

# GOLF COURSE ARCHITECTURE

*The global journal of  
golf design and development*

ISSUE **73** JULY 2023





# DELIVERING BEYOND YOUR EXPECTATIONS

- » SHAPING PACKAGES
- » GOLF COURSE CONSTRUCTION
- » CONSULTANCY & MANAGEMENT
- » TURNKEY CONSTRUCTION PACKAGES
- » SPECIALISED TEAM SERVICES

**CJWGOLF**  
SHAPING THE FUTURE

+44 (0)7799 635 169 | [INFO@CJWGOLF.COM](mailto:INFO@CJWGOLF.COM) | [WWW.CJWGOLF.COM](http://WWW.CJWGOLF.COM)



ADAM LAWRENCE

---

## Slow down

I have often thought that many of the problems with golf are a result of the fact that most golfers are men. There is no doubt that golf courses have both suffered and benefitted from testosterone. Competitive behaviour may have driven the creation and improvement of many courses, but it has a destructive side too: sometimes that urge results in a determination to achieve results that are far from positive.

The quest for faster greens, discussed in this issue's main feature, is a classic example. While greens that roll smooth and true are undeniably a good thing, and fast rolling is correlated with smoothness, the desire among clubs to have the fastest greens is not. This quest for speed makes golf slower to play (isn't that a beautiful irony?) and more expensive. It can also make wonderful old greens, built when it was simply not possible to mow grass so low and groom it so well, unplayable.

This is most often expressed as 'a loss of pin positions'. But the truth is that those positions are not genuinely lost. They just become unplayable because the green is rolling too damned fast. In consequence, hundreds, even thousands, of classic greens have been levelled out, removed of the contours that made them great in the first place, so that they can be cut and groomed to be even faster.

The architects who do this work should not be unreasonably criticised. We all have to eat, and if clubs want faster greens, in the end it is their right to have them. But perhaps our male-dominated green committees could do with a different perspective.

*Adam*



## Southwest Greens Leisure Concepts

- Putting areas "Himalaya" style
- Mini golf concepts
- Championship putting courses

# FUN ANYONE?

## Golf Entertainment Venues

**Golf Entertainment Venues succeed because of the hands that build them.**

The golf industry is changing and open for innovative concepts to entertain all kinds of golfers.

When new and exciting ideas continue to emerge, the success of such venues depend on both the products and experience of the construction company they partner with. Our Company leads the charge in both cases, allowing us to understand the needs of our most discerning clients. We provide in-depth knowledge with regards to synthetic turf systems, concept performance demands, installation skills

and project management experience, assisting them to create world class facilities.

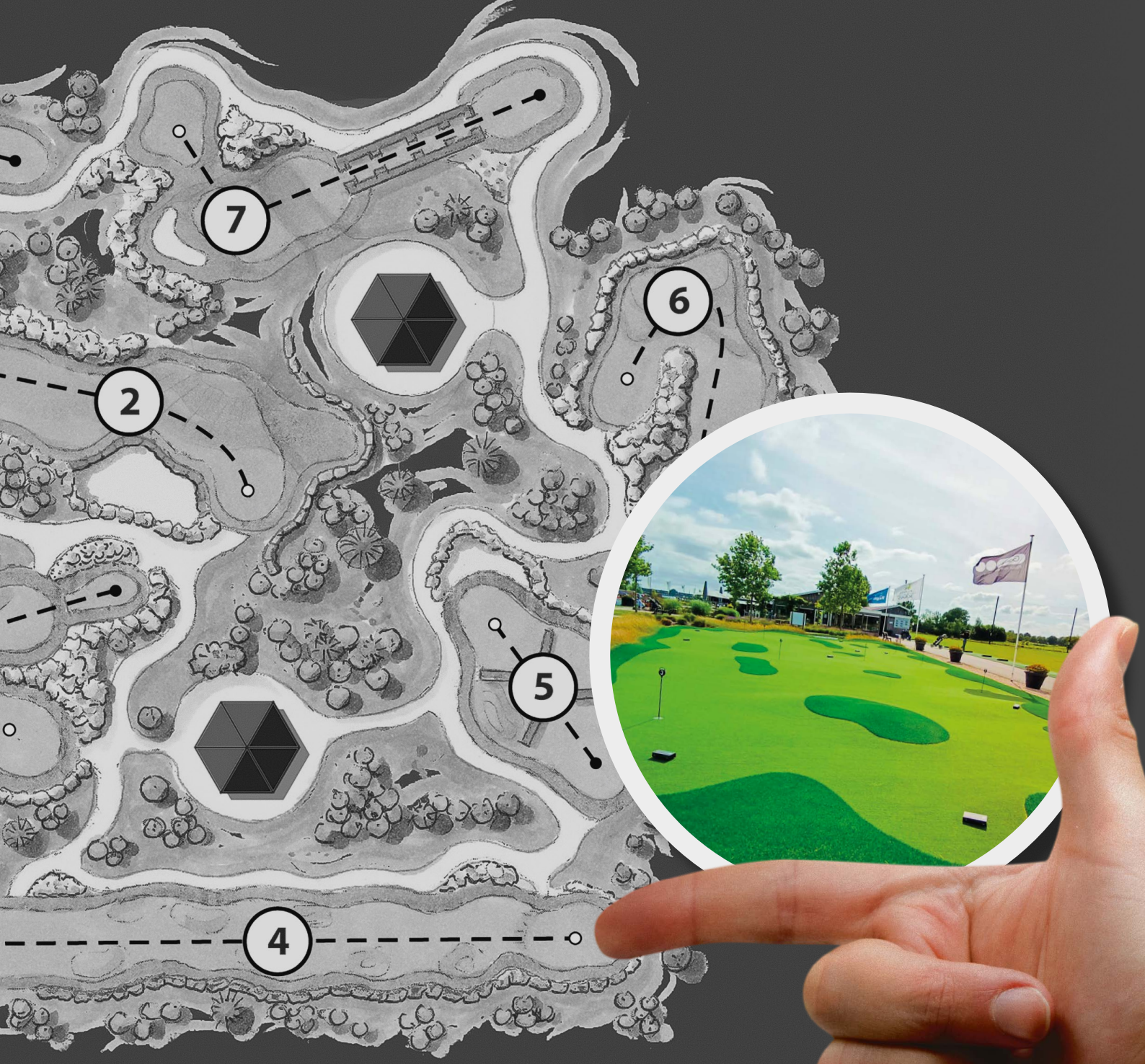
Working alongside our client, pushing the boundaries of imagination, drives us to help grow the game.

We prove that our knowledge and skill coupled by our artistic passion makes it today's reality.

We also love to think out of the box with our clients creating concepts and new ways to get people involved with golf.

### **KEVIN HOLINATY**

President, Southwest Greens Construction.



SOUTHWEST GREENS®  
CONSTRUCTION

Mastering the Art of Synthetic Turf Installations

+34 616 582 787 • [info@southwestgreens.eu](mailto:info@southwestgreens.eu) • [southwestgreens.eu](http://southwestgreens.eu)

SWG Construction, construction arm for SWG International,  
a Division of Shaw, a Berkshire Hathaway Company



**Stirling &  
Martin**  
GOLF COURSE  
ARCHITECTS

**30**  
years  
Since 1993

*Designing Golf Courses*

120

GOLF & RESIDENTIAL  
MASTERPLAN

30

GOLF COURSE  
OPEN TO PLAY

5

GOLF COURSE  
UNDER CONSTRUCTION



**Stirling &  
Martin**  
GOLF COURSE  
ARCHITECTS



**EIGCA**  
EUROPEAN INSTITUTE OF  
GOLF COURSE ARCHITECTS

[www.stirlingmartingolf.com](http://www.stirlingmartingolf.com)

SPAIN +(34) 670 82 59 59 • [marcomartin@smgolf.es](mailto:marcomartin@smgolf.es)

# GOLF COURSE ARCHITECTURE



Published by Tudor Rose  
Tudor House, 6 Friar Lane  
Leicester LE1 5RA  
Tel: +44 116 222 9900  
[www.tudor-rose.co.uk](http://www.tudor-rose.co.uk)

ISSN 1745-3585 (print)  
ISSN 2754-9828 (online)

Printed in Great Britain by Micropress Printers.

© 2023 Tudor Rose Holdings Ltd. All rights reserved.  
No part of this publication may be stored or transmitted or reproduced in any form or by any means, including whether by photocopying, scanning, downloading onto computer or otherwise without the prior written permission from Tudor Rose Holdings Ltd.

Views expressed in *Golf Course Architecture* are not necessarily those of the publishers. Acceptance of advertisements does not imply official endorsement of the products or services concerned. While every care has been taken to ensure accuracy of content, no responsibility can be taken for any errors and/or omissions. Readers should take appropriate professional advice before acting on any issue raised herein.

The publisher reserves the right to accept or reject advertising material and editorial contributions. The publisher assumes no liability for the return of unsolicited art, photography or manuscripts. It is assumed that any images taken from sources which are widely distributed, such as on the Web, are in the public domain. It is recognised though that since such images tend to be passed freely between sources it is not always possible to track the original source. If copyrighted material has ended up being treated as public domain due to the original source not being identified please contact the publisher, Tudor Rose.

*Golf Course Architecture* is published with the support and guidance of the American Society of Golf Course Architects, the European Institute of Golf Course Architects, and GEO Foundation.

In 2023, the EIGCA presented *Golf Course Architecture* with its Harry Colt Award, which recognises outstanding contributions to golf or golf development.

#### Contributing Editor

Adam Lawrence

#### News Editor

Richard Humphreys

#### Editorial team

Alice Chambers, Amber Hickman,  
Alex Smith

#### Contributors

Eric Iverson, Tom Mackin,  
Mark Wagner

#### Design

Bruce Graham, Libby Sidebotham,  
Dhanika Vansia

#### Subscribe

[www.golfcoursearchitecture.net/subscribe](http://www.golfcoursearchitecture.net/subscribe)

#### Publisher

Toby Ingleton

#### Publication & Sales Manager

Benedict Pask

#### Production Manager

Stuart Fairbrother

#### Website Development

Chris Jackson

#### Circulation

Ritwik Bhattacharjee

#### Photography

Andalucía Golf Magazine, Arnold Palmer Design Company, Atlanta CC, Beyond the Contour, Cabot Citrus Farms, Steve Carr, CDP, EGD, Vaughn Halyard, Harris Kalinka, Andrew Harvie, James Hogg, Jansen Golf Group, King-Collins, Gary Lisbon, Golfplan, Jason Livy, Taku Miyamoto, Mike Nuzzo, Brian Oar, Prairie Band Firekeeper Resort, Quitno Golf Design, Red Feather, Rees Jones, Inc., Evan Schiller, Schmidt-Curley Design, Jacob Sjöman, SkyRidge Park City, Spogard & VanderVaart, The Club at Lac La Belle, USGA Museum, Verulam Golf Club, WAC Golf



When you have finished with this magazine please recycle it.



# Golfplan

Dale & Ramsey  
Golf Course Architecture

*The Art and Science of Golf Course Architecture*



Nara Binh Tien Golf Club – Vietnam

Golfplan

USA +1-707-526-7190 • [golfplan@golfplan.com](mailto:golfplan@golfplan.com) • [www.golfplan.com](http://www.golfplan.com)





## SPONSORS



[www.arnoldpalmerdesign.com](http://www.arnoldpalmerdesign.com) | [www.atlasturf.com](http://www.atlasturf.com) | [www.cjwgolf.com](http://www.cjwgolf.com) | [www.harradine-golf.com](http://www.harradine-golf.com)  
[www.hunterindustries.com](http://www.hunterindustries.com) | [www.pureseed.com](http://www.pureseed.com) | [www.rainbird.com/eur](http://www.rainbird.com/eur) | [www.reesjonesinc.com](http://www.reesjonesinc.com) | [www.schmidt-curley.com](http://www.schmidt-curley.com)  
[www.sportsturfsolutions.com](http://www.sportsturfsolutions.com) | [www.southwestgreens.eu](http://www.southwestgreens.eu) | [www.stirlingmartingolf.com](http://www.stirlingmartingolf.com) | [www.tee-2-green.com](http://www.tee-2-green.com)  
[www.toro.com](http://www.toro.com) | [www.wac.golf](http://www.wac.golf) | [www.zlineproducts.com](http://www.zlineproducts.com)

# CONTENTS



## ON SITE

52 David McLay Kidd's Dunas course at Terras da Comporta in Portugal, which opens in October, has had quite the journey as Adam Lawrence reports.

*Cover photograph by: James Hogg*



## TEE BOX

10 Our Tee Box section opens with news of CDP's bunker overhaul at Royal Dublin in Ireland.

## INSIGHTS

30 Eric Iverson describes how Renaissance Golf Design uncovered elements that make Cherry Hills a Golden Age treasure.

34 Mark Wagner highlights the importance of inclusivity and sustainability for the Native American tribe that owns Firekeeper Golf Course in Kansas.

## FEATURE

38 Adam Lawrence asks whether architects can convince their clients to keep greens at a speed that allow them to build contoured surfaces, or if we are in a mostly flat era.





#### INTERVIEW

46 Tom Mackin speaks with Cabell Robinson, designer of Finca Cortesin – this year’s host of the Solheim Cup – about his career in Spain, where he has lived for more than half a century.



#### REPORTS

58 A restoration may be on the cards for St George’s Hill with Renaissance hired to produce a masterplan.

62 WAC Golf submits a masterplan for a 36-hole golf facility to be built on 4,000-acre property in Florida.

66 European Golf Design aims to create something special with its redesign of La Grande Mare on the island of Guernsey.



70 Mike Nuzzo designs 21 holes of golf for Cabot Citrus Farms, which is in the midst of a transformation.

74 Rees Jones is finding demand for pre-tournament renovation work is on the rise in the East.

78 Golfplan completes bunker project at Seowon Hills ahead of the South Korean course hosting a LPGA tournament.

#### HOLING OUT

80 We hole out the issue with Jon Garner’s convertible design in Utah, which can be played in two ways.

TEE BOX

# Royal Dublin completes bunker overhaul

CDP project sees a return to Colt's original approach of larger but fewer hazards.





**Clayton, DeVries & Pont (CDP) has completed a bunker renovation project at The Royal Dublin Golf Club in Ireland, which has seen hazards rebuilt to a style closer to Harry Colt’s work on the course in the 1920s.**

Dublin Golf Club was founded in 1885 and moved to its present location on Bull Island in 1889. Two years later, it received its royal patronage from Queen Victoria. Following damage inflicted to the course while it was used as a rifle and artillery range in the First World War, it was rebuilt and redesigned by Colt. In the 2000s, Martin Hawtree completed a renovation and lengthening of the course, also moving previously low-lying green complexes above the water table.

By 2019, a member survey had raised issues relating to playability, presentation, safety, sand consistency and the number of bunkers. The club asked CDP to study the hazards. “Their enthusiasm for the project, professionalism, and knowledge of Harry Colt were three key factors for us selecting CDP to oversee our bunker project,” said general manager Jeff Fallon.

“The club felt that there were too many bunkers,” said Frank Pont, who completed the audit with Hendrik Hilgert and with input from Mike Clayton. “There were 94. A lot were very steep, and some were small and pot bunker-ish, which made it hard for members to get in and out. Given that there were so many, players would often find themselves in a few during a round, leading to a general feeling that the course was quite tough.”

*Renovated greenside bunkers on the fourth hole at Royal Dublin*

# LIFE IS BETTER WITH HUNTER

*Next-Generation Solutions to Simplify Irrigation*



## KEEP IRRIGATION IN CHECK TO FOCUS ON WHAT MATTERS MOST: *PLAYABILITY.*

As a superintendent, irrigation is just one of the countless tasks you face every day. We're proud to provide best-in-class systems to keep irrigation running smoothly in the background where it belongs. With top performance and maximum reliability built into every product, choose a new approach to golf irrigation designed to improve your life on the course and beyond.



TTS-800 Series | Pilot® Integrated Hub | Pilot Command Center Software



Contact us today to learn how Hunter solutions simplify watering to ensure healthy, playable turf.

<https://hunter.info/lifeisbetter>

# Hunter®



*The new bunkering on the short par-four sixteenth*

“Frank and the team found historical photos which allowed them to track the changes from Colt’s work in the 1920s all the way through to the present day,” said Fallon. “They made regular visits and met with key stakeholders to further develop their local knowledge of the site. The results of the audit clearly showed that the club had moved away from Colt’s philosophy of designing severe for the scratch player, but sympathetic for the bogey golfer. The audit also highlighted that we lacked asymmetry of defence, which was another of Colt’s principles, and we had increased the number of bunkers from 70 to 94.”

Photography from before the Second World War gave Pont an insight into Colt’s work, and coastal survey photos from the late 1940s confirmed the bunkers were originally bigger, and there were less of them. “There were somewhere in the region of 60 to 70 bunkers,” said Pont. “In addition to them being bigger, they also had a

more irregular shape. Prior to our work, bunkers were around 20 square metres on average, while Colt’s looked to be more like 60 square metres.

Pont and his colleague Hendrik Hilgert presented the firm’s proposals to the membership. “We proposed going back to fewer bunkers and having the greens more asymmetrically defended,” said Pont, whose renovation plan was accepted by the club.

The Covid pandemic delayed construction until October 2022, when DAR Golf Construction, who had worked on Hawtree’s renovation in the 2000s, began work, including the installation of new bunker lining. Pont and Hilgert collectively spent around 80 days on site during the project.

