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golf design and development*

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ADAM LAWRENCE

Are signatures being erased?

In the last issue of *GCA*, we carried an interview with Jeremy Slessor, the boss of European Golf Design (EGD), the architectural firm owned by the European Tour.

EGD started off as a vehicle for projects that were marketed as signature designs by touring professionals, but in the last ten years or so, the firm's courses are now mostly billed to its four lead architects.

Of the first generation of big-name signature designers, Arnold Palmer is dead and both Jack Nicklaus and Gary Player are well into their eighties, so it is an easy conclusion to reach that this model is in retreat. Slessor told *GCA* that he believes many developers have concluded there are better ways to spend marketing budget than handing over a substantial signature fee.

But there are markets around the world, including some of the fastest-growing where this is not true. Slessor did add that the pro signature model was still very popular in Asian golf markets, and in Vietnam, the subject of our lead feature in this issue, it still seems to dominate. Of the top ten courses in Vietnam on *top100golfcourses.com*, three were designed by Greg Norman's firm, two by Jack Nicklaus's, one by Nick Faldo's and one is credited to Luke Donald and done by IMG's design office.

Why should this be so? The relative youth of golf in Vietnam is surely the main reason: when there is no great history of golf in a country, an obvious way to attract attention to the game is to bring in names that people who are not deeply enmeshed in the game might have heard of. Another is the lack of a domestic resident golf design industry. Only one of the top ten, Sky Lake's Lake course by Korean Ahn Moon Hwan, was designed by an Asian architect: if you are having to import designers, it makes sense that you would choose big names.

Will Vietnam grow its own domestic golf designers? Given the speed at which golf is taking off in the country, don't bet against it.

Adam



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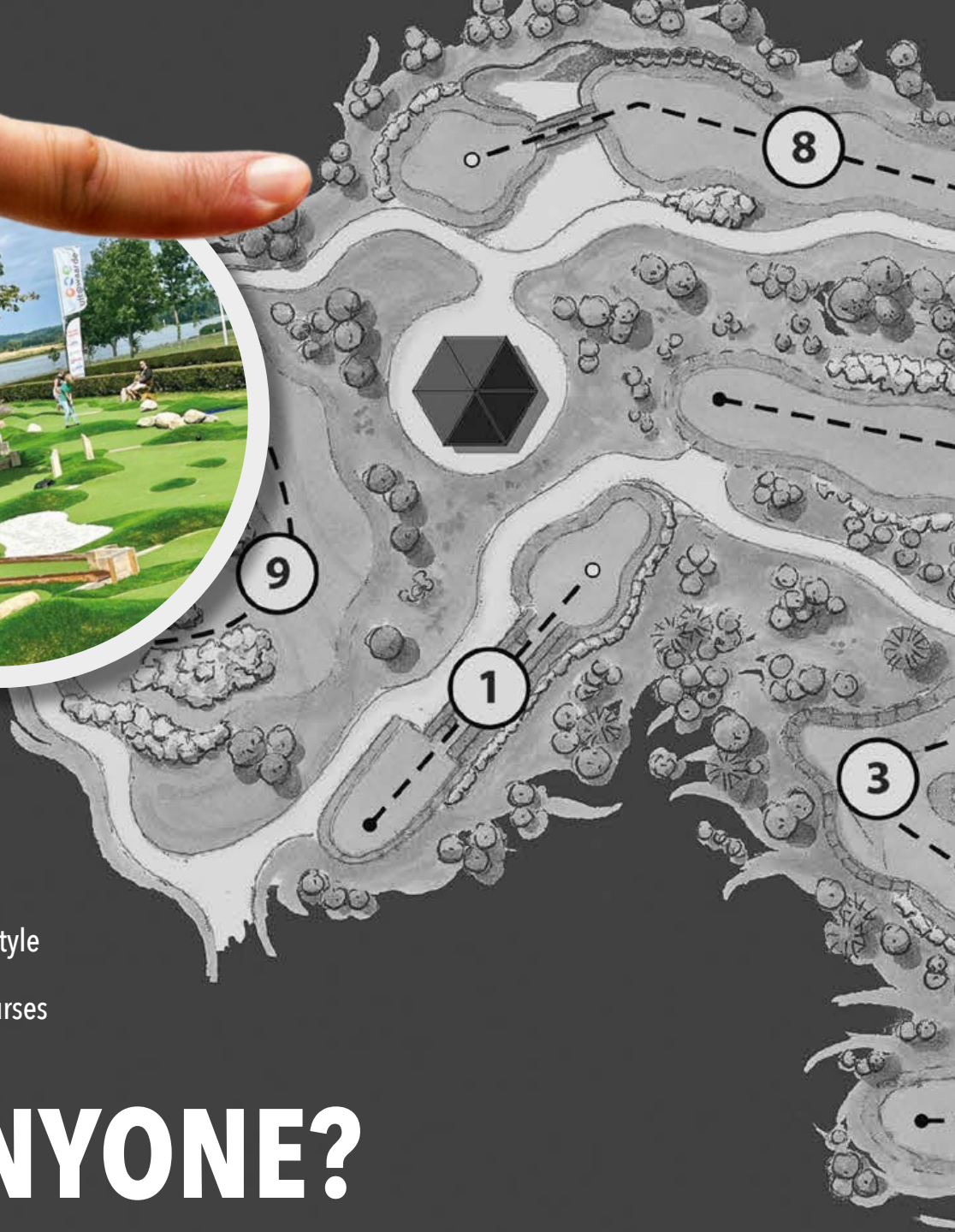
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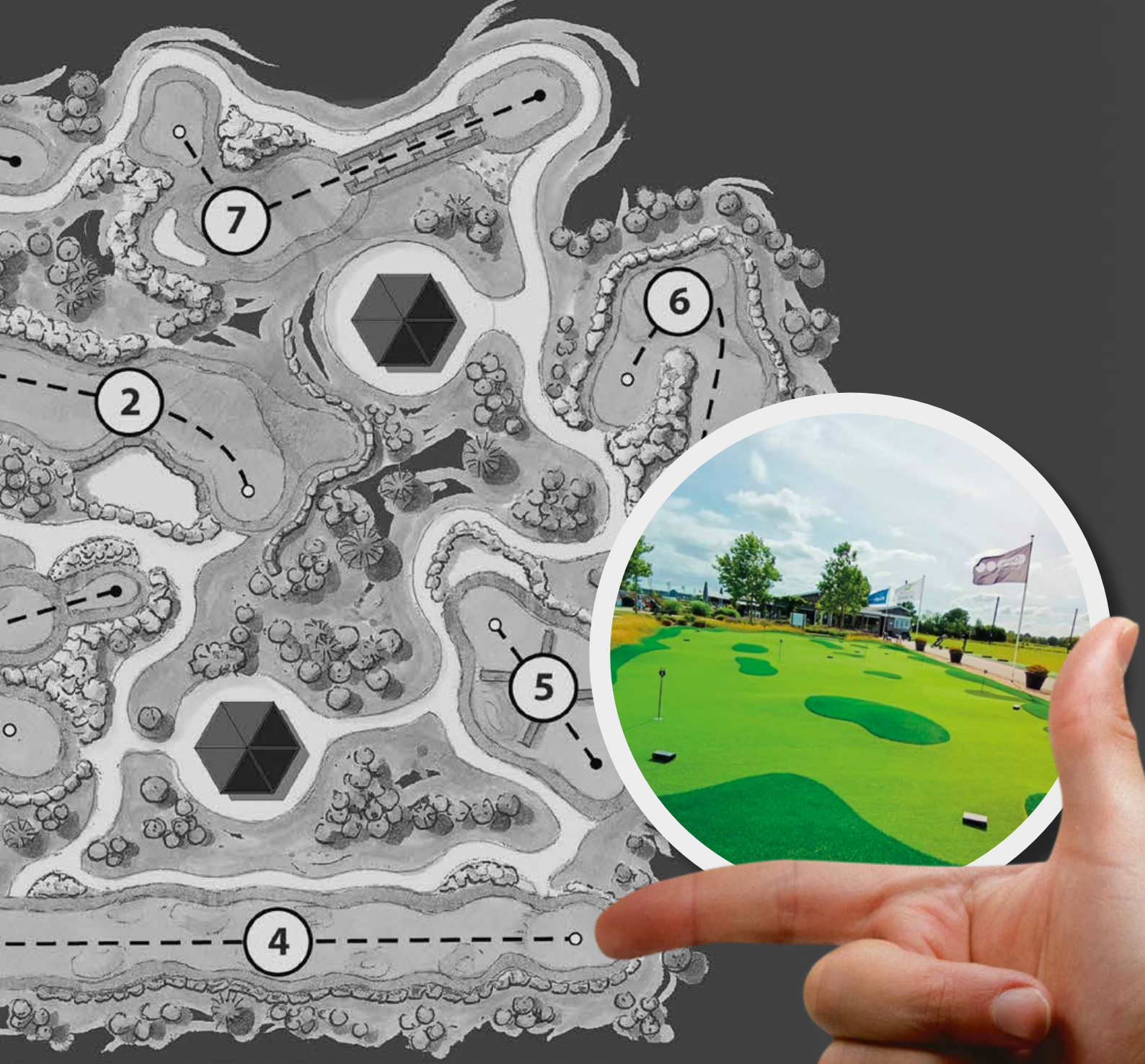
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Cover photograph courtesy of Bandon Dunes Golf Resort



