

# GOLF COURSE ARCHITECTURE

*The global journal of  
golf design and development*

ISSUE **74** OCTOBER 2023





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WELCOME



ADAM LAWRENCE

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## The end of a legend

**T**he closure of the Arnold Palmer Design Company marks the end of an era in golf course architecture.

Founded in 1972, APDC, along with Nicklaus Design, essentially created the concept of the marquee professional golfer signature design. It was a model that worked very well for many years. Many thousands of people bought a membership or a house at an Arnold Palmer club; the association with the King, for decades the most popular golfer in the world, convinced them that they were getting something desirable.

By the time Arnold died in 2016, the golf design market had changed. Overbuilding in the years around the millennium, followed by the crash of 2007-08, essentially put paid to large scale development of new golf courses. When building started to come back, it was of a very different type, centred around a small number of projects, most of which aimed to build something truly special. Whatever you thought of Palmer courses, it's unarguable that such a model was not what made the company great.

Since Arnold's death, architects Brandon Johnson and Thad Layton, both very talented designers and fine men, have kept the name alive, and done some excellent work in doing so. But it has always seemed a strange situation. Golf design, probably because it is such a small business, has always been a personalised affair. Clients expect to see the person whose name is above the door, perhaps not every visit, but certainly at critical times during the project. The post-Arnold version of APDC was an attempt to create something new, more akin to traditional professional services businesses. If you hire KPMG to audit your company, you don't expect Klynveld, Peat, Marwick or Goerdeler to show up with a calculator; if you choose Foster + Partners to build you a new tower block, nobody expects to see an 88-year-old Lord Norman appear with surveying equipment to view the site. But golf design is different.

Now, Thad and Brandon will, presumably, go on to run more traditional design businesses. We at GCA wish them well, trust they will succeed, and look forward to reporting on their work.

*Adam*



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Darryl Bartlett from NMP with the Metairie Country Club team



NMP was honored to receive the 2023 Golf Inc. Best Global Private Club Renovation of the Year award for Metairie Country Club, New Orleans by Mr. Brian Silva. (Pictured, Hole #13 Knoll)



Hole #15 Punchbowl



Hole #8 Double Plateau and Principal's Nose



Hole #3 Biarritz

**Other notable projects from 2022-2023:**

The Waldorf Astoria Golf Club, Orlando FL – Mr. Rees Jones. 18-hole bunker and greens restoration.

The Country Club, Cleveland, OH – Mr. Gil Hanse. 18-hole bunker and greens restoration.

Quail Ridge, Boynton Beach, FL – Mr. Jason Straka and Mr. Dana Fry. 18-hole full remodel.

Lexington Country Club, Lexington, KY – Mr. Kevin Hargrave. 18-hole bunker and greens restoration.

The Links at Audubon, Memphis, TN – Mr. Bill Bergin. 27-hole full redesign and irrigation.

Springdale Golf Club, Princeton University, NJ – Mr. Ian Andrew. 18-hole bunkers remodel.

The Four Seasons Golf Club, Orlando, FL. Bunker improvements.

Charles River Golf Club, Newton, MA – Mr. Eric Iverson. Renaissance Golf. 18-hole bunker and green improvements.

The Country Club, Brookline, MA – Kelly Ami Drainage. Greens and fairway drainage improvements.

Metacomet Golf Club, East Providence, RI – Mr. Robert McNeil. 9-hole full remodel and irrigation.

Mendham Golf & Tennis Club, Mendham, NJ – Mr. Robert McNeil. Bunker remodel.

The Monster Golf Club, Lake Kiamesha, NY – Mr. Rees Jones. 18-hole full remodel and irrigation.

Lookout Mountain Club, Lookout Mountain, GA – Mr. Tyler Rae. Full 18-hole remodel.

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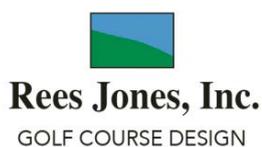
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*Cover photograph by: Momentum Golf Photography*



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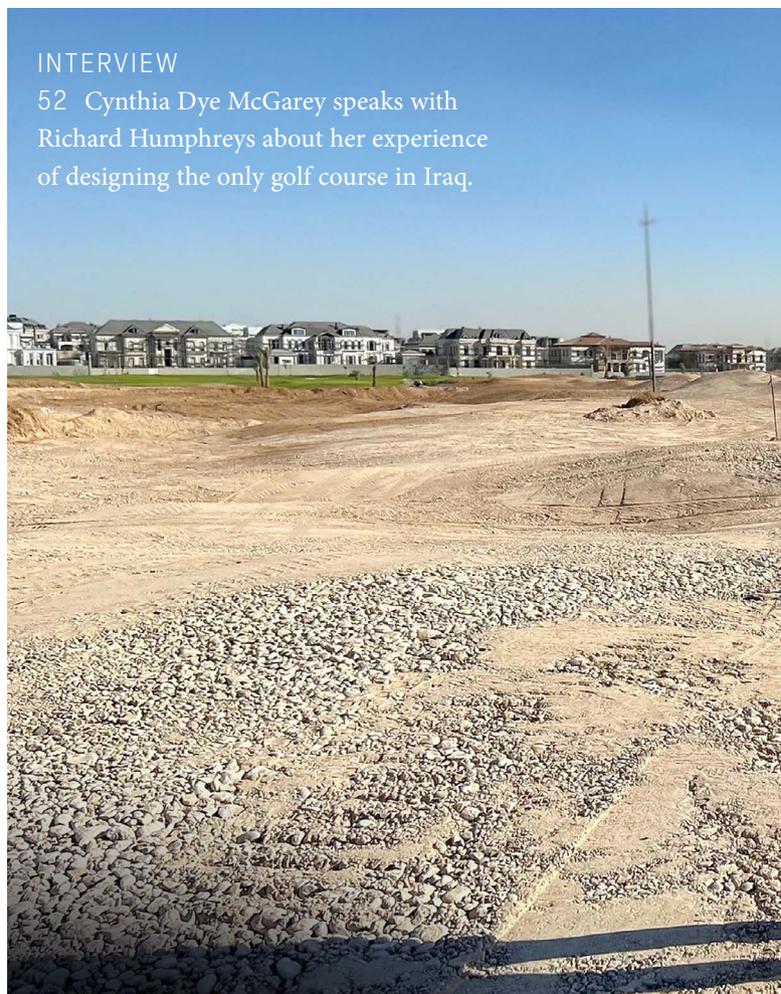
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# TEE BOX



## OCM completes redesign of Course Three at Medinah

Architects have overseen a significant rerouting, restored a Golden Age bunker style and brought the ground game to the fore at the Presidents Cup 2026 venue.



*Significant changes have been made to Medinah's closing holes, which play alongside and over Lake Kadajah*

**O**CM Golf's redesign work on **Course Three at Medinah Country Club, near Chicago, is complete and the new layout is now growing in ahead of a planned reopening in 2024.**

"The project is best described as part restoration, renovation and redesign, with the major routing changes occurring in the last six holes," said Mike Cocking of OCM Golf.

Referencing old aerial imagery, hand drawn plans and photos from the 1920s, the design team had a clear picture of how the course has evolved over the past century. "Early aerials showed a very interesting bunker style, somewhat reminiscent of other Golden Age courses," said Cocking. "They were rugged, natural looking hazards with fairly irregular shapes. There were also some great ground shots of holes three and four, which showed a very dramatic bunker arrangement – something we have looked to restore.

"Then there were several holes where we've retained the basic structure, and the changes are mainly to the green and bunker style. Holes like the old seventh [which will become the tenth], eighth [eleventh] and twelfth are good examples."

The most significant of OCM's changes have been to the closing six holes. Rerouting now sees a new thirteenth hole that plays alongside Lake Kadajah, a shortened fourteenth, removing the old fifteenth, converting the old par-three seventeenth into a short, Cape-style par-four sixteenth, a new par-three seventeenth that plays back across the lake on the diagonal, and the

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TEE BOX



Photo: Mike Cocking

*At holes five, six and seven (pictured), OCM has reintroduced a boundary fence, making out of bounds a strategic hazard*

eighteenth that plays up the original corridor alongside the first hole.

“There were a number of reasons behind the development of this concept, including the similarities between the second, thirteenth and seventeenth,” said Cocking. “There was also the lack of a truly great short par four; Lake Kadajah being repeatedly used across the line of play when golf’s most exciting water hazards are positioned diagonally; the potential to make a more dramatic finish; and most importantly, our aim to improve the architecture and variety of shots.”

The course closed in October 2022 for tree removal and the demolition of old paths and irrigation. Construction began in April 2023 and by mid-October all shaping and grassing has been completed.

One aspect of the project has been to reduce the elevation of some elements of the course. “The most

recent version of the course had many tees, greens and bunkers elevated well above the natural ground,” said Cocking. “It created a somewhat artificial appearance, and, in some areas, the natural character of the land had been lost.

**“These changes make for a much more natural looking course with a scale that’s more in keeping with the broad and expansive nature of the site”**

“Course Three sits over some wonderfully undulating ground, and we felt it didn’t need this additional height to add drama, so one of the first things we’ve done on each hole is to remove the features and return the land to how it once looked.

“Some bunkers – especially on the fairways – had been placed on flat ground which wasn’t necessarily suited to building great looking hazards.

It seemed like these sites had been chosen because of the distance they measured from the tee rather than how the land moved. And to be visible, they had been built well up and out of the ground. In contrast, our bunkers have been built where they best suit

the land – into natural rises – to create more visual interest. This also results in bunkers scattered at a range of distances to ensure a wide range of golfers will have to deal with a bunker at some point in their round.”

The number of bunkers has been increased from around 70 to 100. They are generally placed close to the line of play, and at the greens the bunkers are much tighter to the putting surface.



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Water, which previously wasn't much of a threat for better players, is now more in play. And at holes five, six and seven, OCM has reintroduced a boundary fence, making out of bounds a strategic hazard.

At holes six, seven and eight (the original sixth, tenth and eleventh), OCM has returned the character of the land. "There are still some bunkers, but this part of the course was originally an oak savannah and so we've established some broad sections of fescue rough to reintroduce that feel," said Cocking. "We hope these changes make for a much more natural looking course with a scale that's more in keeping with the broad and expansive nature of the site."

OCM has also emphasised angles and contour. "Every hole is wider," said Cocking. "If fairways are 25 yards wide the game just descends into a test of execution. But when the fairways are 40, 50 or even 60 yards wide, and you have a green where one side is heavily defended, you can create angles to both reward and penalise depending on which side of the fairway you play to. We like to place a hazard somewhere near the ideal position to play into the green to help create some thought-provoking decisions back on the tee."

"There are some holes where contour short of the green, or a putting surface that tilts away from the fairway, really encourages golfers to use the contour to feed the ball towards the pin. So there has been a lot of work in the approaches to try and make sure they play firm for most of the year."

Course Three will host the Presidents Cup in 2026. **GCA**

## Three from Three

*Mike Cocking picks out some of his highlights of the redesign*

**Hole 6:** One of the more controversial changes has been the incorporation of a split rail fence along the fifth, sixth and seventh. The boundary used to play a more integral role in the design, but urban growth converted the dirt road and farmland into housing and a three-lane motorway. We were keen on bringing that concept back into play while providing much needed separation from the original boundary fence and busy road.

The club were lucky to have a lot of room to the right of each of these holes... so much so we were able to shift the line of play by 30 or 40 yards. There is now a huge reward for playing close to the fence. However, we've also given a lot of space to play away on each fairway but obviously the approach becomes a lot harder.

**Hole 8:** The eighth (the old eleventh) had a dogleg with tall trees on the inside corner – making the hole difficult for the average golfer, but long hitters like Rory McIlroy could launch drives over the trees and have a lob wedge to the green.

We have removed 15 to 20 trees on the corner and replaced them with a string of bunkers and fescue rough to create a diagonal line of hazards.

There's a small, narrow green with a right-to-left tilt and more bunkers guarding the right and rear, so there is a huge advantage in keeping close to the bunkers on the corner. There is lots of space to the right but for every yard to the right, the pitch into the green becomes more difficult.



**Hole 16 (pictured):** When we looked across the lake at the old seventeenth our eyes would turn to what appeared like a wonderful short par four near the then fourteenth tee. It looked like a great Cape hole, but we weren't sure it could ever be played. But with our rerouting, we have managed it!

Multiple tees help to vary the line and length of the carry, and the views from the elevated back tee will be dramatic. However, arguably the more interesting shot is from the forward sets of tees where golfers may be tempted to go for the green.



## Portmarnock hotel course redesigned by Jeff Lynch

**Portmarnock Resort near Dublin, Ireland, has reopened its course, redesigned by Jeff Lynch and rebranded it to Jameson Golf Links.**

Located on the former estate of the Jameson family, Ireland's famous distillers, the original course was built in the 1990s by architect Stan Eby of European Golf Design with Bernhard Langer as the signature name.

The hotel and golf course were acquired by the Canadian Gagliardi family in 2019, and Lynch was appointed for the redesign shortly after.

Several of the course's holes, mostly those located in the dunes close to the Irish Sea, have been rerouted. The dog-leg eighth has been transformed into a straighter par four, with a new fairway, green complex and grass

pathways. A new par-three ninth set in the high dunes close to the water is a highlight of the course, while the now par-five twelfth hole has a highly elevated 'volcano' green offering stunning sea views.

An irrigation lake has greatly increased the course's water collection capabilities.

Perhaps the most dramatic change is still in progress. Lynch has built a



Photo: Larry Lambrecht

## Shell Bay opens in south Florida

**The Shell Bay Club in Hallandale Beach, Florida, has opened its new 18-hole layout by Greg Norman Golf Course Design (GNGCD).**

The project has been led by real estate development firms Witkoff Group and PPG Development, with GNGCD conducting a comprehensive overhaul of the former Diplomat Golf & Tennis Club.

Work began in November 2018 and was completed earlier this year with GNGCD creating a 7,254-yard golf course as well as a nine-hole par-three layout and a 12-acre practice facility. The 18-hole course is located between

the Atlantic Ocean and Intracoastal Waterway, with golfers presented with a variety of risk-reward shots with water challenges in play from the back tees.

“Completely isolated from its surroundings, the walkable layout will capture the true essence of the game with immaculately conditioned fairways, sweeping sandbelt-style bunkers and contoured greens that test every club in your bag,” said Norman.

The par-three layout includes various template green designs, including versions of Punchbowl, Redan and a Double Plateau.

## Els Club in Malaysia completes turf project

The Els Club Desaru Coast in Malaysia has completed regrassing work on greens and fairways at its Valley course, one of two at the resort.

“Having recently visited The Els Club Desaru Coast, and witnessed first-hand the improvements to the Valley course, it is no surprise that the layout is held in such high esteem in Malaysia, but also across Asia and beyond,” said DJ Flanders, executive vice president at the club operator Troon International. “The course will continue to flourish on the back of these improvements.”

new green for the seventeenth hole, in dramatic, previously unused land beyond the existing green, so the hole can be changed from a difficult par three to a short par four. This is expected early in 2024.