Individual holes were closed for play as DAR worked on them, but the remainder of the course remained open throughout the project. “In the winter, the club operates a less-than-eighteen-hole layout, so it wasn’t much of a problem that some holes were

closed for construction,” said Pont. “They used about four or five different routings, which helped us a lot as we didn’t feel a lot of time pressure and the members were kept happy. Once we finished a hole, it would be back in play quickly with some areas of ground under repair.”

The project was completed in February 2023 and the last of the bunkers reopened at the start of May.

“Feedback to date has been very positive,” said Fallon. “All the issues noted during the survey have been addressed. And following their engagement with the CDP team, our members have also broadened their knowledge of Colt’s design philosophies.”

Pont added: “Bunkers are now better placed to challenge low handicap golfers who seek birdies. Some have said that it feels like there are more even though we took plenty out! At the same time, the course has undoubtedly become more forgiving for the average golfer.” **GCA**

## Swede dream for Stenson

Construction is in progress on the new Crownwood Club project north of Helsingborg on Sweden's west coast.

The club is owned by pro golfer Henrik Stenson, golf course architect Christian Lundin and Norwegian golf investor Arild Karlsen, and will include an 18-hole course for members and a public 11-hole course, plus extensive practice facilities.

"It's not directly on the ocean, but it's as close as you are going to get permission to build a golf course on, in

Sweden. With sandy soil and pine trees, it's a great property for golf," said Stenson, in an interview with GCA.

"We want our members and guests and juniors to feel that these guys really care about golf," said Lundin. "If we can do that, I think the project will be very successful."

Crownwood Club is scheduled to open in summer 2025.

*Read the full interview with Henrik Stenson and Christian Lundin at [www.golfcoursearchitecture.net](http://www.golfcoursearchitecture.net).*



Image: Harris Kalinka

*A visualisation of the new Crownwood Club project on Sweden's west coast*





## Welling oversees big changes at Atlanta CC

**Atlanta Country Club in Georgia is carrying out the first major renovation of its golf course since it opened in December 1965.**

The Willard Byrd layout hosted the inaugural Players tournament in 1974 and the Atlanta Classic on the PGA Tour between 1967 and 1996.

In late 2019, the club hired Beau Welling Design to develop a renovation masterplan to modernise the course's infrastructure.

"Several components of the irrigation system were well past their useful life," said Scott Lambert, course superintendent at Atlanta CC. "Bunkers needed rebuilding, drainage was lacking, and the greens were nearing the end of their lifespan. There was also a desire to install a state-of-the-art hydronics heating and cooling system under the greens as part of their rebuilding process."

Construction work began in February

2023, including a rebuild of bunkers and greens, new forward tees, and a new short-game area.

"The holes on the front nine are nearly complete and much of the earthwork has been completed on the back nine," said Lambert. The club chose bunker liners from Bunker Solution. "The performance and longevity of our liner will deliver what Scott and the club envisioned for the renovation," said Morris Johnson of Bunker Solution. "The main liner holds the sand in place incredibly well, particularly after any kind of rain event. This allows architects the freedom to create visually striking bunker faces without the worry of creating maintenance issues, as the labour time to reposition the bunker sand after a rain event is dramatically reduced."

The course is expected to reopen by December 2023.



Photo: Atlanta CC

## THE BIG PICTURE

**The green of the par-three seventh followed by the split-fairway par-five eighth on the new La Réserve Golf Links course at Heritage Golf Club in Mauritius, photographed by Jacob Sjöman.**

The course was designed by Peter Matkovich and Open champion Louis Oosthuizen and is scheduled to open at the end of 2023. “La Réserve Golf Links has been inspired by the strategy required to play the wonderful old links courses of Ireland and Scotland,” said Matkovich. “Scoring will be dependent on your strategy, choices and playing within your ability.

“The eighth is a great example of strategy in golf design. You have a choice to make from the tee because of the split fairway separated by a mountain stream. Either take the wider fairway route to the left, making it a three-shotter, or accept the challenge and go right over the stream to the narrow fairway, protected by two penal bunkers and a waste area. Hit the fairway and you are left with a relatively straightforward second shot into the green.

“This option makes the eighth play like a par 4.5, and a good birdie chance for those brave enough to take it on.”

The course features wall-to-wall Pure Dynasty seeded paspalum, developed by Atlas Turf International and Pure Seed.





Photo: Jacob Sjöman

## Great plans for Grand-Mère

Architect Andy Staples is documenting the history of the course at Club de Golf Grand-Mère in Shawinigan, Canada [not to be confused with La Grande Mare in Guernsey, which features on page 66 of this issue] and overseeing work to preserve the design while renovating some of its weathered features.

The first three holes were laid out by a local landscaper in 1912, and the full eighteen features the work of Albert Murray, Walter Travis and Hugh Alison. Staples will restore Travis's par-three ninth, which played from a location near the eleventh green over a canyon towards the eighteenth green. It will serve as a nineteenth hole, while also reCompleting all of Travis's original nine holes. Work has already started and is expected to take place over five years.

*Read a detailed history of the course and its architecture by Beyond the Contour's Andrew Harvie and Zachary Car on the GCA website.*



## Refreshed Orchid Island on track to reopen in November

**Arnold Palmer Design Company (APDC) is renovating its layout at Orchid Island Golf & Beach Club in Vero Beach, Florida.**

Designed by APDC in 1990, Orchid Island is on a barrier island and has water in play on 17 holes.

"We are finding and re-establishing the original green sizes and shapes," said Brandon Johnson, lead architect. "Targeted work will establish new pin locations and soften contours that limit pinnable square footage on greens.

"The reduction and removal of certain bunkers allows us to explore different strategic options in the opened-up spaces. We can better utilise the existing contours and landforms on and around the bunker complexes to enhance the aesthetic and strategic interest of each hole."

Other changes include realigning tees and recontouring fairways to open sightlines to ponds and lake edges. The sixth, ninth and seventeenth fairways will also be reshaped to eliminate contours that feed balls towards existing ponds in key layup areas.

Johnson is redesigning the short-game area, with Celebration and Platinum TE

paspalum grass used to match what is on the course. "A wide variety of shot scenarios will be incorporated into the facility, allowing members to practice every facet of their game," said Johnson.

Johnson has worked alongside contractor King Villages and superintendent Matt Boyd.

The course is expected to reopen in November 2023.



Photo: Arnold Palmer Design Company



## GOPHER WATCH



In the April 2023 issue of *GCA*, Sandy was located on the closing hole of Rob Collins and Tad King's nine-hole Sweetens Cove course. *GCA* editor Adam Lawrence was the first journalist to see the layout back in 2012 and is now an honorary member. Congratulations to Joe Andriole of Orlando, whose entry was first out of the hat, and who wins a prized *GCA* golf shirt.

This month our intrepid gopher is back on the links, on probably the most famous hole on one of the world's greatest courses. One golfer intentionally missed the green of this par three on all four rounds of a championship, believing an up-and-down was his best chance for par. If you'd like a chance to win a *GCA* golf shirt, email [gopher@golfcoursearchitecture.net](mailto:gopher@golfcoursearchitecture.net) with details of Sandy's location.



Photo: Jansen Golf Group

## Jansen brings Himalayas-inspired designs to Toronto

**The Donalda Club in Toronto, Canada, has opened a new practice area designed by Jansen Golf Group.**

Inspired by the Himalayas putting course at St Andrews, Donalda's new green and chipping area features pronounced mounds and swales.

"By identifying the most likable features of a Himalayas green through technology, the Jansen

team has developed an approach that maximises space and packs in as many of these key features as possible," said Rob Gavarkovs, architect at Jansen Golf Group.

The design firm, led by architect Paul Jansen, has used a mix of artificial and real turf for the green, which is in a shaded location next to the clubhouse. "Lately, the members have been coming

off their rounds, grabbing a drink and heading straight out to the Himalayas to have some fun and settle some bets," said head pro Andrew McCarthy.

Donalda's green is the second of three Himalayas-inspired designs in the city created by Jansen Golf Group. The first at Cedar Brae in Toronto having been met with widespread member approval and a third is planned for TPC Toronto.



Q&A  
with Mike Cocking

## “Bringing holes together with shared fairways and even a couple of double greens helped maximise space”

Inspiration was drawn from both Australia and Scotland for Kingston Heath’s new short course.

**The Furrows is a new par-three layout designed by OCM Golf and now open at Kingston Heath, one of the famed courses on the Melbourne sandbelt in Australia.**

We spoke with one of OCM Golf’s principals, Mike Cocking, to find out more.

**How did the opportunity for the short course come about?**

Since the mid-1990s, the club has had the foresight of purchasing land

surrounding the course, as a means of protecting the boundaries. This included what was known as the ‘Madden Land’. Used as a market garden for the best part of the last century, the club have looked at a variety of uses for this strip, starting around 20 years ago when a nineteenth hole was first built.

**Tell us about the design process**

An early idea was to incorporate the first, sixth and nineteenth holes so the

course would start and return at the clubhouse, but this became awkward jumping in and out of a full field, so it was quickly dismissed.

Another design had fewer holes, but included an option to play a short four, and yet another embraced the freeform option.

However, these weren’t that practical on a small piece of land, especially if a number of groups want to use the course at once, so we gravitated towards the idea of a formal loop of



Photo: Gary Lisbon

*Cocking has maximised space by incorporating double greens in his design, such as here for the third and sixth*



Photo: Gary Lisbon

*The fourth hole at The Furrows takes players to the far end of the strip of land*

par-threes. Despite not trying to stick to a nine-hole layout, the dimensions of the Madden Land made it hard to create anything but nine.

At 600 metres in length, it would be long enough for roughly four holes out and four holes in, and the widest section to the south would also allow for a hole to play across the property, to make nine holes in total. We did, however, want to avoid the feeling of just playing four holes down the same corridor out and back. Therefore, with the routing we were conscious to move the holes around as much as possible. We also wanted to maximise the more attractive backdrops and limit those against the eastern boundary where a few houses were visible. And, just like the Old course

at St Andrews, which is also built on a thin strip of ground, bringing holes together with shared fairways and even a couple of double greens helped maximise the limited space.

#### **Did you draw inspiration from elsewhere?**

The main course, in particular the approach to the par-four third and the par-three tenth, provided inspiration. There were other great short holes we were keen to use as inspiration, certainly locally around the sandbelt, such as the third and fourth at the nearby Woodlands, the third on the West course at Royal Melbourne. And at St Andrews, we took ideas from the second, twelfth and eighteenth. These holes are some of the most enjoyable

and thought provoking in the game, so we figured with nine of them, why couldn't a short course like this hold the same interest as something a little longer?

#### **What does this short course mean to Kingston Heath as a club?**

We wanted to create a unique facility for members – outside of the formal practice facility or the main course – a layout that could be played in an hour or two, and allow golfers to hone their skills from under 120 metres. It also helps create a pathway for new golfers to learn and get interested in the game, and short courses such as this help prolong the golfing life for older golfers, who may find the main course a little too long or too difficult.



## Todd Quitno strives for simplicity on Westmoor return

**Todd Quitno has completed the first phase of renovation work at Westmoor Country Club near Milwaukee, Wisconsin.**

The architect completed a project at Westmoor in 2008 while an associate with Lohmann Golf Designs, creating deep, grass-faced bunkers inspired by William Langford's renovation of the course in 1957. But Quitno said this work "diverged on style by including more noses and fingers."

He added: "Our goal back then was to bring in the bold angles and elevated greens of Langford to the rest of the course, where possible,

and to an extent I think we did. However, the styling, specifically in the bunkering, was a deviation from what characterises Langford's work."

In 2020, the club asked Quitno to develop plans to renovate bunkers and greens. His goal was a simpler presentation of bunkers, making them easier to maintain, and restoring the Langford style.

The first phase of the project focused on 10 greens and their bunkers. "The major focus with the bunkers was to take the long fingers and bulkiness out that characterised the style we implemented back in 2008," said

Quitno. "By doing this, it has provided a much cleaner, simpler look and there is considerably less hand mowing work on the grass faces. Removing the excessive bulk from behind greens in several locations has also allowed the opportunity to expand putting surfaces to capture edges, add pinning areas, and clean up a few awkward tie-ins. The aesthetics are much improved simply by the elimination of clutter and bulk. In turn, the added pinning areas, via expansions and slope adjustments, allow for greater variety."

Future changes will cover fairway bunkers and practice facilities.



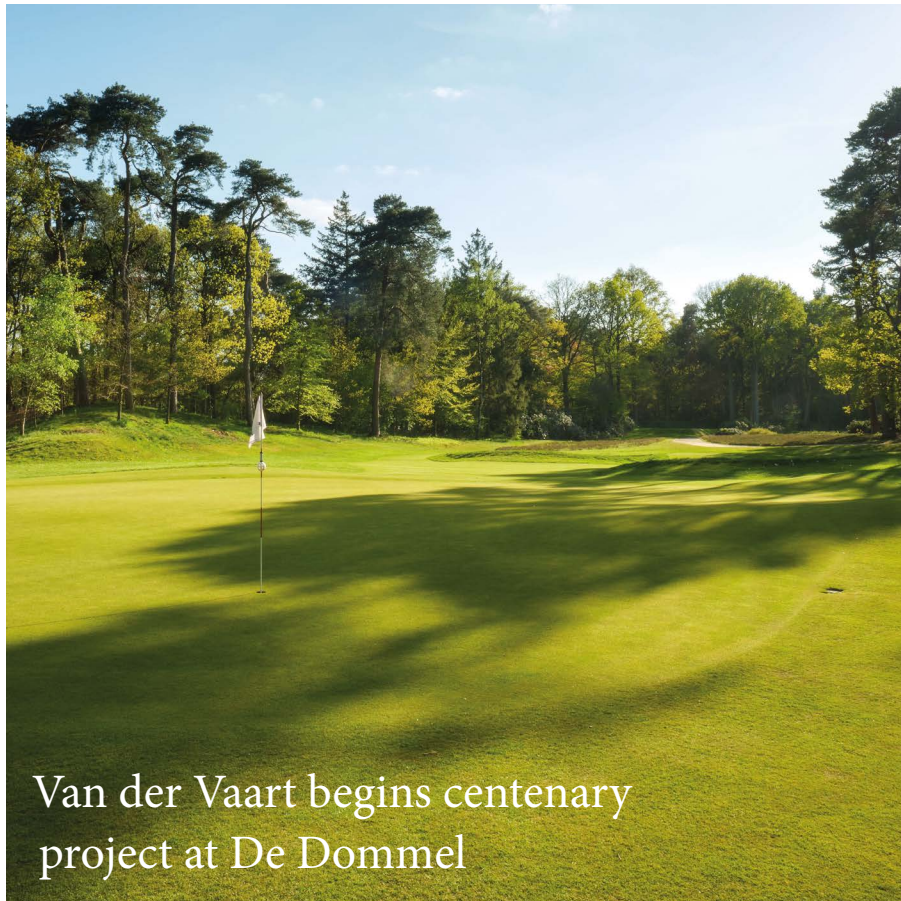


Photo: Spogard & VanderVaart

## Van der Vaart begins centenary project at De Dommel

**Michiel van der Vaart is leading a renovation project at Golfclub De Dommel, near Eindhoven in the Netherlands, with work scheduled to finish in time for the club’s centenary in 2028.**

The architect is aiming to improve playability and safety on the course, reinstate De Dommel’s original heathland style, and better connect holes that had been designed by Harry Colt in 1929, Frank Pennink in 1984 and Frank Pont in 2014.

“The course has become overgrown over the past decades,” said van der Vaart. “It’s a necessity to open things up to allow for more strategic golf. All the ‘old’ 12 holes [by Colt and Pennink] need more width, not only for playability but for sunlight and airflow across tees, fairways and greens. The result I want to achieve is more clustered

trees – mainly pines – combined with open areas where heather, sand and fescue form a more naturalistic look.

“The biggest change will be the eighth and ninth. The former plays with a sharp dogleg left that is currently blocked by trees if the drive is less than 190 metres. In opening the left side, from around the 150-metre mark, and changing the woodland into heather with little sandy dunes, players will be able to hit across this area, creating a more Cape-like effect.

“The integration of heathlands has everything to do with the identity of this golf course. By incorporating heather in bunker edges, we can draw quirky natural shapes from the side, almost like fingers, close to the fairway. For the players it is a new form of obstacle but know from surrounding golf courses what to expect.”

## Next phase of Verulam renovation to begin in October

James Edwards is overseeing a renovation at Verulam Golf Club in St Albans, England.

“Our old bunkers needed upgrading,” said Paul Keen, general manager at Verulam. “They had poor liners, narrow bases, and faces that were either not steep enough or too shallow. We also wanted a comprehensive overview of the entire course. This is not just a bunker project; we want to elevate Verulam from a very good local course to one that is recognised with the very best.”

The renovation will be completed within four years, with Conor Walsh handling construction and new course manager Peter Allam and course director Don Ward representing the club, alongside Keen.

The first phase was completed in February 2023, with work due to start up again in October.

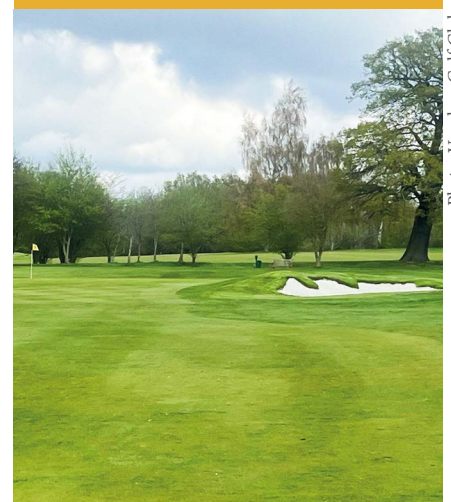


Photo: Verulam Golf Club

## COURSE BLUEPRINT

## Red Feather

**The new King-Collins course at Red Feather Golf and Social Club in Lubbock, Texas, is now growing-in ahead of an August opening.**

Architects Tad King and Rob Collins were first contacted about the project in 2020, by professional golfer JJ Killeen and technology executive Brad Ralston, who had identified a 135-acre cotton field that they wanted to turn into a private golf course with a real estate component.