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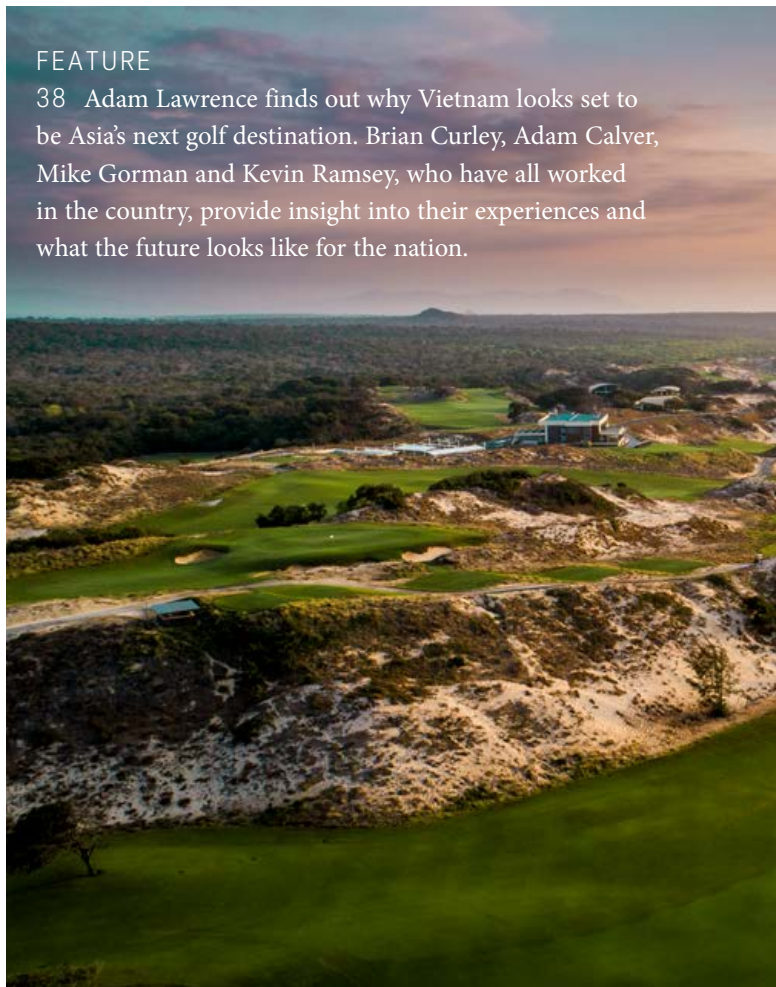
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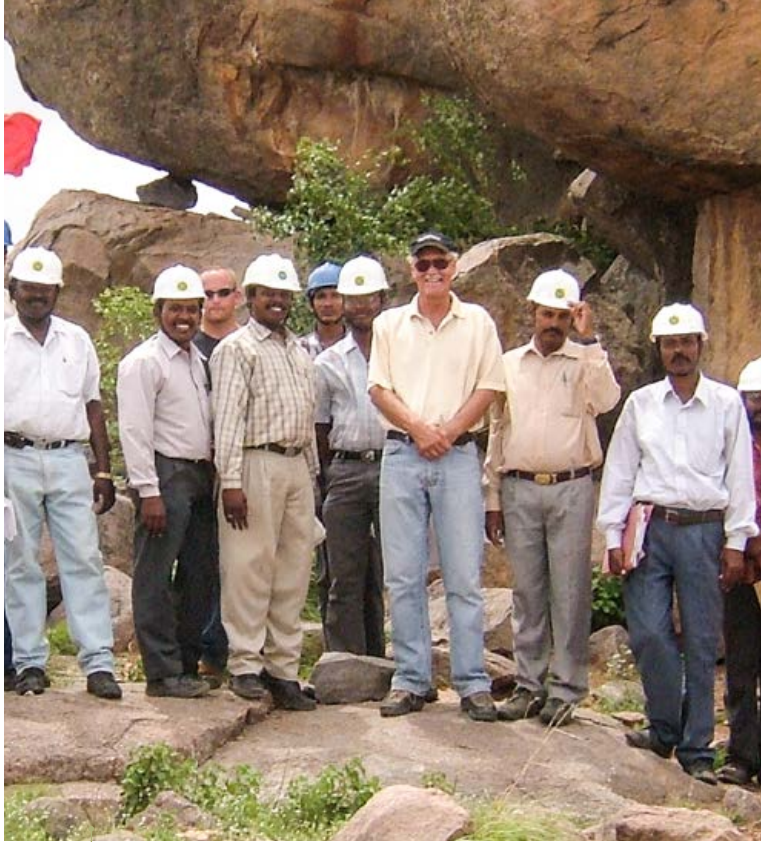
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TEE BOX

High Grove prepares for construction

Site for 150-member Florida club spans 1,200 acres of citrus groves on undulating sand dunes.

Construction of a new course by Hanse Golf Design for the 150-member High Grove club in Venus, Florida, is scheduled to begin in December 2024.

The private club, which will have a limit of 150 members, is the vision of co-founders Ryan Hanks, Colin Sheehan and Bert Guy.

Sheehan, former coach of the men's golf team at Yale and an advisor or founder to several projects including Ochoopee Match Club in Georgia and Tree Farm in South Carolina, and the development team scouted a 1,213-acre parcel at the southern end of the

100-mile-long Lake Wales Ridge with Valencia orange groves as the ideal location to build their golf destination. The site rises in elevation from 105 to 175 feet above sea level and has a 40-foot ridge running along the eastern side.

"The property is one of the most unique we have seen in Florida," said Jim Wagner of Hanse Golf Design. "It is not only the dramatic elevation change of the ridge but also the light-to-moderate sandy 'chop' throughout that defines the property. The entire property helped us set up an interesting routing that allows the sharper elevation of the ridge to be the showcase."

Once the clubhouse was assigned a central position, Hanse and Wagner began creating a routing that would take advantage of the site's ridge. The par-four fourth rides along the ridge and the fifth, a drop shot par three, plays off it. The par-five sixth climbs back up to a green defended by expansive bunkering. The par-four seventh plays back off the ridge. The eighth is on lower lying land and the short par-three ninth plays uphill over a massive waste bunker to a green close to the seventh tee.

The front nine is about anticipation and surprise," said Wagner. "There is the anticipation of playing through the citrus and unique 'chop' seen upon arrival, while wondering what the property and golf course has to offer. And then there's the surprise of the 30- to 50-foot elevation changes of the main ridge running through the property that will not be experienced until the middle of the front nine and not seen again until the finish of the back nine. The blend of these property characteristics helps to create the moments that will separate High Grove from most Florida golf experiences."

Holes 10 to 16 wind their way through a section of orange groves,



Photo: High Grove

The site for the High Grove club spans 1,200 acres of citrus groves on undulating sand dunes

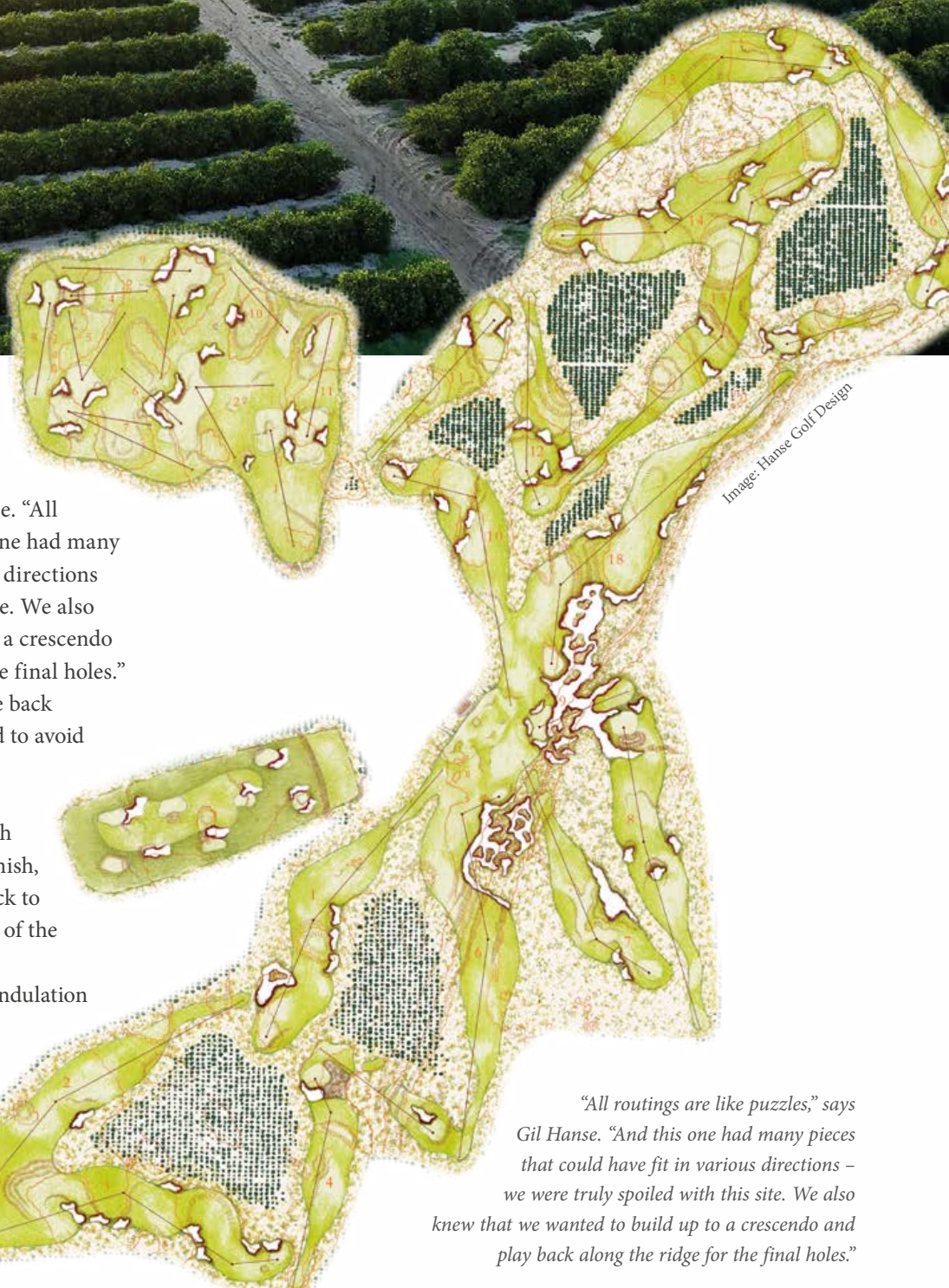


Image: Hanse Golf Design

ridge lines and valleys. “The contours were so good that we changed holes many times before settling on this final set,” said Hanse. “All routings are like puzzles, and this one had many pieces that could have fit in various directions – we were truly spoiled with this site. We also knew that we wanted to build up to a crescendo and play back along the ridge for the final holes.”