*A full On Site report about Jameson Golf Links will feature in the January 2024 issue of Golf Course Architecture.*



Photo: Troon International

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# Brandon Johnson remodels Omni Barton Creek



Photo: Brandon Johnson

**Brandon Johnson of Arnold Palmer Design Company is leading a renovation at Omni Barton Creek Country Club at Lakeside in Texas.**

Work includes restoring the original shapes and sizes of greens, realigning edges and expanding them in selected places to recapture significant square footage that had previously been lost. “We are reintroducing lost pin locations and establishing new ones, which improves shot set-up options,” said Johnson.

The architect is also addressing issues with thatch, organic build-up, and poor surface drainage on greens,

while also recontouring the surrounds and approaches to introduce strategic playing opportunities and increase recovery options.

Bunkers will also be realigned, repositioned and recontoured to give them a “much stronger visual and strategic presence”. In several areas, removing and/or reducing the bunkers will open up new sightlines and increase playability.

Tees will be realigned, reshaped and laser levelled, while new forward tees will be added. Select trees will also be trimmed or removed to alleviate shade issues and open up angles of play.

## GOOD READ

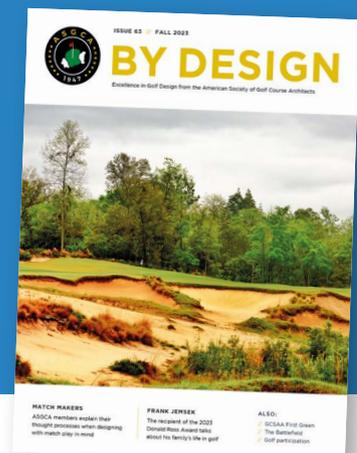
“The hole needs to taunt the player into offense or defence”

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 – Gil Hanse, Andy Staples and Tom Marzolf share their thought processes for designing for match play.

“When it’s match play, the hole needs to taunt the player into offense or defence, depending on how the match stands,” says Marzolf, of Fazio Golf Design, who helped to redesign Adare Manor in Ireland ahead of it hosting the 2027 Ryder Cup.

The Fall issue of *By Design* also includes an interview with Frank Jemsek, a profile of The Battlefield course at Shangri-La Resort in Oklahoma, and insight into the GCSAA First Green program.

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





*Work on the fourteenth and fifteenth at Royal Birkdale is already under way*

## Royal Birkdale begins course changes ahead of 2026 Open

**Ten-time Open Championship venue Royal Birkdale in Southport, England, has started work on a series of course changes by golf course architect Tom Mackenzie of Mackenzie & Ebert.**

Among the changes will be the introduction of a new par-three hole, on land between the current fifteenth green and sixteenth tee, which will play as the new fifteenth. According to the club, the design will add

variation to its set of par threes, and will play towards the clubhouse.

The existing par-five fifteenth is being redesigned and will become the new fourteenth, with the existing fourteenth green being converted into a short-game area; the tees will be used for a nineteenth hole.

Another hole to be redesigned is the par-four fifth, with the aim of bringing the hazard on the right more into play with the addition of

significant fairway bunkering. The seventh will also become a short par three with an elevated green.

Renovations to bunkers, tees and pathways are also part of the project.

GolfLink Evolve began construction in early October, with the first phase expected to be complete in spring 2024. The next will begin in autumn 2024 and conclude in spring 2025, with all work set to be finished in time for the club to host the Open in 2026.



Photo: Laurence Lambrecht

## Tyler Rae nine-holer opens at Spy Ring

**Heritage Spy Ring Golf Club on Long Island, New York, has conducted a grand opening for its new nine-hole course designed by Tyler Rae.**

The site was previously home to the 18-hole Heatherwood Golf Club, which closed in early 2020. Rae's new par-36 layout can be played from 2,323 to 3,105 yards and has holes ranging from 97 to 520 yards.

Eight greens are open at the front, allowing for approach shots to run

onto the putting surfaces. "The greens are mainly perched up and their vast sizes and flowing contours should provide a thoughtful test for each golfer," said Rae. "There likely won't be a straight putt on the golf course but they won't feel contrived or forced.

"All bunkers were shaped and built into landforms as if to feel like they were always meant to be there. The wandering sand lines and natural feel to them derives from some of the heavy land movement."

## Ben Davey to begin Yowani redesign in November

Ben Davey, director of Contour Golf Design Group, will lead a redesign of the course at Yowani Country Club in Canberra, Australia, beginning in November.

The work is possible following the sale of eight hectares of the club's land, which has now been rezoned for an apartment development.

A requirement for Davey's redesign has been to have both nines return to a new clubhouse, which meant a reconfiguration of several holes was needed.

All greens and tees will be rebuilt, with putting surfaces expanded to provide more interest and pin positions. "The greens have been designed to have tilts and broad falloffs on their sides, with spacious short grass surrounds often flowing seamlessly through



Photo: Contour Golf Design Group

to the following tees," said Davey. "I want lots of variety, lots of movement but not wild contouring. I also want to introduce a few quirky features that the members may not have seen before."

*Read more about the changes at the Yowani project on the GCA website.*

## THE BIG PICTURE

**The par-three second green on the new North course at Te Arai Links in New Zealand, designed by Tom Doak and photographed by Ricky Robinson, looks out to the wildlife refuge of the Hen and Chicken Islands.**

The green has wide and undulating surrounds, flanked by sandy waste areas with native grasses. “We planted over 100,000 native plants consisting of 10 species that thrive in this area,” said Nick O’Brien, who is a superintendent at Te Arai Links alongside Brian Palmer. “Once they mature, the vegetation will blend with the New Zealand coastal palette.”

The hole can be played from 164 to 242 yards and is protected by a large mound in the line of play, with several other ripples of contour to contend with if the green is missed left.

Beyond the green is the teeing area of the par-four third, where players turn back inland having played two holes towards the ocean.

The new layout is now open, and joins the Coore & Crenshaw South course, which opened in 2022. Both can now be booked for public play.







## Davis restores Dye style at Gasprilla

Florida's Gasparilla Golf Club has opened its renovated 18-hole course, just over a year since it was decimated by Hurricane Ian.

Originally designed by Pete Dye, the course was scheduled to be rebuilt in 2024 but the project was brought

forward after the hurricane damaged trees, greens and the irrigation system.

Tripp Davis has spearheaded work, which involved installing new irrigation and drainage, as well as turning over the organic build-up under fairways and rough to enhance surface drainage.

Other tasks included shifting some tees, bunkers and fairways lines, and relocating greens.

"We had the opportunity to modernise how the course plays," said Davis. "We enhanced enjoyment for the average to higher-handicap player by taking

## Benkusky becomes new ASGCA president

**Mike Benkusky has become the 79th president of the American Society of Golf Course Architects, at the Society's annual meeting in Milwaukee, Wisconsin.**

The Illinois-based architect succeeds Brit Stenson in the role. Benkusky has over thirty years' experience in golf design, initially for Lohmann Golf Designs and since 2005 with his own firm. He works primarily in the Midwest, with projects in his home state of Iowa, as well as Indiana, Illinois, Kansas, Michigan and Wisconsin.

"We have seen a resurgence in golf and our members are busier than ever with all types of projects," said Benkusky.

"After a slowdown in design, many of our members downsized to one-man shops. Now some of them have started to team up, which allows them to complete more work, share their talents and meet their client's timeframe."

The meeting also saw Frank Jemsek honoured as the 2023 ASGCA Donald Ross Award recipient, following a long career operating the Cog Hill, Pine Meadow and St. Andrews clubs in Illinois, and Summer Grove in Georgia.

In accepting the award, Jemsek spoke of his work on initiatives to introduce new players to the game.

Education sessions covered a range of topics, including pace of play, strategy, putting courses, fast and firm conditions and native grasses. ASGCA director of outreach Jeff Brauer spoke about the Chicago School of golf course architecture, Garrett Gill provided a retrospective on his father David Gill's life and career as a golf course architect, and golf historian Dan Moore provided insight into the work of William Langford and Theodore Moreau.



Photo: ASGCA



Photo: Tripp Davis

some of the trouble out of their way, while also making the course more strategically interesting for better players by adding sharper angles and more distance control challenges.”

Davis restored Dye-style features, including the depth, shape and sizes

of bunkers. “While we made changes to every hole, it was always with an eye to what Pete’s design intent was originally, both stylistically and strategically,” said Davis. “We wanted our work to be a tribute to his style and substance.”

### GOPHER WATCH



Royal Portrush in Northern Ireland is widely seen as the greatest work of Harry Colt. The epic par-three sixteenth/fourteenth (the traditional routing has changed since the course was altered to bring the Open Championship back to Portrush) has a deep ravine to the right that so scared the great South African Bobby Locke that he deliberately missed the green to the left every day of the 1951 Open. The depression he played for has been known as Bobby Locke’s Hollow ever since.

Mark Mennell, head greenkeeper at Fulford Golf Club, spotted where Sandy was visiting, and was the first entry out of the hat. Mark, your prized GCA shirt is on the way.

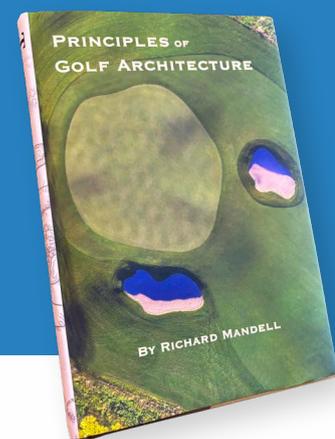
Sandy has journeyed to a course that is short by modern standards, but it still very highly regarded. It was designed in the mid 1920s by one of golf architecture’s big names. Know where Sandy is and fancy a shirt? Answers to [gopher@golfcoursearchitecture.net](mailto:gopher@golfcoursearchitecture.net).

### GOOD READ

## Principles of Golf Architecture

Golf course architect Richard Mandell’s fourth book, published last year, sets out the design process in terms of principles, as referenced in the title, and also elements – the ‘building blocks’ used by designers to create a composition. His first eight chapters are devoted to the latter – line, space, shape, form, texture, colour, scale and nature – exploring their meaning, often with reference to art and architecture, then providing examples of their application in golf design. He then devotes a chapter to each of 27 principles. “The fact there are no hard rules – only principles – is what separates the design philosophy of one person from that of another,” he says. Some of Mandell’s principles, such as variety, visibility and playability, might come as no surprise to the reader. Others are less obvious. Chapters on intention, definition and connection, for example, are thought provoking and might find you looking at golf holes with a new perspective. At 278 pages and illustrated throughout, *Principles of Golf Architecture* has a depth that will see you returning to the bookshelf for more.

\$35 plus shipping  
[www.golf-architecture.com](http://www.golf-architecture.com)





## Shaping to start at Cabot Pacific in 2024

**Whitman, Axland & Cutten (WAC Golf) is preparing to begin shaping for the 18-hole Cabot Pacific course at the Revelstoke Mountain Resort in British Columbia, Canada.**

Site works are under way for the course, which will sit at the base of Mount MacKenzie. It has

been designed by WAC Golf's Rod Whitman, who was selected as the architect following his work at Cabot Links in Cape Breton. The project is being managed by WAC Golf design associates Dan Philcox and John Cavanagh, with support from course superintendent Bradley Allen.

"This site has constant contour, but isn't too severe," said Keith Cutten. "Most of the property is gently rolling, with some big washes coming off the hillside. Very little will have to be manufactured, and I don't see us using a lot of dynamite, if any at all – there are rock outcroppings, but nothing that impedes golf."



Image: Harris Kalinka

## Drew Rogers focuses on width and bolder features at Pine Lake

**Pine Lake Country Club in Michigan, Detroit, is set to reopen for play in 2024 following a renovation by JDR Golf Design.**

Formerly known as the Automobile Club of Detroit, the original nine was laid out in 1916 by Willie Park Jr before nine more holes were added in 1921. Since then, the course has been worked on by Robert von Hagge, Jerry and Bruce Matthews, and Craig Schreiner.

Drew Rogers, who was hired in 2014 to develop a renovation plan, has aimed to create an “old meets new” course with “subtle hints of Willie Park Jr sprinkled into a very classic architectural presentation”. This has involved building new greens, bunkers and tees, as well as work relating to fairway turf, paths, irrigation and drainage.

“The site is not blessed with interesting topography, so we had to rely more on maximising space and width and build bolder features to

emphasise traditional, risk/reward playing angles,” said Rogers. “All of this is more in keeping with what might have been envisioned when the course was originally produced.”

Work is being directed by the club’s superintendent Terry Poley, who is collaborating with LaBar Golf Renovations, Thielen Irrigation, and consultants Michael Kuhn of MKA Irrigation and Dr John Rogers, professor of turfgrass management in the department of plant, soil and microbial sciences at Michigan State University.

“When we’re done, the course will offer a pure and enhanced golf experience,” said Rogers. “It will look and feel as though it has been there for 100 years. Members will not only be greeted with a new ‘old course’, but also with enhanced shot values and playing options that were missing previously. It should be a really enjoyable round.”

Recent renderings show greens surrounded by woodland and large rock outcroppings as well as long sightlines towards Mount Revelstoke National Park and across the Columbia River.

Cabot is planning to open the course for preview play in 2025.



Photo: JDR Golf Design



Q&A  
with Aleem Hussain

## “These courses will allow the average person easy access to the sport”

A new golf course has opened in Guyana, to become a template for nine more.

**Aleem Hussain, the only Guyanese-born golf course designer and president of the Guyana Golf Association, is on a mission to develop the sport in the South American country.**

He has completed the first of ten planned low-maintenance starter courses. Westside Golf Course is in Vreed-en-Hoop, a village on the mouth

of the Demerara River, on the opposite bank to the capital, Georgetown.

### **What was the vision behind Westside Golf Course?**

The idea was to have a starter course that would introduce new players and kids to the game yet be challenging enough for an experienced player. It would be low maintenance, situated

near highly populated areas and be a public facility with a low cost.

Traditionally, the cost and availability of land situated close to populated areas is prohibitive and as such, membership and green fees are extremely high. The second aspect of traditional courses is that their sheer size makes it difficult and costly to light the entire facility and host night play, which would allow more



Photo: Al Wilson

*Westside Golf Course in Guyana is low maintenance and aimed at beginner players*



rounds and generate more revenue. And, with the new generation having shorter attention spans, a traditional three- to five-hour round was proving to be a stumbling block to attracting new players and kids.

I examined cricket, football, basketball, etc, and found that the average game takes between two to three hours, and all are played on a regulation pitch/ court. I determined that to grow golf, I would have to ensure that I could match those metrics and thus Westside Golf Course was born. The course is the first of a series of 10 I plan to build and all will provide players all over the country the opportunity to play under the same conditions and avoid long travel.

#### **How did you develop the layout for Westside Golf Course?**

The course has three fairways, six tees, five greens – one juts out into a lake as a semi-island green – and holes (ranging

from 70 to 450 yards) that can be played as a par three, four or five depending on which tee is being used. The added difficulty is the positioning of the sand traps that takes the ocean breeze into consideration. The course is like a links and while short in length, the greens, wind and water make it quite challenging for every level of player.

The footprint is large enough for the course to be used as both recreational and teaching golf but small enough to be lighted for night play and easy to maintain, reducing cost while extending hours of use.

#### **How will your courses impact golf participation in Guyana?**

These courses will allow the average person easy access to the sport at a minimal cost, and provide schoolchildren with a location to learn and practice. With Guyana being a cricketer's paradise, the crossover

between the two sports will allow golf to grow rapidly.

