelong career.

What was your first job in golf, and how old were you when you got it? *Riley Johns:* A summer job working at a golf course – 16-hour days. I worked on the maintenance crew in the mornings and in the clubhouse kitchen during the afternoon and evenings. I

was sixteen.

Jeff Danner: Does a lawn mowing job for the local pro when I was ten count? Compensation was free golf lessons. If not, my first golf industry job was in high school at a local muni called Pine Valley in Marathon, Wisconsin. I started with outdoor services, range picking, course set up, garbage collection and later moved into the pro shop. In college, I started working maintenance jobs.

Angela Moser: My first job in golf was in retail. I sold and fitted golf clubs, equipment and clothing. It was my after-school and weekend job that

Contributors



Reda Channane, GolfDesign Morocco

The first Moroccan to practice golf architecture, Channane worked with the Cabot Links Turf Team. Returning to his native country, he formed his own firm and worked with James Duncan and Cabell Robinson during the renovation of the Royal Golf Dar Essalam in Rabat.



Jeff Danner, Richardson | Danner

A member of both the European Institute of Golf Course Architects and the American Society of Golf Course Architects, Danner worked for Greg Norman Golf Course Design for several years before forming the firm of Richardson | Danner with veteran American designer Forrest Richardson.



Alex Hay, Lobb + Partners

After starting his career with European Golf Design, Hay moved to Canada to create a Canadian office for the firm Lobb + Partners. He completed the EIGCA's vocational education programme while with EGD and, since moving to North America, has become one of the first members of the ASGCA's new Associate Programme.



Riley Johns, Rhebb & Johns Golf Course Design

A Canadian who got his start working for Coore & Crenshaw on Cabot Cliffs, Johns formed a partnership with another C&C shaper, Keith Rhebb. Their work includes the acclaimed renovation of the Winter Park municipal in Orlando and the current restoration of William Flynn's Rolling Green in Philadelphia.



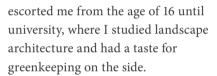
Tom Kelly, European Golf Design

Kelly came to golf design through construction, working for leading UK-based contractor MJ Abbott for several years, before landing a CAD and design associate role with European Golf Design, the firm co-owned by the European Tour and by some distance the largest design shop in Europe.



Angela Moser, Moser Golf

Having worked for Tom Doak and Renaissance Design since 2011, Moser is currently in New Zealand shaping his North course at the new Te Arai resort, close to the architect's triumph at Tara Iti. She has also worked with Gil Hanse, and has completed restoration projects in her own name in her native Germany.



Tom Kelly: I was a range picker, driving the little buggy around picking up balls while getting missiles hit at you from point blank range. It was great. On the same job I also lent a hand building a little par-three course at the range, although 'building' is a very loose term as smoothing out a few areas for greens was about as technical as it got. I was sixteen, it was my first part-time job.

Alex Hay: It was in the pro shop at Epsom Golf Club. I worked for the then head professional Ron Goudie, I was paid five pounds per hour. That was pretty good in 1997! I was sixteen.

Reda Chananne: Since 2015, shortly after I qualified as a civil architect, I have followed several trainings in the field of golf with the Royal Moroccan Golf Federation, notably in course rating. In 2018, alongside experts of the French Golf Federation I was invited to work on the Red course of

Royal Golf Dar Essalam, Rabat. Right after the first phase of the renovation I had the privilege of presenting to HRH Prince Rachid, president of the Royal Moroccan Golf Federation, the results of the work and my ambition to become the first golf architect in the country. Thanks to his special attention, I was able to join the team in charge of the renovation of the three courses of the Royal Golf Dar Essalam. This meeting with HRH was key and unlocked many doors for me. At the start of the renovation of the Blue course and following a short experience in shaping on the Green course in Rabat, I met Cabell Robinson. Following constant exchanges with him, at the age of 30 I was hired to be his assistant on this project. It was a fantastic experience to have him as my first mentor and to learn about schools of design in golf course architecture.

What is your view on classroombased education for golf architects?

RJ: A sensible starting point; but probably best if mixed in with a realworld project as well. Classrooms can be a good place to learn specific skills such as graphic communication or drafting, and technical tools such as computer software.

JD: I think it is invaluable. The curriculum didn't focus much on golf in our landscape architecture programme in college, disappointingly. This led to me taking matters into my own hands. In my final semester, I was approved for an independent study for credit under the supervision of the department. I chose sustainable



Riley Johns says that aspects of golf design that require more site-based creative expression or troubleshooting, such as routing, clearing, earthworks, shaping, finishing and grassing, are best learned in the field with time and experience

golf course design as the area of focus. The independent study allowed me to design my own curriculum with approval from the department. The opportunity allowed me to choose my own site and explore the design process for building a golf course. Having this on my résumé helped me land my first job as a golf architect after graduation.

TK: Very important but site experience is just as, if not more, important. We'd all love to spend days walking sites to find routings and 'play in the dirt' but the realities of most jobs require lots of work in the office to make sure the work done on the ground is efficient and helps keep clients and contractors happy and budgets in check... all the boring bits. Looking to the future, I'd probably expect this to become more

important as technology and climate change lead to more remote working and less chance for quick visits to check on site work, unfortunately.