“The site for Red Feather is a playa lake,” said Collins. “These features, which are dry for most of the year, are very important for the drainage of the surrounding area. It doesn’t rain often in Lubbock, but when it does,

it typically rains very hard and water from miles away will drain to the site.”

The project saw 1.3 million cubic yards of dirt moved so the heavily contoured golf course site can store enough water to handle a 500-year flood event.

“The vision was to create a rugged, west Texas landscape on the formerly featureless and flat site,” said Collins. “The finished course has an 80-foot-deep canyon and a network of barrancas running throughout that give it a one-of-a-kind look and feel.”

Having visited the site prior to starting the routing process, King-Collins developed their layout remotely. “We went through several

different routings with Brad prior to finalising the current one,” said Collins, noting that there were some course changes as it was being built. “One of our biggest goals was to create a great deal of variety in terms of hole length and direction. We also worked to create a thrilling, gambling finish, which includes a driveable par four, a short par three, and a reachable par five.

“Each hole is unique and asks its own set of questions, yet they are all tied together visually and thematically. I think people will be shocked at the diversity of the shotmaking interest, the bunkering and greens that our team laboured so hard to create.

“Shaper Robert Nelson poured his creativity into building one of the most diverse sets of bunkers that I’ve ever seen on a golf course. There are tiny pot bunkers, nasty little slivers that you’d love to avoid at all costs, and some intricately detailed large ones. Some of the bunkers are hidden from view and play much larger than their size, given that the ground contours funnel to them.”

Red Feather will feature Zoysia fairways and bentgrass greens. Fairways will be mown very low and tight to promote the ground game. “The greens, like the bunkers, are diverse in their shapes, contours, and size,” said Collins. “Some greens, like the fourth, will be remembered for their bold contouring, while others



Photo: Red Feather

*The Red Feather course is expected to open in August*

King-Collins has designed short green-to-tee connections throughout the round

The seventeenth is just 99 yards, but surrounded by penal bunkering

Around 1.3 million cubic yards of dirt has been moved for water storage alone, and in excess of two million cubic yards in total

The fifth is the first of four par fours of 330 yards or less, and reachable with the right wind



Image: King-Collins

The site's two lakes are connected by a stream that wraps round the connected eighteenth and practice putting green

The first shot of the round plays to a generous fairway, enticing players to go for the par-five green in two

are very subtle and sit neatly on the ground, with the sixth and tenth being prime examples. There will be a great deal of variety in terms of pin locations that will allow the operations team to present a varied and new challenge each day.

“The windy conditions will also invite players to keep the ball low, using the contours and the greens to work the ball close to the hole. Almost every green sits low to the ground and is open in front to allow balls to chase onto the surface. I think players will delight in

discovering the ideal angles and shot shapes that yield the best scores.

“It is a golf course filled with local knowledge that will promote a sense of discovery as players learn through trial and error the best way to play each hole.”



Hybrid Zoysia Grasses

Hybrid Bermuda Grasses



#1 Selling Zoysia Grass

StoneHill Golf Club

Sustainable Turf Farms studied various Zoysia grasses over a period of 10 years before hand selecting the best varieties most suited to the Asian Climate.

These grasses are low input varieties that require up to 50% less water, mowing and fertilizer applications, and up to 90% less Insecticide, Fungicide and Herbicide applications.

Each of our highly acclaimed Turf Farms, located in Thailand and Vietnam, are ITGAP (International Turf-Grass Assurance Program) Certified. This program ensures all farms are maintained to a certain level of quality, guaranteeing the buyer gets what he pays for. Each farm is inspected annually by an Authorized ITGAP Inspector and inspections are also done by the Breeder, Bladerunner Farms.

All grasses are produced from Foundation fields direct from the Breeders. Sustainable Turf Farms and Sports Turf Solutions also has a full team of leading Turf Managers and Agronomists to assist with every project from advice to grassing and grow-in contracting.

**ASIA'S  
LARGEST  
PRODUCER  
OF  
CERTIFIED  
TURF GRASSES**



## Black Desert course opens in Utah

**Black Desert Resort in Ivins, Utah, has opened its new golf course, designed by Phil Smith and the late Tom Weiskopf.**

The layout was built by Heritage Links among black lava fields below Southern Utah’s red rock mountains.

Speaking about the layout before his death in 2022, Weiskopf said that elements reminded him of some of golf’s most famous holes. The par-three third which, like the sixth at Riviera, has a bunker in the middle of the green; the thirteenth green takes inspiration from the fourteenth at Pebble Beach; the seventeenth is a “spinoff” of Royal Troon’s Postage Stamp; and the closing hole has a big

false front to the green, like the fifth at Augusta.

The course is defined by the lava rock: the double green for the second and eighth (pictured) sits among it, the 600-yard seventh has lava islands located at the second landing area, and a lava ridge is a prominent feature of the sixteenth hole.

“Black Desert Resort is located at the convergence of three unique landscapes – jet-black lava beds, towering red rock cliffs of Zion National Park, and Utah’s beautiful Mohave Desert,” said Jared Lucero, CEO of Reef Capital, the resort’s developer. “The emerald fairways and greens laced among the lava fields are set against the red rock

backdrop, making for an awe-inspiring golf setting.”

Shortly after Black Desert’s May 2023 opening, the PGA Tour selected the venue to host the Black Desert Championship in autumn 2024. This will be a first PGA Tour event in Utah for more than 60 years.

“In introducing the PGA Tour – and the LPGA in 2025 – to a new market, we look forward to collaborating with the Black Desert Resort team in their vision for professional golf in the Greater Zion community,” said Tyler Dennis of the PGA Tour. “Competitively, our members will enjoy the challenges and incredible views that define the Black Desert golf course.”



## OUR PURPOSE:

Improve the planet  
and the lives of  
the people on it  
with **beautiful,**  
**responsible**  
fields of play

[arnoldpalmerdesign.com](http://arnoldpalmerdesign.com)  
(407) 876-1068



Photo: Schmidt-Curley Design

## First of two Curley layouts for new Cambodia club to open next year

**Grassing is almost complete on the East course at City Golf, the new club in Phnom Penh, Cambodia, that was previewed in the October 2022 issue of GCA.**

City Golf will have two eighteen-hole layouts designed by Brian Curley of Schmidt-Curley Design. The East is set to open in January 2024 and the West will follow in 2025.

“We’re aiming to make the two courses as different as possible,” said Curley. “The East offers a much more traditional take on design with formal bunkering while the West will be more rugged and natural.”

The project is requiring significant earthmoving, with Curley preferring massive landforms over small-scale mounding, to create a more natural golf experience.

“The property was a floodplain, so a fairly significant dirt move has lifted

the two courses up and five lakes have been excavated to create the fill,” said Curley. “Although there is a lot of water, my intention was to provide ample room for golf and to not have water constantly in play.”

The architect is providing variety in terms of setup and strategy, with multiple teeing options and substantial contour, such as at the driveable par-four fifteenth (pictured) with various angles of attack.

The two courses connect at the eighteenth. “The closing hole on the East is a par five with water sweeping from tee to green,” said Curley. “The hole plays from the highest point on the property, atop a huge landform that hosts both course’s eighteenth tees. This offers extended views over the large lake and the island-green nineteenth, which will be a par-three bonus hole accessible by boat.”

### GOOD READ

“You’re always looking for something that people will remember”

For 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 – designers share stories of their most exceptional encounters on golf course sites.

“You’re always looking for something that people will remember,” says Greg Letsche of Ernie Els Design, who incorporated a network of 17th-century stone walls on the island of Mauritius in the design of holes at Anahita Golf Club.

The Summer issue of *By Design* also includes architects’ thoughts on the distance debate and insight into the Wadsworth Scholar Program from its eight previous recipients.

To download the latest issue and subscribe to *By Design*, visit [www.asgca.org](http://www.asgca.org).





ERIC IVERSON

## Restoring a classic

Eric Iverson describes how Renaissance Golf Design uncovered elements that make Cherry Hills a Golden Age treasure.

**I** was familiar with William Flynn’s design work before our team took on the project to restore Denver’s Cherry Hills, the century-old site of this year’s US Amateur Championship. But I would soon learn a great deal more.

We had spent the summer and fall of 2002 outside of Philadelphia, working with Tom Doak on his second course at Stonewall. While I missed a couple of Flynn courses, I got a pretty good dose of his work while in the area. For me, Flynn was easier to identify with than most of his contemporaries; he got into design and construction at a very young age, and did so, in part, through the interest he developed from being an avid player in his youth. He wasn’t influenced by courses in the UK as many of his contemporaries were. Instead, he relied on finding inspiration

from the graceful contours of the land he was working on. I came away thinking he built beautiful greens with plenty of slope, yet subtle undulations within them that made for great golf.

The first thing that stood out on our initial visit to Cherry Hills were trees, trees, and more trees! We couldn’t achieve anything of substance, like restoring greens and bunkers, until

**“As the trees came down, the long-range views emerged. It became clear that Flynn had taken great care in laying out the course”**

we started getting rid of many of the planted trees on the property. That’s a pretty standard refrain when consulting on older courses, particularly when we began talking with Cherry Hills back in 2006.

As the trees came down, the long-range views emerged. It became clear that Flynn had taken great care in laying out the course. His third hole is lined up directly on Mount Evans, the tee shot on five directly toward Longs Peak, and the tenth toward the snow-capped peaks of the Rocky Mountain National Park. These things don’t happen by accident. Bunkers

had been added and restyled, and two green complexes had been completely redesigned. The rest of the course was pretty well preserved and just needed to be presented more like it was originally by Flynn.





*Renaissance paid special attention to the impact of the Little Dry Creek, as seen here running between the greens of, from left, the fourteenth, eighth and seventh*

I was unaware of the Cherry Hills connection to Pine Valley until I read Mark Fine's comprehensive 2006 report on the course. To me, the most enduring element is the fourteenth hole, which is remarkably similar to Pine Valley's thirteenth, one of the best holes in the world. Throughout the course, you can see from both Flynn's drawings for Cherry Hills, as well as the as-built drawings from October 1922, that he had an affinity for breaking up sections of fairways in the same manner as Pine Valley. Some of those remain today on holes like five and seventeen.

I've heard the term 'Muirfield

routing' used to describe Cherry Hills, referring to its outer loop of nine holes, with the remaining nine on the interior of the property and, in Muirfield's case, featuring a clockwise then counter-clockwise rotation. In this case, I think it had everything to do with how the property is essentially bisected, lengthwise, by Greenwood Gulch and to a greater extent, Little Dry Creek. Once Flynn made the decision to play along the creeks instead of crossing them multiple times, the result was a number of holes on the interior that all had water in play. The remaining

holes were on the higher perimeter, playing along the hillsides which adds great interest, too. He would deploy this same solution at Huntingdon Valley a few years later. In contrast, Muirfield is routed over rambling links terrain, and I believe the routing there may have been more intentional, whereas I think Flynn arrived at his instinctively, which is genius in its own right.

Our restored versions of the third and thirteenth greens represent the biggest impact of the project. It was suggested that we also move the par-three eighth to make room

# PERFECTION EXPECTED

ON THE GLOBAL STAGE | MARCO SIMONE, ITALY



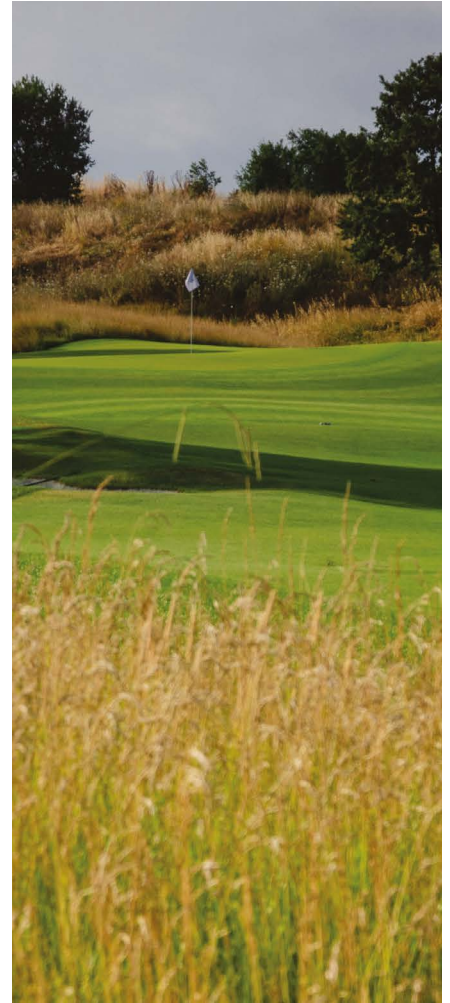
GREENS

*Pure Distinction®  
Bentgrass*



FAIRWAYS/TEES

*Pure Dynasty®  
Seeded Paspalum*



ROUGHS

*Pure Seed®  
Tall & Fine Fescues*



[info@atlasturf.com](mailto:info@atlasturf.com) | [info@pureseed.com](mailto:info@pureseed.com)



Scan to learn more



*At the fifteenth, restoring tees and the front-left portion of the green revived what was planned as the course's shortest hole*

to lengthen holes nine and sixteen, but we liked our idea more because it solved a significant congestion problem. The first version was an exact reproduction of the original, and served as a good lesson that reproducing greens exactly in a new location doesn't work as well as just

various ways by the creek. Think of it as a creek bed and not just the water itself. Flynn's holes played along the high ground, on the banks of the creek bed, and everything below, from bank to bank, was an unmaintained hazard, with the creek itself meandering within the banks.

## **“Cherry Hills will prove again, as she has so many times in the past, to be a thrilling venue for championship golf”**

designing a new one that fits the new space. In 2016, we built a new green further west and positioned it atop the bank of Little Dry Creek. It's still a difficult hole but now complements the others that play along the creek.

Flynn designed the holes along Little Dry Creek to be impacted in

As part of the project to restore the creek to a more natural state, we had a few opportunities to re-establish the alignment and get the creek proper back into play. The fourteenth hole is the best example of this. Also, restoring the original tees, as well as the front-left portion of the fifteenth

green revived what was meant to be the shortest par three on the course. There are terrific new hole locations close to the creek. With the bank mowed short, the slightest pull with a short iron will likely find the water. The longer tees remain intact, so the day-to-day setup for the US Amateur will be fun to watch.

It has been a privilege to help Cherry Hills restore the brilliance of its William Flynn design. With the altitude of the Mile High City, 7,316 yards from the championship tees may seem modest for the world's best amateurs, but Cherry Hills will prove again, as she has so many times in the past, to be a thrilling venue for championship golf. **GCA**

*Eric Iverson is a golf course architect at Renaissance Golf Design.*



MARK WAGNER

## Everything good about Kansas

Inclusivity and sustainability are valued highly by the Native American tribe that owns Firekeeper Golf Course, which will soon have a short layout designed by Christine Fraser.

**A**long with Dancing Rabbit and Circling Raven, Firekeeper may be in the hunt for best name for an eighteen-hole golf course.

Everything good about Kansas is found here, and the club is planning on adding a short course designed by Christine Fraser.

The current layout was designed by Jeff Brauer, former president of the American Society of Golf Course Architects (now its director of outreach), and Notah Begay III, a Native American who played on the PGA Tour and is now an analyst with Golf Channel and NBC. Firekeeper sits an hour west of Kansas City, 20 minutes north of Topeka, and a day's drive from the geographical centre of America.

Brauer considers Firekeeper his best work, noting the course traverses three

distinct environments while creating minimal disturbance to the existing land. The course, which opened in 2012, is an endeavour of the Prairie Band Potawatomi Nation, and the tribe was very interested in preserving the character of the land, which Brauer

it opened, suggests the course has generated a clientele that has changed the perceptions of the area and its tribal cultures.

“Gaming has been a source of financial income to take care of each tribe’s people,” he says.

**“The course traverses three distinct environments while creating minimal disturbance to the existing land”**

feels he and Begay managed. “Their main goal was to build a course that stands with the best in Kansas,” says Brauer. “It seems most people think we achieved that, making it a very successful project for my firm.”

Michael Powell, a PGA professional who has been at Firekeeper since

Powell, who is a member of Osage Nation, notes Firekeeper sits on land toward the end of the Trail of Tears. “A lot of tribes got shoved off into the middle of nowhere,” he says. “Well, nowhere is now this beautiful golf course. A lot of nations have taken advantage of building top-



Photo: Prairie Band Firekeeper Resort

*For the Firekeeper Golf Course, Jeff Brauer and Notah Begay III aimed to design a layout that preserved the character of the land*

flight resorts and changing attitudes and the living conditions of our native people.” The club has already added 10 acres of wildflowers and a pollinator garden.

The short course project is personal for Powell. “I see it as a way for me to teach the young kids, and the elders, how to play the game that is a vehicle to better oneself.”

Choosing Fraser as the architect is very much in keeping with this plan. Fraser’s MO in design is aimed at making golf more inclusive. “I’m optimistic that golf will change for

its own sustainability in terms of participation and interest,” she says. Fraser brings this perspective to her design. “How can we make golf smaller? How can we bring the rules, footprint, land, usage of fertiliser, maintenance and budget all back to size while keeping the architecture, vistas and challenge of the game? This will allow social relevance going forward... equity is always the pursuit.”