Just like cricket went through a makeover from five-day test matches to T20, it is my goal to bring a similar format to golf. Imagine golf being played in less than 90 minutes – just like all other major sports. These standardised courses that I'm building will allow for matches to be played all over the country simultaneously!

#### **What is next?**

Under the NexGen Golf Academy, I have partnered with the Ministry of Education to introduce the sport to more than 8,000 children around the country as a part of their PE timetable. With land already identified in various areas for more courses, new players will have easy, low-cost access to the sport. This model can lead to an exciting golf feeder programme and bring in an influx of new golfers.

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## ACTIVE PROJECTS



Dhoho Golf Club  
Kediri, Indonesia



Undisclosed Island Project



Stone Highland  
Bac Giang, Vietnam



## Hudson National on track for spring 2024 reopening

**Tom Fazio, project lead Tom Marzolf, Rick Phelps and Jeff Lawrence are nearing completion of a Fazio Design renovation at Hudson National Golf Club in Croton-on-Hudson, New York.**

Every green has been rebuilt by contractor LaBar Golf Renovations and regrassed with 007XL bentgrass. Some greens have been relocated, while others were redesigned to have more contour to match the rest. A few putting surfaces have also been reshaped or expanded to create new pin positions.

Bunkers have been rebuilt on holes three, six, seven, nine, twelve, fourteen and eighteen, and fitted with liner from Bunker Solution. Many fairway bunkers have been relocated further from the tee due to advancements in

club and ball technology, and some extended into areas of play to pinch the landing areas for longer hitters.

“Bunkers are strategically located to direct the lines of play,” said Marzolf. “The course will see a combination of styles across bunkers. For example, the addition of low mow bent-edge bunkers will be memorable and dramatic. The edges of many bunkers will be made up from seed-head, brown and fine fescue.”

Morris Johnson of Bunker Solution said: “The members will experience greatly improved bunker playability, from the reduction of golf ball plugging potential to consistent moisture content of the bunker sand. With the ability to hit golf balls right off the Bunker Solution liner, players

at Hudson National will never hit anything other than sand.

“The feature that superintendents like the most, is how incredibly well the Bunker Solution liner holds sand in place on the bunker faces. This equates to huge labour savings, as the sand repositioning time after a rain event is dramatically reduced.”

All fairways have been re-seeded with bentgrass, and rough will feature a new variety of fescue bluegrass.

“The members are going to love the golf course additions,” said Theron Harvey, director of club operations at Hudson National. “We’ll be able to provide them with slightly more contour on the greens, more hole locations, interesting bunkering and the best turf conditions.”

COURSE BLUEPRINT

# Cabot Highlands

**Cabot Highlands in Inverness, Scotland, is expected to open for preview play in 2024.**

Development group Cabot unveiled the routing plan earlier this year, with the Tom Doak course designed around the 400-year-old castle that is located on the Castle Stuart property.

“For nearly three decades I have worked with Tom,” said Don Placek, lead associate for Doak’s Renaissance Golf Design, and the graphic artist responsible for the Cabot Highlands’ routing map. “From the beginning he aimed to build interesting, compelling and varied golf holes using whatever the site inherently offered. But perhaps one of the loveliest residuals, throughout his resume, is a conscious effort to present the golf as simply ‘discovered’, rather than constructed. He would tie in even the softest new contours with their naturally existing counterparts... appearing as if they had always been there.”

Placek’s responsibilities include drawing plans for Renaissance’s new designs and keeping track of Doak and his associates: Eric Iverson, Brian Slawnik, Brian Schneider and Angela Moser.

“Area historical records are often the best way to engage graphic styles demonstrating course features and contours finding their way into compelling fairways and greens,” said Placek. “Clever fonts often emerge from studying the oldest drawings

geographically associated with a new project. Old documents and historic records frequently disclose ideas and ways to help convey and present the third dimension in a two-dimensional format.

“Over the years I’ve considered the methods and media that course cartographers in the early 1900s used to display hand-drawn concepts. An aged parchment or sepia-based paper for example, or what several years ago became a personal favourite, cyanotype. A blueprint method first introduced by Sir John Herschel in the early 1840s, cyanotype was the precursor to Leonardo da Vinci’s Camera Obscura, circa 1502.”

Of the Cabot Highlands routing map, Joe McDonnell, a golf artist and now head of imagery at Clayton, DeVries & Pont, said: “It’s just like a treasure map, your eye travels around the entire thing looking for the ‘X’ that marks the spot, but the real treasure is the plan itself.”

Placek adds: “Consciously keeping that sense of finding something hidden or even lost for a good while, much the way a century-old golf course might also look and feel, is certainly the goal. Hopefully people enjoy ‘finding’ the old farm bothy, a permanently moored fishing

*The first and eighteenth holes share a fairway, while the second and seventeenth share an expansive bunker complex*



trawler, St Columba’s Old Petty Church and especially – standing sentry over the site since 1625 – Castle Stuart, in this plan... as much as the pathway of the new Cabot Highlands golf holes!”

The second shot on the par-five eighth will require careful navigation around several bunkers



Image: Renaissance Golf Design

The par-five fifteenth runs alongside Moray Firth's tidal estuary

Green to tee connections will be a feature at Cabot Highlands

Shared fairways can be found throughout the round



*The new eleventh, twelfth (foreground) and thirteenth at Ingestre Park*

## New holes open at remodelled Ingestre

**Ingestre Park Golf Club in Staffordshire, England, has reopened 11 new holes following a remodelling by International Design Group, with the remainder opening by May 2024.**

The work was completed following plans to route the UK's new HS2 high-speed railway line through Ingestre's golf course. The club lost 12 holes and needed to reconfigure others due to safety considerations and HS2 landscape mitigation requirements.

Contractor MJ Abbott began course construction on 12 new holes and the renovation of the remainder of the layout in 2021.

"We took the opportunity to level up the playing experience by introducing

more playing strategy into the game," said Jon Hunt, golf architect at International Design Group. "We now have sharper doglegs, approach bunkers and new ditches."

Bunkers are also steeper and deeper as well as having a more "characterful" edge, with greenside bunkers closer to the putting surface.

"The new first is a classic risk and reward hole," said Hunt. "If the player can fly the bunker on the left of the fairway, there's an easy bump and run into the slightly uphill green. However, if their tee shot finds its way to the right of the fairway, the adjacent lake will come into play and a flop into the green is needed."

Another new hole is the ninth, which has a ridge running diagonally across the landing zone. If a player's tee shot reaches the top of the ridge, they will have good visibility of the green, if they are short, they face a more difficult approach. "The ridge runs across the green, linking the two bunker noses, makes long putts difficult, so accuracy into the green is critical to make a birdie," said Hunt.

"The new sixteenth [old eighth] is the only significant drop hole on the course. The new teeing position forces a tighter dogleg. Some long and accurate hitters could reach the green but there's danger all round. It is far better to lay up with a long iron

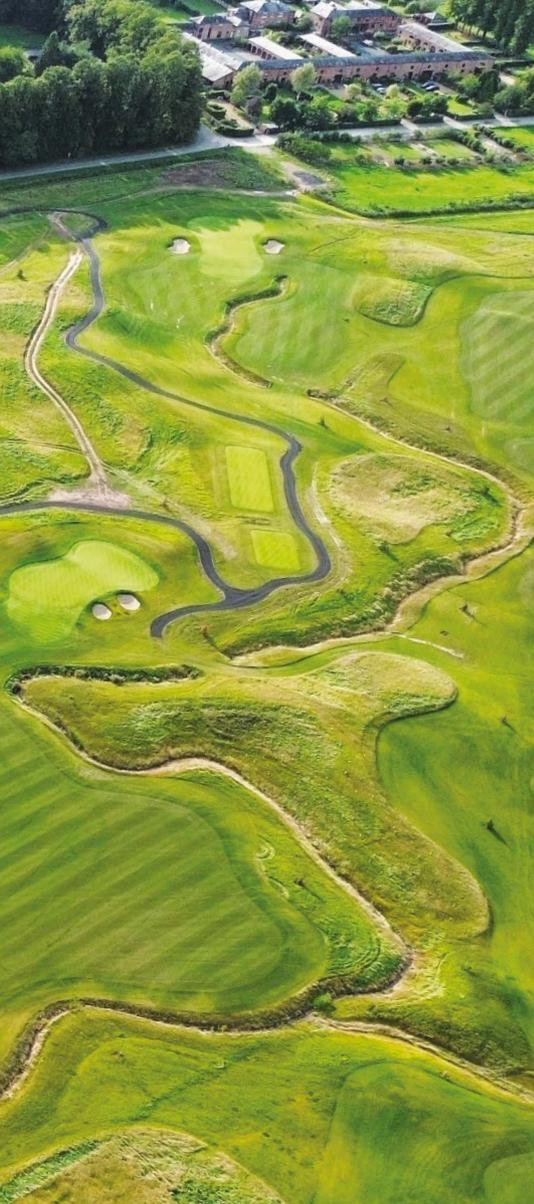


Photo: IDG

## Hunter helps Formby with water savings



Photo: Hunter Industries

or rescue club in front of the tight fairway bunkers for an easy pitch into the green.

“At the first landing area on the new seventeenth [old ninth], the righthand approach bunker appears to block access to the diagonal green. However, once closer, players will see there is plenty of space behind the approach bunker on the right.

“And the new eighteenth has comically been dubbed ‘the world’s first dogleg par three’ with a long iron off the tee needing perfect placement to land on the small, undulating green. Less confident players can lay up on the fairway meandering round the new pond.”

Formby Ladies Golf Club near Liverpool, England, is realising the benefits of its new Hunter irrigation system.

The project to install Hunter GT885 fairway sprinklers and the Pilot CCS central control operating system was completed between January and March 2023. “This was the culmination of a five-year project to future-proof the club’s irrigation infrastructure and water security,” said course manager Rob Sandilands.

The club had undertaken consultations and audits as well as establish an irrigation sub-committee and concluded that it needed to expand its irrigation system to include fairways and walkways.

“We immediately entered a very dry period in spring and early summer once the system had been installed, meaning it was necessary to use it in earnest straight away, which we were able to do and give irrigation coverage to areas that would otherwise have been lost to drought,” said Sandilands. “We can also water in products like wetting agents at times that suit us, rather than being tied to the times when rain was forecast.

“Members and staff have already noticed a significant improvement of the fairways due to the Hunter GT885 rotors consistency and distribution of uniformity, and the fairways will only keep improving as the new system gives us total control of playing surfaces.”



RON FORSE

## Golf as war

Ron Forse explores the crossover, in reality and in language, between golf and warfare.

**A**s a kid growing up in New Jersey I was always fascinated with the quirky, randomly formed dunes down the Shore as well as the more inland pitch-pine-laden landscapes that quickly rise and fall as knob and kettle formations.

Closer to home, I would recruit buddies for war games in a sand pit with gnarly bumps and ridges and even an ancient, depressed roadway, which served as a rampart to hide behind and attack. These landscape features resembled bombed-out battlefields.

As golf caught my imagination, I started to notice that perhaps the most interesting courses are those that share some of the same topographical characteristics that many battlefields tend to have. There is a visceral, as well as historical, connection between golf and the fields of battle.

Indeed, the great Alister MacKenzie famously learned principles of golf architecture – visual, topographical camouflage and earth-shaping techniques – by observing those built by the Boers of South Africa in the Boer War. So, one of the great geniuses of golf design learned his craft substantially on the battlefield.

The nomenclature of golf and military is often common. The Redan hole gets its name because of its resemblance to a V-shaped fortification where the British fought the Russians in the Crimean War. The words ‘bunker’ and ‘trench’ are descriptions of features on both courses and battlefields. The narrow bunkers at the tenth of the Myopia Hunt Club in Massachusetts truly resemble World War One trench works.

There are instances where actual American Civil War ramparts and

earthworks were used as part of a modern course. Golf architecture writer Ron Whitten has pointed out the many examples of these which can be found up and down the East Coast and all the way out to Texas. Before the venerable Newport Country Club (the venue for the 2023 Senior Open Championship) was constructed, its tenth and eleventh holes were tent encampments for Rochambeau’s troops during the American Revolutionary War. Rows of parallel swales and ridges can still be seen in the holes, along with a rampart fortification off to the side.

An interesting aspect of all this is how American golf architecture started out looking more like a civil war battlefield than the strategic, natural courses that came into vogue in the early 1900s. This Victorian era of architecture so often featured flat-top berms, six feet high



*The Redan at North Berwick got its name from a V-shaped fortification encountered in the Crimean War*

stretching 80 yards across an entire fairway. Very militaristic if nothing else.

Battlefields and golf courses both employ vistas, ramparts or ridges, in tactical ways to head off trouble either from an enemy or hazards in the land. Military scouts and golfers alike enjoy a high vantage point.

The stark objective of mastering a Volcano or Mesa par three can be like taking a castle on a hill, with its sense of victory or defeat fronting you. Standing on the tee it is do-or-die. A Little Round Top at Gettysburg, if you will.

An overall similarity between golf and war is, beyond aesthetics and mere topography, the idea of mastering territory. It is a tactical exercise in both that requires analysis of the lay of the land and the way to best get from point A to point B. The principles of war articulated by Napoleon Bonaparte included economy of effort. This involves employing as few moves as possible to arrive at your objective. It is a matter of efficiency and keeping the golf strokes (or 'moves') to a minimum. The game

Capture the Flag bears a striking resemblance to golf, in that the flagstick is your ultimate goal, and putting interesting obstacles in the way creates the essence of the game.

Interestingly, in golf and battle, you're using implements to hurl missiles. It is shooting bullets at a target but, with implements much better suited for warfare than golf! In both golf and war, a plan is made, then after the first shot you need a new plan as you adjust to the changed situation. Make your plans and then make them again.

Golf courses have been used as military bases, sometimes requiring the reconstruction of the course after the war is over. This has happened on both sides of the Atlantic. Warfare has created features on golf courses. On the south coast of England is the Seaford Head club, where the first tee shot must carry two grassed-over bomb craters in the upslope of the fairway. These are the result of German bombers on a mission to drop their payload on London. The captain did not want to fly over the anti-

aircraft artillery and so, thinking they were going to drop their bombs into the English Channel, and with the lack of lighting on the ground, he inadvertently contributed to the craft of golf architecture in the land of the enemy.

Recognising a military-golf crossover seems somewhat inevitable given the importance of the British Empire and the spread of golf. For instance, British (or rather Scottish!) military men started the Royal Calcutta Golf Club in India in the 1820s, remarkably 40 years before there was any course in England.

One of the great things about the resurgence of classic architecture is a renewed emphasis on random, interesting landforms whether naturally occurring, like at Sand Hills, or man-made, such as the mined-out landscape of Streamsong. Great courses focus the eye and make the golfer choose their preferred method of mastering a landscape to meet their objective with efficiency. Not unlike a military field general! **GCA**

*Ron Forse is principal of Forse Golf Design.*



BRANDON JOHNSON

## Is it hard or is it good?

Brandon Johnson highlights the need for interesting and strategic golf course design rather than focusing on making holes extremely difficult or overly long.

**T**he common phrase goes something like this: “Fourteen is our best hole. It’s the hardest on the course and can turn a par into a double bogey quickly”.

Difficulty does not automatically make a hole good, or elevate it to be the best on the course. In my experience, holes anointed as such are often my least favourite on the course.