AH: I think a varied approach to all education is best. The classroom is an important aspect of golf architecture, especially for learning and respecting the history of the game. On the technical side, one thing I've noticed is that you remember things more easily when in the field. I used to spend hours amending construction details using CAD, but it wasn't until I saw them implemented on the ground that they became ingrained.

RC: Training in golf architecture in a school is highly important. Having experienced the profession first, on-site, for three years, I had



the honour of becoming the first
Arab to join the EIGCA educational
programme. In architecture as in any
other art form, there is both theory
and practice. I had understood that
during the three years that I spent on
site. While I had accumulated a lot of
knowledge and ideas during that time
– everything was a bit jumbled up. The
educational programme allowed me
to conceptualise, better understand
and reorganise those ideas and put
everything in its place in my mind.

What aspects of the job can be learned in a classroom, and what needs to be done on site?

RJ: Basic construction theory with regards to drainage, irrigation, turf and grading could be learned in a classroom up to a certain point. Anything that required more site-based creative expression or

troubleshooting, such as routing, clearing, earthworks, shaping, finishing and grassing, is probably best learned in the field with time and experience. Nothing can replace the wisdom of a mentor.

JD: Just about every aspect of designing something for the built environment requires equal parts of classroom training and real-world field experience. Every line we draw or concept we envision impacts things on the ground. Still, if you never get the opportunity to see how it translates to the field, it's harder to understand the real-world influence of the idea. Reversely, suppose you are working exclusively in the field. In that case, it is difficult to have a well-rounded understanding of the contextual influence of the idea because you are working in a microcosm at any given time. They

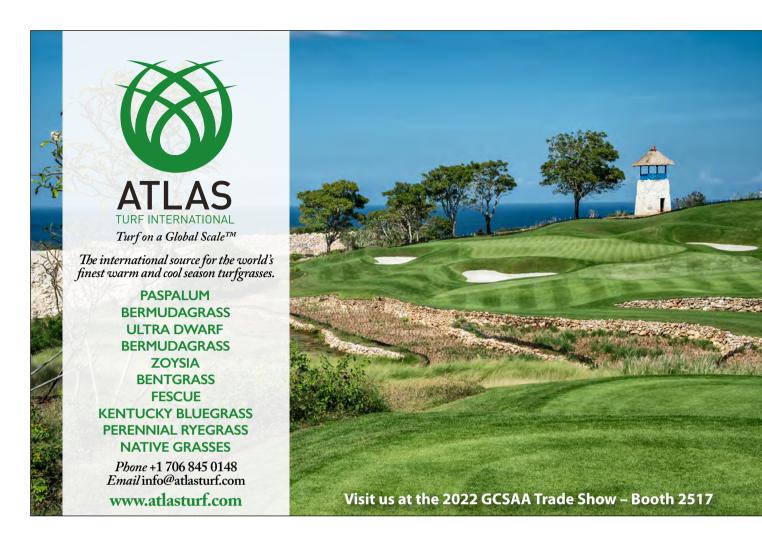
call it planning for a reason. Even the 'field architects' start with sketching or planning to understand the bigger picture of what they are proposing. There is no substitute for proper technical training, and there is also no substitute for experiencing first-hand how a site receives the design.

AM: My personal opinion is that you cannot separate education into classroom and on-site. It is not black and white. Much experience and more profound understanding are lost by reducing it only to either way. A combination of both would be ideal. Educating the history of golf course architecture and its incredible designs and different design strategies is easily taught and discussed in class. Still, site visits to the best golf courses are mandatory (and more fun) to understand and study the ground and how they stand the test of time.

The very same goes with construction. Understanding topo maps and what your sketched lines on paper mean for drainage and the response of the ball on-site is essential to draw them in the first place.

On a broader scale, teaching the application processes through school projects would be fantastic if escorted with the specific government bodies to understand what they seek in those plans. Working through a whole project is vital for understanding the complexity of our job.

TK: I believe the technical side of the job is still probably underappreciated by those outside the industry. As well as mastering the artistic and technical skills of the design itself, a good architect needs to have a broad knowledge base





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Angela Moser (pictured on site during the construction of the current twelfth hole of Tom Doak's design for The Rennaisance Club in Scotland) says her network began with a single contact in the industry

with an understanding of agronomy and maintenance, construction techniques, drainage, irrigation, civil engineering and more, most of which require some 'classroom' work to learn.

AH: Understanding contours and controlling surface water is vital to a golf architect's work. I think aspects of that can be learnt in the classroom. Drawing skills are also very important, we often sit with clients and masterplanners and need to be able to communicate our ideas well with a scale ruler, pencil and tracing paper. In

side, getting out and seeing golf courses is probably still the best way to learn. However, I'm not sure my wife and kids believe me when I tell them that when I am playing golf, it is actually research and development!

How do you get projects as a young architect?

RJ: Keep busy, do your best work, and hope the phone rings.