Powell notes the Potawatomi nation in Kansas now includes a boys and girls club, early childhood education centre,

senior centre, functioning government, and an excellent golf course.

“It’s nice being part of the operation that invests in continuing to be great,” says Powell. “I mean, let’s face it, reservations were not selected for deeds of access and prime real estate. But we’ve made something great. And we are fortunate that we are within a short drive of major metro areas, pulling from several populations.”

Powell adds: “When we first built Firekeeper, people viewed it as ‘The Indian Casino’. There were negative connotations of the reservation,



**Z LINE**  
*Bunker Systems*

# THE ONLY BUNKER LINING SOLUTION



4 Premium Bunker Lining Systems

Tee Line Systems

Driving Range Sand Replacement Liners

All Inclusive Systems – One Price

15 Year Warranty

**THE ONLY BUNKER LINING SYSTEM  
PROTECTED BY FOUR PATENTS**

**INSTALLATION SERVICES AVAILABLE**

**832 375 5110 | [www.zlineproducts.com](http://www.zlineproducts.com)**

2001 Timberloch Place, Suite 500 | The Woodlands, TX | 77380

Financial assistance available OAC. We accept all major credit cards.

PROUD MEMBER OF



SUPPORTERS OF



*We Offer FREE  
Demo Bunker Packages!*



*Many of the holes play in a prairie landscape, as seen on the fourteenth*

but then people came and saw our property, people saw how unique it is. In 13 years, the perception has changed considerably. There are no houses around the course, and it will stay this way. The resort also funds a lot of the operations of a functioning government and culture.”

**“We strive to save on resources, to be more sustainable and responsible. When I hand it off, I want to say I have been a good steward. The land is going to outlive us”**

Land with a capital L is deeply embedded in native cultures. Powell sees his role as golf operations, but also to be an ambassador for the community. “I want our course and staff to represent every tribal member,” he says. “We strive to save on resources, to be more sustainable and

responsible. When I hand it off, I want to say I have been a good steward. The land is going to outlive us.”

And this is where Fraser’s chapter of the Firekeeper story begins. “The minds behind the short course project at Firekeeper have a comprehensive understanding of responsible

stewardship, community engagement, and sustainable design,” she says. “The design concept will use equity and fun as the foundation to create a playground for people of all abilities and backgrounds. The small footprint combined with thoughtful design will allow for minimal maintenance

intervention and efficient use of resources. The goal is to remove barriers, reach beyond the fences, and invite the community in. The short course will be a service to the community through recreation, environmental justice, and a safe space for people to be themselves. At its best, this project will have a profound effect on the lives of our youth.”

Brauer is also in the mix, coming back later in the year to oversee work on bunkers and other items that will be restored to the original intent.

If golf is a vehicle for self-improvement, Firekeeper and its people get better every year. **GCA**

*Mark Wagner is a golf historian and the founding director of the Binienda Center for Civic Engagement at Worcester State University.*

FEATURE

# Too fast for furious?

GREEN SPEED

Written by Adam Lawrence





Can architects convince their clients to keep greens at speeds that allow them to build contoured surfaces, or are we now in a mostly flat era? Adam Lawrence reports.

**E**dward Stimpson, the state amateur golf champion of Massachusetts, invented the measuring device that bears his name after watching the 1935 US Open at Oakmont, seeing Gene Sarazen putt off a green, and wondering how fast the greens were rolling.

And ever since, at least according to one view, a simple measuring tool has become the agent of an

arms race, a competition among courses to have faster and faster greens. The Stimpmeter, so this argument runs, is a scourge, a device that encourages golfers to ask, 'How fast are the greens today?', with a subtext that hints, 'Make them faster'. All at the expense, it is said, of the architectural interest of the same greens: as the ball rolls more, so the slopes need to be gentler to prevent putting from becoming a lottery.

*Although some greens at Landmand are wild, as seen here on the seventeenth, King-Collins designed them big enough so that they can run at 10 feet on the Stimp and have lots of pinnable areas*

When Stimpson introduced his invention to the world in 1936, the average green speed that he reported was 2.5 feet. In the mid-1970s, the USGA modified Stimpson’s meter, used it to test more than 1,500 greens,

championships, at least the ones held in the US, the green speed could easily be between 13 and 14 feet. One of the most common reasons why courses are renovated is that the greens have, given modern speeds, become short

many have been changed (some might say ‘emasculated’) in recent years.

“Canton Brookside, where I played a lot growing up, has arguably the best Ross greens in America,” says Texas-based architect Kurt Bowman. “They’ve lost around 70 per cent of pinnable area, and the areas they still pin are four to five per cent. It opened in 1921. The lowest height of cut in 1920 was 0.75 inches (19 millimetres).”

## “At high-end private facilities, sensible greens speeds are a tough sell, because fast greens are seen as a status symbol”

and reported that the average speed was 6.5 feet – the fastest were at Oakmont (that course again!), but this time at nine feet and eight inches.

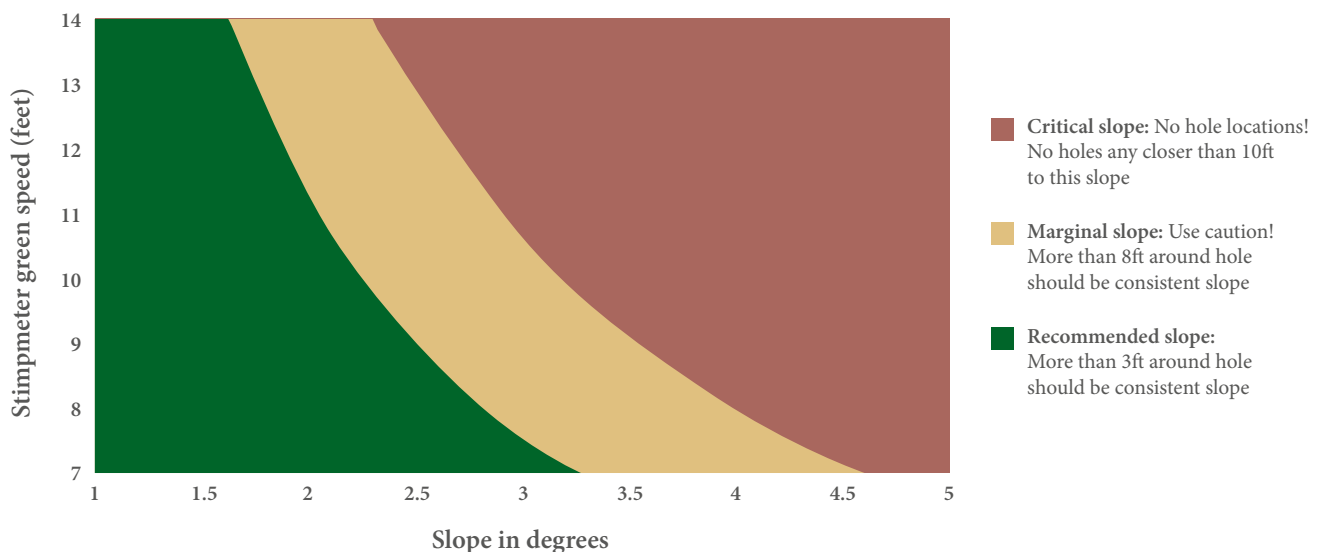
Today, seven or eight feet on the Stimp is regarded as unacceptably slow. Most high-end clubs expect greens to Stimp in double figures most of the time, and for Major

of places flat enough to locate the pin. According to a chart drawn up by architect Jerry Lemons, once greens run at over 10 feet on the Stimp, any part of a green with much over two per cent slope is a sketchy area to put the flag; given that many Golden Age greens are mostly sloped way above this level, it isn’t hard to see why so

Scottish architect Stuart Rennie says: “There is a fascination in golf with making greens faster and faster, which in my opinion is not that good for the game. Peter Thomson once said to me that when he first went to St Andrews, he found that hitting the putts harder was much more of a challenge. That’s the sort of attitude we should be promoting today.”

### Balancing green speed and slope

Golf course architect Jerry Lemons has charted recommended slope ranges according to the speed of greens



Source: Jerry Lemons



*Edward Stimpson invented his measuring device after watching players grapple with Oakmont’s fast greens at the 1935 US Open*

At the Belleair club in Florida, architects Jason Straka and Dana Fry recently completed a remarkable restoration of Donald Ross’s original design (read more in the April 2023 issue of *GCA*). Belleair’s new greens are, by modern standards, very slopey, and if the club were to get them running at 12 feet on the Stimp, which it could fairly

easily do, they would be unplayable. But, in conjunction with the architects, the club has resolved to keep the greens at a lower speed, though still high by classic era standards. This allowed the architects to be more creative – and a little truer to Ross’s original design – in their work there.

“The majority of the greens prior to the restoration were raised pedestals,” says Straka. “They were very much a modern-day design, which looked nothing like the historic Ross greens. The hole locations weren’t any more or less sloped than they are now. But the greens were faster pre-restoration because the transition areas between hole locations by and large weren’t as complex as they are now.”

“Before the restoration, our greens averaged between 10-12.5 feet on the Stimpmeter,” says Belleair member Connor Lewis, founder of the Society of Golf Historians. “When he discussed the restoration plans with us, Jason was very specific: he said that

if he was going to restore Ross’s slope and features to these greens then we, as a club, should try to keep the green speeds under 11 feet.

“I have been told that the Florida State Golf Association rates greens between one, the flattest, and seven, the most severe. When the Association toured Belleair, they rated 11 greens at seven! Now, those 11 greens would be near ridiculous if the green speeds were 12 or 13 feet but at 10, I would argue they are among the best in the state. And yet, the truth is that many of the slopes within these restored greens are still less than what Ross designed: that is just a product of modern green speeds. If it were up to me, I wouldn’t even post that day’s greens speed. Most people don’t even know how it’s calculated: they just know that the US Open is somewhere between 12 and 13.”

Straka says: “As complex as the greens are now, the height of many of the internal mounds and contours are

## Golf’s fast forward

*Green speeds at top US clubs, as measured by the USGA in 1977. In contrast, greens at Los Angeles CC were running at around 13ft during the 2023 US Open.*

Augusta National .....	7ft 11in
Congressional .....	6ft 4in
Cypress Point .....	7ft 8in
Harbour Town .....	5ft 1in
Medinah .....	7ft 8in
Merion .....	6ft 4in
Oakland Hills.....	8ft 5in
Oakmont .....	9ft 8in
Pine Valley .....	7ft 4in
Pinehurst #2 .....	6ft 10in
San Francisco GC .....	7ft 2in
Shinnecock Hills .....	7ft 2in
Winged Foot .....	7ft 5in



*Following Fry/Straka's Ross-inspired restoration, which has seen original slopes and features restored, Belleair now keeps its greens at under 11 feet on the Stimp*

not as large as Ross's originals. This is obviously because green speeds were significantly slower back then and there had to be a happy medium between restoring the complexity of the greens and the members' desire for smooth and fast surfaces. The discussion was never about faster greens equals better greens. The discussion was always about finding the happy medium between green speeds and enjoying the complexity of the Ross putting surfaces. I don't think that most members would have any idea what the daily green speeds actually are. That said, from a professional point of view, average speeds around 10 for daily play or 11 for special events would be ideal. The maximum slope in pinning areas is three per cent, so quite high by today's standards, but not crazy."

"Pre-construction convos with clients are necessary. I've given thought to putting speed limits on greens in my contracts," says Bowman. "There are arguments that work. Pace of play is

important, especially at resorts and public golf courses. Fast greens mean slower play. But at high-end private facilities, sensible greens speeds are a tough sell, because fast greens are seen as a status symbol."

Lewis reckons that Belleair is not much different in this regard. "I think every club has this issue, and

## "We have dumbed down golf greens to the lowest common denominator – speed"

it is a matter of education," he says. "Personally, I would argue that good greens are those that make you use your imagination and that the faster the green rolls, the less slope you can have and the less interesting the putting becomes. I guess it comes down to what is more interesting, distance control or green reading? As you can probably tell, I prefer green reading. My daughter Madeline only started playing golf a couple of years

ago and she has a talent for the game. She called me during her first round on the restored West course. I asked her what she thought of the greens, worried she would hate them. Her response was, 'Dad, they are really tough but that makes them so much more fun to play'. I have never been prouder of her – she got it."

Belleair's membership, says Lewis, is fairly well bought in to the new approach and the new greens. "It is still early, but I haven't heard many people complain," he explains. "When I do hear a complaint, I usually respond that we, as members, have one of the greatest home field advantages. There are quite a few putts that will break over 30 feet! As a golf historian I believe that faster green speeds make for uninspiring greens. If you take a



Photo: King-Collins

*The huge Biarritz eighth green at Sweetens Cove has no shortage of pin positions*

moment to look at the original greens designed by MacKenzie, Morris, Colt, Ross and Tillinghast, they were works of art. We have dumbed down golf greens to the lowest common denominator – speed.”

It is in restoration projects that these problems are at their most intense. “On one project, there was a conversation that started with the club saying we want to be able to have speeds of 12 to 13 quite often,” says architect Jim Nagle. “We responded by saying, ‘Well, then you won’t have Donald Ross-like greens’. They took some time and came back with, ‘We want Ross greens’. They will periodically have the speeds up to 12 or more, but they recognise that it limits their hole locations. But then for regular play they back off.

“I got into an argument with a client because they expected two greens to be designed at 2.2 per cent or less. I told them that was taking all the challenge and interest out of the green. It was all because the club wanted fast greens.

It wasn’t until the superintendent and I measured the slopes on challenging, but acceptable, hole locations and saw that many were at 3.5 per cent (some were even between 3.5 and 4 per cent) that the club started to change tune. With higher slopes it becomes important to have surrounding slopes that do not accelerate or continue that higher percentage.

“You have to build the greens with character, challenge, and authenticity – when needed – but have a design that works for everyday play but has fun tucked ‘Sunday pins’ that work with speeds over 11.5. It can be done and, as an architect, it’s fun to attack that challenge. If they want fast greens then they have to accept the trickle down: larger greens, somewhat less undulations and the associated costs to maintain.”

On modern courses it is slightly different. Rob Collins and Tad King’s nine-hole Sweetens Cove course in Tennessee is famous for its severe

greens, and at their new Landmand course in Nebraska, though not all the greens are wild, some certainly are. And Collins, who has operated Sweetens Cove since its (rather tortuous) birthing process, and is now a co-owner of the course, says that keeping the greens at a sensible speed is key to players’ enjoyment of the golf course.

“At Sweetens, the greens average around 10.5 feet, but I’ve played them at twelve plus,” he says. “Thirteen feet is probably too fast. In the club championship last year, they were probably 12.5 and it was the most exacting I’d ever seen that golf course play.”

But Sweetens, even though its greens are wild, is without doubt a modern course with modern greens. “There is a sweet spot at around 11 or 11.5 feet where the greens and the surrounds fully reveal themselves,” Collins goes on. “And that’s faster than Tad or I thought they could get when we were building the course. I give great credit to Tad because when he was finishing them he paid great attention to keeping the pinnable areas relatively quiet. Players don’t really talk about the speeds; just about how different they are from what they’ve seen elsewhere. People remark very often about how there is a discovery process to them. You can’t just play them one time and expect to have seen everything – because there are so many pin positions. But all the pinnable areas are one per cent slope or less.

“Landmand was a similar approach. Going into the project we knew that we could not build 18 Sweetens-style



WHITMAN, AXLAND & CUTTEN  
GOLF COURSE ARCHITECTS



MASTERS OF DESIGN-BUILD

CAMBRIDGE, ONTARIO | MESA, ARIZONA | DELTA, BRITISH COLUMBIA

WWW.WAC.GOLF | INFO@WAC.GOLF

*At Lac La Belle, Craig Haltom has achieved the balance of wild contour and fast greens by incorporating pinnable areas that are relatively quiet*

greens. There are wild greens, but they are mostly very large, and there is a ton of big, broad pinnable areas out there. They are running those greens at around ten feet: partly the reason they are slower is because of the wind. When the wind is blowing 30 miles an hour you have to pay attention to it!”

Sometimes, the only way for an architect to go is to accept that the

on hard times before it was bought by the Morse family, the founders of the Prestwick group that makes course furniture from recycled plastic,” Haltom explains. “They’d never owned a golf course before, and company founder Matt Morse decided he wanted to build something spectacular on top of the old course. There wasn’t much to restore, so we went for it. It was a very

the type of shot you hit in will make a difference. But they are also very fast – as fast as you’d play at a high end midwestern course.”

How did Haltom square the circle? He says that, again, it is about building greens that have big slopes, but also pinnable areas that are relatively quiet. “It has to be built in such a way that it has plateaus,” he says. “The art is that it can’t look like a simple segmented green. How do you connect the plateaus in a way that allows for modern green speeds? On average, the greens are large. There are a few tiny greens, and they are flattish ones. Where the greens are wild, they’re generally big enough to accommodate that. People find it to be a really fun, interesting golf course. It’s driven by pin positions and which side of the fairway you’re playing from. All that becomes possible when you have enough space.” **GCA**

**“The ball is always doing something after it hits the green. You have to be aware that the type of shot you hit in will make a difference”**

greens will be very fast and hang the consequences. A few years ago, Wisconsin-based Craig Haltom rebuilt the Lac La Belle course, originally built in 1896, and a private summertime retreat for Chicago’s wealthy for most of its existence. “It had accumulated a lot of drainage problems and fallen

difficult construction, but five years on the course is fully public and very successful. The first comment every player makes is how wild the greens are – we thought that would be the key to making it memorable. The ball is always doing something after it hits the green. You have to be aware that

# Spotlight set to shine on Cabell

CABELL ROBINSON

---

Tom Mackin speaks with the American who designed the course on which this year's Solheim Cup will be played – and who has lived in Spain for more than half a century.