The ridge gets much steeper on the back nine and Hanse and Wagner wanted to avoid punishing walks at the end of the round. Their plan is for a par-three seventeenth and a par-five eighteenth that hug the ridge line. “With the finish, it was about bringing the players back to the ridge, which is really the theatre of the property,” said Wagner.

Faced with a site that has a lot of undulation and sand, Hanse and Wagner have been allowed to be quite creative with course features. Wagner said: “The key word for both greens and bunkers will be ‘unpredictable’. Our goal is to create interesting situations

“All routings are like puzzles,” says Gil Hanse. “And this one had many pieces that could have fit in various directions – we were truly spoiled with this site. We also knew that we wanted to build up to a crescendo and play back along the ridge for the final holes.”

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The High Grove developers plan to maintain the site's citrus groves within out of play areas and along the property perimeter

for the golfer to overcome while keeping them guessing. There will be a variety of greens shapes and sizes that will complement one another especially in the recovery shot game where the player will have numerous options.

“The bunkers will take on the personality of the site sandscape and be used to match the property character as opposed to competing against it. The existing exposed sand and native grasses will be utilised and expanded upon to create natural challenges for the players to navigate. There really isn't a ‘style’ of greens or bunkers we are looking to create, other than matching the beautiful setting of the property while allowing for fun playable golf.”

High Grove's identity will be complemented by the developers' plan to maintain groves within the out of play areas and along the property perimeter. Sheehan says: “While there are countless golf courses in Florida, not one of them, as far as we know, plays among citrus groves. We will also be introducing an attractive texture of

flora native to the Lake Wales Ridge, which we have seen as precedent at the nearby nature refuges.”

Hanse and Wagner have also designed an 11-hole par-three course on the northwest portion of the property, with holes between 102 to 188 yards. “The short course will have multiple routings for daily variety,” said Wagner. “We have also planned

said Sheehan. “It wasn't intended to be one of the many Florida real estate golf communities; instead, we will have cabins totalling 48 bedrooms.”

Sheehan, Hanks and Guy want High Grove to be different from the flurry of new golf courses that have been built in Florida. “The other new courses in the state are certainly closer to the coast, but they each begin as entirely flat

“High Grove is endowed with natural terrain and undulation that will make it stand out from others in Florida”

several greens and tees within close proximity of each other with the goal of enhancing social interaction.”

The project has no real estate component, with the developers planning on High Grove being a golf-driven development. Member equity shares start at \$200,000.

“This was always going to be a special-occasion, destination club where we anticipate members and their guests coming for one- and two-night stays,”

parcels ten feet above sea level,” said Sheehan. “Those flat-earth projects can be interesting as they force architects to create every single feature by shaping millions of cubic yards of earth, but High Grove is endowed with natural terrain and undulation that will make it stand out from those others.”

Hanse's build team Cavemen Construction are expected to complete work by summer 2025, with a planned opening by December 2025. **GCA**



Ebert revamps bunkers at Gog Magog

Gog Magog Golf Club in Cambridge, England, has completed the penultimate phase of a bunker project, which is being overseen by Martin Ebert of Mackenzie & Ebert.

Work on its Old course was completed in the winters of 2021-22 and 2022-23, while renovation of the Wandlebury course began in 2022 and will be completed by April 2025.

“For the Old, we wanted to keep the traditional style of the bunkering,” said Brad McLean, general manager at Gog Magog. “Martin proposed some relocations, but predominately rebuilt most bunkers in their original locations. The styling is more traditional, with flat bottoms and steeper faces built into the landscape.

“For Wandlebury, the brief was a bit different as we wanted to differentiate the two courses. We called for more defined revetted edges and much larger surface areas. The bunkering on many holes was more strategically imagined, and not only were landing areas considered but how the bunkering could add to the shape of the hole. The difference between the two styles is striking.”

The last phase of work, the renovation of the final six holes on Wandlebury, which also includes building a new fairway on the short par-four thirteenth, will start in October 2024.

“We chose to install China clay with its whiter appearance to help

the bunkers really stand out,” said McLean. “The maintenance of the sand has changed too. We get a lot of wind, which sometimes caused issues, but with this variety, we are finding it much more stable and at the same time, playable and consistent. We are now working to develop thin and wispy grasses so that the ball returns to the sand if it hits the face.”

Most of the construction work has been done in-house, led by estate manager Andrew Howarth, with some assistance from Paul Davies of Shapewright.

McLean picks out the sixteenth (pictured) as a hole that demonstrates the positive impact of the renovation work on the Old. “Off the tee you can



Kristine Kerr continues Omaha Beach renovation



Photo: Kura Golf Course Design

Omaha Beach Golf Club near Auckland, New Zealand, has reopened its eighteenth hole, part of an ongoing renovation by Kristine Kerr.

The club originally opened in 1975 with a nine-hole layout, and nine more holes were added in the 2000s. The original nine, now played as holes one to three and thirteen to eighteen, was built on the northern portion of the site, “a low-lying, sandy peninsula with virtually no elevation change,” said Kerr. “These holes suffered drainage issues in winter and periods of heavy rain, with a high water table.”

The south nine was built with modern techniques and incorporated shaping from adjacent sand dunes. “Our work was to update the north nine to harmonise with the south,” said Kerr.

This has involved bunker work on fourteen and a remodelling of fifteen, seventeen and eighteen. “The turfgrass bore the brunt of the poor drainage and age,” said Kerr. “All three were completely reshaped, elevated, include new bunkering and grass, better integrate with new wetlands and maximise the relationship and views of the adjacent harbour.”

see the entire hole, now with stunning China clay sand and imposing bunkering,” he said. “There are two cross bunkers that longer hitters can reach, but for the shorter hitters, there are bunkers either side of the fairway that could catch slightly wayward shots. The hole also runs alongside First World War training trenches that have been recently excavated, and we have evidence that mock battles were held across the sixteenth fairway – a fabulous golf hole with a sobering history.”

Work on Wandlebury has required a different approach. “We have been more cautious in how we maintain the edges, allowing the grasses to grow a bit longer than preferred so that the

structure of the revet is maintained,” said McLean. “But the crisp wavy edges of the bunkers has helped to produce a more modern looking course.”

The club has finished the tenth and eleventh holes on the Wandlebury this winter. “The tenth is a sweeping downhill par four with large, staggered bunkering on either side of the fairway,” said McLean. “Whereas the eleventh is a short dogleg left with bunkers on either side of the fairway and near the green, with a pot bunker located 30 yards out to catch any shots that may be running into the green or off the drive. As it is a short hole with substantial bunkering, it now requires the player to think their way through the hole.”

THE BIG PICTURE

The new Sedge Valley course at Sand Valley Golf Resort in Wisconsin, designed by Tom Doak and photographed by Kevin Murray.

Doak took inspiration from classic English heathland and links designs for Sand Valley's latest course, allowing the land to dictate a quirky routing with several short par fours, back-to-back par threes and just one par five, albeit maybe the longest in the state. The result is a layout that is more intimate than its three big brothers – Sand Valley, Mammoth Dunes and the Lido – with a notably lower total yardage. When it opens in July 2024 there will be plenty who will rank it top of the pack.

This image shows the green at the par-four fifteenth, which has a central bunker set into a huge rise in the fairway. Golfers that fail to carry the crest may well be left without a view of the putting surface for their approach.

GCA visited Sedge Valley in late 2023 and an On Site report will appear in the July 2024 issue.

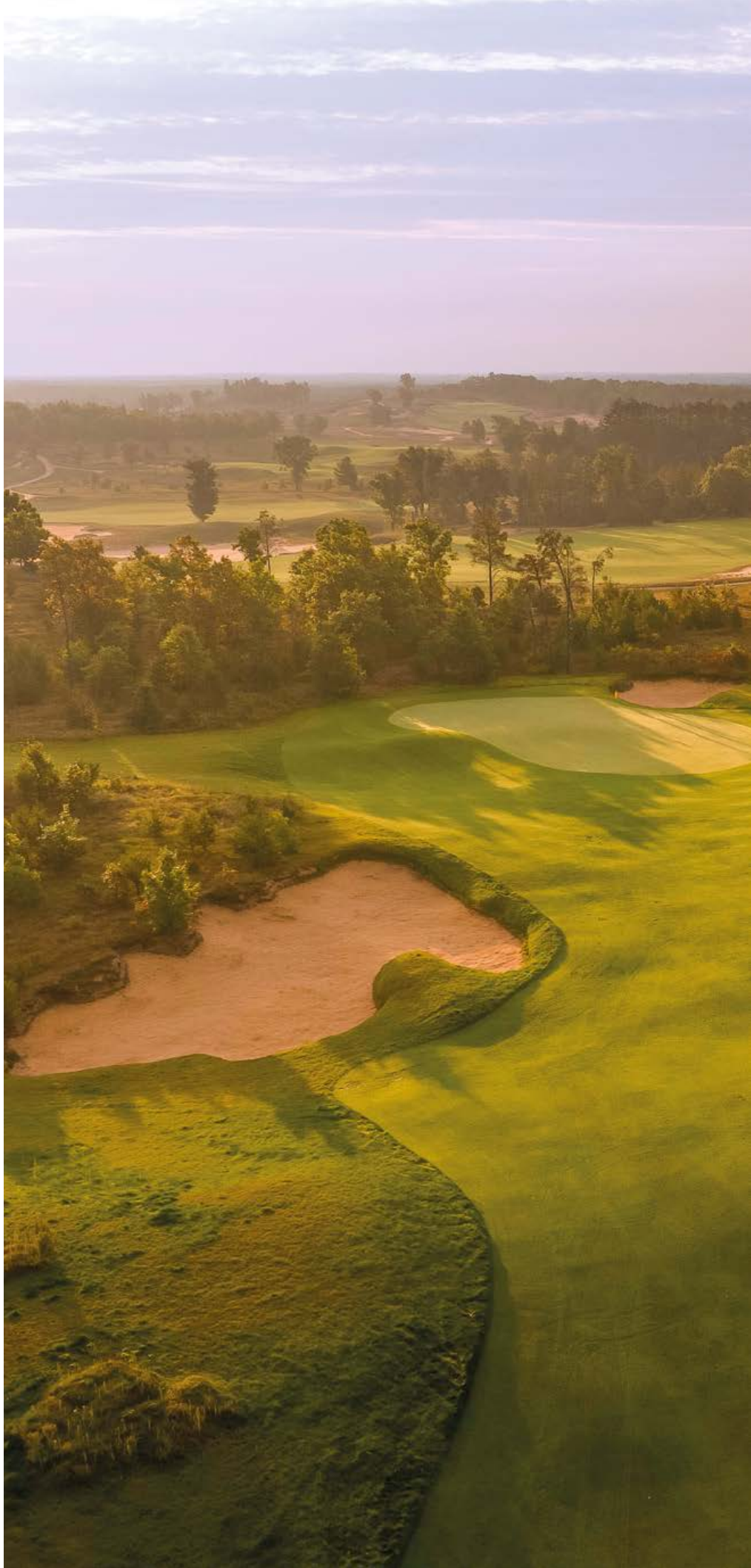




Photo: Kevin Murray

Construction of new course begins at Rodeo Dunes

Ground has broken on the first of two new courses at Rodeo Dunes, 50 miles northeast of Denver, Colorado.