JD: Nobody will tell you it is easy. It is all about relationships. I've been fortunate enough to work with some

them wherever possible. One acquired skill is vetting what opportunities are worth your time and best-suited as a worthwhile endeavour. Sometimes the most challenging part is saying no. Nobody likes to turn down work, ever, but it takes discipline to understand when an opportunity isn't a good fit and let it go.

AM: Ironically, you need the experience to get projects, but need projects to gain the experience. So, get to work and acquire the knowledge. It doesn't matter what course or level you are involved in, learn the equipment that is being used and stay focused and interested. If you notice that it is not the most outstanding project, stay positive because even a terrible experience is an experience of what you want to avoid in the future. The reputation and recommendation of your work will spread and hopefully you will get the right email.

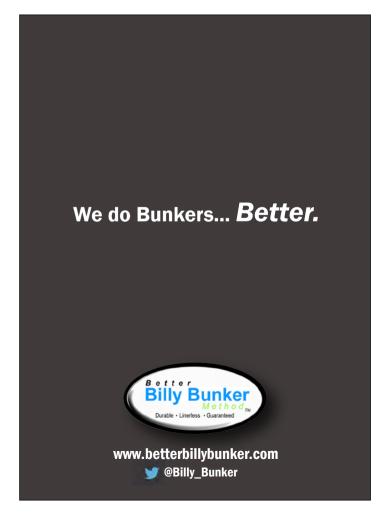
TK: I'm maybe in an enviable position to many young aspiring architects as I

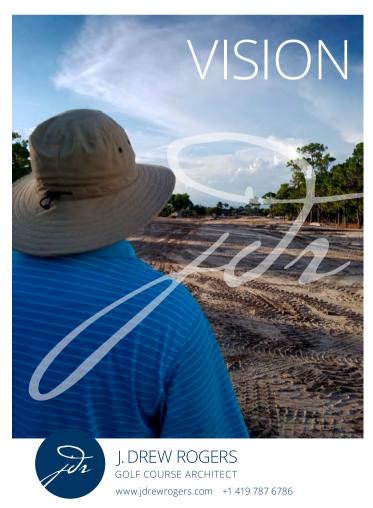


"It's a slow game. You have to be very patient and not get despondent when you miss out on work"

terms of understanding exactly what you are drawing, when working on a grading plan for example, nothing can beat seeing a good shaper bring your vision to life. On the more relaxing very well-established and recognised architects and designers. That doesn't mean you don't have to try. There is no secret recipe. You must find opportunities for exposure and pursue









A good architect will require a broad knowledge base and understanding of disciplines like agronomy, drainage and irrigation, says Tom Kelly, much of which will require some 'classroom' training

work in one of the bigger offices around these days so I'm not constantly trying to win my next project on my own. But at the same time, given the size of most of our projects it's a leap suddenly to expect to be given the lead on a full 18-hole project with minimal experience. I just need to keep pestering Jeremy [Slessor, EGD's managing director] and prove my ability with any small opportunities I get and I'm sure they'll start to fall on my desk eventually!

AH: It's a slow game. You have to be very patient and not get despondent when you miss out on work. Learning from the jobs you don't win, and asking for feedback regularly has been useful for us in Canada.

As a newcomer to the industry, how did you go about building your network? *RJ*: Slowly and over time. I tend to let the networking happen organically rather than planned or forced. It's a small profession which is helpful, and

golf has a special way of bringing likeminded people together anyway.

JD: Persistence, persistence, persistence. There are roles to play in every firm, and sometimes there isn't always an inherent opportunity to get in front of people and interact to create those relationships that are so important for finding work. So, for example, if you are just starting out in a firm and want to be more than a draftsman or 'office employee', you need to ask for opportunities and prove that it benefits the business. It can be tricky because the firm's needs must come first, and you may find much of your time being spent on deliverables. For me, taking the initiative to be inserted into situations where I could meet people and form relationships was vital. Attending trade shows, participating in a panel discussion, giving presentations, writing articles and using your voice to gain exposure are just a few ways to accomplish this.

AM: My network started with having one contact in the industry. My fellow student Anton Ortner (Olazabal Design) got me my first CAD monkey job. Over the years, I met and got introduced to a wider circle, but the game changer was when I pulled all my courage together and reached out to the people I was inspired by. Now I understand that the golf industry is one big family and you will meet most of them over time. It will come naturally once you are in it.

TK: It started off with lots of letter writing and thankfully there were a few kind people who responded with advice and even offered some work experience early on. After some seasonal greenkeeping work which came out of one of those work experience visits, I was then lucky enough to work for MJ Abbott for six years who work with a wide range of architects and consultants from across the industry, which was a fantastic experience, providing plenty







Progressing a career in golf course architecture requires a blend of skills, including design, networking and site work. Pictured clockwise from above are Reda Channane, Alex Hay, and Jeff Danner (right) with landscape architect Michael Budge

of opportunities to interact with some of the best in the business. The EIGCA and BIGGA events have also been vital. The annual EIGCA conference is a great event and well worth the effort of attending having seen it from both sides of the fence now. Sometimes I forget but generally the golf course industry is very friendly and reaching out to ask a question every now and then, even to a stranger, can often reap rewards.