**W**hen the 2023 Solheim Cup tees off on 22 September at Finca Cortesin on Spain's Costa del Sol, all the biggest names in women's golf will be there.

Yet it will be one of the least known names in golf course architecture whose work will provide a testing stage for the biennial competition.

The 82-year-old Cabell Robinson, designer of the course at Finca Cortesin, came to Spain in 1970 to establish a European office in Málaga for his boss, Robert Trent Jones Sr. He never left.

Robinson led the European efforts of Jones's firm until 1987, when he went out on his own. He has since compiled a roster of course designs, largely around the Mediterranean rim, including Las Colinas and La Reserva in Spain, Royal Palm and Amelkis in Morocco, and Aphrodite Hills in Cyprus.

But it's his impressive work on the hilly site at Finca Cortesin that will garner Robinson international attention later this year. The parcel of land posed a particular challenge, he recalls. "It was difficult due to being divided by a road, but the owners were willing to spend a considerable amount of money to create an underpass to eliminate that problem.

**"I've always believed in making the fairways fairly wide. But if you go off course at Finca Cortesin, you can be in deep trouble because it gets impenetrable quickly"**

There were also some environmental issues. The tenth hole was originally a dogleg left par four playing down to an arroyo. But we couldn't cut down a number of trees, so that hole was shortened into a downhill par three."

Finca's origins, like many courses on the Costa del Sol, revolved around real estate. "The developer and owner, Javier López Granados from Madrid, did not know anything about golf," says Robinson. "He did the project, like a lot of developers here in Europe, because if you are going to do a real estate development, you ought to

have a golf course. But he was very understanding and learned a lot about golf. It was never initially designed to host a major tournament like the Volvo World Match Play Championship (played there from 2009 through 2012)





or the Solheim Cup. To be honest, most of the courses I have done here on the coast are probably capable golf-wise of hosting tournaments, but I think that was an afterthought because it costs a lot of money to host a tournament. I think he got the idea that having a major tournament would benefit real estate sales.” Judging by the massive properties now overlooking the first six holes alone, he was right.

The course routing will change for the Solheim Cup. “The big change is starting out with a driveable par four, the fourth hole in the regular routing,” says Robinson. “It’s an exciting hole, and they thought it would be a better start, photographically, because they can get a lot of camera angles on it.”

What the teams from Europe and the US will encounter after that opener

is a layout quite generous off the tee and a collection of strong par fours, highlighted by the uphill fifteenth which could be the deciding hole in many matches. “I’ve always believed in making the fairways fairly wide,” says Robinson. “But if you go off course at Finca Cortesin, you can be in deep trouble because it gets impenetrable quickly.”

No expense was spared, either on the course or at the adjoining 67-suite luxury resort, where both Solheim Cup teams will be staying. “The one thing I am very complimentary to Javier about is that while he knew nothing about golf, and didn’t know much about it during construction, when it came to doing the right thing or the cheap thing, he always opted for the right thing. I had no real problems, economically, to do what I wanted

to do there. He wanted quality above anything else. Even the clubhouse, which is certainly not very large but very tastefully done, really proves that you don’t necessarily need to go huge to hold a major tournament.”

Robinson says the biggest change in European golf design during his career involves course maintenance.

“When Jones did Sotogrande [in 1964], his first work over here, he had the owner send a team member to America to travel around and see courses and their upkeep. Now an awful lot of superintendents over here, the better ones, have gone to schools like Penn State or Michigan State, not necessarily for a full three-year term, but they come back with a much better knowledge of maintenance. I think 50 years ago the courses here were

*The green complex at the par-three seventeenth with the Estepona mountains providing the backdrop*





in alright condition, but they weren't quite up to the American level. That has improved a lot."

Another difference Robinson has found is that American developers, the majority of them, either play golf themselves or know a lot about golf. But the majority of European golf developers only do a golf course because they feel they have to have them as part of their development. "Some learn, like Javier at Finca Cortesin," he says. "He knows a good deal about it now. But they are really neophytes when it comes to understanding what it's like and I think that now, because of some of the success of American-designed courses – especially from Jack [Nicklaus], who has done some very good courses – there's a more ready acceptance of the cost of an American designer. And we are more expensive than virtually anyone in Europe. But in the end, I think the courses Americans have done here have stood up pretty well for the most part."

Robinson was not surprised about the growth of the game on the Costa del Sol. "When I came over here, I told Mr Jones I would stay for at least two years," he says. "He had done Sotogrande and Real Club de Las Brisas in Marbella, and we had some other leads. He was very confident this could be a big area for development. I didn't speak any Spanish at the time, but I did feel climate-wise it could work, and I knew that he was pretty much a visionary in many respects. He really believed in the destination. There are other golf destination points in Europe, but none of them have the variety or number of courses in a small area that the Costa del Sol has."

# GREATNESS DOESN'T HAPPEN OVERNIGHT



Patience is a virtue, but when the results look as good and play as well as a Tee-2-Green course, we think it's worth it. That's why it takes a minimum of twelve years to develop our seed.

To say we know bentgrass is an understatement. It's truly all we do.



BENTGRASS. IT'S ALL WE DO.

[tee-2-green.com](http://tee-2-green.com)



*The long par-three sixth (playing as the third during the Solheim Cup), with the third and fifth (which will play as the fourth and second), both par fives, beyond*

The first course Robinson worked on in Spain was Valderrama, which opened as Sotogrande New in 1974. It was then known Las Aves in the early 1980s before receiving its current name under which it famously hosted the 1997 Ryder Cup. “It’s a Robert Trent Jones course, but I was there during the

At age 82, Robinson says he should be slowing down. “I think I’m officially retired,” he says. “But in the golf course business, none of us have the sense, if we’re moderately successful which I guess I am, to retire as long as we can move about and travel. I have another project east of Málaga, and there’s talk

year. But I don’t spend much time looking back on my career, and I haven’t tried to set goals to achieve. It is what it is. If people like what I’ve done, so much the better. I think I have caused more headaches than pleasure for people playing my courses. But I probably have a couple more courses in me that I can do.”

Robinson does plan on attending the Solheim Cup in September. “Yes, definitely. I’ll probably be embarrassed and criticised! But I have a good relationship with the greenkeeper there, and they have called me back from time to time for minor changes.”

Which team will he be rooting for though? “I’m an American. But I have lived here in Spain for so long that I will try to be a little impartial,” he says. “Emotionally, I will kind of be with the Europeans because it’s my course and I’ve been in Europe 53 years now, so I’m as much European in a sense as I am American. But if you scratch me, I bleed American.” **GCA**

**“I don’t spend much time looking back on my career, and I haven’t tried to set goals to achieve. It is what it is. If people like what I’ve done, so much the better”**

whole construction,” he recalls. “At that time, we did not have a shaper, which is common today but certainly not back then. We had construction supervisors who knew how to build a course, and they would work with local people and direct them. I would go back and forth overseeing the supervisor there. I never take credit for Valderrama because it isn’t mine. It’s Robert Trent Jones.”

of a third course in Cyprus, but I’m not looking for work. If it comes to me and I’m interested, I’ll do it.”

He’ll be waiting for opportunities at his home in Mijas, a mountain town halfway between Málaga and Marbella. “For the number of years I’ve spent in Spain, I’m either stupid or I like it,” he says. “I do miss the States and get back several times a

ON SITE

# Slow burn

TERRAS DA COMPORTA, PORTUGAL

---

Adam Lawrence visits the new McLay Kidd Dunas course at Terras da Comporta in Portugal and reflects on its extended birthing period.

*The par-five twelfth on the Dunas course at Comporta, which is opening fifteen years after architect David McLay Kidd's first visit*

**D**eveloping and building a golf course is rarely a quick business.

Let's say you are a wealthy golf lover and would like your own course. First, you need to find some land. We know that the quality of the land is the largest single influence on the quality of the course, so ideally, you'd better find something good – sandy soil and interesting ground contour preferred. If you don't already own the site, you'll need to buy it, or at least come

to some sort of lease arrangement with the owner.

You need a design, and you need to apply to the relevant government agency or agencies for planning consent in all its myriad forms.

And then, once you have secured the land, you have a design, and you have permission, you can start building. If you're lucky and everything falls in line, you might get the course built in a year, but most go over that. Once

construction is complete, you need to hand the course over to your grass guys to grow it in, generally taking another year or so (though if you're in a warm season turf environment, where grass grows quickly, that might be less). You need to construct whatever buildings are needed to operate the course.

And then, finally, you, your friends and (hopefully) your paying customers, whether members or green-fee guests, can start playing golf on your new





*The central bunker provides a target line for the drive on the par-four eleventh*

course. If you're lucky, from start to finish, five years might have elapsed. More likely you are ten or more years older than when you first thought about building a course. I hope you haven't got so old and/or decrepit that your body will no longer allow you to play!

Architect David McLay Kidd first came to Comporta, in the Portuguese region of Alentejo, an hour south of Lisbon, in 2008. He was hired, by the Espírito Santo banking family, one of the great business dynasties of Europe, to build a golf course on a huge site about a kilometre from the Atlantic Ocean. Kidd worked on the project for a year, and then things went quiet for a while.

Three years later, in 2012, Comporta came alive again, and the course went into construction. By mid-2014, nine holes were completed and grassed, and the other nine were almost ready for seeding. "At the time, I was building the Beaverbrook course south of London, and one morning, I was sitting having breakfast with one of the owners of

that club," Kidd says. "He was reading the *Financial Times*, and suddenly he looked up from his paper and said to me, 'You might want to read this'."

"This" was an item in the paper suggesting that the Espírito Santo bank might be in trouble. Kidd flew to Portugal and sat down with his client, who assured him there was nothing

**“The holes rear and fall across enormous valleys; it is the kind of property a golf architect dreams of”**

to worry about. But at the end of June 2014, the bank collapsed with enormous debts, the product of some very dubious financial dealings. And with it went the Comporta development.

The course sat there for six years, with the irrigation system still running – “they basically flooded it and cut it to four inches occasionally,” says Kidd – until it was acquired by leading Portuguese real estate developer Vanguard Properties. Vanguard has

never previously had any involvement with golf, but CEO Jose Cardoso Botelho knew a good proposition when he saw one.

Vanguard acquired the Comporta development in 2018 and made contact with Kidd to bring the golf course back to life. It needed a lot of work: the bunkers were completely overgrown,

and there were trees growing through the tees. Kidd's former staff shaper Conor Walsh, now an independent contractor, first came to the property in 2019 – by this point Kidd, now US-based, no longer had a European-based construction operation – and work was just getting under way when, in early 2020, the Covid-19 pandemic hit. Kidd, helped by Vanguard's influence, was eventually able to get a permit to enter Portugal, but could





*Kidd's Dunas course sits on 250 acres of perfect golfing country; sand, pines and scrub*



not hope to get his construction crew to the site to finish the job. Walsh, therefore, was contracted to handle the build, which he did in close collaboration with the architect.

Now, after its incredibly extended birthing process (it is actually even longer than described above, because the property had been lined up for development long before Kidd got involved; the original golf course routing was done by Donald Steel), the course is finished and ready to make a bow. It will open formally in October (though it is in a soft opening phase now) and in my opinion, the day it opens, Portugal will have a new number one golf course.

When Kidd first visited Comporta in 2008, he must have become very excited, very quickly. The whole of the Tróia peninsula, at the base of which the course sits, is sand, with pine trees and scrub vegetation. It is perfect golfing country: if enough water was available, it could easily play host to dozens of excellent courses. And the

property the Dunas course occupies is remarkable even by the standards of its surroundings: a kilometre from the Atlantic and measuring a total of 2,500 acres (the golf course sits on about 250 acres of that). It is, essentially, huge sand dune country, though the vegetation is not obviously seaside. The holes rear and fall across enormous valleys; it is the kind of property a golf architect dreams of.

The course is like nothing anyone who has only played golf in Europe will ever have seen before. My closest comparison is with Kidd's own Mammoth Dunes course at Sand Valley in Wisconsin; the two share a sense of scale, and the landscapes are vaguely similar, though perhaps Mammoth has an eccentricity, exemplified by the short par-four sixth with its crazily wide boomerang green, that is not present at Comporta.

The sheer size of the undulations at Dunas gives rise to a lot of partial blindness. Kidd says the most dangerous place is usually the

best place to be on his courses, but here he often allows golfers to pick their poison: on several occasions you can trade a shorter route for a better view. The greens are creeping bentgrass, but everything else has been seeded with fescue, surely a first for southern Europe. At the moment, the course is young and quite green, but assuming that it is allowed to dry out and firm up as it matures, it will truly play like the links course its architect says it is. Angles will matter here.

The greens are enormous, though, compared to the scale of the contour that surrounds them, I thought they were quieter than I had expected. I paced off the green of the par-three third hole, for example, and it was 69 paces long (though the hole is massive, well over 200 metres from the back tee, so perhaps it needs it).

There is a lot of sand: one of my playing partners found sand six times in the first four holes. Most of the holes are either up, down or both. The par-five twelfth stood out to me as being mostly

# Schmidt- Curley GOLF DESIGN

Critically Acclaimed Designs  
World-Wide

The Team Behind Mission Hills-China

Named One of Golf's Most  
Influential Architects - GOLF INC. (2018)

FLC Quy Nhon Golf Links  
Mountain Course  
Vietnam

*Members, American Society*



*of Golf Course Architects*

[www.schmidt-curley.com](http://www.schmidt-curley.com)

## ACTIVE PROJECTS



Phnom Penh, Cambodia  
Animation by Harris•Kalinka



Wildcreek Golf Course Redevelopment  
New Home of the First Tee Northern Nevada



Stone Highland  
Bac Giang, Vietnam



*On the closing hole, the waste area juts into the fairway on both drive and approach*

level; perhaps this is appropriate, as the hole that follows it is the most severely downhill on the course. The par threes are an excellent, and varied set. My favourite was the sixth, a fairly short hole to a green tucked into a saddle between two dunes, but the others are no slouches, and the picture postcard seventeenth, the shortest on the course, will be one of the most photographed.

Truly, the only downside I could see was that the course will be a very difficult walk if anyone chooses to try: the routing is rather spread out, with some substantial gaps between holes, and the scale of undulation will not help here. At present, anyone trying to walk will have little choice but to follow the cart paths between holes. There is an attractive wooden walking path through the sand barren between the seventh and eighth holes; some more of these would help. Mention of carts, and knowing the course is mostly fescue inevitably makes one wonder how the grass will stand up to the traffic.

“If fescue is maintained correctly, it can take cart traffic,” says Kidd. “What will help here is that there will be less cart traffic when the fescue is most stressed, in the heat of summer.”

Kidd says that the Tróia peninsula sits on top of a large and well-filled aquifer, so water, which comes from boreholes, will not be in short supply, though the

the hotels, will be made of wood, there will be no concrete involved in the construction of the clubhouse, and all houses will be carbon neutral. Two five-star hotels are planned, though the brands of those hotels has not yet been announced. Kidd, for one, would like Vanguard to build a less fancy lodge for golfers, along the lines of the

**“Assuming that the course is allowed to dry out and firm up as it matures, it will truly play like the links its architect says it is”**

developer is working on a project to recycle the water used in the local rice fields for irrigation. Vanguard CEO Jose Cardoso Botelho says Comporta will be the most sustainable project of its kind in Europe. Every house will produce solar energy, and will be able to share it back with the rest of the development. Eighty per cent of Comporta’s energy requirements will be produced within the grounds. Every building, including

accommodation at Bandon Dunes and similar resorts. I share his view: I don’t believe that golfers are looking for super luxury and think that such a lodge could be the foundation of the ‘European Bandon’, something the continent lacks.

The course, when it opens fully in October, will be priced at €175, inclusive of cart and range balls; in present market conditions a bargain. See it if you can. **GCA**

# Big plans for St George's Hill

The Surrey course has hired Renaissance to produce a masterplan, with restoration work also mooted. Adam Lawrence reports.

**The iconic St George's Hill club in Surrey, England, one of the finest works of the great architect Harry Colt, has hired new consulting architects, and is thought to be considering a significant restoration of Colt's original design.**

A team from Renaissance Golf Design, headed by Brian Schneider, supported by regular shapers Clyde Johnson and Angela Moser, plus agronomist Chris Haspell and Jasper Miners of Evalu18 Ltd as historian and project manager, has

been contracted to produce a new masterplan for the entire golf property at the club, which currently includes 27 holes.

St George's Hill was acquired by housebuilder Walter Tarrant at the very beginning of 1912. Tarrant did not play golf, and knew little of the game, but was savvy enough to spot its attractions, and, thanks to golf writer and artist Charles Ambrose, hired Colt to design the course, on what would be the first ever 'mixed use' golf and housing development.

Colt's course was hewn from thick woodland, an enormous job for 1912, and yet was constructed in less than a year. Eight thousand trees were removed, using traction engines and dynamite, and 300 men then hand dug the areas cleared, removing ton after ton of peat to reveal the sandy subsoil.

By the standards of many Golden Age courses, St George's Hill's main eighteen is little changed from the original. The famous par-three eighth hole started life with two separate greens, but one was abandoned fairly



Photo: Jason Livy

*The opening hole of the Red nine at St George's Hill in Surrey*



*Colt's huge scar bunkers in the face of the eighth green are currently mostly grassed down*

quickly after opening, and the first green was rebuilt by Fred G. Hawtree and J. H. Taylor in the 1930s, after Colt's original green, which was right on top of a hill, was judged to be too much like hard work by the members.