Rodeo Dunes will be Dream Golf's third destination after Bandon Dunes in Oregon and Sand Valley in Wisconsin. Developers Michael and Chris Keiser announced the project last year, with Bill Coore and Ben Crenshaw designing

one course and their associate Jim Craig creating the other, which will be his solo design debut. The Keisers say there is the potential for six courses to be built on the 2,000-plus acre site of pure sand.

"If it weren't for the mountain range in the distance, you could very easily mistake this site for one in Ireland," said Michael Keiser. "Sand Hills is my

inspiration here, it is golf in its rawest form, stripped of everything that is unessential, that's what Rodeo Dunes is and needs to be. Its success will be having the discipline to let go of our egos and letting it be what it wants to be."

The first course is on track to open in 2026, with some preview play available prior to the grand opening.



Kidd returns to Tributary to revamp bunkers

David McLay Kidd has completed a bunker renovation at the Tributary club in Driggs, Idaho.

Formerly known as Huntsman Springs, Kidd originally designed the course in 2008. Last year, he was brought back and, along with superintendent Guy Johnson, identified the bunkers as in need of improvement. "The project has been a complete renovation, including the removal of some, adding new ones in, recutting every edge and installing Profile's

Flexterra solution for erosion control," said Kidd. "Edges leading into bunkers have been cut back, returning bunkers to their original shape and making them easier to maintain.

"The course originally had around 150 bunkers, many of which had little strategic purpose other than the visual 'ooh ah' moment. We took a couple dozen out, mainly the ones that were only penalising bad shots. And we made a few bunkers bigger... the ones that were guarding the tightest lines."





Photo: Nick Kelley, courtesy of Rodeo Dunes



Photo: DMK Golf Design



Photo: PGA Tour

Welling focuses on playability at Atlanta CC

Atlanta Country Club in Georgia has reopened its golf course following a renovation by Beau Welling Design.

The Willard Byrd layout first opened in 1956 and went on to host the inaugural Players Championship in 1974 and the Atlanta Classic on the PGA Tour between 1967 and 1996.

While most of Welling’s work has been executed in honour of Byrd’s original design, the par-three third and par-five eleventh were substantially redesigned. On the third, tees were expanded by 40 per cent and shifted to the left, with the green and greenside bunkers altered slightly. At the eleventh, the fairway was lowered by an average of eight feet and the green was lowered by 25 feet to bring the pond right of the green more

into play. A front greenside bunker was removed, and the green was reshaped to slope front-to-back.

Changes have also been made to “recalibrate the bunkering strategy”, with hazards now also featuring liner from Bunker Solution.

“For many years, Byrd’s design challenged the game’s greats as a prominent venue for championship golf,” said Welling. “With this renovation, Atlanta Country Club will no doubt continue to be a true test for the elite player, but I’m even more excited about what this will do for the membership and their guests who will enjoy the elevated playability and sense of community that we hope to inspire with all our designs.”



Q&A
with Steve Marnoch

“Heather is an asset that should be protected and developed as much as possible”

Steve Marnoch talks about his Matlock project, where he has reshaped bunkers and started to reintroduce heather.

Steve Marnoch has overseen the completion of another phase of bunker and heather work at Matlock Golf Club in Derbyshire, England.

The Scottish architect has been carrying out renovation work on 26 bunkers that were deemed “out of date” on the 1906 Tom Williamson layout. The first phase, which began in November 2022, focused on holes one

to four, with the second taking place in December 2023 with four more holes worked on.

“As with many older courses, Matlock’s bunkers had lost their shape, their relevance and often penalise high handicap players rather than offer a varied playing strategy to challenge all levels of golfer,” said Marnoch.

The architect’s heather plan is part of an initiative to rewild the site, which also includes tree removal to open up the moorland property and enable the heather to thrive, as well as eradicating large areas of bracken.

Why was a rebunkering project necessary for Matlock?

In combination with the rewilding of the course, our new bunker style fits into this theme. In an open, often windy setting, shallow bunkers do not function well, and sand can be lost. Our new bunker shapes are far more random with patches of heather here and there and shaped so that the internal sanded areas ‘hunker down’ and are protected from the wind, yet not being so deep to be unfair.

Patches of heather were translocated to characterise new bunker banks and other areas to influence play. Where bunkers had become redundant, opportunities arose to relandscape these as wilder heather areas with some sand scrapes and heather patches, gorse and self-seeded pines. These give a far more natural appearance and

A fairway bunker and heather have been added on the right side of the seventh to act as a visual reference and to better protect players teeing off on the nearby fifteenth

Photo: Steve Marnoch



The new heather-clad fairway bunker on the 255-yard par-four fourteenth better defines the hole and protects the green from a running approach shot

Photo: Steve Marnoch



offer a wide range of habitat benefits compared to just taking the old bunkers away and reurfing.

How will your changes impact the playing experience?

The strategy of the fairway bunkers was pretty much non-existent but now, on certain holes, such as the first, seventh and fourteenth, the new bunkers help to guide play. At the greens, the former bunkers did little but catch an already poor shot. Now, they tighten up the greenside pin positions and define green entrances, which, in turn, define which side of the fairway will offer the best approach.

The surrounding, rugged features have also been brought more into play, connecting the man-made golf holes with the natural landscape and influencing play, for example at the side of the par-three fifteenth.

Naturally sited bunkers with randomly-shaped edges – some with heather patches around them and some with their edges connecting with the natural rough native grasses

– will fit far better within an upland moorland than the flat meaningless saucers with no connection or relevance to their surroundings.

What benefits will the heather programme bring to the club?

Heather is commonly recognised as a vital habitat for wildlife and an enjoyable feature when playing a round of golf. Heather is an asset that should be protected and developed as much as possible throughout the golf course. Where it is suspected to be in the ground as dormant seed, this hidden gold should be exposed and brought back to its former glory.

The original site must have been covered in heather – it is visible in paintings in the clubhouse. However, years of unmanaged planting has gradually transformed Matlock from open moorland to more of a parkland layout. Extensive maintenance has also suppressed heather from developing properly.

The rewilding plan for Matlock intends to turn this situation

around. Tree clearance, particularly between holes twelve to seventeen, of undesirable species will help with the heather development and improve the health of the grasses around the playing surfaces. This will also help to open the site in the higher areas, defining these as moorland again, whilst the land alongside Bentley Brook, which runs through the course, can be managed as attractive woodland.

Altering the mowing regimes around known heather areas to allow these to develop and flower in the autumn will also provide better definition and separate the fairways.

We are also translocating mature heather and spreading a locally sourced mixed heather seed. And in areas suspected of containing dormant heather seed, such as between holes six, seven and eight, we are carrying out turf stripping down to the black layer to allow that heather to germinate.

Read more about the renovation project at www.golfcoursearchitecture.net

New Gary Player course takes shape in Montenegro



Image: Gary Player Design

A visualisation of the Gary Player Design layout at Lustica Bay

Construction is under way on the Lustica Bay golf course in Montenegro. The layout has been designed by Gary Player and his lead associate Steven McFarlane.

Lustica Development and Orascom Development Holdings are financing the development – on the Lustica Peninsula, a little south of Dubrovnik in Croatia, on the Adriatic Sea – where a marina, village and five-star hotel, The Chedi Luštica Bay, are now all complete.

“The property is on a spectacular site overlooking the Adriatic Sea,” said Player, whose firm developed a masterplan for the layout in 2012,

working alongside architects EDSA. “The topography is quite severe and very rocky with low growing vegetation throughout; it also has an elevation difference of more than 200 metres. A detailed programme was prepared to balance earthworks and to excavate down into the site to produce natural looking holes that transition into the surrounding terrain.

“Fairways have been designed with bold contours and multiple tiers to traverse the steep gradients. Great care has been taken to preserve as much of the surrounding vegetation to create an immediate maturity for the golf course.”

ProGolf began construction in 2023 and will complete the course in phases. Bunkers are being built with the EcoBunker system. “The steep topography of the site influenced the design of greens and bunkers,” said Player. “Bunkers are predominantly small bold features with steep grass faces that punctuate and define the undulating and rolling fairways and green complexes.

“Greens are slightly smaller than we would normally design so that they sit as naturally as possible into the terrain. This will make approach shots into them quite challenging, but

on almost every hole, the high side of each green will be very receptive and provide a bailout option for the less proficient golfer. The creeping bentgrass putting surfaces will be very fast so we have designed gentle contours to accommodate multiple pin locations. The stylised and manicured green complexes will create a stunning contrast with the surrounding rugged natural terrain.”

Nine holes are expected to be ready by 2026 and the full eighteen open by 2028.