Often a hole is deemed hard purely by virtue of its length. Most recreational players will struggle to reach the longest in regulation. No strategy required or pivotal decision to be made. The hole humbles the player because it surpasses their ability to reach a lofty distance threshold. With distance demands neutralising the other quivers in their arsenal, the long hole is perceived as a

brute. In reality, it’s a one-trick pony in its scoring resistance tactics, failing to truly test a player’s grit, creativity, decision making or resilience in navigating a cunning strategic test.

The purpose of golf course architecture is not to make playing the game difficult for the sake of it. It is rather to interpret the land cleverly and astutely, sculpting the ground in crafty, fun, beautiful forms that provide a myriad of avenues for players to approach the game. The degree of challenge comes from the balance of an alluring feature or landform and the complexity of the strategic riddle being presented around that feature.

The intent is not to punish the golfer into submission nor create situations where success is consistently granted even for the poorest of executed shots.

The human spirit craves achievement, especially when it is earned honestly through skilful physical execution or a display of mental creativity. Highly regarded architecture presents that difficult challenge, testing all facets of one’s game, while achieving this balance of strategic complexity throughout the round.

Players may be easily wowed and overwhelmed with wicked slopes, bold contours and outrageous visuals. They all have their rightful place in golf course architecture. Distilling the challenge down to its basic elements and allowing them to carry the day might be the harder task for an architect and a welcome change of pace for the player.

While contours, and the ideal of ground game options, can be the



*Pot bunkers, often found on links courses in the UK, provide a mental and strategic challenge for players*

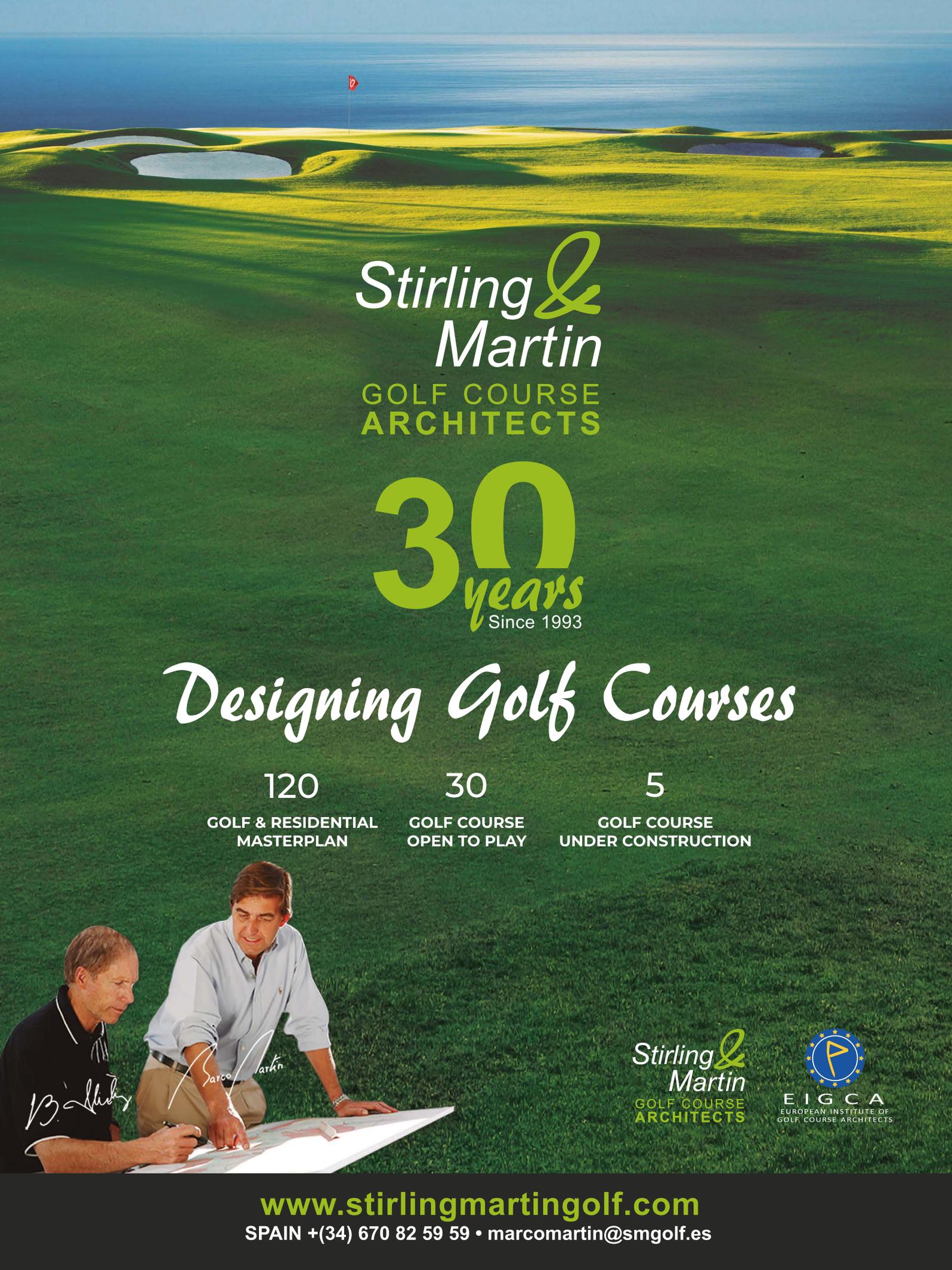
most romantic expression of great architecture, those same features can also be polarising.

Everyone comprehends the finality of a water hazard. The design feature simply says ‘you cannot play from here’. Coming to terms with a vexing contour or landform, with the ability to put the club on the back of the ball, sends a player into an entirely different mindset. You’re now contemplating the escape, no matter how long the odds may look, with a legitimate chance to execute the seemingly impossible shot.

Contours, or the angle one finds themselves attacking the contour, may suggest a play away from the intended target. Executing that prudent play to safety is not difficult. The difficulty lies in the decision, choosing the wise play and wrestling with the psychological mind game such situations create. For some reason golfers feel entitled to have a free go at the pin no matter the angle, lie or stance, so the insertion of a contour that suggests counter to this mindset is often viewed as extreme, gimmicky or too difficult. The real question

might be ‘how did I wind up here in the first place?’

Pot bunkers on links courses offer a similar challenge. It’s acceptable and even expected on links courses to avoid bunkers at all costs, for the penalty of not heeding the warning will be harsh. A penalty often resulting in no chance to advance to the green with only less than ideal options available such as playing sideways or even backwards to minimise the damage. Successfully escaping one of these penal pits is hard... yet the strategic and mental asks of a player are brilliant!



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*The fifth green complex at Lakewood National*

It is extremely difficult to avoid these bunkers and their gathering contours and even more problematic trying to escape from them. The intelligence of the architecture isn't how penal the feature is, it's the strategy employed to avoid them. The thrill of narrowly skirting a shot by a notoriously penal

choosing the best path and executing the shot of choice becomes the challenge versus mindlessly waking a ball around a featureless landscape with no discernible consequence or reward for the effort.

I had the pleasure of playing Sand Valley earlier this year. The course

simultaneously being hard but great.

The fifth at Lakewood National points to these thoughts as well. This bunkerless green complex, with feeding slopes on the approach, uses a domed back pin as its principal defence.

Bold, edgy and unconventional, it's sure to evoke emotion but more importantly engage the players mind to conjure a creative shot choice. During the 2019 Korn Ferry event, we witnessed the deliberations of one group. Almost identical recovery situations resulted in three completely different shot types and outcomes. A true test of the mental and physical aspects of the game on full display for the fans and membership who play there 51 weeks of the year. What else can you ask for in golf course architecture? **GCA**

*Brandon Johnson is a golf course architect based in Orlando, Florida.*

## “The intelligence of the architecture isn't how penal the feature is, it's the strategy employed to avoid them”

pot bunker is far more rewarding than successfully navigating a benign hazard or run-of-the-mill forced carry.

The more complex the decision making, the more intricate the game becomes. While the architect's intention is not to 'make it difficult', the mental deliberations add layers of sophistication and nuance to the game. Making the right decision,

was brilliant, fun to play, and treated us to a thrilling walk, especially on the front nine. While navigable, the course presented an extraordinarily strong challenge with contours and sandy dune situations that can abruptly throw a good round into a tailspin. It's a wonderful example of thoughtful architecture successfully walking that delicate line of

FEATURE

# Is the golf boom real?

INDUSTRY GROWTH

Written by Adam Lawrence



Golf emerged from the global pandemic with participation figures not seen in decades. Adam Lawrence asks whether this is translating into a boom for golf course architects.

**I**t seems very poor taste to note that a pandemic which has, up to now, killed seven million people and triggered the largest global economic crisis in more than a century, has been good for golf.

But numbers don't lie. In 2021, according to the National Golf Foundation, more rounds of golf were played in the United States than ever before, up by six per cent, even after a huge spike in the second half of 2020. In

the UK, the number of people playing golf jumped from three million in 2019 to 5.2 million in 2020. Globally, the NGF estimates that the total number of golfers grew from 61 million to 66.6 million as a result of the pandemic.



*Hudson National in New York is one of many US clubs to invest in course infrastructure, with work in progress to build new greens and bunkers, regrass fairways and install a new irrigation system*



*Jeremy Slessor of European Golf Design says the firm is as busy as they have been since the early/mid 2000s. Current projects include a total renovation of La Grande Mare in Guernsey*

It isn't hard to see why that initial spike happened. Golf was one of the first leisure activities to be allowed to reopen after the first round of pandemic lockdowns; its outdoor nature, its huge playing field and its essentially socially distanced nature made it an obvious way of getting out of doors and having fun at a time when both were difficult to achieve. According to the NGF's 2020 survey, 67 per cent of golfers explained their increased play by saying they had 'fewer alternative ways to spend leisure time'. The following year, though, 56 per cent of respondents said that golf was 'more of a priority'.

"Golf was given a rebirth during Covid, especially in the younger demographic," says architect Phil Smith. "What was once seen as a waste of time – a four-hour game – is now seen as a valuable way to get a break from phones and computer screens. I attribute some of that to the psychological effects of Covid and people realised what was

important to them after being locked up for a year or so in front of their computer screens."

This change has to be good news for those in the golf industry. It may not be the case worldwide – British architect and course owner Adrian Stiff says the pandemic "probably increased demand by 25 per cent, but it's fading a bit now, maybe at six or seven per cent a

**"It's definitely best for the top guys, but it's still pretty good for most architects – there still seems to be a lot of work out there"**

year." There are certainly some regions where new activity is minimal. Swedish architect Christian Lundin says very clearly: "There is no boom here." But the belief of many golfers, that if more people were exposed to the game, they would enjoy it enough to keep playing, seems to have some legs. In most of the golfing world, the boom in participation is very real indeed. And, inevitably, that

is resulting in more work for golf course architects.

"We are as busy as we have been since the early/mid 2000s," says Jeremy Slessor, chief executive of European Golf Design. "The first two months of Covid – March/April 2020 – were fairly concerning, but since then it has been crazy."

Slessor says that the spike in architecture work began very quickly,

way before any boom in participation had become clear, and was led by the renovation market, with forward-thinking owners realising that, if their facilities were going to be closed or empty for a substantial time, it was a good opportunity to make necessary improvements. "For renovation projects, especially where there was a hotel involved, people decided early on that



*The Portmarnock course in Dublin, Ireland, has been renovated by Jeff Lynch of (re)GOLF and rebranded as Jameson Golf Links*

the summer of 2020 was going to be dead, so let's get on and do what we need to," he explains. "Where newbuilds are concerned, people thought, 'We are three to five years away from needing to market and sell this thing, and if Covid is still a serious problem then we're all in big trouble, plus interest rates are low, so why not go ahead now?'"

Bill Coore says: "If I took a call today from a prospective client with a project that was ready to go, it would be the winter of 2025/26 before we could possibly start work on it, and even that is questionable, unless one of our committed projects were to fall away."

What is clear about this boom is that it is happening from the top down: it is the elite firms who are busiest, and the most high-end projects that are moving ahead fastest. Yet the spike in activity is feeding through to almost every level of

the business. "My business has exploded since Covid," says Phil Smith. "Both private and resort businesses have seen an increase. It's mostly in the US, but I'm getting a few overseas leads for new course work. The nature of projects is a mix. As an architect, it just depends on the type of developers that we are connected with. But people seem to be spending money both on resort vacations and/or club membership. It's been nice to see the rebirth of both since the 2008 disaster."

Texas-based designer Kurt Bowman echoes the theme that the boom is across the market. "It's definitely best for the top guys, but it's still pretty good for most architects – there still seems to be a lot of work out there," he says. "I've had a bunch of enquiries in the last six to eight weeks, and I have one project I'm finishing this year, and one

eighteen-hole redesign that will start late this or early next year. Add to that a couple of little projects and it's pretty good – two decent projects at once is a ton of work for me. I think the positive reviews, and the recent ranking of the Links course at Hacienda Alcaidesa in Spain has helped me. The more you're out and about and people see your work and talk about it, the better, obviously."

Trying to market and sell golf design services is always a challenge, but Slessor says that, at the moment, the lack of any identifiable trends about where work is coming from make directing sales efforts even more difficult. "I would say that as an industry we are in a good place, but it is everywhere and nowhere. We look at our enquiries and there are no trends," he explains. "There is very strong optimism in all the markets in which



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Photo: Apogee Club

*The new Gil Hanse-designed West course at Apogee Club in south Florida, a region that has more than 10 new courses in development, to meet surging demand for high-end private golf*

we are involved. Everybody seems to be selling their product, real estate, memberships, hotel beds, green fees. In 2021, operators were saying that green fees were the biggest part of their business, but in 2022, they flipped and said that member play was back in a big way. You can have the best marketing strategy in the world, but if you're not getting out there and talking to people it's not going to help."

"I think the market has totally flipped from prior to 2008, when it was mostly new courses and mostly real estate-driven, especially in the US," says Bowman. "You think about the design firms that were dominant then, and those that are the top guys now, I wouldn't have believed that change. Credit is due to those firms obviously – they do great work – but when most of the work is redesigns, it changes the economics of projects. It's hard to justify a multimillion-dollar fee on most redesign jobs in the way you might on a real estate-driven course.

Clients have seen that architects who are not PGA Tour players are doing great work: it is now easier in the design world to be a smaller operation than it is to be an old-style big shop.

"The biggest win for David against Goliath was when Gil Hanse won the Rio 2016 Olympic course. He beat all the big names, and it changed the trajectory of Gil's career and was hugely important in changing the trajectory for a lot of architects."

But the biggest boom of all is in a few select warm-weather locations in the US. It is most evident in south Florida, where a remarkable number of high profile projects are under construction. Prime among them are the Apogee Club, a 1,200-acre development near Hobe Sound, to the north of West Palm Beach, backed by Sebonack developer Michael Pascucci and Stephen Ross, who owns the Miami Dolphins NFL team. The first course, the West, designed by Gil Hanse and Jim Wagner, should open this winter: the second,

designed by Tommy Fazio and former USGA boss Mike Davis, will follow, and Kyle Phillips is at work on the third.