Colt himself altered several greens shortly after the course opened, after their slopes were considered to be too steep, and the strategy of the sixteenth hole has been changed by tree planting designed to force play away from the boundary fence. Otherwise, the course is not dramatically different from that created by its original architect. The most obvious change, though, is at the eighth: Colt's huge scar bunkers in the face of the green are now mostly grassed

down. There has been talk of the club restoring these bunkers for years, but, as yet, it has not been done.

The New course, now the Green nine, however, has not been so kindly treated. Built by Colt in the late 1920s, and always something of an afterthought, the New (or Ladies') course has been reduced to nine holes, with today's seventh formed from two of Colt's original holes. A reservoir to store irrigation water has been built in the area previously home to several of the lost holes on the original back nine: the creation of a practice field next to what are now the fourth and fifth holes cost the course two holes. The second, originally a par four to a green close to the boundary fence and

Brooklands Road, has been reduced to a par three, with the green much further forward, and the old third, a par three playing back from the boundary, no longer exists.

"We completed a strategic review in summer/autumn 2021 and derived six pillars," says general manager Philip Worthington. "We set ourselves several goals in relation to Colt – and five points we wanted to consider. Fundamentally, though, the central question was Colt's own test of a golf course: will it live?"

"We want a 27-hole masterplan, looking at the entire estate as one big picture, including practice grounds and greenkeeping facilities. We want to preserve Colt's design

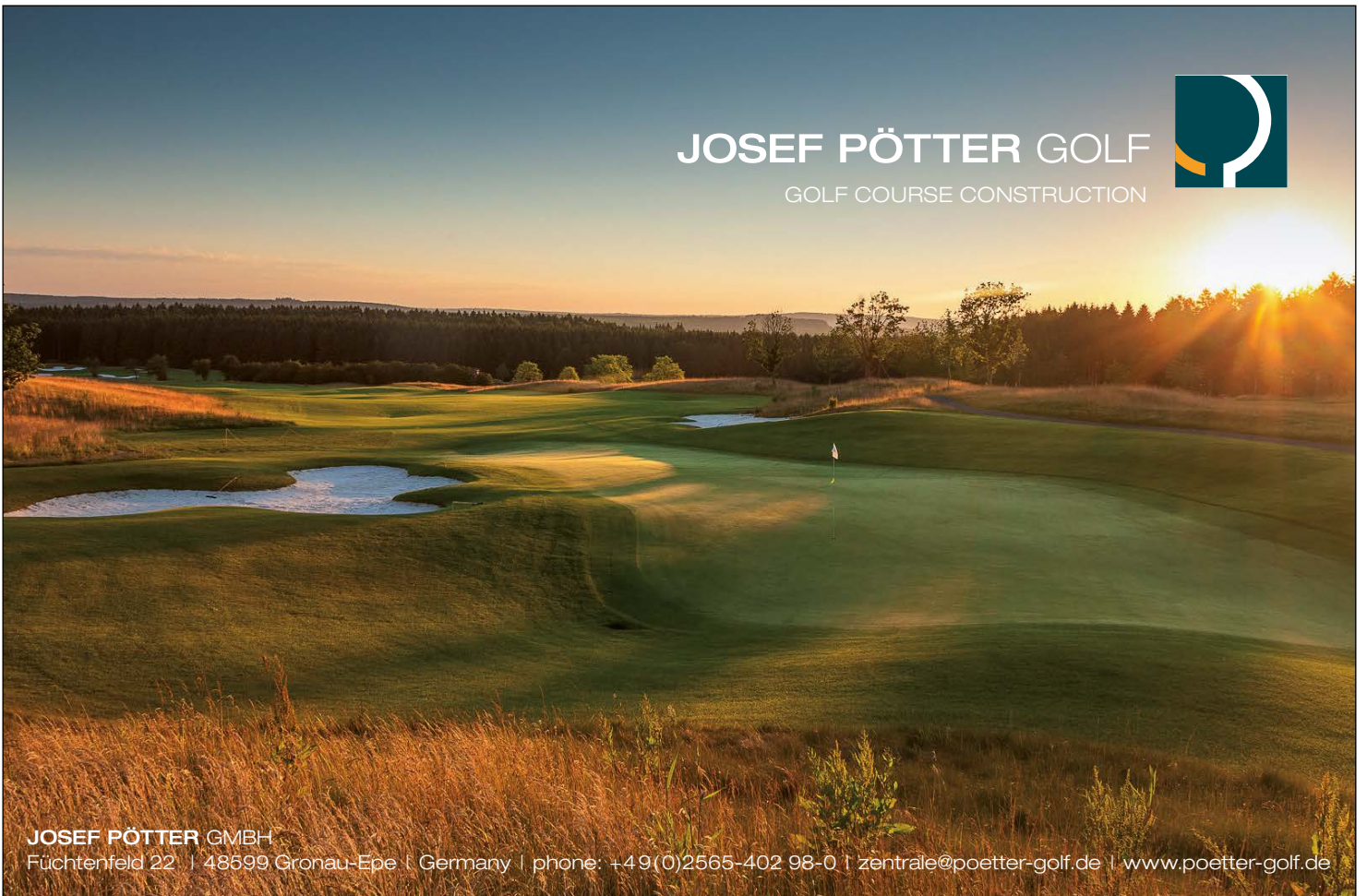
*Reinventing the way bunkers are lined*

**BUNKER**  
Solution™



Prevent contamination of sand | Reduce sand migration during weather events | Eliminate the need for gravel  
Maintain lip integrity | Golf club, string trimmer and raking machine friendly | [www.bunkersolution.com](http://www.bunkersolution.com)

**JOSEF PÖTTER GOLF**  
GOLF COURSE CONSTRUCTION



**JOSEF PÖTTER GMBH**

Füchtenfeld 22 | 48599 Gronau-Epe | Germany | phone: +49(0)2565-402 98-0 | zentrale@poetter-golf.de | www.poetter-golf.de



*The par-three second on the Green nine was originally a par four*

principles, as we are all custodians of a landmark golf course. Neither the Course Design Group, the board, or the committee are here to decree that changes are required: we are very well aware that, if we were a building we would be grade-one listed.”

Brian Schneider says: “St George’s Hill is a marvellous place, perhaps best known for its stunning par-three eighth hole. However, this is just one of eighteen extraordinary holes found on the Old course (the Red and Blue nines). It is also evident that Harry Colt’s second eighteen, the New, was the match of any course in terms of interest, memorability, and fun.”

In a statement, the club’s Course Design Group said: “We are blessed as members of this wonderful club to be the custodians of what can only be described as a timeless work of art. The journey we will now embark on, in partnership with Renaissance

Golf Design and Evalu8, is one of excitement and adventure. To create a plan that will protect, enhance and restore Colt’s masterpiece, is not only a privilege, but a necessity.”

“We are not looking for a new course architect. We have one – his name is Harry Colt,” says Worthington. “We are looking for a team of architects

## “We want to preserve Colt’s design principles, as we are all custodians of a landmark golf course”

that can review, revisit and restore his works to a modern-day standard deemed appropriate by the club and its membership. What prompted this decision wasn’t one specific event. It was a culmination of factors including the pandemic, a review of course usage and playing habits, and a full review of our assets and our responsibility

to maintain and improve them. It is a natural evolution, and we are hoping to have options and considerations to take to members later this year.”

If the club eventually decides to embark on a full-scale restoration – though, as noted above, it is questionable just how restorative any work on the New course, now the

Green nine, can be – it would, along with the project currently underway at The Addington, be the most significant restoration yet undertaken in British golf. It remains to be seen how bold the club is prepared to be; but for all those who love historical golf architecture, and Harry Colt in particular, it will be exciting to watch. **GCA**

# Florida's next great destination?

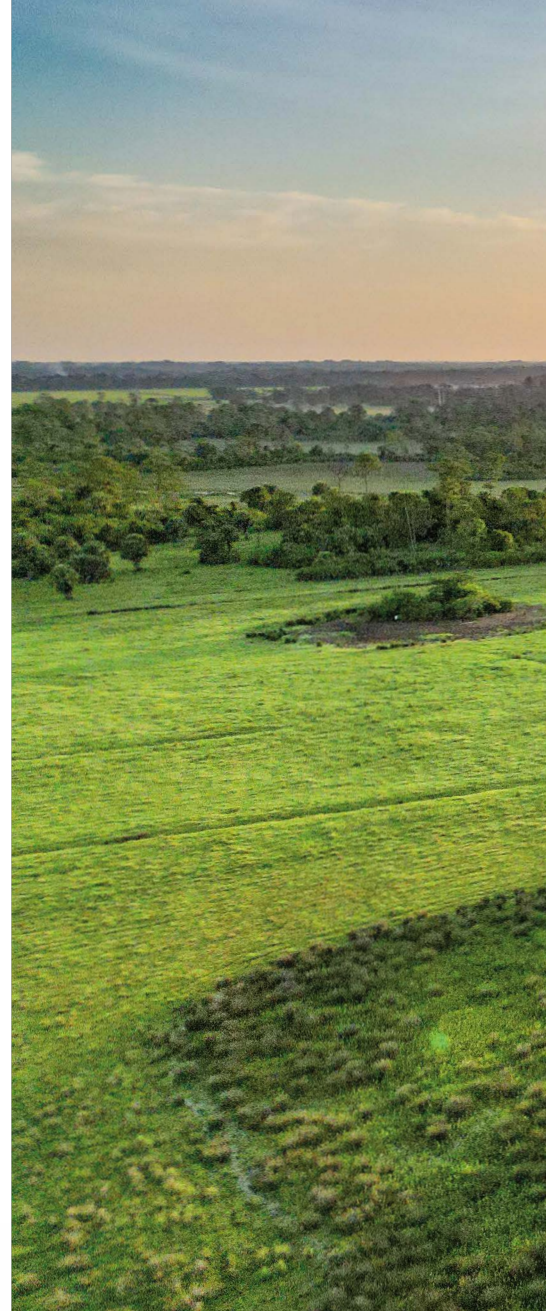
WAC Golf delivers plans for The Ranch, 36 holes of golf led by Friar's Head developer Ken Bakst.

**K**en Bakst, developer of Friar's Head on Long Island, New York, has submitted a masterplan for a new development in Martin County, Florida, which includes a 36-hole golf facility designed by Whitman, Axland & Cutten (WAC Golf).

The plan includes two eighteen-hole golf courses and a 175-acre practice facility comprising a 10-hole full-length practice layout, a 12-hole short course, a massive undulating putting green, an extensive short-game area, and a 360-degree long-game practice area.

Bakst is the visionary behind The Ranch. He wants to leave the land mostly untouched, while also creating a golf experience like no other.

“For the last decade Kenny had been searching for the perfect land for the next golf experience, and in summer 2021 he found it!” says Keith Cutten. “A nearly 4,000-acre rustic ranch 20 minutes from the beaches of Hobe Sound, and a short drive from Palm Beach Island. The Bakst family instantly fell in love with the rugged and picturesque site.”



WAC's plan includes two eighteen-hole courses, a 10-hole full-length practice layout, a 12-hole short course and extensive practice facilities

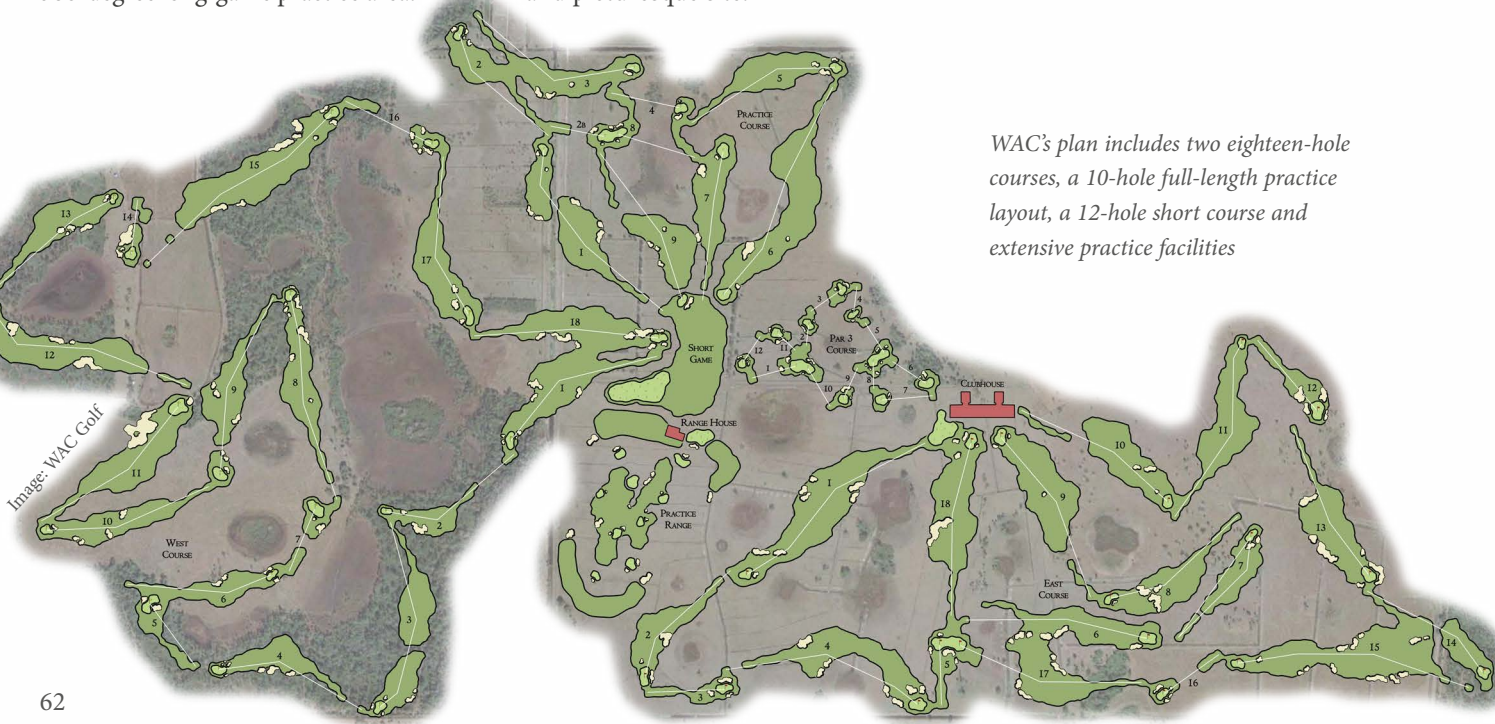


Image: WAC Golf



*Developer Ken Bakst has given WAC Golf free rein to design the best golf experience possible on 4,000 acres 20 minutes inland from Hobe Sound*

Photo: Andrew Harvie



Historically named the Calusa Creek Ranch, the site is “incredibly diverse with grassy pastures, wetlands, oak hammocks, pines flats and cypress domes,” says Cutten. “It is still an active ranch, currently home to approximately 800 Brangus cattle, and Kenny intends to continue to operate a significant cow calf operation on the property. It’s also a haven for outdoor enthusiasts with 1.5 miles of frontage on the St. Lucie Canal.

“Most mornings The Ranch is blanketed in a breathtaking fog and as the blanket of mist lifts it unveils an abundance of wildlife that calls the land home. Deer, turkey, osprey, fox and many others will have plenty

of room to thrive as The Ranch transitions, and that’s because more than 90 per cent of the land will be preserved as open space, while more than 65 per cent will remain bona fide agriculture for cattle and farming.”

The excavation of two large fishing lakes outside of the golf footprint will generate sand for course construction.

“There will not be any cuts into the existing landforms except where we choose to incorporate creeks and ditches into the design of the golf courses,” says Cutten. “It is our goal to create natural looking landforms which accentuate inherent features for the benefit of golf and it’s a rare

opportunity to have so much land to work with, which will allow the most natural and sensitive areas of the site to remain unaltered and serve as beautiful landscape features.”

The routing of the courses and practice facilities was a collaborative effort between all three WAC Golf partners and Bakst.

“It was most definitely a fun and creative process,” says Cutten. “But, as you can imagine, it was also incredibly challenging to zero in on where we would plan everything when starting with 6.1 square miles of land, without any limitations on where or how much land we could utilise.”

We do Bunkers... **Better.**



[www.betterbillybunker.com](http://www.betterbillybunker.com)

 @Billy\_Bunker



[TQUITNO@QUITNOGOLF.COM](mailto:TQUITNO@QUITNOGOLF.COM) +1 847.951.3051



CREATORS OF THE WORLD'S GREATEST GOLF COURSES

Sol Golf have constructed some of Europe's most prestigious courses which have hosted the Ryder Cup, Rolex Trophy and Open Championship. Our portfolio is continuously growing with the consistent addition of new course developments together with the renovation of existing courses.

Photo by Jacob Sjoman

Pictured is hole 2 of the recently completed Marco Simone Golf & Country Club, Ryder cup course 2023.

CALL +353 64 775 1006 EMAIL [info@solgolfconst.com](mailto:info@solgolfconst.com)



[WWW.SOLGOLFCONST.COM](http://WWW.SOLGOLFCONST.COM)

— SUBSCRIBE —



FREE  
DIGITAL  
EDITION

Sign up to receive the free digital edition at  
[www.golfcoursearchitecture.net/subscribe](http://www.golfcoursearchitecture.net/subscribe)



*The site is home to around 800 Brangus cattle and Bakst intends to continue to operate a cow calf operation on the property*

The masterplan was submitted to Martin County almost two years after Bakst identified the land.