AH: I've been fortunate to work with EGD and Tim Lobb thus far in my career, building a good network has happened naturally. Latterly, I've become more involved with the

EIGCA and ASGCA via their Associate Programmes, which has resulted in my network expanding more.

RC: Joining the EIGCA allowed me to enlarge my network considerably. For the last four years I have been travelling a lot to work on projects. But like everyone else, in the last two years I was affected by the global pandemic. I was not able to have other work opportunities due to the global situation and travel restrictions. I had to come back to my country a little earlier than I had anticipated. It has now been more than a year since I created my company GolfDesign Morocco.

The idea is to offer local services that adapt to the financial level of the clubs, especially after the pandemic. In Morocco, only two or three big companies are working in the construction of golf courses. At this moment in time, I do not consider them as competitors. I am more focused on creating a new market on a reduced scale, which gives precise answers with reduced budgets to the clubs.

How important to you is being regarded as the architect of record on projects? *RJ*: Very important if you designed the golf course. I view g My first job





in go olf designers not dissimilar to musical artists; the artist should always be credited to the album/golf course they create. This recognition plays a big part in how they get their next project.

JD: It used to be much more important than it is now. Most people get into this business with the romantic notion they will build a body of work that bears their name in perpetuity. I'm no different, but the reality of golf course architecture is that no one person is ever solely responsible for the design, construction, and

evolution of a golf course. However, it is human nature to want to be recognised or acknowledged for doing a great job, whether they are the architect of record or not. I like receiving a pat on the back for doing great work that provides my clients with a return on their investment while providing healthy, active, and engaging experiences for the golfers. But also, something that serves a more significant benefit to the surrounding environment and community. The real legacy is not the architect of record. It is the work, and it is for the people who experience the work after we're gone. We benefit from the

to take away from the designer's original idea for the sake of putting my name on it.

TK: I'd hope this isn't as much of an issue as it probably used to be, and I know here at EGD we are keen to make sure those responsible get the praise they deserve. I'm not one to seek the limelight so having my name on record is probably most important to build a résumé to seek future projects. It's not a good look for the industry when deserving people are struggling to prove to potential future clients what they were and weren't responsible for, so I hope that isn't something I ever have to deal with.



"The golf course industry is very friendly and reaching out to ask a question can often reap rewards"

fact that the works of MacKenzie, Ross, Dye, Tillinghast, Colt, Simpson, or whoever lives on, but they aren't here to bask in their fame. Indeed, they don't care! Nothing in this world is permanent, and inevitably, golf courses need to evolve and change over time to serve a useful purpose. While long-lasting for some, the legacy of a name is still just temporary, it eventually fades. That is something we can't control after we're gone. Credit and recognition are excellent, but it is not why I have dedicated my life to this work.

AM: The original designer deserves the credit. I am still waiting on my first solo design, but am proud to be involved with so many newbuilds and restorations. I would never want AH: Not at all to be honest. Along with seeing a design come to life, working closely with the individuals involved with each particular project is the most rewarding part of the job. I'm not too concerned if the wider world knows if I was involved in a project design wise, I'd almost rather golfers are able to enjoy the work of Lobb + Partners without knowing we were there.

RC: In architecture, the success of a project is linked to the presence of multidisciplinary teams. Being a signatory on a project is just a representation and a tribute to all those who work with me. I firmly believe that my future as a golf architect is based on the evolution and success of the teams around me. GCA







he story of the creation of Les Bordes, not far from Orléans in the area of France known as the Sologne, is well known. How architect Robert von Hagge, having befriended golf consultant Yoshi Endo while working in Japan was told to expect a call from Baron Marcel Bich. How von Hagge, on returning to Texas, took a call from a Frenchman he could hardly understand; the only things he learned from that call being that the Frenchman (Bich) wanted to build a golf course on his estate and that there was a first-class Air France ticket to Paris awaiting him at the airport. And how the course was eventually built, at a cost that "exceeded the unlimited budget", by an American design firm that had never worked in Europe before and a Japanese construction management company.

Throughout its history, Les Bordes has remained something of a mystery. Almost impossible for outsiders to play, but ranked among Europe's finest courses by a lot of those who did, it existed in a state of semilimbo for many years after Bich's death in 1994. At one point about a decade ago, it was apparently being taken over by a group in which Greg Norman was involved. And then, in 2018, the course finally was sold, to a consortium headed by private equity specialist Driss Benkirane.

From the very start, Les Bordes was intended to be a 36-hole club. Von Hagge's original concept plan for the site incorporated two courses, but that plan was lost in an office fire, and no-one can remember what it looked like. As late as 2010, the year in which von Hagge died, his firm, with his longtime associate and partner Rick Baril taking the lead, was supposed to be building the second course.