Not far away, Ken Bakst, the developer of Friar's Head on Long Island, has acquired a massive property of 4,000 acres and hired the firm of Whitman, Axland and Cutten (WAC) to design 36 holes and a massive practice facility (as reported in GCA July 2023). Also in the Hobe Sound area, Discovery Land is developing Atlantic Fields on a 2,300-acre site, bringing its usual recipe of a luxury residential development – with homes apparently starting at \$3 million – and a Tom Fazio golf course to Florida for the first time. Just to the south, in Palm Beach County, Nicklaus Design, along with a new signature designer, Justin Thomas, are at work on Panther National, another enormous development, spread over 2,400 acres, for the Swiss billionaire Dominik Senn.

And that is just the tip of the iceberg. "There are at least 15 very high-end



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*The new Seven Mile Beach course in Tasmania, Australia, designed by Clayton, DeVries & Pont, is close to completion*

private clubs going in central and south Florida, several of which are standalone clubs with no development, except golf cottages or development completely separate from the course,” says golf architect Dana Fry, who lives in the area. “We [he and his partner Jason Straka] are heavily loaded with top-end projects not only in Florida, but also in South Carolina and Georgia to a lesser extent. There is also a lot of golf being planned in other warm weather states like Texas, and Arizona would be the same, if it were not for the shortage of water there.”

Rob Collins, who is currently working on a reversible nine-hole course at Palmetto Bluff in South Carolina, among many other projects – and like Coore is booked out for several years – says: “I think there has been a big shift in what people want in golf. I’ve witnessed it at Sweetens [Cove, the nine-hole course outside Chattanooga that made his reputation,

and which he now co-owns and operates]. People are willing to search out and play compelling golf. It doesn’t matter where it is, and I don’t think we’ve begun to see the bottom of that movement. As regards Florida and other warm weather markets, I think Covid has radically shifted our society in ways we’ll still be learning about in 20-plus years from now. A lot of people are realising they don’t need to live where they work. Therefore, warmer climates are becoming increasingly popular and the demand for golf is nowhere near met in a place like south Florida. Especially given that almost all the golf down there is part of residential developments and not very compelling to this new breed of player. So, something that is new and thoughtful is going to be immensely popular and sought after.”

Fry concurs: “Wealthy people are leaving a lot of northern states for better weather and a low-tax

environment. Florida has over a thousand courses, but most are mediocre at best, so there is an obvious shortage of quality, high-end golf for these new residents. If rich people move south in numbers, and the few really good clubs are full, then there will be demand for high quality new places to play. It is a function of population movement combined with the increased interest in great golf that has been developing essentially since Sand Hills. There is lots of movement to Cabo in Mexico too, mostly the wealthy from western states like California, Washington and Colorado, so there are lots of golf, hotel and development projects going in there.”

It may have taken 15 years, and the nature of the market has changed completely – there is not a huge swell of housing-based golf being built, though there are projects of that kind too – but golf development is on the up in a way not seen in some time. **GCA**

INTERVIEW

# New frontiers

CYNTHIA DYE

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*Cynthia Dye on site at Erbil Hills in Iraq, which will be the country's only golf course*



## With Erbil Hills set to open nine holes, Cynthia Dye McGarey speaks with Richard Humphreys about her experience of designing the only golf course in Iraq, the city of Erbil and why this project is important for the country.

**T**hese days, it's pretty rare for an architect to be asked to design the only course in a country.

But for Cynthia Dye McGarey, that happened. Her project on the outskirts of Erbil in northern Iraq will, when it opens, be the only golf course in the country. It won't be the first. There were once a couple of sand layouts and one grass course before, but when the Gulf War came the courses closed.

So how did the Erbil Hills project come about? The answer lies in another of the architect's pioneering projects, Dreamland Golf Club in Baku, which itself was just the second in Azerbaijan, the former Soviet republic on the Caspian Sea, north of Iran. "The owner of Dreamland is the uncle of Hassan Gozal, who is in charge of this project for First Quantum Capital," says Dye.

Erbil is real estate-driven. Around 300 grand residences are planned, along with several other amenities including a hotel, shops and sports areas. "It will be a community experience," says Dye.

Erbil revolves around a central citadel, a Unesco World Heritage Site that forms the city centre, and is circled by three primary ring roads. Erbil Hills

is about 10 kilometres north, lying between the outer two rings.

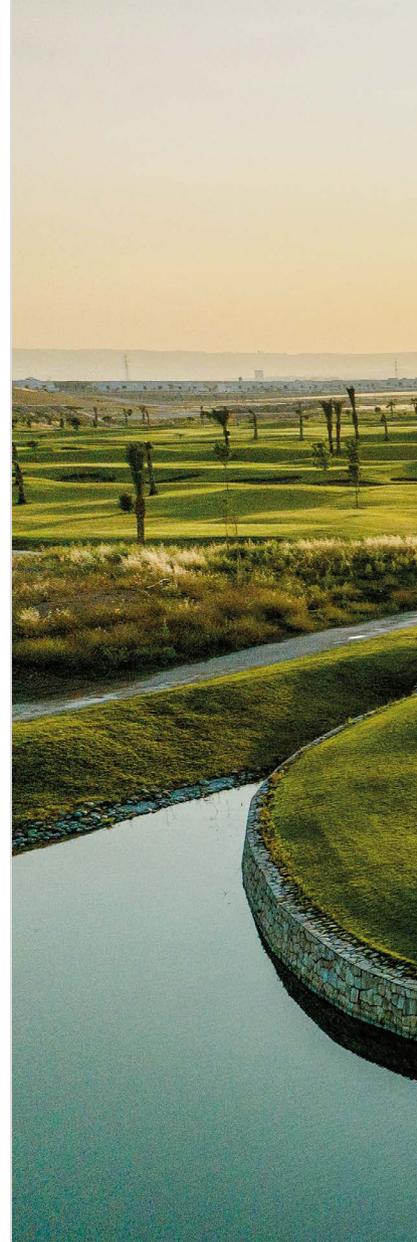
"The site for the course was farmland, with a lot of grazing grasses," says Dye, adding that it reminds her of the site she worked on with her uncle Pete and cousin Perry for The Wolf course at Las Vegas Paiute Golf Resort. "At Erbil, we're very close to the mountains. In fact, there are quite a lot of houses up there because it gets cooler. The foothills have plenty of pine trees too. It's a little bit of a different setting to one that Americans and Europeans would think of for Iraq – there's a lot of versatility in the terrain.

"A large valley runs through the whole property. There is a 3.5-metre storm drain under a new highway that connects the site to the upper valleys, with the course routed along a water detention system in the bottom of the valley. This means that water is seen by every golf hole, but it is not always in play. The lakes and the storm drain will help to prevent the city with flooding issues, which has happened in the past."

Dye says she was hesitant when approached for the project, but was assured that safety was a top priority. "When I first visited the site, I was quite impressed with the security," she says. "It's still in place today.



Photo: Erbil Hills Golf Club



*“It’s all about teaching locals to play golf,” says Dye (pictured with Erbil Hills general manager Campbell Elliot)*

“The local people are extremely nice, and the food is excellent. It’s a very family-orientated place – the Erbil community reminds me of Latin American countries where you find multiple generations living together or near each other. There is a lot of socialising together – I like that aspect of their culture a lot.”

Erbil is the capital of the Kurdistan Region of Iraq, home to about 1.5 million people including an increasing number of expats from Western countries, particularly those that work in the oil industry. “Every nationality is represented in Erbil,” says Dye. “Nearby is the University of Kurdistan Hewlêr, a Catholic seminary, and all the religious and ethnic communities

are represented in the city.”

One aim of the project is to introduce locals to golf and provide them with a place to learn how to play. “We have planned a great practice facility,

and April, the weather is nice, and I believe the club will be very busy, therefore creating a lot of Iraqi golfers and helping the future of the sport in the country.”

**“The Erbil community reminds me of Latin American countries where you find multiple generations living together or near each other”**

just like what we did in Baku,” says Dye. “It’s all about teaching locals to play golf, although we expect the low handicap players to use it too. They’re starving for this type of sports entertainment here. Between October

For a nation new to the sport, Dye’s design includes multiple tees, generous width and not much rough. “You can put the ball anywhere,” she says. “The fairways are wide, especially at the landing area, and the

*Fittingly for a Dye design, Erbil Hills includes an island green*

Photo: Erbil Hills Golf Club



bunkers have been designed to be in play more for the better golfers. The greens have multiple ‘outs’ and they are not super fast. There are rolls coming into them and then it flattens out with multiple pin placements. This sort of design is key to making it challenging for some but not for the for average player. We want them to get to the pin. We also have the ability to tighten the greens up to get them playing as hard as we want.”

Dye Designs, which Cynthia runs alongside her husband O’Brien and son Matthew, has projects in progress in Morocco, Saudi Arabia and Serbia, along with renovation work in the US.

“Golf’s surge in popularity looks to be sustained, but I don’t know how

long it will last,” says Dye. “It seems the industry is building more high-end and destination golf courses for very few people, and the remodelling work is raising the prices of golf for the average player. These two factors are what concerns me: are we outpricing the sustainability of golf courses and the people playing them? Everybody wants to remodel their golf course, but it’s all the old guys at the clubs asking for it as they can afford it. We need to build more municipal golf that people can afford or remodel courses in a way that doesn’t outprice the existing players. That is the challenge for the future of our industry.

“A lot of our remodelling work relates to decreasing the maintenance on

a golf course. Everything has a life expectancy, and before clubs spend a lot of money on upgrading their irrigation system, they have to make course changes to make sure everything is in place. Bunkers are a huge part of it, so I tee placement and grass reduction.”

Sustainability and playability are key to Dye’s design philosophy.

“Designers evolve to their own likings,” she says. “I always think about playability – my uncle would say to me, ‘How do you think you’re going to get there?’ I’m not the best golfer in the family, so I really think about this, especially from a forward tee perspective, although I often play from the intermediate tees. I don’t make things too easy, as those playing from a

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*Dye also laid out the course at Dreamland Golf Club in Baku, Azerbaijan*

forward tee still like a challenge. I like multiple tees and different angles, and offsetting hazards to provide various obstacles depending on what tee you are playing from.

“For my design at West Cliffs along the Atlantic coast in Obidos, Portugal, I included carries because we had grass limitations due to the amount of vegetation. We have a similar brief in Saudi where we’re working with a certain amount of grass, and we have to make the most of it as well as making the native vegetation more playable. So, areas of vegetation and rocks are usually the carries and areas around tees.”

Dye has taken pride from seeing her son continuing the Dye family tree of designers. “He said when he was young that he didn’t want to be a golf course

architect because all the golf courses will have been built by the time he grew up,” says Dye. “But we’re still building them!

“Matthew has been getting me more involved in remodelling because he’s been doing it for the last eight years.

## “Golf provides people with a place to go and meet others, socialise and belong”

“Driving ranges and practice facilities are also becoming a great way to showcase our design abilities to provide amazing places for people to learn, play and socialise. I’m really happy about what’s happening in this space and the people are really engaging and making them social venues. Dreamland’s social

schedule is always packed – it’s a whole new experience and it brings more people to golf. I hope Erbil achieves something similar.”

Dye Designs has worked with IMG Golf Course Services on both Erbil Hills and Dreamland projects.

“The future is bright for golf, especially due to the pandemic as people saw golf courses as safe havens and where they could go and belong to a community,” says Dye. “That has helped expand golf. Golf provides people with a place to go and meet others, socialise and belong.” **GCA**

ON SITE

# The Carolina Matterhorn

PINEHURST NO. 10, NORTH CAROLINA

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Adam Lawrence got an in-construction view of the Tom Doak-designed tenth course at Pinehurst.



**P**inehurst is an odd mix of golfing theme park and golfing heaven.

There is a definite air of St Andrews about the village, given it is almost entirely focused on golf; but at the same time, it is hard not to realise that it is corporate in a way that Scottish golf towns are not. Yet, because the village was developed more than a hundred years ago, it feels 'proper' in a way that a newer development of a similar nature might not.

The other thing to note about Pinehurst is that the golf is not all of the highest quality. The resort is,

obviously, anchored by Donald Ross's classic No. 2 course, but nothing else in its portfolio comes close to the same level. Course No. 8 is a Tom Fazio production which many people like, and No. 4 has recently been restored by Gil Hanse; but the fact remains that Pinehurst is No. 2 and change.

There is no doubt that the resort has altered considerably in the last 10 to 15 years. The truly epic restoration of No. 2 by Bill Coore and Ben Crenshaw in 2011, covered in *GCA* issue 24, put Pinehurst on a whole new track: since then, it is unarguably home to one of

the world's greatest courses, and its sustainability has been transformed. And that change inevitably feeds through to the rest of the resort.

Pinehurst Resort bought the thousand-acre property occupied by the former Pit Golf Links more than a decade ago. The Pit was, in many ways, a trendsetting course. Located in what had previously been a sand quarry, Pinehurst native, architect and developer Dan Maples built a course that was wildly different to anything else in the area, with blind holes and drama. But by the mid-2000s, the Pit



had been outflanked. Mike Strantz's Tobacco Road, not far from Pinehurst, took a lot of the themes of the Pit and amped them up: more blindness, deeper bunkers, bigger slopes in the greens. Suddenly, the Pit didn't look quite so radical, and eventually it went bust.

Pinehurst sat on the Pit for a long time. To be truly honest, the resort had no pressing need for new golf until the impact of the pandemic on the game started to be felt. Once the post-Covid boom in the game started to feed through, the redevelopment of the Pit property started to gain some urgency, and Pinehurst boss Bob Dedman signed off on the resort's tenth course.

Course No. 10 – as it has not, until now, been officially known, though it has always seemed an inevitable and necessary name – will be something unlike anything else the resort has to offer. It is designed by Tom Doak, and built by a crew headed by regular Doak associate Angela Moser, the German's

first job as site lead. It is an incredibly rapid build: the team mobilised on site at the very start of 2023, and much of the course was grassed when GCA visited in early June. It will be completed by early autumn, and will open in 2024: such is life when you are in as much demand as Doak's team is at the moment, and you have the priceless advantage of working with warm season grasses, which grow in at a frankly terrifying speed.

Course No. 10 is fairly obviously a Doak design. The architect is one of the greatest routers of courses that has ever lived, and the journey that No. 10 makes is complex. The beautiful seventeenth hole, which plays over a substantial lake to a rather wonderfully located green might well have been routed by any old architect, but it would not, surely, have been executed so well.

Although the Pit was renowned for its eccentricity, I would say that No. 10

is, by Doak standards at least, mostly rather sane. Golfers will not encounter wild hole after wild hole: yes, there are greens that are relatively severe – the first hole, for example, whose approach is significantly downhill, and whose putting surface creates a definite 'infinity' effect, features a green that slopes front to back in a dramatic way. Frankly, the green appears to fall off a cliff. Given that the tee shot is essentially blind, it is a brave opening hole without doubt, though it is, typically for Doak, beautifully routed and essentially natural.

No. 10 does not occupy that much of the ground that previously was home to the Pit holes. Mostly, the course explores parts of the thousand-acre property that were previously virgin, and indeed, an additional course (No. 11!) will eventually share the property. But there is one hole that has to be viewed as among the boldest the architect has ever built.