“The site is so vast that it would have allowed for many options,” says Cutten. “However, Kenny’s vision is to preserve all of the natural areas of the 3,900-acre ranch, 95 per cent of which will remain as green open space. Locating golf in the southern third of the site, far removed from both people and traffic, will provide golfers

are still working on minor refinements every time we are on site together.

“The flow of holes was very important to us, as was the distinctiveness of the two courses. The core principles of routing – changes of direction, wind and sun angles and so on – were of course critical, but exploring the site’s diverse habitats, while preserving their best parts, was equally significant. We simply let the site inform our decision making, and did not hesitate to make

course will be broader and bolder, with sweeping views across the entire golf course, while the holes on the other course will weave in and out of upland pines and prairie land to provide a more intimate walk through nature.”

The practice areas were given the team’s utmost attention too, with Cutten saying nothing comparable has ever been built. “That’s a bold statement, but Kenny is known for his love of practice and belief that great practice facilities are a source of great enjoyment and absolutely critical to providing golfers of all abilities with the means of learning how to take their games from the range to the course.

“The Ranch is a major undertaking, both in project scale and vision. We have been gifted a great opportunity to deliver something truly special for golf in Florida and America. We do not take this opportunity lightly and have crafted a team to help us deliver.”

Earthworks for mass grading, drainage and irrigation could begin as early as autumn 2023, with construction of the courses and practice facilities anticipated to begin in winter 2024. [GCA](#)

## “We have been gifted a great opportunity to deliver something truly special for golf in Florida and America”

with an incredibly remote and serene experience in uninhibited nature.”

Once the team had settled on that area, design work began. “We would have plans spread out on a dining room table for weeks at a time,” says Cutten. “Then we would share options with Kenny to get his thoughts, which, not surprising to us, were always invaluable. It took nearly a year to settle on our current routings and we

adjustments in the field where the inclusion of site assets could further enhance the journey.”

The two eighteen-hole layouts – East and West – both max out at around 7,500 yards.

“The site characteristics will help to differentiate the courses from each other, and we will employ traditional design elements reflecting their differing landscapes,” says Cutten. “One

# Unearthing a Guernsey gem

With its redesign of La Grande Mare, European Golf Design aims to create something special for the island.

**L**ocated on Guernsey in the UK's Channel Islands, La Grande Mare is owned by Stephen Lansdown, founder of the Hargreaves Lansdown investment company and owner of several Bristol-based sports teams.

He bought the golf course and hotel in 2019 with the aim of creating a premium development and holiday destination. European Golf Design (EGD) was hired to renovate and reroute the golf course and KKA Architects to create a new country club and lodges.

"Location-wise it is second to none, with the sea in front and beautiful countryside behind," says Lansdown. "I saw the chance to create something very special for Guernsey."

The golf course was a 4,761-yard par 64, but with the purchase of additional land, EGD is extending

Work in 2024 will then shift to the remaining seven holes.

"The new land has provided brand new third and fourth holes and a much-lengthened par-five seventeenth," says Robin Hiseman, who is leading the project for EGD. "The prime site characteristic is the widespread use of water hazards, which offset the short length with some thrilling shots.

"La Grande Mare translates as 'the big pond' and the site straddles a delta on the western coast of the island, where numerous watercourses converge before entering Vazon Bay. The original designer dug out several ponds in addition to the many ditches, or 'douits', as they are called in Guernsey. These douits crossed many fairways at right angles, which served to frustrate and penalise golfers, who couldn't hit full tee shots."

Hiseman's redesign will reduce the number of times players encounter the douits. The new ponds will provide strategic challenge, as well as water storage, flood alleviation and a source of fill.

Much of the existing layout has been retained, but every hole will be

redesigned from tee to green. "We've reconfigured the course to fit the two loops of nine holes better with the new clubhouse," explains Hiseman. "It's a short, technical layout, with a lot of strategic twists and surprises. We have numerous 'half-par' holes, which entice you with realistic birdie opportunities, but with jeopardy to be tackled in the process. It will definitely be a course with lots of birdies and eagles, but also plenty of doubles and triples."

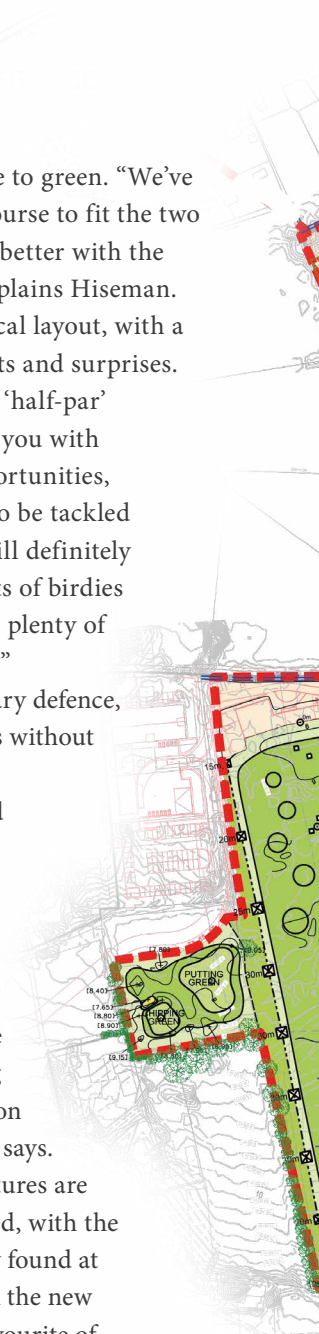
Water is the primary defence, with only four holes without water hazards. The landscape reminded Hiseman of Florida and of one course in particular, the Donald Ross-designed Seminole.

"I explained that we could do something similar here, albeit on a reduced scale," he says. "The new water features are diagonally orientated, with the geometric formality found at Seminole. We think the new seventh will be a favourite of many. It is a shorter version of the tenth at The Belfry, but we think ours is better!"

**"It's a short, technical layout, with a lot of strategic twists and surprises"**

it to a par 69 of 5,400 yards, while also adding a new driving range, golf academy, short-game area and putting green.

MJ Abbott is under way with construction, with the driving range and 11 holes, including two on new land, the focus of the first phase.





The bunkerless par-three fourteenth is defined by linksy mounds and has the most undulating green on the course

Image: EGD

A 200-yard wide fairway is shared by the first, ninth and eighteenth

“My favourite part of the layout is the 200-yard-wide triple fairway at holes one, nine and eighteen. We’re digging out a couple of new lakes and using the spoil to build a 250-yard long, fairway-cut ridge that separates the playing areas. Functionally, the ridge is providing elevation and slope to help us drain flat land, but it also gives us the opportunity to be artistic with the landform and shape bunkers, ridges, spurs, and swales along its length. I can’t wait to see it built and catching the low sun angles.”

Several hundred non-native Tamarisk bushes, previously planted to define fairways, have been removed to create a wide, links-like canvas upon which seven holes coming from the clubhouse will

EGD has designed new third and fourth holes, which are located on newly purchased land

# MJ ABBOTT

MJ Abbott are the UK's leading golf construction experts. Whether re-shaping a bunker, reconstructing a green, or building a new 18 hole golf course, our expertise, experience and depth of resources is second to none.

Our extensive client portfolio includes the R&A, Wentworth Club, Celtic Manor Resort, hundreds of private and proprietary clubs, and a number of major resort venues.



Golf construction *experts*

+44 (0) 1722 716361 • enquiries@mjabbott.co.uk  
mjabbott.co.uk

# VISION



J. DREW ROGERS  
GOLF COURSE ARCHITECT

www.jdrewrogers.com +1 419 787 6786

## LOBB + PARTNERS

GOLF COURSE ARCHITECTS

DESIGN WITH **PRIDE**  
BUILD WITH **PASSION**



www.lobbandpartners.com | tlobb@lobbandpartners.com

Hole 18 NEWGIZA Photo: Kevin Murray



Atlanta Athletic Club - Riverside Course

Johns Creek, Georgia  
Tripp Davis - Redesign 2022

Tripp Davis and Associates

Golf Architecture  
Norman, Oklahoma USA  
405-447-5259  
tripp@tdagolf.net



*New ponds, like on the short par-four seventh – which provides a similar challenge to the tenth on Ryder Cup host course the Brabazon at The Belfry – will provide a strategic challenge as well as water storage and flood alleviation*



be shaped. “The newly expansive landscape is in parts wide open to the sea breezes, whilst other parts of the course pass through woodland and around protected wetlands, complete with colourful groves of wild orchids,” says Hiseman.

“The low-lying course encounters seasonal flooding problems, complicated by the sole outfall being dictated by the tide. During spring tides, the course will flood as the outfall valve is closed by the high sea level. The existing course has a negligible amount of drainage, which causes the course to remain closed for long periods after a flood. The new design introduces nearly 30 kilometres of new drainage and several automated pump chambers to remove surface water after significant rainfall.”

A new Toro irrigation system, designed by Irritech, will be installed. The club has also engaged agronomy consultants Turfgrass, led on this project by John Clarkin and Jonathan Pendry, to complement EGD’s redesign with a tour-standard grass, especially around the greens where sandcapping is taking place.

“When it all comes together, La Grande Mare will offer something special; a short, intricate course built to the highest of design and construction standards,” says Hiseman. “Guernsey and Channel Islands golf is sure to receive a significant boost with the interest it will generate.”

A soft opening is scheduled for summer 2025, by which time the new country club and clubhouse should also be completed. **GCA**

# Cabot hits jackpot in Florida

Two new layouts by Mike Nuzzo are in construction at Cabot Citrus Farms.

**T**he former World Woods Golf Club in Brooksville, Florida, is now in the midst of transformation following its acquisition by developer Cabot in January 2022.

Kyle Franz is redesigning both the Pine Barrens and Rolling Oaks courses (which will become Cabot Barrens and Cabot Oaks), collaborating with architect Mike Nuzzo and advisor Ran Morrissett on the latter.

Meanwhile, Nuzzo is well under way with The 21, 105 acres that will be home to a 10-hole course of almost 3,000 yards and an 11-hole par-three layout.

There is about 50 feet of elevation change across The 21's sandy site – almost 10 feet deep in places. “The site had two prominent hilltop features,” says Nuzzo. “The second, third and sixth greens on ‘The Ten’ all surround the southern hill. The tenth hole and the par-three course, ‘The Ace’, use the hill closest to the clubhouse. That hilltop was previously used as a starting point for both the old practice holes and executive course – it was mostly a giant tee complex. We use it now more as a crescendo for both courses.

“The site was small and squarish, which isn't traditionally best for routing traditional length holes, but because we had no constraints, we were able to use the shorter perimeter dimensions by fitting more ‘half-par’ holes on The Ten. It will be an ideal walking golf course for those that normally play about 3,000 yards. It gives them a chance to walk the entire course and not have to walk past tees several times per round. There are five holes that would be considered par 3.5. Two short one-shot holes and a long three-shot hole.”

*A large waste area will lie between tees and green on the fifth hole of par-three course The Ace*



Photo: Cabot Citrus Farms





Photo: Cabot Citrus Farms

*Looking back on the third and second holes on The Ten at Cabot Citrus Farms*

Nuzzo's design aims to isolate the golf from the surroundings to make the courses feel like an escape or retreat. A large berm system shields the town of Ponce de Leon from the course and the site's infrastructure. It was created with material excavated for large waste areas, dramatic features for both courses.

Both courses were originally planned as nine holes. "The preliminary plan had a little bit of a walk to and from the last one-shot hole," says Nuzzo, of The Ten. Cabot's Ben Cowan-Dewar asked if there was enough room for another hole. "At the time I was considering a tenth hole on the par-three course, so it struck a great balance for Cabot to have ten plus ten," says Nuzzo. As it happens, another par three was added to The Ace, which Nuzzo says: "allowed for the routing to tack the property and add more dramatic features."

While The Ace is a par-three course, Cabot's scorecard for The Ten does not list pars.

"Once the best use of the land was determined to be more 'half-par holes', or holes of less traditional lengths," says Nuzzo. "The goal was to add as much interest to each hole and emulate some of the great short holes in the world. We took some ingredients from my favourites and also concocted some original ideas.

"One of the challenges was working with the old four-sided range. By eliminating the east and west tee pods it allowed The Ten to route around

**"The goal was to add as much interest to each hole and emulate some of the great short holes in the world"**

the new range. The first hole aided the transition, it is somewhat wide and uses the old terrain to have a super-rumpled and interesting approach and green complex.

"The second green rewards the safe play to the left side. The player who

challenges the green will have to avoid the trouble to the right before arriving at a green that will slightly curve the ball left. The third has a waste bunker the size of a Publix! The hole has a slender green that slopes away from the tee with a very steep left side. It is highly dramatic, and the first thing visitors will see upon entering the site.

"The fourth hole is 560 yards and feels like it was born in Ireland.

The pronounced dunes running the entire left side of the hole create a

fairway strongly canted left to right. Strategically, the green rewards players when playing from the left side."

Nuzzo expects the fifth to become a favourite. "The fairway is quite wide with a portion in the middle that is obscured by views of bunkers that

# Arthur Schaupeter

## GOLF COURSE ARCHITECTS

Creating unique adventures for golfers  
Maximizing value for our clients

TPC Colorado ranked #89 on America's 100 Greatest Public Courses - Golf Digest 2021



[www.schaupetergolf.com](http://www.schaupetergolf.com)

+1 314 443 9029

[art@schaupetergolf.com](mailto:art@schaupetergolf.com)



GOLF COURSE  
CONSTRUCTION  
AND RENOVATION

WEST CLIFFS



PROGOLF BRASIL  
Antonio.carios@progolf-group.com

GOLFSCAPE  
Benjamin.silva@progolf-group.com



SINCE 1929

# HARRADINE GOLF

CASLANO . DUBAI . BERLIN



[www.harradine-golf.com](http://www.harradine-golf.com)

Image: Mike Nuzzo



create an old-fashioned MacKenzie illusion,” he says. “The green is the largest on the course and has a giant ‘flea’ buried in the middle, exaggerating the reward for playing to the proper sides of the fairway.”

The green on the sixth boomerangs around a hilltop. “The fairway severely pinches down in the driver landing area,” says Nuzzo. “On most holes the fairways will help the shorter hitter or force the longer hitter to be very accurate. There are large waste areas on either side of the fairway neck and the green has a significantly lower portion back right that many will need to study to get their putts near the hole.”

A “devilish” 115-yarder seventh is followed by the more traditional 185-yard eighth that the architect describes as “Winged Footian”. The ninth fairway is the lowest spot on the property, requiring significant work to facilitate drainage. “The green is a stunner,” says Nuzzo. “The tenth looked like a short uphill hole once

*The 21 at Cabot Citrus Farms, designed by Mike Nuzzo, comprises a driving range and short game area, an 11-hole par-three course and a 10-hole course of 3,000 yards but with no designated pars*

the old par-three practice tee was removed. Not exactly an ode to Pine Valley’s second, but it does have a very dramatic fairway and elevated green.

“There are lots of angles to play to all different hole locations, and, in general, the longer the tee shot, the more restricting the angles become, and the fairways often narrow dramatically the further one carries.”

Nuzzo has designed the par-three The Ace course with excitement in mind, with large features such as the quarry on the fifth, which

the architect says is the size of a battleship. “There are ridges in front of greens, narrow greens, deep bunkers hard on the edge, greens that run away, greens that run sideways, one inspired by the eighteenth on the Old course at St Andrews, and the craziest waterfall green to finish the round,” he says. “This green has a hidden back portion after carrying the hilltop ridge. It even transitions into the 60,000-square-foot putting green that is significantly undulated across the base of the hilltop.” **GCA**

# Big in Japan

Rees Jones is finding rising demand for pre-tournament surgery in the East.

**A portfolio of renovation work at US championship venues including The Country Club, Hazeltine, Torrey Pines and Bethpage Black saw Rees Jones inheriting his father's title as the Open Doctor. Now, demand for his pre-tournament surgery is gaining momentum in the East.**

Jones' first project in Japan was completed in 2011, at Ibaraki Country Club near the port city of Osaka. The club's West course had been selected to host the 2013 Panasonic Open and its members wanted an architect who they could trust to get the course tournament-ready.

Jones says, "Ibaraki approached us to see if we would be interested in doing a complete rebuild of the existing golf course. The club had a proud history of hosting the Japan Open, but they had fallen out of the sequence."

"Over the years, tournament officials had determined that the course was becoming outdated for professional players," adds Jones' design associate Bryce Swanson. "The existing course layout had dual greens and the club wanted to convert to single greens with more strategic variety."

Jones and Swanson added back tees for distance, reviewed bunker placements to provide players with different challenges and redesigned

the greens with new angles and orientation, along with introducing chipping areas in their surrounds.

"We really tried to mix it up in terms of what was being asked of the golfers," says Swanson. "Using the existing layout, we created a new course experience which resulted in a very exciting finish at the 2013 Panasonic Open."

"The closing hole is a par five where they can make eagle, birdie or get in trouble," says Jones. "It was very well received by all the players and the scores weren't overly low. It's a really good finish – the seventeenth is the hardest par three on the course – and it really made their muscles tighten."

The club is now celebrating its 100-year anniversary and preparing to host its sixth Japan Open in October 2023.

Jones' second project in the country (as featured in the January 2019 issue of *GCA*) was at Taiheiyo Club's Gotemba course, southwest of Tokyo, in the shadow of Mount Fuji. There he worked alongside Hideki Matsuyama, a first course design project for Japan's number one golfer. The course had previously hosted 2001's World Cup of Golf, won by Ernie Els and Retief Goosen, plus an annual event on the Japan Golf Tour.