Finally, after the 2018 takeover by Benkirane, founder of private equity firm RoundShield, the club was reformed on a rather more solid footing. The clubhouse has been rebuilt - rather beautifully - and a number of cottages constructed to accommodate members and their guests. A programme of building some larger houses, which will be sold to members (and which can also be rented when their owners are not in residence), is about to start, and the chateau which was Baron Bich's home is becoming a Six Senses hotel, expected to open in 2024, although interestingly, hotel guests will have no access to the golf courses, which are strictly reserved for members and their guests. And, finally, the second eighteen hole has come to fruition, along with a ten-hole par three course that goes by the name of the Wild Piglet, both designed and constructed by Gil Hanse's team.

The Les Bordes property is enormous, around 1,400 acres, and as such contains a lot of different topography, soils and the like. Hanse's new course is not near the clubhouse or the Old course, in fact it is a ten to fifteen minute cart ride away. This







The par-three seventh and, top, approach to the par-four eighth

might not seem ideal, but there are consolations. Most prominent of these is the environment in which the course sits. Von Hagge's Old course is quite low-lying and heavily forested; it has water hazards on twelve of the eighteen holes, and the soils are far from ideal for golf. Rick Baril says: "The soils were miserable and variable. It seemed like they would never drain." Hanse's New course is very different. If it is higher, it is subtly so, but it is much more open, and in places the soil is quite sandy. Although there is currently very little evidence of heather, it feels like a heathland.

"We were instantly drawn to the vegetation on the site," says Hanse.
"The beauty of the broom, the bracken, the heather, the trees, led us to believe that we had a terrific opportunity to plug a golf course into great mature vegetation. When we discovered how much of the site was sandy we knew we could use exposed sand to aid in the transition from features to existing

landscape. All of these site-specific positives led us to building perhaps our most 'lay of the land' golf course."

This lay of the land feel is what struck me most about Les Bordes New. Director of golf Jack Laws, who formerly worked at Sunningdale, compared the course to Harry Colt's work at the famous old club. I can see what he means – the holes lie gently of the greens at grade level, at least at the front; if they are pushed up at all, it is usually at the back.

The light touch feel of the course is enhanced by the rapid growth of vegetation, which has helped to naturalise it and hide the inevitable construction scars. It's true that most of this growth has been in the form of broom and, ultimately, if a heathland

"The light touch feel of the course is enhanced by the rapid growth of vegetation, which has helped to naturalise it"

on the land as Colt's course tend to

– but in many ways it has been built
with a much lighter touch than the
great English architect would have.
In particular, Colt pioneered the use
of elevated greens, for visibility and
drainage, and a course with most of
the greens up in the air is a common
sign of his fingers being on the design.
Les Bordes New, by contrast, has most

environment is the goal, the broom will have to be cut back severely to allow room for the heather to grow. But in the short term at least, it is no bad thing. Those greens, by the way, are contoured, but not dramatic: elegant is a good word to describe them.

The course has strategy aplenty.

The short par-four fifteenth hole has
two bunkers in the middle of its wide



Gil Hanse describes the New as "perhaps our most 'lay of the land' golf course"

fairway, offering golfers a clear choice of route. What I liked about the hole was that the choice was in no sense clear-cut. Go right, the ostensibly easier tee shot, and the ground rises ten yards short of the green, creating visibility problems. Go left, though, and a small mound at the front of that side of the green makes the approach shot – even if only a chip – rather perplexing: should you hit a lob wedge above the trouble and attempt to bring it to a stop near the hole, or should one try a running shot up and over the contour? It is

a hole that will take several plays to determine the better option – which will vary from golfer to golfer.

The long par-three fourteenth, as well as some beautiful bunkers short and right of the green, features a French version of the famed Devil's Asshole at Pine Valley (where Hanse is a member) at back left – Le Cul du Diable, perhaps? It isn't as deep as the original (though these things never are), but it's certainly hazardous enough to make anyone who knows it is there steer well clear of that side of the green. The

par-five closing hole features one of the few substantial water hazards on the course (a definite separator from the Old course). Though I can normally take or leave water holes, I did like the way the diagonal nature of the lake that protects the green offers golfers a range of choices, even if they have to lay up.

We should not finish without a mention of the ten-hole Wild Piglet par-three course. Such facilities have become a popular amenity at destination courses in recent years, a







The ten-hole 'Wild Piglet' par-three course occupies the land between the seventh and ninth holes of the New course

good way to give players something else to do beyond another eighteen full length holes. It is, in a way, a pity that Les Bordes is so private: courses like the Piglet are perfect venues for held themselves in check a little while building the New, perhaps this is where they let their more playful side out. Consequently, it's a lot of fun, with plenty of ways to use contour to move

"Greens are contoured, but not dramatic: elegant is a good word to describe them"

young golfers to learn to love the game. The greens are significantly more dramatic than those on the big course; if Hanse and his shaping team the ball around the greens. I wonder if it is, in fact, a little bit too long for its purpose, of hit and giggle golf, but there is no doubt that it is a lot of fun. When we heard that Les Bordes had hired Hanse to build the New course, and that the site chosen was in large measure sandy, there could be little doubt that the result would be excellent, and it is. I suspect one consequence of the creation of the New will be a substantial rankings drop for the Old course, which frankly looks very 1980s by comparison (and which, to be honest, I didn't like at all – some of the mounding is way over the top for my taste). But if so, it will surely be replaced by the New. GCA

Heath revival

WOKING GC, ENGLAND

The birthplace of strategic golf is now the venue for possibly the most thorough transformation to the Surrey heath. Adam Lawrence reports







he heathland of Surrey and Berkshire in southern England is an area of crucial importance to golf history. Essentially the region in which golf architecture came into existence as a discipline, the heath was the first place in which great golf was built in quantity away from the seaside. Harry Colt, Herbert Fowler, Tom Simpson and many others came to golf design here. The first club formed on the Surrey heath was the nine-hole Limpsfield Chart GC, which was founded in 1889. The second, though, was Woking.