“The main factors that influenced the routing were the steep topography, dramatic elevation changes, long-range views of the Adriatic Sea, Kotor Bay and Boka Bay mountains, and the integration of the holes with the proposed villa development,” said Player. “The rocky nature of the substrata is extremely challenging and will require jackhammers to be used on every hole. One valuable benefit of this is that we are processing the rock on site to produce our own gravel for capping and drainage.

“With so many incredible holes with stunning panoramic views, it is difficult to pick just one standout. But I would say the run of holes from fourteen to seventeen is going to be an incredible combination. This sequence contains two par threes, a par four and a par five all playing downhill with views of the Adriatic on every shot.”

Lustica Bay will be the first golf course in Montenegro. “It is with great pride that we are expanding the game of golf around the world,” said Player.



Photo: OCM Golf

OCM continues greens redesign at Mount Lawley

Mount Lawley Golf Club near Perth, Australia, has reopened its course following renovation work by OCM Golf, which has included the reconstruction of eight green complexes and some fairway rebunkering.

Four greens were rebuilt in 2022 and a final phase, to be undertaken later this year, will focus on the remaining six greens, rebuilding tees, and creating a new short-game area and practice putting green.

“The green complexes have all been redesigned with new contours and bunkering schemes, based on fairly classic principles of strategic design,” said Mike Cocking of OCM. “For the most part, greens feature long tilted grades and fairly subtle contours but it’s the bunkering where the real similarities to the Melbourne Sandbelt exist.”



Photo: The Club Company

Gaunt improves bunker visibility at Lichfield

Lichfield Golf and Country Club in Staffordshire, England, has reopened its course following a bunker renovation by Jonathan Gaunt.

The project was completed in two phases, one in 2021 and a second in 2023, and included the removal of bunkers that had lost relevance due to advances in distance. “We reduced the sand areas down in the bunkers we have retained,” said Gaunt. “The new bunkers are raised and designed to be significantly more visible from the tees and landing areas. They will have more of a psychological impact upon the golfer playing the course.”

Lichfield is operated by The Club Company, and Gaunt is also renovating four of its other courses: The Club at Cams Hall Estate in Hampshire, Castle Royle in Berkshire, Nizels Golf and Country Club in Kent, and The Tytherington Club in Cheshire.

TEE BOX

Image: Fry/Straka



A pond comes into play on the first, seventh and eighteenth holes

According to architect Jason Straka, holes five and six, which share a fairway, are being built on locations “where iron was forged centuries ago”

COURSE BLUEPRINT

Curracloe Links

Construction has started on Curracloe Links, a new golf course designed by Dana Fry and Jason Straka, located on the east coast of Ireland.

The layout is being built on land that had previously been used for farming, a few hundred metres from Curracloe Beach, the filming location for Steven Spielberg’s *Saving Private Ryan*, and next to Neville Hotels’ newest property, Ravenport Resort.

“It’s a compact site, so gaining a reasonable length was critical,” said

Straka. “After several week-long trips to study the land and surrounds, we began with several routings on paper. We had to ensure the golf course had a good balance of length, walkability and amenities such as a short-game areas.”

The €20 million (\$27.1 million) project will be Neville Hotel’s second golf-oriented property in Ireland, following the renovation of the Pat Ruddy and Tom Craddock-designed course at Druids Glen in 2023.

“The views to the ocean and into the town of Wexford and its harbour were a must,” said Straka. “The site is bisected by a typical, Irish rock-walled road that runs to Curracloe Beach. The south side of the site is linear, so you’ll see holes two to seven are very much oriented east and west. These holes are in between the road and a large wetland that separates the course from a large line of dunes. It’s perfect golf terrain with excellent views across



The par-three eleventh plays over a deep chasm of gorse

One of the first holes identified by the design team was the tenth, which sits in a massive valley running north

A large sand ridge, first encountered on the eighth, is a key feature of the north side of the course

the dunes and into the ocean. Even on foggy days you will hear the waves crashing and shore birds squawking from this stretch of holes.”

Holes one and eighteen will be built high up on a promontory along with the clubhouse and villas. “The first and eighteenth also utilise an existing on-site pond,” said Straka. “This pond was used by sheep for drinking and bathing in generations past and will continue to be, with a sheep farm immediately west of the course.

“Holes eight and nine traverse a large sand ridge to bring golfers to the upper part of the north side of the course. The tenth was identified very early on as it sits in a massive valley running northwards. Similarly, eleven was also chosen early on – it’s a short par three that plays level, but over a very deep chasm filled with gorse and has a backdrop of an Irish rock-walled country road.”

The greens on holes nine, thirteen and seventeen have long views from the site’s ridge tops.

“Greens will be individually shaped on site, but their locations were chosen for a variety of views and unique shotmaking,” said Straka. “Some are infinity greens while others are more punchbowl.

“Everything will be fescue, so greens and surrounds will be maintained very much the same, with the ground game definitely in play. Bunkers will be to a blowout style, meaning we’ll rough them in and then hydroseed them. Once established we’ll go out and hand edge them and fill with sand. The secondary rough will consist of exposed sand and fescue.”

The 18-hole layout will be the first in Ireland to be designed by Fry and Straka. “Using the natural topography was critical,” said Straka. “Every hole has unique features – some are views to the sea, sheep farms or the clubhouse, while others are sand ridges that serve as places for skyline greens or backdrops. Holes five and six have archaic locations where iron was forged centuries ago. This story will be told as golfers pass these locations.”

GOOD READ

“The wilder the better”

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* – Kevin Atkinson, John Fought and Raymond Hearn discuss whether putting courses are a good investment, and what gives them the best chance for success.

“My mentality is almost the wilder the better, because this is for entertainment,” says Atkinson, who has designed putting courses at two country clubs in his home state of Colorado: Red Rocks and Boulder. “We’re not creating these putting courses for practice, it is about laughing and having fun. The direct ROI from the Boulder and Red Rocks putting courses is the food and beverage.”

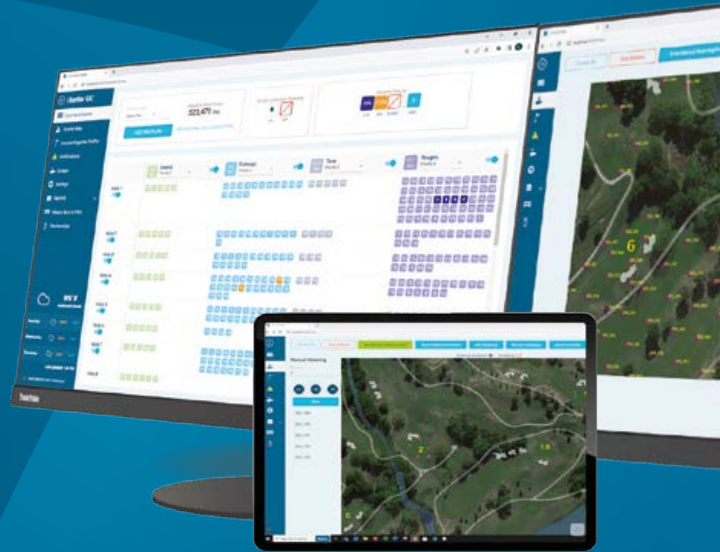
The Spring issue of *By Design* also includes advice on native grasses from Dave Kaplow, a case study on Greg Martin’s Settlers Hill project, details on the BIRDIE Act and a sketch from Jeff Danner for a proposed project in Portugal.

To download the latest issue and subscribe to *By Design*, visit

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Photo: Brian Walters

New course opens at Saint John's Resort in Detroit

The Cardinal, a new course designed by Raymond Hearn, will open this spring at Saint John's Resort in the Plymouth suburb of Detroit, Michigan. The multimillion-dollar project was commissioned by the Pulte Family Foundation, which acquired the resort in 2021.

The course was built on the site of the resort's previous 27 holes. Almost nothing remains of the original holes other than some playing corridors that were altered. Hearn also designed a seven-hole par-three layout and a two-acre Himalayas-style putting course.

"Saint John's landscape is incredible," said Hearn. "It has a variety of natural features such as prairie, woodlands, ridges, valleys and water. Add to those a collection of 100-year-old trees and you have a special setting."

Hearn highlights the par-five fifth as one of the standout holes. "At 535 yards from the back tees, it is relatively short by today's standards, but is an interesting journey," said Hearn. The tee shot requires a carry over a pond, with the more forward tees cutting off the distance to the fairway. A creek, wetlands and a large tree pinch the

fairway at the landing zone, challenging longer hitters. "Better players may go for it in two, using the back-left bunker as a target," said Hearn. "That, however, brings into play a second pond, wetlands and slopes around the green. The reward is a chance at eagle but bogey or worse is a possibility if you unsuccessfully negotiate the natural hazards."

Hearn has also included a church pew bunker complex on the ninth hole (pictured), which plays alongside the resort (its chapel is located inside). Bunkers on the course feature ProAngle sand and liner from Better Billy Bunker.