*Tom Doak and design associate Angela Moser, site lead for the Pinehurst No. 10 project*



Photo: Pinehurst Resort



*The par-three seventeenth plays over water*

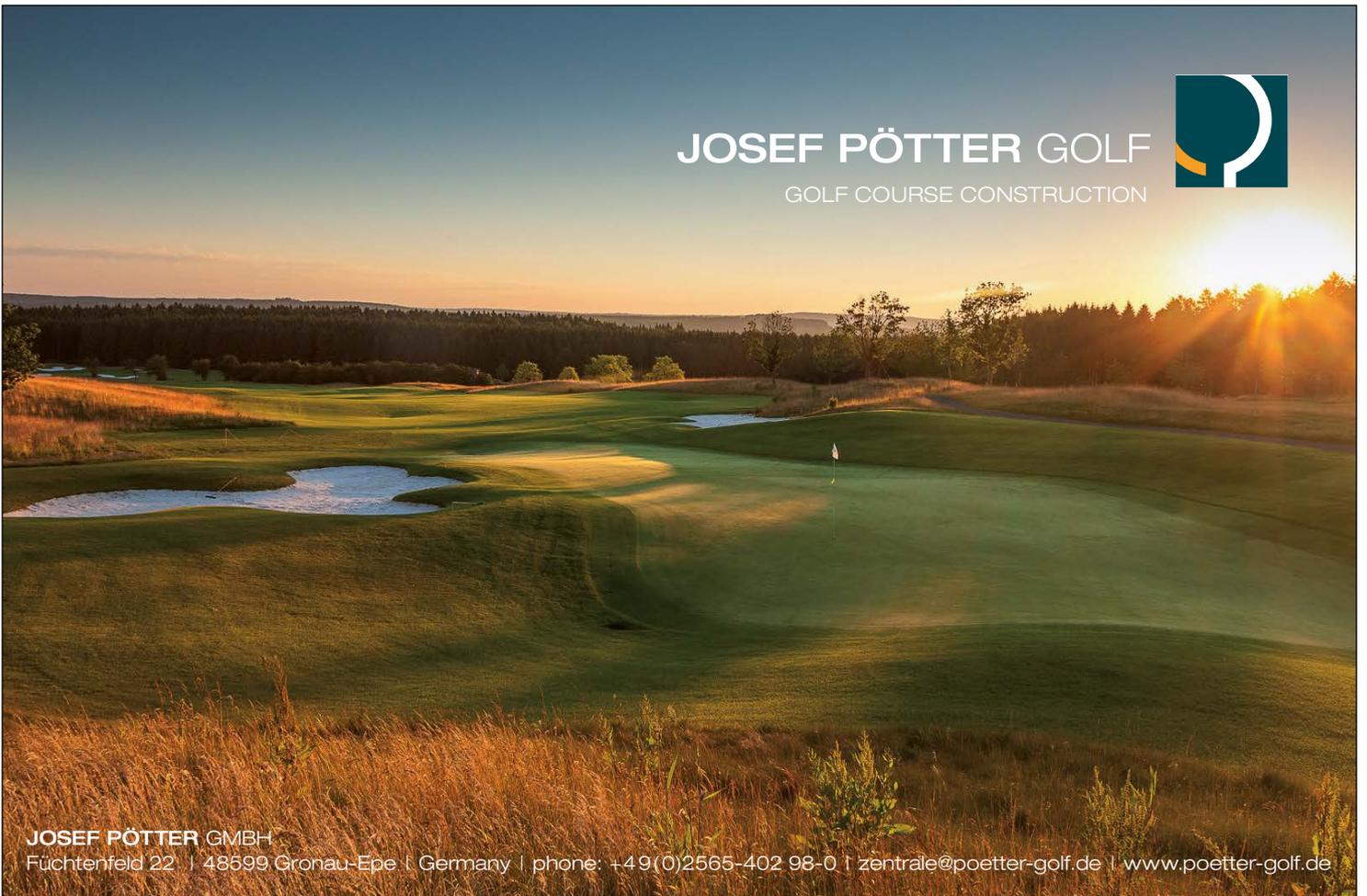
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Photo: Pinehurst Resort

*The eighth plays over a 'Matterhorn' feature to a heavily contoured fairway*

No. 10's eighth hole is part of the course that does sit on land formerly used by the Pit. It is, very clearly, part of the old sand quarry, and it essentially occupies a valley among trees whose bases are higher than (most of) the land they encompass. But not all of

can be seen from the tee, but not much! You can get a view of the green for your second, but only if you are brave enough to drive straight over the top of the 'Matterhorn'. It is, essentially, a larger version of Harry Colt's unique (until now) sixth hole at De Pan in

though, be too brutal: the nature of the valley means that balls will inevitably bounce or roll off the huge contours, but will not often go out of play. It is a fine piece of design by Doak: a hole that everyone who plays it will always remember and discuss, and it will also not eat golf balls too hungrily.

Angela Moser is, I think, entitled to be well pleased with her first job as a lead associate for Doak. Pinehurst No. 10 will be a splendid addition to the resort's offering, with enough radicalness and drama to be hugely memorable to resort golfers, yet sane enough to be very playable and unlikely to scare too many horses. When golfers, after their rounds, sit down and analyse what they have played, it will not, I think, be regarded as one of Doak's more extreme courses. But nobody will ever forget that eighth hole. **GCA**

**“There cannot be many other places in golf where a 20-foot-high contour is in the direct line of play”**

it: the valley is home to a number of enormous, and steep, sand mounds, the biggest of which is fully 20 feet high, and is, presumably, left over from the sand quarrying operation. They are as large as any contours I have ever seen in the direct line of play. The hole is, to top it all, mostly blind: a sliver of fairway

the Netherlands, a par four that also involves a drive over a large hill and is mostly blind.

Truly, No. 10's eighth is among the boldest holes that I have ever seen: there cannot be many other places in golf where a 20-foot-high contour is in the direct line of play. It should not,

# Peer pressure

FOXHILLS, SURREY, ENGLAND

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The Foxhills Club & Resort is investing heavily in its courses to improve its offering to members and visitors. Adam Lawrence paid a visit.

**The southern English county of Surrey is an extremely competitive golf market.**

Surrey, and the neighbouring county of Berkshire, was essentially the cradle of golf architecture; from Willie Park Jr's creation of Sunningdale in 1900 onwards, the area has been packed full of great courses. Given it is also one of the most affluent parts of Britain, the demand for fine golf has always been high. In short, it is an area in which a golf facility can do great business, but it had better be good.

Most of Surrey's top courses were built in the so-called 'Golden Age' of golf architecture, which is to say before World War Two. There have been high profile (and, by their nature, fairly big money) developments in the area since, most recently the Queenwood and Beaverbrook clubs, but they are in a definite minority. Most of Surrey golf is old school members' clubs, and fairly high-end ones at that.

This, therefore, makes the Foxhills resort, located just to the north of the town of Woking, something of an outlier. Foxhills' location puts it

in some very exalted company: less than a mile (plus, to be fair, the M3 motorway) separate its courses from the Wentworth estate. Sunningdale is not much further away. The famous 'Three Ws' of Woking, Worplesdon and West Hill are just the other side of Woking town. And closest of all, the rigorously private and very expensive Queenwood is just across the road from Foxhills.

Foxhills occupies an estate that was once home to the politician and bon viveur Charles James Fox. Fox's gambling habits were legendary: in 1774, at the age of 25, his father had to pay off gambling debts of £140,000, the equivalent of £17 million today. Fox became an MP at the age of 19 but, owing to his support of causes such as American independence, the French Revolution and Catholic emancipation, he held high office for only a very short time. When Fox died in 1806, his body was found to contain 35 gallstones, a hardened liver, and seven pints of transparent fluid in his abdomen.

The Manor House at Foxhills, now the centre of the estate's extremely

nice hotel, was built in the 19th century. Rooms have been added in several different phases: the courtyard block of about 20 rooms is of modern construction, but to a cursory gaze appears to be original: it is very well done. The estate was turned into a golf resort in 1975, with two courses designed by Fred Hawtree, now known as Longcross and Bernard Hunt, after the eight-time Ryder Cupper who served as pro at Foxhills for 25 years.

The Surrey area became a golfing hotbed because so much of it is on sandy soil. All the famous old courses in the area are sandy, located on a geological formation known as the Bagshot Beds. Foxhills, however, is not wholly sandy, but has large areas of clay. There is heather, but only a tiny amount, and it is not really in play. The two courses are mostly lined with pine trees, though in several places the trees are in very straight lines, indicative of them being planted rather than self-sown.

Longcross is generally regarded as the better of Foxhills' two full sized courses (the estate has a third course



*The most dramatic of the recent changes to Foxhills' Longross course is the expansion of the pond on the par-three sixteenth to the green's edge*



*Gary Johnston's work will include rebuilding bunkers*

too, but the Manor is a short nine holer), and it has been in *Golf World* magazine's list of the top 100 courses in England. The popular website *Top 100 Golf Courses* lists Longcross as the 28th best course in Surrey; not obviously that great a ranking, but then we come back to the strength of Surrey golf.

The resort, a rather high-end place as befits its setting, is obviously keen to enhance the golf offering, and is working with architect Gary

Johnston of European Golf Design, on a long-term improvement project. The first fruits of that, the renovation of holes thirteen to sixteen of Longcross, has recently been completed. It is mostly subtle work – green expansions, extensive drainage additions, new irrigation, and a bunker refresh, including lining them with EcoBunker's EcoTec product. The most obvious change is the reconstruction of the par-three sixteenth, pushing the pond up to the

greenside to create a dramatic – and demanding – downhill water hole. For many players the hole will, especially into any kind of wind, require a wooden club, or at least a hybrid, and it will be a tough one.

“When the courses were built in the seventies fairway irrigation wasn't as common, instead fairways tended to be capped with soil that helped retain water and stop them drying out,” says architect Johnston. “Similarly the greens were all soil based push up



Photo: Foxhills

style which are not as free draining as modern greens.”

I thought the bunkers, in places, could have been a little more dramatic. The new bunkers are well placed, but perhaps a little subtle in visual terms. Obviously, there is a trade-off between visual drama and maintenance efficiency, and the architect, in consultation with his client, has to take a decision on how much drama to build in. A higher, more flashed sand face might have meant a slightly

higher maintenance load, but given the nature of the place, the balance might have been tipped a little further towards the dramatic. “A lot of the bunkers were very short from the tees, and they do hold a number of events, and would like to have more. So they know they need to challenge the better players a bit more,” says Johnston. “We wanted Longcross to have more dramatic bunkering, something we will look to develop as we work through the next phases.”

It was noticeable to me that the renovated holes were more open than those that have still to be worked on, and my suspicions were confirmed when, next to a path between two

## “We want to add a little bit of differentiation between the two courses in terms of bunker style”

holes, I came across a substantial pile of tree trunks. Both courses could certainly stand some tree work: on Longcross, to address those very straight rows, and the fact they are also rather too close together. Some careful thinning would, in addition to making the course more open and improving the turf quality, allow those remaining to thrive better. On the resort’s other course, the Bernard Hunt, the tree stock is more varied, with a fair quantity of different broadleaved species to be found. In my opinion, the resort would do well to take some of these out, and focus on the pines.

Foxhills isn’t really a heathland property, and it doesn’t have the sandy soil that characterises most heaths,

but, with the pines and everything else, it does share a fair bit of DNA with heathland, and it could share more. Heather seed survives in the soil for many, many years, and can be encouraged to grow by removing areas of turf. Even if that doesn’t work, it is possible, as was proven across the road at Queenwood, to import heather and grow it successfully. Heather is so associated, especially in that part of the world, with quality golf. That said, the topsoil cap that was installed during the original construction is a problem, and it is hardly surprising that the club does not have any appetite for the scale of work that would be required to remove it. “The soil is too heavy to

grow a good heather stand. The topsoil cap is six inches to a foot deep all over and the heather won’t grow through it,” says Johnston.

Foxhills is a mixture of club and resort; it has a significant membership component in addition to its pay and play business. Judging by the amount of expensive metal in the parking lot, and hardly surprisingly given the location, those members are an affluent bunch. Its non-golfing facilities are first rate, and I am sure that the membership values those facilities just as high as it does the golf. But it is good to see a facility determined to improve what it has, and I am confident that Foxhills will continue to get better. **GCA**

# Restoring Arana's intent at Aloha

Marbella club unlocks more pin locations following reconstruction of all greens.

**With just 11 courses to his name over a 30-year career, Javier Arana may not be considered the most prolific golf course architect.**

But he is regarded as Spain's finest, producing some of the country's most celebrated designs – including Club de Campo in Madrid and El Saler on the Mediterranean Sea just south of Valencia.

Arana never saw his final design, Aloha in Marbella, completed.

Construction began in 1972 and the architect made his last visit to the course in May 1974. Seeding of the greens had not yet started, because of a shortage of water to grow them in. Arana died in January 1975; the course opened that October.

Spanish agronomist Luis Cornejo says that when Aloha first opened, the greens were typically cut at 5.5 millimetres and had a Stimpmeter reading of 6.5. Playability has therefore

been a challenge in recent years, with the higher speeds associated with modern cut heights reducing the pinnable area on surfaces that – on half of the holes – sloped at more than five per cent.

According to Alfonso Erhardt, author of *'The Golf Courses of Javier Arana'*, the architect drew detailed plans of the greens, but there is some debate as to how precisely the final surfaces reflected his intent given that he died



Photo: Aloha Golf Club

*The fifth at Aloha, where Tim Lobb has overseen the rebuild of all eighteen greens*



*The previously severe contours meant there was a lack of pin positions*

before opening and several have been reworked since.

Between April and July of this year, the greens have been rebuilt, by a team comprising design firm Lobb + Partners, contractor CJW Golf, agronomist Cornejo of Surtec Golf Agronomy, who also served as project manager, and Aloha’s head greenkeeper Manuel Angel Gonzalez Loma.

“Aloha is a beautiful course to play, set amongst rolling hills and a varied landscape,” says architect Tim Lobb. “We first visited the course in 2022, prior to commencing our design, and undertook a comprehensive analysis of the existing greens. Surtec had already completed a full detailed survey of the greens and the slope analysis backed

up our initial thoughts that large portions of many of the greens were severely contoured. This meant there was a severe lack of pin positions and diversity in the putting experience with modern green speeds.”

**“The underlying philosophy was to retain and enhance the Arana influence as much as possible”**

All eighteen greens have been rebuilt in a single phase with TeeOne bentgrass, which was grown in an offsite nursery. Following the completion of work, the course reopened in stages during August and September.

“During the design process, the underlying philosophy was to retain and enhance the Arana influence as much as possible,” says Lobb. “We were working to a minimum of seven pin positions per green,

which would have several benefits, including developing a variety of playing strategies. We worked hard to also restore some of the perimeter pin positions which were lost due to green shrinkage and speeds.



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Hole 18 NEWGIZA Photo: Kevin Murray

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Photo: Aloha Golf Club

*The CJW Golf team rebuilt all greens on time and in budget*

“The club can now spread the wear on greens of this busy course. Aesthetically, the greens should look quite similar from a distance, and I would say that many golfers may not feel the subtle changes to the green contours. But what will be different is the variety of pin positions and strategies available.

“Working on Arana’s last design has been a pleasure and joy. Studying his other courses and greens philosophies – some inspired by his early mentor Tom Simpson – highlighted the need to look at the collection of Aloha greens holistically whilst still respecting the original intent with the tilts, plateaus and separations.