Jones says: "Just before we worked there, Hideki shot 23 under par to



win the Taiheiyo Masters, but after we completed work the winning score was nine-under, so it's now much more of a championship test."

Gotemba has continued to host that event and in 2024, it will also be the venue for the Asia-Pacific Amateur Championship, the winner of which will receive both Masters and Open invitations.

Trips across the Pacific are now increasing in frequency for Jones and Swanson. A long-range master plan has been completed for Shizuoka Country Club's Ogasa and Takamatsu courses, a composite of which are used for a Japan LPGA StepUp Tour event, and Taiheiyo Club owner Shun



*Taiheiyo Club's Gotemba course hosts a Japan Golf Tour event each year*

Han has brought them into another of the club's locations, the 36-hole Karuizawa Resort in the central Gunma prefecture, to redesign the Asama course.

"One championship project has led to another," says Jones. "They're not building anything new in Japan. It's all redos and upgrades; and they're having to upgrade to get tournaments. They really care about their championship golf."

When a course is being updated for tournament play, club members understandably wonder what that might mean for them. "They were worried that we were going to make it too hard for them," says Jones, of their work at

Gotemba. "But on opening day we were complemented on how much more the members enjoyed the golf course.

"We can make it more difficult for the pro by adding areas to the greens that allow pins to be hidden, and

## "One championship project has led to another"

relocating bunkers so the average player can access the green effectively, but the pro would have a hard time getting close to the pin."

Short grass is an important part of that formula too. "Drawing from our

experience with tournament venues in the US, we were able to highlight that for really good players, bunkers aren't necessarily a challenge," says Swanson. "With the introduction of runoff and chipping areas around the green, that adds challenge for the good player because it forces them to make a decision."

"The everyday golfer can putt it up from the chipping areas then two putt and be happy," says Jones. "The best players want to get it close to the pin to save par. They now have to think about it because they can either putt it, hit it into the bank, or loft it.

"I always say you don't build a church just for Easter Sunday. And I think

that's what we do best. Like at Torrey Pines, and other courses we've done in preparation for the US Open, it's still very playable, manageable and enjoyable for the average player."

The typical membership model in Japan – a relatively small annual fee plus a green fee for each play – means it is critical to get members coming back for more. Jones says: "It is important for the clubs and the owners to have a course that people want to play on a daily basis. And I think that's what we've accomplished."

Jones and Swanson have developed a good understanding of how their Japanese clients like to work. "We're mindful of their respect for the landscape and the trees," says Swanson. "Tree removal is geared towards agronomy and playability."

Jones says: "We walk the course with them and explain

everything we do thoroughly, so they understand what we're talking about. The clients are very involved. It becomes a team effort because it is ultimately their facility."

"It's about taking the time to really get to know what they are looking for," says Swanson. "For example, we understand what type of green contours they like. I would say it's based on Japanese architecture – a little more subtle."

"At Ibaraki, they very much wanted to use our design philosophy. But at Gotemba, they wanted us to understand what the original architect Shunsuke Kato had done and to incorporate his design philosophy into updating the course for today's players."

"It was more of a restoration," says Jones. "Kato was ill but before they announced that we were going to do the work, they visited him. He was very much on board with having us improve his golf course."

Shizuoka has seen contrasting approaches; the Ogasa course moved from dual to single greens, while the Takamatsu (see the April 2022 issue



of GCA) has retained the dual green and has more of a restorative feel. The result has been a more equal balance of member play between the two. "The hotel is booming and the whole place has been revitalised," says Jones.

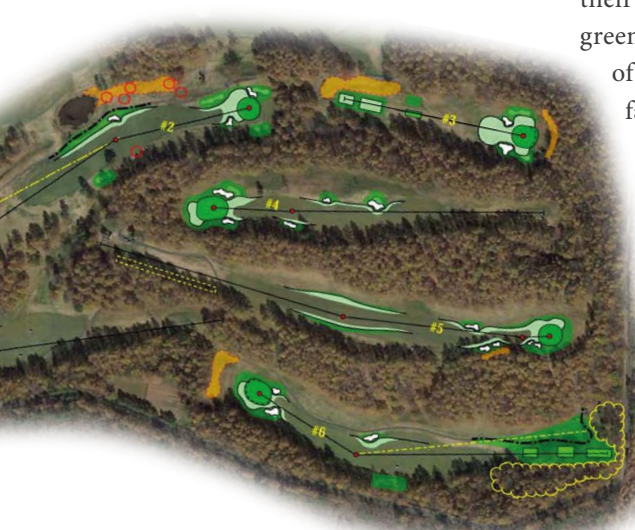
Construction is now underway at Karuizawa, again with the



*Jones' plan for the Asama course at Karuizawa Resort includes a complete rethink of green surrounds*



*Jones' proposal for the fifth hole on the Asama course sees the introduction of new bunkering in the second landing area of this par five hole*



hope of elevating its potential for tournament play. “There hasn’t been any remodelling work since the 1960s,” says Swanson. “They now want to make sure they are putting their best foot forward. It’s single greens, but it’s a complete rethought of some of the tee locations, the fairway bunkering and the green surrounds. There’s a downhill tee shot on the par-four eighteenth, and we are going to completely rebuild the green complex with that possible tournament big-finish in mind.”

As with all his jobs in Japan, Jones has teamed with Hiromi Yanagisawa and Inaji Landscape & Construction Co. to ensure the final product is of the highest quality.

While advances in technology allow for effective remote working, Jones and Swanson will still make regular site visits. “Golf course architecture is one of those things that you really do need to do out in the field to be able to understand the space you’re dealing with,” says Swanson. “The ability to have a Zoom call has definitely helped. We do quite a bit with photos and video calls where the contractor will walk us through something that’s been shaped. When we do visit the site, we’re closer to being able to do final touches.”

Jones and Swanson expect to be completing their operation on Karuizama’s Asama course by the end of 2023, with an eye towards hosting tournament golf in the not-too-distant future. **GCA**

# Seowon gets Hills course tour-ready

Golfplan completes bunker project at Korean club ahead of a visit by the LPGA.

**W**hen the LPGA Tour selected the Hills course at Seowon Hills Country Club near Seoul, South Korea, to host the BMW Ladies Championship in October 2023, it contacted Golfplan to review the design.

David Dale, one of the firm’s partners, had created a renovation masterplan for the club’s Valley course several years earlier. While the club hadn’t found the time or budget to

proceed, Dale’s proposals had clearly made enough of an impact for him to be asked about the Hills.

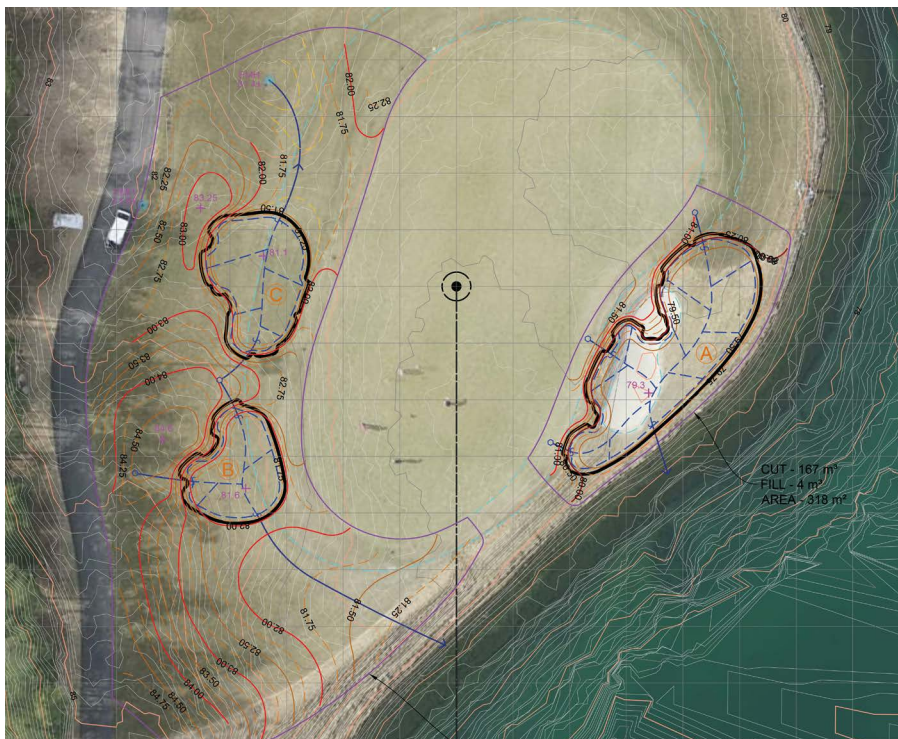
“The Hills has a grand scale,” he says. “The holes are wide, the greens are enormous, and the views from the course to the surrounding mountains are beautiful. There is a wonderful variety of holes in the way they lay on the land and the lakes are large and strategically positioned. The ability to move 10,000 to 15,000 spectators

around the course during an LPGA event is also ideal.

“When I was asked to evaluate the Hills, which functions as an extremely busy public facility that also offers night golf every day, we started our initial spatial evaluation by using Google Earth as our base map prior to our scheduled visit to tour the course.”

Fairways, tees and rough on the Hills is turfed with Kentucky bluegrass, a departure from the Zoysia that is the norm for South Korea. “The course is sandcapped to help the greenkeeping team to maintain excellent turfgrass conditions for the 120,000 rounds that are played on it each year,” says Dale. “The sandcap is critical to growing healthy cool-season turf during the hot, humid and rainy summer months.

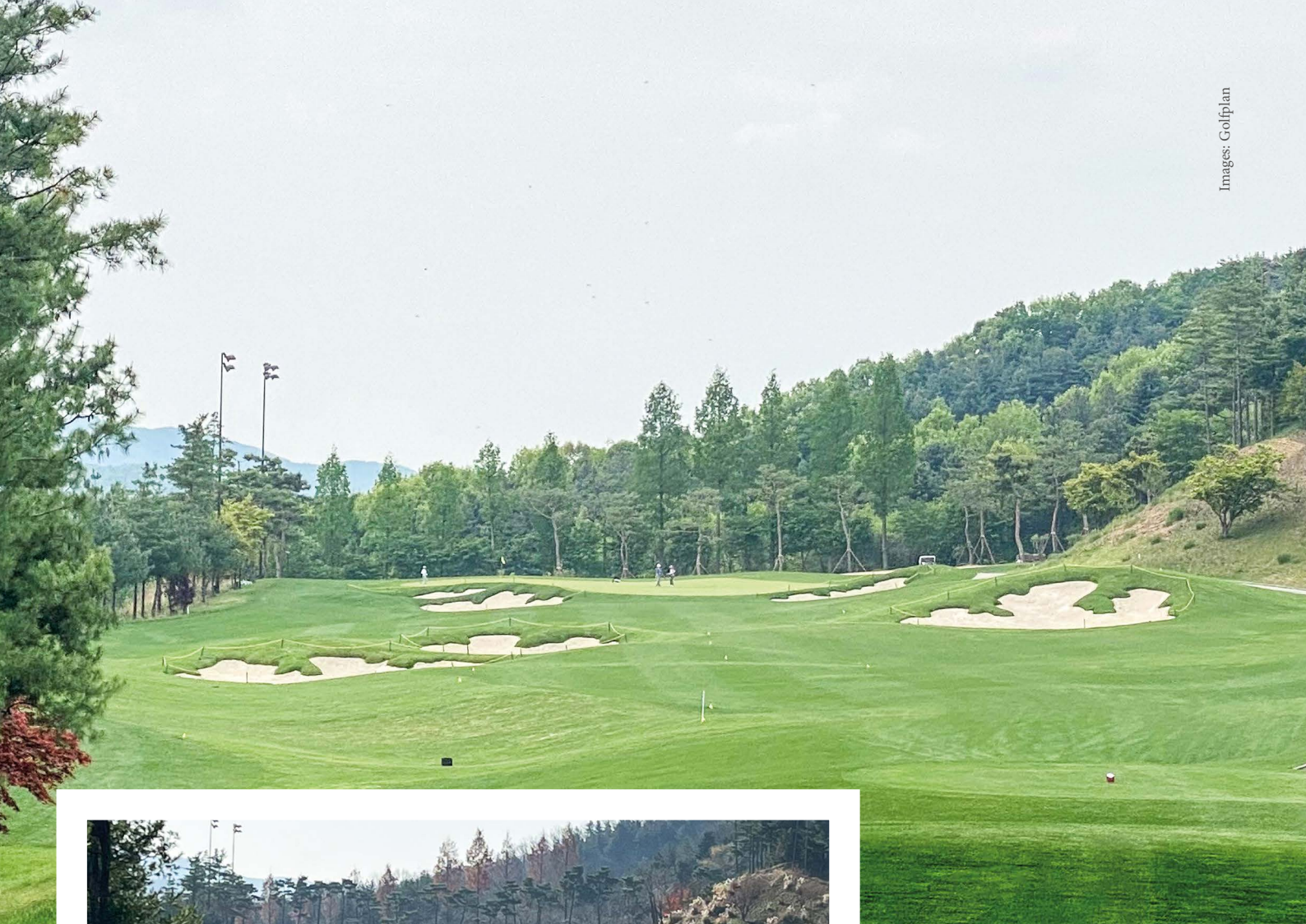
“Numerous KLPGA and KPGA events have been held on the Valley course, but the Hills checks all the boxes to host a professional golf tournament, too. The Hills was originally designed to provide more rapid play with minimal strategic character, but the chairman and management of the club had discussions with the LPGA to see what the course could competitively provide the LPGA players. Also, given this opportunity to host the BMW Ladies Championship, the club wanted to make use of this opportunity to



Images: Golfplan

*Golfplan’s design for the par-three seventh included the expansion and addition of bunkers to heighten the challenge*





*Golfplan's redesign of the closing hole (also pictured left, before the renovation) illustrates both the strategic placement of fairway bunkering and greenside hazards designed to defend specific pin locations*

reposition the course as a high-end public golf facility.”

Part of Golfplan's remit was to provide thoughts on the strategic value of bunkers, and the opportunity to add new tees to create a variety of hole lengths and expand tee surfaces. Dale prepared a bunker remodelling masterplan and submitted it to Seowon and LPGA for review.

“The existing bunkers had gone beyond their life cycle, the subsurface drainage failures, bunker sand line neglect, and damaged bunker faces from 10 years' worth of foot traffic had taken a severe toll on their

condition,” says Dale. “Most fairway bunkers were located short of landing zones to minimise challenging play. Many were positioned well beyond the longest driver landing zone as directional bunkers and as ornamental features with no strategic value. And greenside bunkers were bookends framing the putting surfaces rather than guarding competitive hole locations.”

With Dale's plan approved in March 2023, construction began in April and was completed in early June. Eighty-six new bunkers provide the Hills with a dramatic transformation in terms of

aesthetics and strategy. On the par-five sixth, for example, a new ‘deception’ bunker short of the green delivers both indecision and options. In the process of rebuilding bunkers, Dale was able to reduce the overall square footage of sand by 20 per cent.

Six mini-backhoe teams and nearly 100 labourers worked on three holes at a time, all the way to final shaping, which was directed by a Golfplan shaper and the firm's regional director.

“The course immediately has better visuals,” says Dale. “It is more three dimensional, strategic, memorable and fun!” **GCA**

## HOLING OUT



Images: SkyRidge Park City

## Nine from three

Jon Garner's design for a new golf facility in Utah can be played in two ways.

**T**he trend for convertible designs is showing no sign of slowing. But not all dual-purpose courses start out that way.

Near Park City, Utah, construction is under way on a short course at the new SkyRidge Mountain Community. Architect Jon Garner began by designing the course to comprise a par three, four and five, so that golfers could experience full-sized holes in a small footprint. But as the design progressed, he realised that with a few modifications the course could serve another purpose.

By identifying locations within the plot for six more greens and some additional teeing areas, his three-hole

par-12 course could be converted to a nine-hole par-three layout.

"One of the design goals was to create a fun experience for the beginner golfers where they can enjoy playing in this beautiful mountain setting that includes views of Deer Valley Resort and the new Mayflower Resort," says Garner. "It is easy to make difficult courses, but it is more challenging to design a course that is playable for all levels of golfers; particularly in mountain terrain.

"This design allows golfers to play different courses within the course boundary, without impacting the spectacular views from either layout. The golf experience is fully maximised in every way possible."

Ted Simons of Synergy Group Consulting provided the developers with advice on the project. "One of the founders of SkyRidge Park City had long envisioned developing short courses at the base of ski resorts as an alternative to traditional eighteen holes, while providing an additional amenity and revenue driver during the off season," he says.

A practice range will also be built. "It will feature a below-grade covered range tee-line, complete with 15 heated hitting bays and Toptracer technology, a 200-foot-long artificial tee-line on top of the range cover, and a 200-foot-long natural grass tee-line below," says Simons. **GCA**

IRRIGATION HAS  
ALWAYS BEEN IN  
YOUR HANDS.  
NOW IT LITERALLY IS.

CIRRUSPRO™



See how you can **Be Fluid** with  
the only mobile-first irrigation  
system on the market.

Follow the journey at:  
@carnoustie.rainbird

**RAIN**  **BIRD**®

# TURN OLD IRRIGATION INTO TORO INNOVATION.



Toro's Lynx® LAC turns legacy decoder systems into something brilliant, new and totally sustainable. Whatever your existing technology, timescales and budgets, Lynx LAC empowers you to realise your vision for better golf.



Join the conversation  
 @ToroGolf

Discover more at: [www.toro.com](http://www.toro.com)