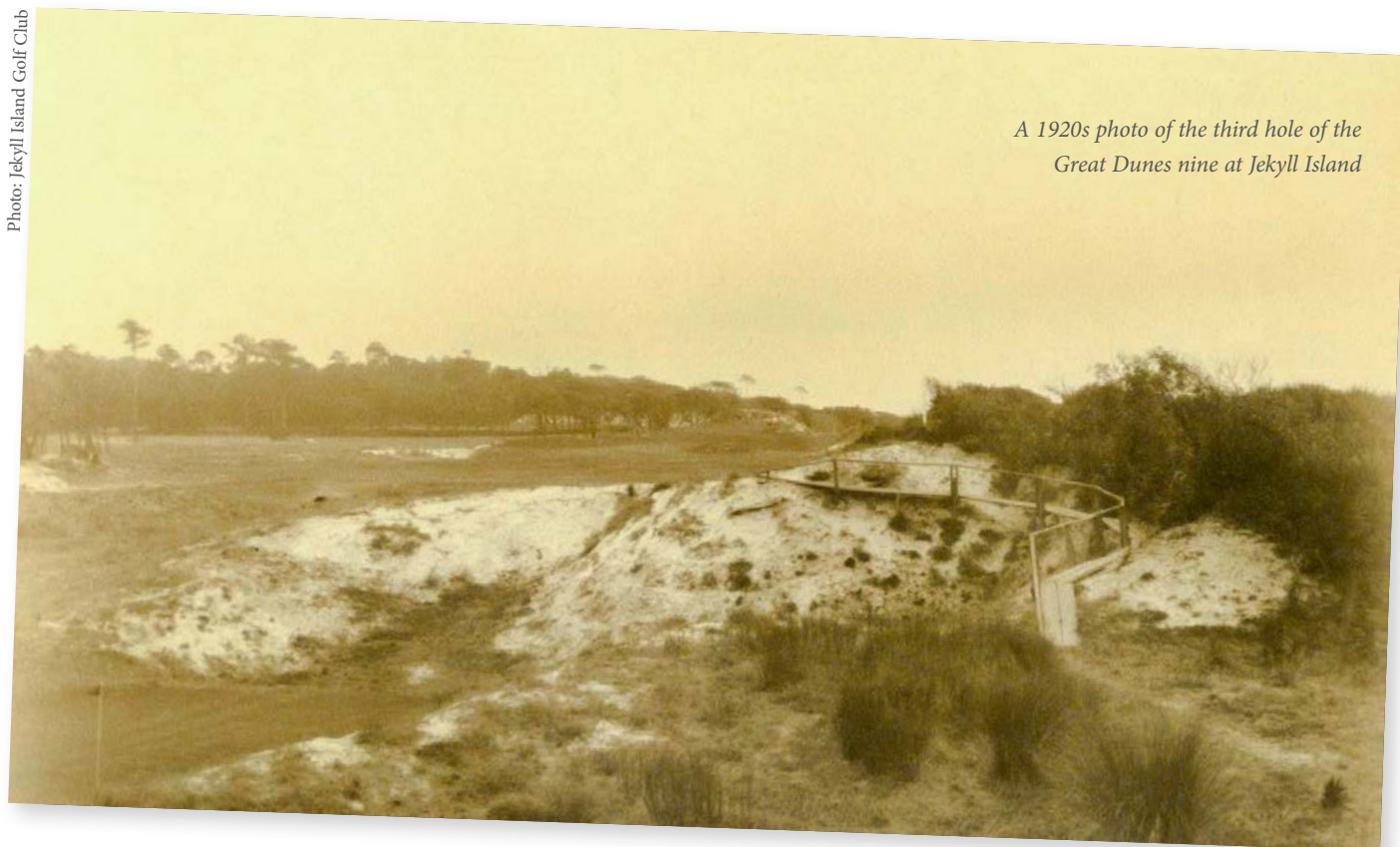
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Photo: Jekyll Island Golf Club



A 1920s photo of the third hole of the Great Dunes nine at Jekyll Island

FROM THE ARCHIVE

Walter Travis inspires Ross and Stein for Jekyll Island project

Brian Ross and Jeff Stein have developed a masterplan for an 18-hole Great Dunes course at Jekyll Island Golf Club in Georgia, with construction expected to begin in October 2024.

In 2023, the Jekyll Island Authority (JIA) hired the architects to restore the Walter Travis-designed Great Dunes nine and create nine new Travis-inspired holes on a portion of the club’s existing Oleander course. The front nine of Oleander will be redeveloped to become holes one to three and thirteen to eighteen in the new routing. Seven of the remaining nine holes will be given over to the island’s conservation department.

Ross and Stein have been referencing historic materials from an archive maintained by the JIA, which has

records dating back to the late 19th century as well as aerials and ground-level images from the 1920s. “These photos are perfect in guiding us on aesthetics,” said Ross. “We can even see how the greens have altered, especially their elevations.”

The pair have also made visits to East Potomac Park, Troy, Cape Arundel and Hollywood – all Travis designs – with greens drawings, photos and lidar scans from each proving useful. “Troy and Cape Arundel have hardly changed, so their greens are great as a reference,” said Stein. “Their strategies have even inspired us for some of our creations at Great Dunes. We’re also thinking of replicating the strategy of the twelfth green at Garden City where giant mounds flank the left and right sides,

with a smaller one at the back. We’d love to bring that concept to a par three at Great Dunes.

“The big telltale sign that we’ve seen in Travis’s work is that he uses diagonal swales through his greens and has abrupt transitions. The swales will turn along the line of play – they’re not always in the same direction. Travis greens are intricately designed and underrated.”

Ross adds: “We recently spoke with the National Links Trust about public golf being accessible, but not always compelling. Our goal at Great Dunes is to be compelling and show what Travis was all about.”

Read more about the Great Dunes project on www.golfcoursearchitecture.net

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CDP starts developing plans for Royal Belfast's Colt course

The Royal Belfast Golf Club in Holywood, Northern Ireland, has appointed Clayton, DeVries & Pont to develop a long-term plan for its course.

CDP's Frank Pont and Hendrik Hilgert are authoring the plan, with other CDP members assisting as and when needed.

"Harry Colt took full advantage of this beautiful, elevated site delivering a great course with spectacular views over Belfast Lough," said Hilgert. "As with our work when restoring other courses of his in Europe and the United States, recommended changes will remain true to his design philosophies."

"We are thrilled to be assisting two of Ireland's oldest clubs, Royal Belfast and Royal Dublin, both of whose courses were designed by Harry Colt," said Edward Cartwright, head of GB&I at CDP. "Our partners have now provided advice to 36 clients with Colt company-designed courses in seven countries."

GOPHER WATCH

Sandy went for a stroll through the bucolic English countryside at Tadmarton Heath in Oxfordshire in the January issue. Opened in 1922, and designed by Cecil Key Hutchison, and located close to the town of Banbury, Tadmarton is, in many ways, a blast from the past: its fairways are unirrigated, so become extremely firm and bouncy in a dry summer; its charming Cotswold stone clubhouse, once a farmhouse, offers a warm welcome, and the abundance of gorse on the course means it can play much tougher than its 6,043 yards might suggest. Kai Tore Breiland of Røyken in Norway figured it out, and we hope he will wear his much sought-after GCA shirt with pride.

From a small, homely English course, Sandy has gone completely to the other extreme in this issue, finding himself on



the longest course ever to host the US Open. Reckon you know where he is, and fancy sporting one of our shirts? Send your answer to gopher@golfcoursearchitecture.net.



LEADER IN **2 INCH** PIPE DRAINAGE

FAIRWAYS & GREENS

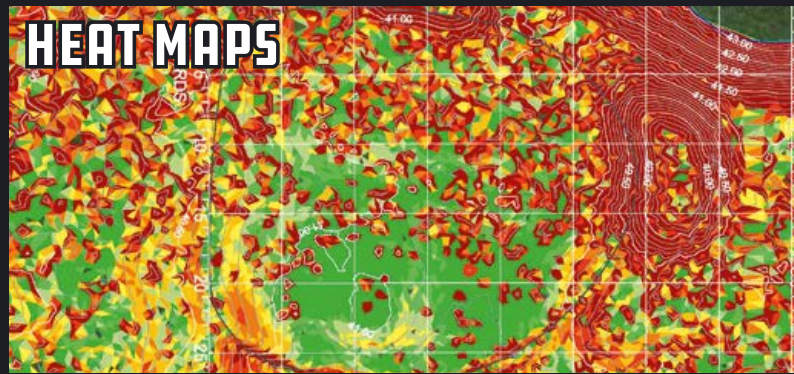
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Jones letter inspires Benkusky's work at Point O' Woods

This autumn, Mike Benkusky is returning to Point O' Woods Golf & Country Club in Benton Harbor, Michigan, to oversee a complete bunker renovation.

The project follows on from two others the architect has undertaken at the club. The first was the installation of new fairway drainage, which was completed in 2022, while the second was the rebuild of the short-game bunkers (pictured) and construction of a new 20,000-square-foot practice green, completed in 2023.

The forthcoming work will see bunkers updated with Better Billy Bunker liner and new Signature BestSand.

“As one of Robert Trent Jones’ more prominent golf course designs, our intent is to keep the current architecture whilst updating the course to meet modern standards,” said Benkusky. “The shaping improvements will be modest and will create more variety in



the sand lines whilst updating the golf course with a fresh, new look.”

A letter that Jones wrote on his final visit to the course around 40 years ago has provided inspiration for Benkusky. “In the letter he referenced adding bunkers to both the sixth and fifteenth fairways to improve the aesthetics and challenge of each hole,” he said. “Also, a select number of bunkers will either

be extended, combined or deepened to create more variety and increase difficulty where it is warranted.”

“It’s been a pleasure working with Mike and the Point O’ Woods membership on these projects,” said Adam Roels, director of golf course operations. “A lot of time and effort has been taken to update and preserve this classically designed Robert Trent Jones course.”

Bois d’Arlon in Belgium opens Heath course

Bois d’Arlon Golf and Resort in southern Belgium has opened nine holes of its new 18-hole Heath course, designed by Stuart Hallett.

Hallett’s design was created to complement the site’s natural landforms. “I picked out a few green sites on my first visit thanks to some very exciting features,” he said. “I wanted to exploit the natural landscape to build what I believe are some standout golf holes, including the fourth green, holes five, six and fourteen, and part of fifteen. This interesting corner appears in both loops; a crossroads in the course routing.

“We worked hard on a couple of the so-called weaker holes with some good ideas and skilful shaping helping to produce some very interesting holes, such as the third and eleventh.”

GolfLink Evolve handled construction and a Rain Bird irrigation system has been installed, as they did for the resort’s nine-hole Park course, designed by Jonathan Davison of Create Golf, which opened last year.



Photo: Steve Hallett

Pirkkala in Finland selects design team for nine-hole project

Golf Pirkkala in Finland is to extend its facilities from 18 to 27 holes and has hired a team comprising of architects Tim Lobb and Kari Haug plus Kai Hulkkonen and Jim Ferguson of Turnkey Golf, a development and project management firm.

The site is hilly, rocky and in some areas forested. “We are hoping to sandcap certain areas, but we are going to have to use the native soil, and we don’t yet have a clear idea of what it is like – except that it is pretty rocky,” said Ferguson, who will serve as project manager.