“Studying original course layout photography, visiting other Arana

courses, and studying Alfonso Erhardt’s complete book on Arana assisted in determining the decision making. On a few greens we found the original perimeter when we started to clean out the old rootzone mix. On greens seven and ten this

**“What will be different is the variety of pin positions and strategies available”**

was particularly noticeable, and we restored the perimeter edge and multiple pin positions as part of the reconstruction process.”

Surtec assisted the club in the selection process of the golf course architect, as well as planning,

agronomic awareness and a continuous on-site presence. The contractor, led by Conor Walsh, was selected following its success at the nearby Comporta Dunas (read more in *GCA July 2023*), and completed the reconstruction of greens on time and in budget.

“Conor and his team brought a fantastic can-do attitude,” says Lobb. “He staffed the project with some of the most qualified and passionate people in the construction industry, with experienced David Minogue as the daily construction manager.” **GCA**

# Panther ready to prowl in south Florida

Richard Humphreys speaks with Nicklaus Design's Chris Cochran ahead of new course opening.

**P**anther National will be the first of several planned new openings in south Florida, to accommodate a post-pandemic shift in demand over supply in the area.

This new private club, in Palm Beach County, has a course designed by Jack Nicklaus and PGA Tour golfer Justin Thomas. The club has been developed by Dominik Senn, founder of investment firm Centaur Holdings.

GCA had the opportunity to sit down with Chris Cochran, senior designer for Nicklaus Design, to discuss the process of bringing Panther National to life.

"The site was a pasture used for grazing cattle," says

Cochran. "From the beginning, Dominik outlined that he didn't want a typical south Florida golf course, which tends to be pretty flat and surrounded by homes, small lakes and roads crossing through the property. Therefore, Jack and I routed a core golf course with the home sites separated by large lakes and no road crossings."

Excavation of lakes and importing of dirt would give the design team the fill they required – around three million



*Panther National's extensive lake system provides a barrier between the golf course and the over 200 home sites*

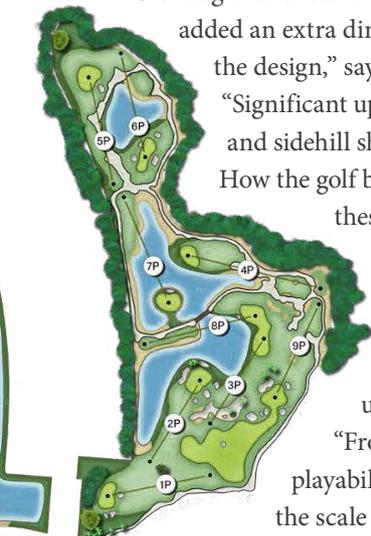
Image: Nicklaus Design



*The par-five ninth at Panther National, where lake excavation allowed the design team to create significant contour*

cubic yards – to build a course that is by no means flat.

“Creating a lot of elevation change added an extra dimension to the design,” says Cochran. “Significant uphill, downhill and sidehill shots are in play. How the golf ball reacts from these lies greatly determined the placement and types of hazards we used. “From a playability standpoint, the scale of elevation change provided Jack and me with a more natural way to present a truly effective ground game. More than half of the greens have strong contours to help feed the ball towards the pin.”



There are seven sets of tees: making the layout playable from 4,563 to 7,840 yards (from the ‘JT’ tees).

Almost 30 acres of bahia grass and numerous bunch grass beds have been planted to provide a contrast to the Bimini bermuda fairways and rough. Grassing was completed in August, and the course is expected to open in mid-November.

“The playing experience will be exceptionally fun and memorable,” says Cochran. “There is a lot of positional strategy off the tee to gain the best angle into a green. There is also a nice balance of doglegs and green angles, what side of the hole water is on, the occasional forced carry, and so on – all of which adds variety to the round.

“What people can’t see from the routing map, but will discover when playing the course, is that variety

of lies, and how the wind, hazards, visuals and setup affects each shot.”

There are over 200 home sites at Panther National, all positioned to preserve the core golf experience.

“I have worked on countless golf and residential projects and I cannot think of one where the client was so pro golf,” says Cochran. “Dominik knew how many homes he needed and a good idea of the clubhouse and maintenance area. For the main course Jack and I were given an area to stay within and we developed multiple routings. We would adjust them and sometimes the property lines too, so we could create the routing that works best. The extensive lake system around the course was developed to provide a barrier to the homes, which still have course views.”

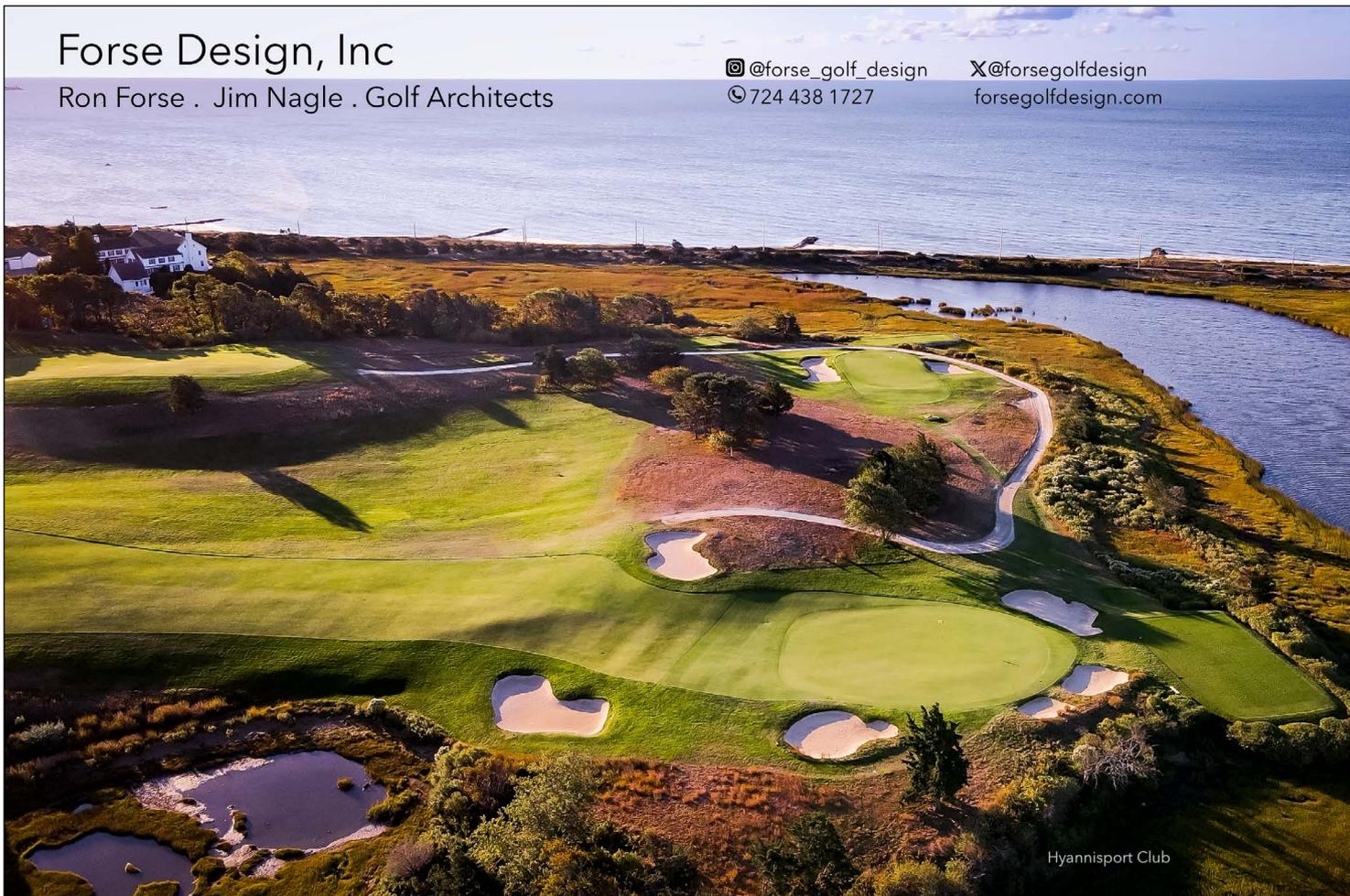
The design team has also created a nine-hole par-three course. Earthmoving

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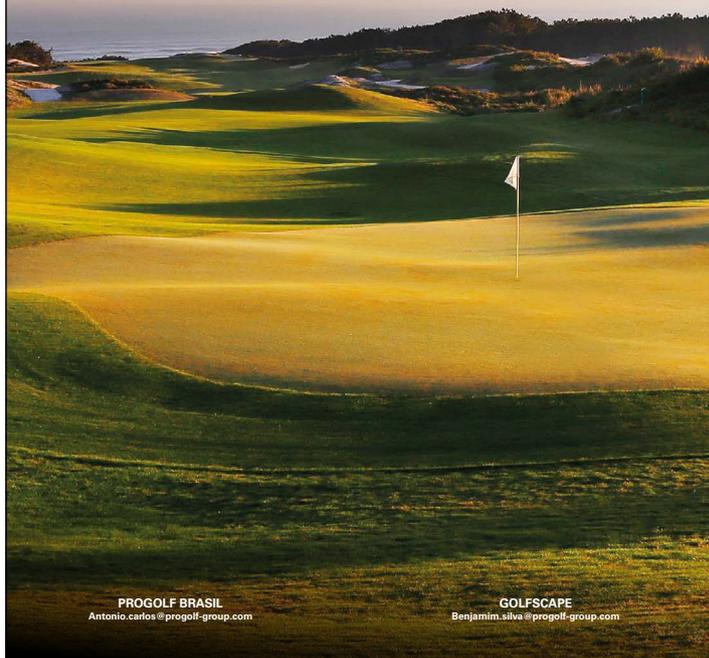


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*The par-three thirteenth can play from 100 to 235 yards*

began in March 2022, with shaping kicking off a month later. Grassing was completed in February 2023.

“For the short layout, the property line was much more set than the main course and there was very little give and take here,” says Cochran. “The configuration isn’t as seamless as I would like but it’s crazy fun to play and an easy walk. The site is relatively flat; it doesn’t have the elevation changes you see on the main course, but it is a really fun layout.

“During one of JT’s visits, he said how he likes the flexibility of playing from anywhere on the short course, not just from the direction of how the holes were routed. We took this into consideration when placing plant material and finalising green contours and bunker placement. JT also talked about how valuable par-three courses are for practicing, especially for dialling in the distances of his wedges and short irons. Therefore, we went with freeform ribbon tees to give the golfer more freedom to choose where to tee from and to spread the wear better.”

The nine-hole layout has 1,101 yards

on the scorecard but with the large teeing areas, holes can play much shorter or longer.

“Like the main course, it is lightly planted with trees, but they make a big visual impact,” says Cochran. “The trees, coquina paths and native grasses give the layout more of a garden feel in comparison to the bold, rough-edged main course. For the most part, greens have more contour than on the main course, placing more emphasis on accurate wedge play.”

There are also extensive practice facilities at Panther National, including a 33,000-square-foot putting and chipping green located between the short course’s first tee and ninth green. “It has very flat to strong contours to provide great variety for golfers,” says Cochran.

The main course has two practice putting greens. “The practice green near the first tee is free flowing with long slopes and multiple breaks,” says Cochran. “The Justin and Mike Thomas-inspired practice green near the practice tee is much more

structured, it has engineered slopes, ranging from one to four per cent, that are easy to identify.

“Using plenty of input from JT, the short-game area has one large green that can be used from all sides. We worked hard to allow for as many different short-game shots as possible, including those from uphill, downhill, sidehill and flat lies. Although it is mainly for shots up to 50 yards, golfers can hit 100-yard shots from one end of the short-game area to the far end of the green. The putting surface is broken up into two zones – one half is very simply shaped, and the other half is made up of a series of small decks where precision is needed to fly and carry the ball the correct distance.”

The range, which is almost complete, has been designed to provide what tour professionals are looking for when they practice. There is over two acres of teeing space, target greens to allow players to practice shots from 50 to 225 yards, and there is a 27-yard-wide fairway (the standard fairway width at a US Open) framed by bunkers for players to practice their drives. **GCA**

# New teeth for Dye classic

Jerry Pate will oversee a ‘facelift’ of Pete Dye’s Teeth of the Dog in 2025.

**P**ete Dye’s Teeth of the Dog at Casa de Campo in the Dominican Republic is widely considered the best course in the Caribbean.

It opened in 1971 and Pete and his wife Alice, who had a winter home on the course, continued to tweak the layout for nearly half a century.

Pro golfer Jerry Pate was the lowest scorer when USA won the 1974 World Amateur Team Championship on the course, and he has been a regular visitor since. He was a friend of the Dyes – he and Pete memorably shared a dip in the lake at the eighteenth at TPC Sawgrass following Pate’s victory at the inaugural Players tournament in 1982 – and with his senior designer Steve Dana is now course consultant for Casa de Campo. In 2025, Pate and Dana will renovate the Teeth of the Dog.

“There will be no major changes,” says Pate. “Our work is more to do with improving the quality of the course conditions and there may be some lengthening of holes. The real strategy of the golf course will remain the same. Golf should be an enjoyable experience and not too difficult. But yes, we’re putting more of the teeth back in, mainly with fairways closer to

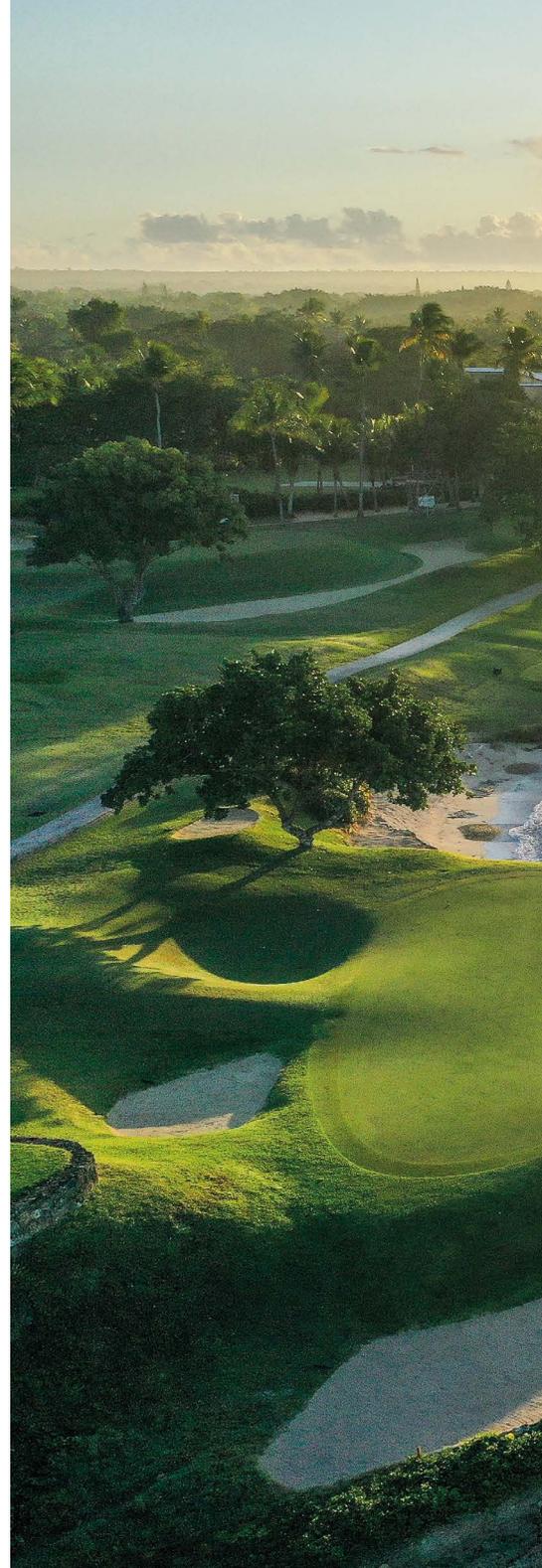
bunkers, making bunkers a bit deeper, and adding some contours and slopes to greens.”