Bernard Darwin, in his classic *The Golf Courses of the British Isles*, published in 1910, suggested that the historian of London-area golf in the last years of the nineteenth century "might have dismissed in a line or two a course that a few mad barristers were

trying to carve by main force out of a swamp thickly covered with gorse and heather near Woking."

But it was after Darwin's hypothetical historian that Woking came to achieve its fame. Originally laid out by Tom Dunn in 1893 – and we should note that Dunn's excellent experiment for Low's theory of strategic golf.

Most famous of Low and Paton's innovations is the central bunker complex on the short par-four fourth hole, said by many to be the true birthplace of strategic design. But the two of them left virtually no part of

"Most famous of Low and Paton's innovations is the central bunker complex on the short par-four fourth"

routing mostly survives to this day – it was Woking members John Low and Stuart Paton (Paton was christened 'the Mussolini of Woking' by his friend Darwin, so powerful was he in the club) who, in the early years of the twentieth century transformed the course, turning it into a living

the course untouched. Most noticeably, over a period of some forty years, Paton oversaw the recontouring of Dunn's original greens to produce a set that remains one of the outstanding collections in British golf. While largely at natural grade (Harry Colt's introduction of mostly raised greens



postdates Woking's creation by some years), the greens are large, sinuous and, in places, massively contoured.

As with most of the Surrey heath courses, time took its toll on Woking. Heathland is a created, not natural, landscape – it was formed by early farmers who felled trees to create grazing for their flocks, and when no longer grazed, it inevitably reverts to woodland if left untouched.

That is what happened at Woking, as at virtually every other heathland course. And it happened sufficiently long ago that these courses have been heavily treed now for many years, long enough for a narrative to emerge that they are or should be 'forested courses'.

Under the supervision of course manager Andy Ewence and consulting architect Tim Lobb, Woking continues to make progress with one of the most ambitious programmes to restore heathland characteristics yet to be adopted on the Surrey heath. cleared area: in a few more years, it should be a field of the purple stuff. The club is now evaluating similar work in other areas: not only would

"Heathland is a created, not natural, landscape
– it was formed by early farmers who felled
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woodland if left untouched"

One example of this work was the clearance of a substantial area behind the second green and to the left of the eleventh fairway. To anyone familiar with Woking, the change was remarkable. The hillside behind the fifth green was now clear. Two years on, heather is springing back into the

this open up the site quite remarkably in places, over time the reduced fertility in the soil from the lack of falling leaves should have a significant effect on both the heather coverage (it does best in poverty soils, when it cannot be out-competed by other species) and the turf sward — it should



be easier for Ewence and his team to encourage fine-bladed grasses at the expense of poa annual.

There is other work under way too. The third hole, one of the best on the course, it is set to get even better, as Ewence intends to build a new tee high on the hillside behind the second green, replacing the present lower tees, improving the view from the teeing ground, and emphasising more strongly the dogleg on the hole.

Over time heather will spread across areas of the golf course where there is currently little of it, though significant transplanting of young heather plants has already occurred in areas like the carry in front of the first tee, and more will follow. This increased focus on heather does have playability implications for the golf course, as

heather is brutal for players with low swing speeds. I vividly remember playing a round with such a golfer on another heathland course. On many, even most, of the holes, he was unable to carry the heather from the tee, and unable to extricate his ball when he went in. For him the golf course was essentially impossible.

The Woking team, though, is determined this situation will not arise on its watch. Ewence and Lobb have, over the last year, installed new forward tees on holes such as the par-three seventh and the par-four eleventh. Although these tees may not get much attention from a lot of golfers, for some they will play a crucial role in ensuring that the course remains playable, no matter how much heather growth ensues.

Lobb says: "The first phase of the project, which began in early March, covers holes one, six, seven, eight, eleven, twelve and fifteen. These works were completed by the end of March and were handled by contractor MJ Abbott and Rain Bird irrigation as well as by Andy's team.

"Our heather restoration work at Woking has been a great success and is set to improve the course's environmental impact significantly. Heather is beautiful and it is the appropriate choice for a heathland course, but it is a tough and unyielding hazard for players with slow swing speeds. Therefore, adding more forward tees is a sensible choice to make the course less penal for such players."

Woking's most important defence is the remarkable set of greens created



New forward tees give players the option of a shorter carry over heather

by Stuart Paton over forty years. They are both large and severely undulated, even when located in areas that seem mostly flat – first timers on the course are apt to be very surprised when they walk up to the thirteenth and fifteenth greens. Now, though, they are getting larger still, as Ewence has been leading a major green surface recapture scheme.