Pirkkala has Finland’s largest junior golf programme, with 500 junior members, and many female golfers. Lobb, who has built a close relationship with Haug from European Institute of Golf Course Architects (EIGCA) meetings, knew this was the perfect project to partner together on.

“The tender documents made specific mention of the needs of the club’s junior and senior membership,” said Haug. “But in our response, we went much further – we will install forward tees



Photo: Pirkkala Golf

Kari Haug and Tim Lobb pictured with Pirkkala’s chairman Mika Viitaharju and general manager Markus Junni

to give everyone a choice of length to play. We will include rest stops along the way, which is very important because the terrain is hilly, and the average age of members is 59.”



Photo: Southwest Greens Construction

New Olazabal Design academy opens in Austria

Southwest Greens Construction has completed work on a new golf academy for Golf Eichenheim Kitzbühel in Austria.

Designed by Anton Ortner of Olazabal Design, the practice facilities include a large outdoor synthetic pitching green with several bunkers, an outdoor practice putting green, a Trackman range and lesson studios.

“The use of synthetic turf in golf applications has experienced explosive growth over the last several years due to its ability to fulfil a need in areas where it is difficult for courses to create and maintain quality solutions using natural turf,” says Haaye de Jong, managing partner of Southwest Greens Construction. “Another large consideration is to be able to offer members and guests an all-year round practice facility depending on the climate; something Eichenheim was keen to take advantage of.”

Construction advancing on new Dhoho course

Construction of Dhoho Golf Club in Kediri, Indonesia, is under way. The course is designed by Brian Curley and Jim Wagner, who have recently formed a new golf design firm, Curley-Wagner Golf Design.

About half the course is rough shaped with a third irrigated. Further rough grading and shaping of features is

ongoing. A large nursery of Zeon and Primo Zoysia from Sports Turf Solutions has been established and grassing of the the first holes is expected to take place in early May, supervised by Flagstick Golf Course Construction Management.

“Pivotal to the overall design is a spectacular stream construction of two major drainage flow lines that will be

a major visual and strategic feature of the course,” said Curley. “The dramatic natural elevation changes and drainage corridors are being nurtured into spectacular water features by Bill Rosmarino and his company, WR RockGroup Construction, utilising the massive boulders uprooted during the rough grading process.”



Photo: Curley-Wagner Golf Design

From coaching to creation

GARETH RAFLEWSKI

GCA speaks with Gareth Raflewski and his Himalayas Golf colleagues about his move from short-game expert to design consultant.

One of the world's top short-game coaches is turning his hand to the design business.

Gareth Raflewski, an Irishman now living in Canada, has worked with top PGA and LPGA Tours players, including major winners. He recently helped Nick Taylor rise to become Canada's number one men's player and winner of the RBC Canadian Open in 2023 and the WM Phoenix Open in February 2024.

"Gareth has been huge for my game," says Taylor. "The way he thinks about the short game is wildly in depth. I think he'll bring exactly that same expertise to his design work."

Raflewski follows in the footsteps of another short-game guru, Dave Pelz, in becoming a Himalayas Golf design



Photo: Himalayas Golf

Short-game coach Gareth Raflewski has joined Himalayas Golf to help create next-generation practice facilities

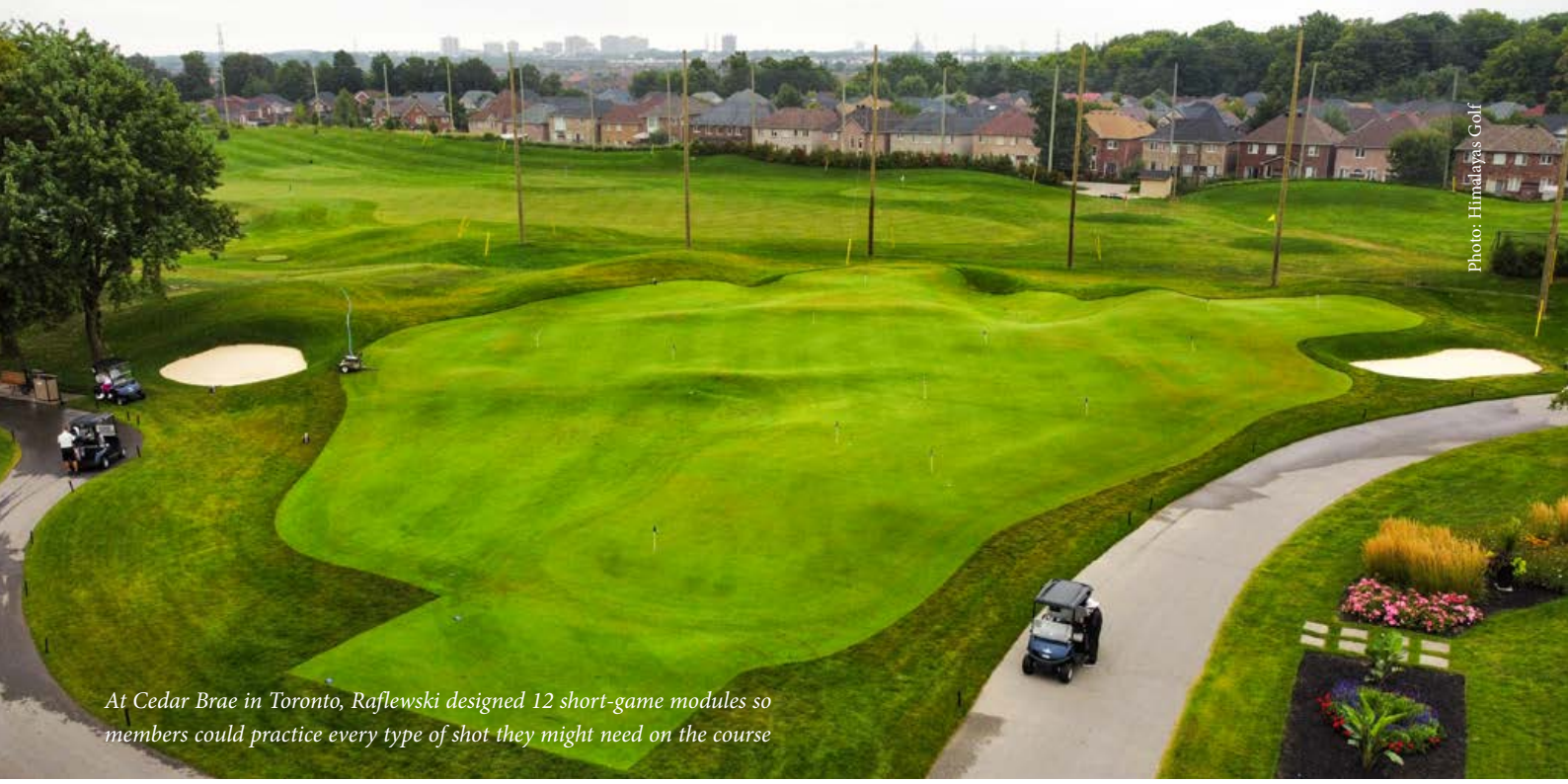


Photo: Himalayas Golf

At Cedar Brae in Toronto, Rafflewski designed 12 short-game modules so members could practice every type of shot they might need on the course

consultant. He aims to change the way practice facilities are designed, turning the practice green into a training aid.

“I was tired of travelling to all these high calibre golf clubs that the men and women play on tour and not being able to find certain shots on the practice green that I knew my players would face on the course,” says Rafflewski. “It was frustrating! So, I went to Paul with an idea.”

Paul Jansen is president of Himalayas Golf. “Gareth and I spoke about his thoughts at length, and I have to be honest, he had a pretty revolutionary idea,” he says. “Golf course architects are good at designing practice facilities that work from an engineering, maintenance and visual perspective, but we don’t know enough about practice to be able to tailor to that. We’re filling a hole in the industry with Gareth’s help.”

Rafflewski’s first assignment was the practice facility redesign at Cedar Brae Golf Club in Toronto, Canada, which opened to members in 2023. The green, up from 5,000 square feet to a huge 18,000, is the first of its kind in Canada. Not for its size, for its design.

Rafflewski designed 12 short-game practice modules – complete with a

practice scorecard – so that golfers can track their development, practice with purpose and improve their games. He says: “These modules comprise the ‘training aids’ in the green, and simply by hitting shots to different areas from various spots, players are building their shotmaking ability.

“The project at Cedar Brae was an easy idea for the members to buy into. It is known in the Greater Toronto Area for having a membership of skilled players. They care about their golf and take their performance seriously. For them, building a practice green that helped them was a no-brainer.”

“Simply by hitting shots to different areas from various spots, players are building their shotmaking ability”

Tiered sections teach distance control, tabletop features force players to bump shots in low or come in high and soft, and berms and spines create multiple breaking putts on different slope percentages to teach green reading.

Rob Gavarkovs, vice president of Himalayas Golf, says: “One of the big things about building a proper practice facility is to have someone involved that is embedded in that world and sees golf performed at the highest level, day in and day out. For us, Gareth is a genius in that regard. Leaning on the expertise of someone who is an expert at practice has been invaluable for Himalayas Golf as we design the next generation of practice facilities.”

Cedar Brae’s scorecard, designed by Rafflewski to “gamify” the practice facility, provides performance metrics and creates a weekly practice plan. The club plans to post members’ scores throughout the year, with cumulative short-game playoffs and prizes at the end of the season.

With the advent of these performance modules, gleaned from experiences working with players on the PGA Tour and LPGA Tour, and the integration of them into a design through Himalayas Golf (the firm is in discussions with several top clubs in North America on similar projects), Rafflewski hopes to change the way clubs think about practice. “I want to design with performance in mind.” **GCA**

Asia's new golfing tiger

VIETNAM GOLF

Written by Adam Lawrence

Golf is booming in Vietnam. Adam Lawrence finds out why.

Golf first came to Vietnam a surprisingly long time ago.

The French colonial authorities planned the hill station of Dalat, in the country's Central Highlands, in the aftermath of the First World War, and when the architect and urban planner Ernest Hébrard laid out the first masterplan of the new resort in 1922, a golf course was included.