According to Pate, work on greens will mainly be “reinstating half a per cent in the green contours here and there”. They will also do some sandcapping to enhance soil depth, level tees and make cart path repairs.

“The Teeth is a great piece of art,” says Pate. “We won’t be taking any bunkers out, there’ll all stay in the same places, although we might add a couple. Our work here is more about tweaking and improving them so they still look and feel like Dye bunkers. They are strategically well positioned, particularly those on holes 14 to 18, but following the project they’ll have new drainage, updated faces and new sand.”

Pate says a key component of the project is “bringing up the course’s level of agronomy” through the regrassing of tees, fairways and greens with saltwater-tolerant Pure Dynasty paspalum, developed by Pure-Seed Testing, Inc. and marketed by Atlas Turf International and Pure Seed.

“Teeth of the Dog, while iconic and inimitable, does present significant challenges to growing grass,” said



John Holmes, president of Atlas Turf International. “Several holes sit so close to the Caribbean Sea that ocean spray is a constant. Pure Dynasty seeded paspalum was the perfect choice when considering a new turfgrass to replace the mixture of older varieties of paspalum and bermuda.

“From the Pure-Seed Testing, Inc. breeding programme, Pure Dynasty



*Jerry Pate wants to respect and restore Pete Dye's Caribbean gem*

delivers the heat and drought tolerance needed for the Caribbean, as well as unmatched salt tolerance. Pure Dynasty will be planted wall-to-wall at Teeth of the Dog, and with its tighter density, finer leaf blade, and ability to be mowed as low as 0.08 inches, this advanced turfgrass will deliver excellent playing surfaces from the tees all the way to the greens.

“Having one turfgrass throughout the course simplifies maintenance practices. This advantage, along with the overall superior turf quality, was just part of the reason the resort’s longtime golf course superintendent, Eusebio Nunez, is a proponent of Pure Dynasty.”

The renovation is part of an ongoing project at the resort, which has 90

holes designed by Dye: the 18 on Teeth of the Dog, 27 on Dye Fore, the 18-hole Links layout, and the 27-hole members-only La Romana design.

Presently, plans are being developed by the design team and the resort for a fourth nine at Dye Fore as well as a new par-three course near the Links layout and a large Himalayas-style putting green near Teeth of the Dog. **GCA**

# Monster's return awakens the Catskills

Rees Jones and Bryce Swanson bring back a kinder beast for New York casino resort.

**There's a revival afoot a couple of hours north of New York City, in a region that many felt had seen its heyday. Central to the revitalisation of the Catskills is the opening of a new casino resort and the rebirth of the celebrated Monster Golf Course, brought back to life by golf course designer Rees Jones and his associate Bryce Swanson.**

From the 1920s to the early 60s – when golf architect Joe Finger, along with pros Jimmy Demaret and Jackie Burke Jr., laid out the original Monster at the Concord, once the largest resort in the US – the Catskills was thriving.

Families from the New York metropolitan area would head to the mountains annually to escape the summer heat at one of the many thousands of bungalow colonies, summer camps and hotels in the Catskills. Grand resorts – like the Concord, Kutsher's, Nevele and Grossinger's, the inspiration for the fictional Kellerman's in the movie *Dirty Dancing* – were the proving grounds for some of the country's best-known entertainers, from Joan Rivers to Jerry Seinfeld.

By the 1970s however, in an era of air conditioning and cheap air fares,

the mountain region had rapidly fallen out of favour. It was the onset of a decline that would last for decades and ultimately see off the Monster.

But the area's fortunes took a major turn in 2018, when Resorts World Catskills opened – with a performance by a returning *Seinfeld* – on the site of the original Concord, near Monticello. Its development was possible thanks to New York's legalisation of casinos in 2013, a measure that was designed to create jobs, generate revenue, attract people and improve real estate value in communities like the Catskills.

The resort – with two hotels, casino, a spa, pool, Topgolf Swing Suites, and an array of dining options – proved to be a driving force for investment in the local economy.

A buzz returned to the Catskills, and with the appeal of city life fading post-pandemic and destinations like the Hamptons being stretched to capacity, each year has seen more openings – from rejuvenated lodges to new boutique hotels, along with stores, restaurants and more to support the increasing flow of visitors.

Resorts World Catskills was ready to bring back the Monster, and they turned to Jones for the job.



This new creature is actually a hybrid of the former Monster and the Concord's International course, which also laid dormant. The construction of the hotels and a nearby waterpark resort had taken some holes from each layout out of play. Jones and Swanson therefore created a routing over the land of the original Monster's first and ninth holes and most of the back nine, plus the International's first six and last three holes. Some of the original hole corridors have been reused and some



*The par-three fourteenth hole on the new Monster lies between the Kiamesha Creek and one of the site's lakes*

new hole corridors have been created in the redesign, but it is, to all intents and purposes, a new course.

“The beauty of it is that we were able to utilise more of the valley where the creek runs through the site, with a network of lakes,” says Swanson. “It’s a gorgeous setting, with striking areas of rolling terrain that offer dramatic views.”

Holes at the new Monster shift in direction and there are significant changes in elevation. “Already, people have talked about the variety,” says

Jones. “There’s no repetitive hole. Every hole has its own distinct characteristics. We were given a wonderful piece of property to create the new course.”

A key goal was to deliver a course that could be enjoyed by all. It would remain the Monster, but should be more playable than the name suggests.

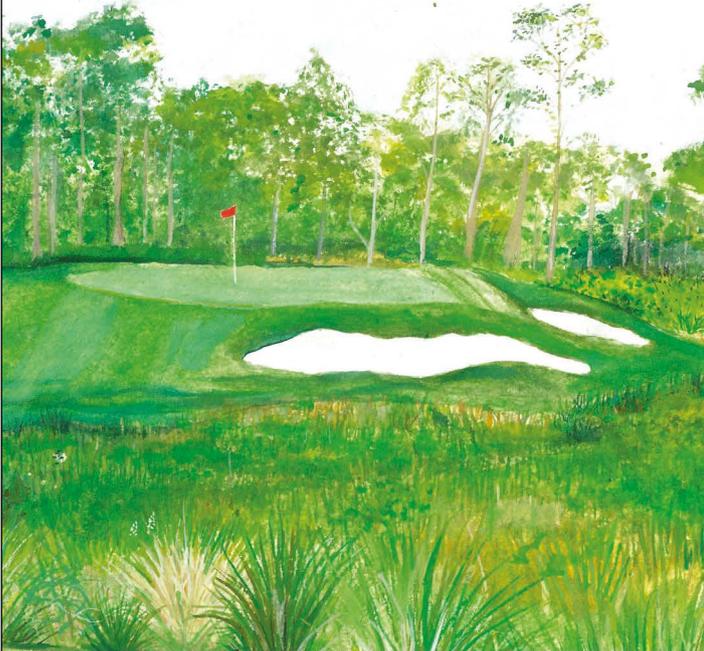
“We made it more flexible, with more shot options and bailout areas,” says Jones. “You can avoid the trouble. The era of the very difficult golf course with only forced carries, whether

it be over sand, fescue or water, has passed. Architects are still building championship-worthy golf courses, but by the same token we give the average golfer an alternate shot.”

This approach is typified on the twelfth, which plays alongside the Kiamesha Creek that runs through the centre of the property.

Previously, the hole was a challenging par-five. “After the drive you had to carry water to a tiny little landing area, then again to the green,” says Jones. “This was a do-or-die

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Photo by Jacob Sjöman

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

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*The par-five twelfth (right) and par-four thirteenth are located in a valley*

situation. Now any type of player can finish the hole.”

“The most significant thing we did was to move the green to a location in front of the creek,” says Swanson. “Then we backed up the tees so we were able to keep the yardage. The creek still protects the right side of the hole, and the long hitter has a heroic opportunity to challenge the green if they want.”

The Monster’s greens are unrecognisable to returning golfers. “We added a whole lot of variety,” says Swanson. “We designed them with more contour and movement, and changed them from simple ovals to a real mix of shapes. Every day will provide a different experience for the player.”

On that twelfth hole, for example, “the left portion is easier to access,

while the front right is harder,” explains Jones. “You have to think about the shot, depending on the pin location and distance required that day. If a guest is there for a week, they’re going to have a different golf course every day. The greens are

**“The greens are sizeable enough to rotate the pin positions and change the character of the hole”**

sizeable enough to rotate the pin positions and change the character of the hole.”

The new Monster has six sets of tees, allowing it to be played from 5,250 to 7,325 yards – which is still 325 yards shorter than Finger’s 1960s design.

There are moments of familiarity, particularly on the back nine. The corridors of the former seventeenth and eighteenth have been used for the sixteenth and eleventh. And the new closing hole occupies the former ninth, but now the green has been moved onto

a rock outcrop. “Golfers are going to be treated to a beautiful but challenging hole which could be considered one of the strongest holes you’ll see in the state of New York” say Jones.

This Monster may be kinder, but it still has some bite. **GCA**

# Bunker renovation the smart way

Brad Klein reports on Dan Hixson's carefully budgeted work at Bend GC in Oregon.

**I**n an era of big budget renovations and high-priced member assessments to pay for them, Bend Golf Club in central Oregon did it the old-fashioned way: modestly, efficiently and on time.

The club has undertaken a complete bunker renovation for all of \$550,000. That includes construction costs, material and design fees.

The work shut down no more than half the course at any one time and

cost members a whopping assessment of \$810 each. That covered just over half the total cost of the programme; the remaining \$250,000 came out of capital reserves. No debt was incurred. Welcome to the world of parsimony.

Bend GC dates to a 1925 design attributed to H. Chandler Egan. The provenance is questionable, since there is no record of Egan's work or presence on site – a gap in the annals compounded by a clubhouse move

in the late 1960s that did not seem to include club records. A simplistic layout map of the inaugural eighteen-hole layout bears the names of local civil engineer C.M. Redfield and that of a golf professional from Waverley Country Club in Portland, Bill Hanley.

Nine holes of that original plan were quickly abandoned after opening, leaving only the current back nine in place. A second nine, comprising holes one to nine, was designed by the father/son team of Robert Earl and Robert Lee Baldock and opened in 1971.

The course, but not the routing, was subsequently redesigned in 1992 by Bill Robinson, who installed his trademark symmetrical mounding along with extensive behind-the-green bunkering.

The course sits 162 miles southeast of downtown Portland. It sports the characteristic landforms and ponderosa pines/sagebrush flora of central Oregon's arid, high desert plain, 3,755 feet above sea level, just on the eastern downslope of the Cascade Range.

The latest bunker work, done between mid-March and late June 2023, is the product of Pacific Northwest course designer Dan Hixson. His original works include Bandon Crossing and Silvie's Valley Ranch in Oregon and Wine Valley CC in Washington. He has also undertaken renovation work throughout the region, including several



Photo: Bend Media

*Tree removal had already opened up the Bend site and brought back views across the course*



Photo: Bend Media

*Dan Hixson's plan called for scruffier bunkers with sod faces halfway down*

Egan courses, one being an extensive project at Oswego Lake CC near Portland that started in summer 2023.

At Bend, Hixson worked closely with superintendent Scott Moffenbeier, general manager Josh Coccagna and Ridgetop Construction, led by Casey Kalbrener. It helped to keep mobilisation costs down that Ridgetop had two other projects in the Bend area. Crew members were booked in a long-term Airbnb and equipment (excavators, dump trucks) did not have to be moved very far.

Hixson's plan called for a scruffier bunker style than the modernist, mounded look that Bend had adopted. Also, a more efficient one. What started as 47 bunkers totalling 38,000 square feet (809 square feet on

average), became 37 bunkers totalling 32,000 square feet (865 square feet on average). Superfluous rear bunkering was removed. Placement emphasised strategy to create meaningful shotmaking options. "Fewer bunkers, more significance," as Hixson summarised it.

There was no need for anything more than sod liners. Bend only gets 15 inches of rain annually, and by careful placement and shaping of the bunkers, the likelihood of washouts was avoided. Sod faces were brought halfway down, and the bunker floors were not flashed up. Instead of burying the club in extensive paperwork just to facilitate a bid, Hixson did bulk earthmoving calculations and sand volumes and then relied upon

drawings via iPad that were regularly sent off to the shapers.

A tree management plan implemented four to five years ago had already opened up the site and allowed for re-establishment of views from the tees. That also created a greater sense of the native land, which included 100 feet of elevation change across the 218-acre site.

One result of all the work is that golfers are hitting more drivers off the tee. They are also thinking more about what happens when the ball hits the ground.

As for how those bunkers are performing, Bend got an early test. On 3 September, the area got 0.65 inches (16.5 millimetres) of rain. "No washouts," reports superintendent Moffenbeier. **GCA**

HOLING OUT

Photo: PopStroke

## Once you pop...

Latest opening for Tiger Woods-backed brand exemplifies the rise in off-course golf engagement.

**A 2023 report from the National Golf Federation revealed that, for the first time, more people now play golf in the USA ‘off-course’, such as at driving ranges, putting courses and golf entertainment venues, than on the course.**

Almost 28 million people engaged with an off-course golf activity in 2022, approximately two million more than the number of on-course golfers.

In October 2023, PopStroke opened its newest venue – with two 18-hole putting courses designed by Tiger Woods’ firm and built with synthetic turf – in Scottsdale, Arizona, right next to the Salt River Fields at Talking Stick baseball complex and across the road from a Topgolf venue. “PopStroke is proud to deliver an unparalleled experience, catering to guests searching

for indelible memories, irrespective of age or skill level,” said founder and CEO Greg Bartoli. The business now has eight venues open and 15 more planned before the end of 2024.

PopStroke, like Topgolf, Drive Shack and others, is delivering an experience that in some ways is more akin to visiting a bowling alley or the cinema. A mobile app allows customers to order drinks and food to be delivered directly to them anywhere on the course, display scores on a digital scoreboard and keeps track of loyalty points. The venue also has a bar and restaurant with open-air seating, a kitchen and TVs showing sport.

With mini-golf a \$1 billion market – thanks to 5,000 courses in the USA and over 130 million people playing it every year – PopStroke looks set for success.

Crucially, there are no barriers to entry. You won’t find a dress code, weighty green fees or restrictions on mobile phone use (quite the opposite – the free publicity on social media is actively encouraged), and customers only need an hour or two for the full experience.

At the 2023 ASGCA annual meeting, golf course architect Kevin Atkinson delivered a presentation on putting courses, sharing several examples of beautifully designed layouts at resorts and country clubs throughout the United States. He did point out that several clubs were grappling with how to monetise these facilities, or achieve a return on their investment in design, construction and ongoing maintenance. Maybe a first step would be to lower some barriers. **GCA**

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