The effects, in places, are quite remarkable. At the fifth hole, for example, a substantial amount of green has been recaptured at the back left, bringing a fabulous sucker pin position back into use, and creating some exciting – and, it must be said, very, very long – putts. The seventeenth hole, famous for the old 'Johnny Low'

bunker that bit deeply into the green, has also been extended, though it remains hard for the present-day viewer to understand why the bunker became so notorious. In general, the deeply and wrote about it repeatedly

– it is set to become influential all

over again. Along with the work

currently underway at Addington,

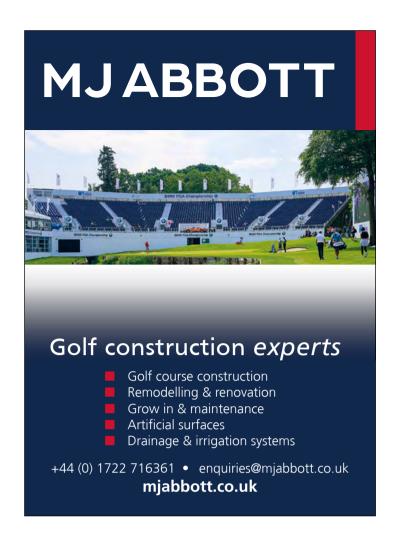
a few miles away, Woking's current

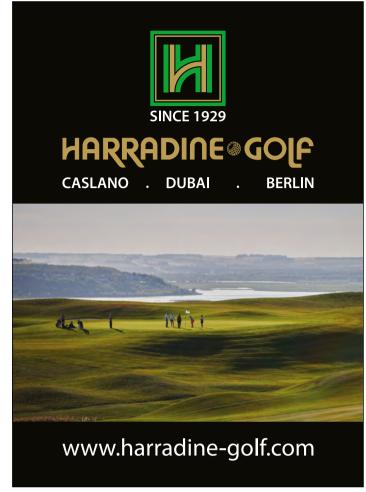
"It is an exciting prospect, and I shall look forward to returning again and again to watch it develop"

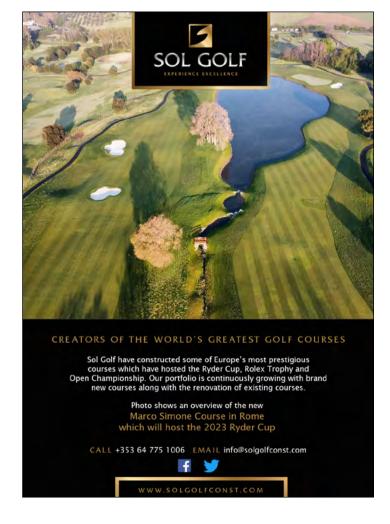
greens, always large, are now quite huge in places, as befits a course on which Low, who loved St Andrews so much, was so important.

Woking, then, is a course that is going places. Always influential, because of its membership – Darwin, golf's greatest chronicler, loved it

projects represent the most significant attempt yet undertaken to return a heathland course to something more akin to what it looked like a hundred years ago. It is an exciting prospect, and I shall look forward to returning again and again to watch it develop. GCA









Spring Lake Golf Club

Spring Lake, New Jersey George Thomas - 1910 / A.W. Tillinghast 1918 Tripp Davis Renovation and Restoration

> Tripp Davis and Associates **Golf Architecture** Norman, Oklahoma USA 405-447-5259 tripp@tdagolf.net

Rise again

VERDURA RESORT, ITALY

When both of its courses were damaged by floods, Verdura Resort took the opportunity to reimagine the layouts. Richard Humphreys finds out more



evere storms raged across Italy over seven days in October and November 2018. Strong winds and heavy rain led to flooding and landslides, resulting in the loss of many lives and billions of euros of damage.

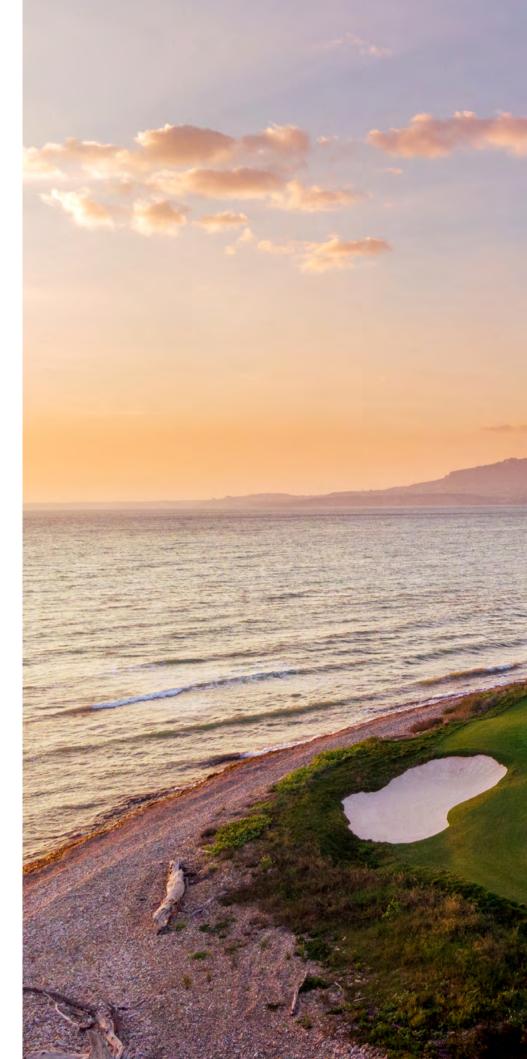
Among the many businesses impacted by the storms was Rocco Forte's Verdura Resort, which is located within 230 hectares of Mediterranean landscape on Sicily's southern coastline. It opened in 2009 with two Kyle Phillips-designed golf courses, the East and West, which are ranked among the best in the country. The European Tour took its Sicilian Open to the venue three times in the 2010s, playing over a composite of the two courses.

The storms led to a breach of the levee that runs between the site and the Verdura River. Phillips explains: "On coastal sites we normally think of erosion as coming inward from the sea. In this case, the erosion started inland and moved toward the sea. The breach occurred near the new tenth tees, one kilometre from the sea, and quickly moved across 14 holes (seven holes of both the East and West courses) and into sections of the resort buildings.

"The flood was obviously devastating, but we needed to approach it as an opportunity to make the golf experience even better."

Phillips altered the routing to incorporate all 14 damaged holes, plus four remodelled holes into the new East course configuration. This new configuration more clearly defines the two courses, whilst preserving an equal number of coastal holes on each course.

"The flood created new landforms and dramatic, eroded inlets near the





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Looking north across Verdura Resort and its two courses, with the greens of (from left) holes thirteen, twelve and five in the foreground

coastline that have been incorporated into the new design." he says. Phillips has also enhanced the walkability, with generous tightly mown connections from green to tee.

One highlight of the new layout is the par-four sixth, with long views along the Mediterranean coastline. "It is arguably now the prettiest hole on the property," said Phillips. "The Mediterranean Sea runs the length of the right side and the view down the coastline goes on forever. The approach plays over a saltwater inlet carved out by the flood to a seaside green that sits on the southern tip of the property."

Playing in the opposite direction, the thirteenth takes advantage of the dramatic mountain and coastline views. With the coastline on the left, this "wee par three" plays down to an undulating green that hugs the water's edge.

Also inspired by the flood erosion is the addition of a new drainage burn that acts as a strategic element to the par-four third and par-five fourth holes, both of which play towards the sea.

The new par-five eighth and par-four tenth holes now share a massive double green. "Sir Rocco is a keen golfer and appreciates the elements of traditional links golf. As we were walking on site before the reconstruction, I mentioned that I was pondering a double green and he was quite excited about the idea. It has turned out to be one of the more dramatic and interesting on the new course."

Sir Rocco Forte, the resort's founder and chairman of Rocco Forte Hotels, said: "I am tremendously excited by the new layout, which will enhance both the playing experience and magnificent views over the spectacular Sicilian coastline."

The East course is already rising up rankings since its reopening in October. Giacomo Battafarano, the general manager at Verdura, says: "To be rated among the world's elite golf resorts and Italy's best is an outstanding achievement for the resort and something that makes us all very proud.

"The global reputation of Verdura for delivering excellence and outstanding service on and off the golf course continues to grow every year and, with the recent reopening of the East course, we're confident that further exciting times lie ahead in 2022 and beyond." GCA

HOLING OUT



Cliffhanger

A dramatic new putting course gives a Colorado club the wow factor

ew clubs will get the chance to perch a putting course on a cliff's edge, with a panoramic mountain view. So when that opportunity arose for The Country Club at Castle Pines in Castle Rock, Colorado, the club grabbed it with both hands.

After five years of evaluation, discussion and negotiation, in late 2019 the stars aligned and a land swap was completed that allowed The Country Club to build its dramatic new addition, called 'The Crags'.

"The new land provided the perfect location," says Sean McCue, the club's director of agronomy, who designed the expansive green. "The result sees the new offering perched upon a steep clifftop with views of the entire front range of the Rocky Mountains."

Construction of the green, by McCue's in-house team, was completed in 2020, and The Crags is now in full operation, having been limited during 2021 due to a clubhouse renovation.

"The design concept merged features found on the Punchbowl at Bandon Dunes along with the lost twelfth green at Sitwell Park in England," said McCue. "These inspirations helped serve to create a wildly over-the-top green that is decidedly specific to our local topography and mountainous terrain.

"The bold contouring goes against modern golf green design, by paying homage to the Golden Age of golf

architecture. The putting surface is oversized with steep slopes – some as much as 20 per cent – that move the ball in ways that one could not imagine until they play the course. The internal rock outcroppings and trees that were preserved also add to the design element, creating natural barriers that add a unique setting to the course, with players also able to work their ball around them too.

"The reaction to The Crags has been overwhelmingly positive by both members and guests alike. For almost everybody who sees the green for the first time their reaction is 'wow', followed by pulling out their phone to take a photo of it." GCA





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