The course was not built at that time, but it was certainly in operation by 1932, when Bao Dai, the last emperor of Vietnam, returned to his homeland from France, where he seems to have discovered the game. In 1930, the British design firm of Colt, Alison and Morrison published a four-page marketing flyer, listing all the courses on which they had worked. At the very bottom of the fourth page, the words 'Indo China: Ville de Dalat' were to be found.

Harry Colt, who was 60 in 1929, certainly never travelled to Dalat to design the course. Nor, almost certainly, did his younger and seemingly more nomadic colleague Hugh Alison. Alison was in Asia, in Japan, between October 1930 and April 1931, and it is just

about conceivable that he could have taken a ship from Tokyo to Saigon at the back end of his trip, but it is very, very hard to believe, as the timings really do not add up, and there is no mention of Alison's Japanese work in the marketing flyer. Much more likely is that Colt or Alison laid out the course from topographical maps, as they did for a number of other far-flung projects, at some point in the late 1920s. The course has long been rumoured to have been constructed for Bao Dai, which seems impossible given the timing of his return from France, though according to Vietnam resident Adam Calver, now chief operating officer of Faldo Design, the emperor did apparently build a small course near the coastal city of Hue, the country's capital between 1802 and 1945; but it has long been out of use.

Dalat was abandoned for the first time in 1945. Around the same time as it was constructed, another course came into being, the Saigon, or Go Vap Golf Club, and that continued in use, even after Dalat was abandoned. In the late 1950s, a doctor named Dao Huy Hach led the restoration of the Dalat





One of Vietnam's top golf courses is Bluffs Ho Tram Strip, designed by Greg Norman's firm, which has 50-metre-high sand dunes and views of the sea from every hole

Photo: Greg Norman Golf Course Design



Photo: Brian Curley



Brian Curley recently added a third nine at Stone Valley, which has been built among towering Karst rock formations

course, drawing on the resources of the Saigon club, but in 1975, the course ceased to exist again. It was finally restored to play in its present form in 1994. During this period, Vietnam’s first modern course, the Vietnam Golf & Country Club in Ho Chi Minh City (formerly Saigon) came into being. And since then, golf has spread up and down Vietnam.

Originally, the logic behind golf in Vietnam was tourism. The country – which *The Times* recently called ‘Asia’s most intoxicating’ – is one of the world’s fastest-growing tourist destinations. From 2.1 million international visitors in 2000, Vietnam received 18 million in 2019, although it has dipped below 13 million post pandemic. South Korea, a golfing hotbed, is Vietnam’s largest source of guests. And it is obvious that firstly, a proportion of those tourists will be golfers, and secondly, as elsewhere in

the world, that golfing visitors are, on average, high spenders. Within Asia, Thailand is, as is well known, the most successful golf tourism destination, with around 800,000 tourists visiting the country to play golf. China’s Hainan Island was another attempt to create an Asian golf tourism hub, but the country’s anti-corruption drive saw a severe crackdown on golf development, and consequently Hainan has fallen out of the headlines.

Globetrotting architect Brian Curley, now of the newly-formed Curley-Wagner firm, says: “I first went to Vietnam in about 2015. China had hit the buffers, and I had to pick up my ball and go somewhere else to do business. I had been hearing ‘Vietnam is going to build golf’ for some time, and I picked up a job designing the Stone Valley course in Hanoi. On my first visit, I checked into my hotel, and bumped into the hotel’s general

“The country – which *The Times* recently called ‘Asia’s most intoxicating’ – is one of the world’s fastest-growing tourist destinations”

Given the growth of tourism in Vietnam, and the country’s natural attributes – the country has 3,260 kilometres (2,000 miles) of coastline – it is hardly surprising that golf became a subject of conversation.

manager, who saw my roll of plans and asked me what I did. I said, ‘I’m building a golf course.’ He said, ‘Oh please, build me a golf course. I have so many people asking about golf, and there’s nowhere to play.’”



Photo: Cary Lisbon

When the RTJ II-designed Hoiana Shores course opened in 2019, it was immediately recognised as one of the region's best

“From a tourist standpoint, Vietnam has the potential to be a hub for southeast Asia,” says Adam Calver of Faldo Design, who moved to the country in 2017 to run the course at Laguna Lang Co, which was designed by the Faldo firm and opened in 2013. “It has diversity in terrain – as well as the coastal stuff there could be great mountain golf. But in recent years, the balance of play has changed. At Laguna, Covid tripled our domestic golf demand – we went from ten per cent Vietnamese golfers to 30 or 40 per cent. Covid saw players start to bring their families to the golf course in numbers, and junior golf has started to grow a lot. The Vietnam Golf Association has launched a junior golf tour in partnership with the R&A, and the Faldo Series final has been here since 2017. There are a lot of very good Vietnamese juniors now. The growth of golf among the Vietnamese

goes hand in hand with the overall economic growth of the country.”

Mike Gorman of Robert Trent Jones II, who was the lead architect on the firm’s Hoiana Shores project near the city of Da Nang, about halfway down the Vietnamese coast, echoes the same message. “The original market for Hoiana was tourists, principally Korean and Japanese,” he says. “However, what has happened is that it is such a fast-developing country that there has been a local golf boom among the Vietnamese. But the tourist market is still strong. Every time I land in the Da Nang airport there could be 20, 30 or 40 golf bags being unloaded off the plane.”

Curley says: “Every course in the Hanoi or Ho Chi Minh City areas is rammed full of locals, to the tune of about 200 rounds a day. You hardly see any expats playing.” As a result, there are substantial numbers of courses in development, though exactly how

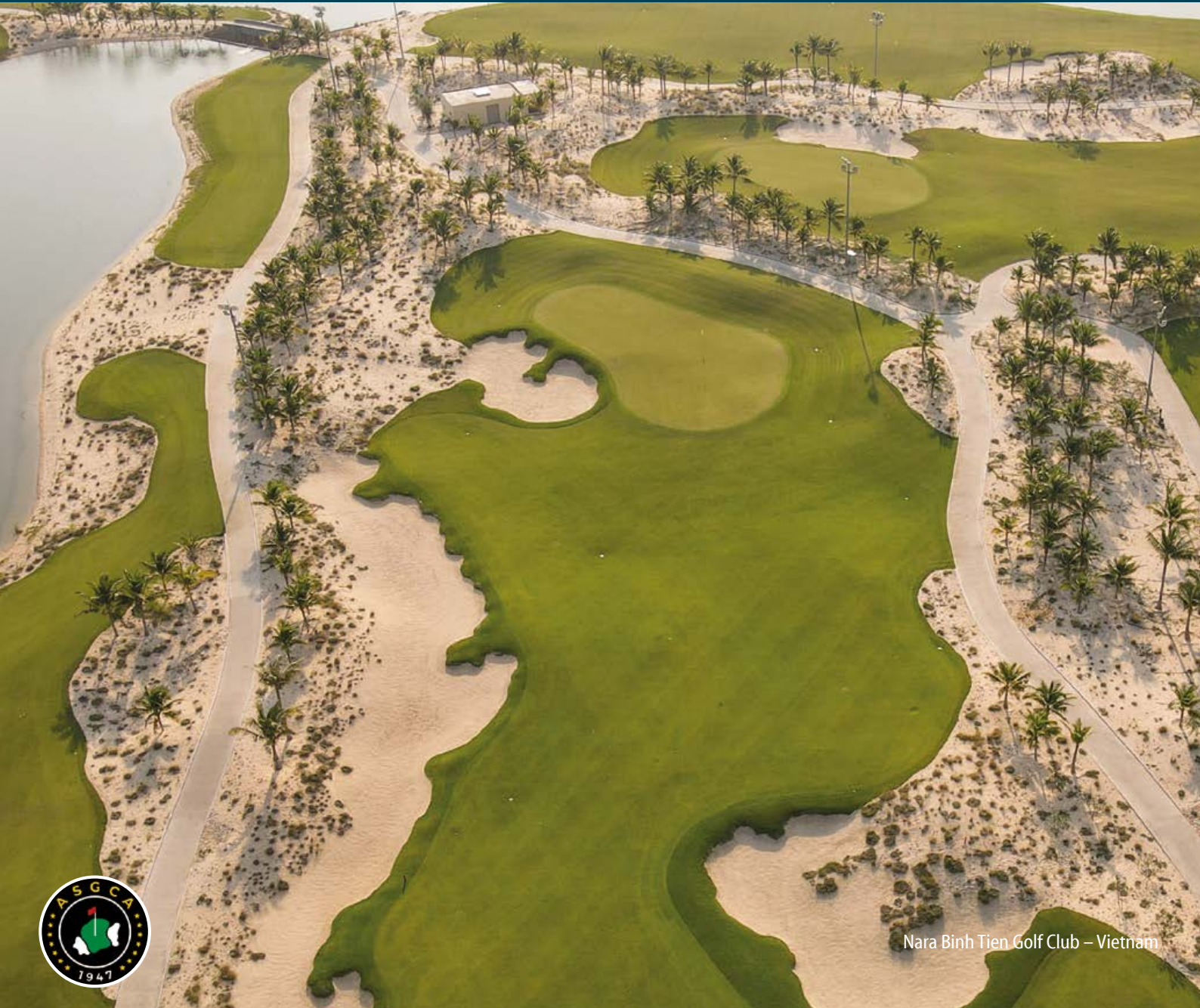
many depends on who you talk to. “There are 65-70 courses operational in the country now, with perhaps a dozen in active construction,” says Calver. “We hear that there are a hundred courses in planning, but I don’t believe that is realistic,” says Gorman. But there is no doubt that, as elsewhere in Asia, developers are building for the future and accepting that, in the early days, their courses may lose money.

“Everything in Asia is built ahead of the curve,” says Curley. “Construction costs are comparable with the rest of the world, they might be three-quarters of what you would spend everywhere else, but operations are extremely cheap. If you’re ahead of the curve at some resort in Vietnam, and it is going to take five years before you have enough golfers, you aren’t losing that much money. It is cheap to maintain a golf course there, because labour is cheap, so you can wait.

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Photo: Laguna Lang Co

Since the pandemic, Laguna Lang Co has seen a rise in Vietnamese golfers, from 10 per cent to at least 30 per cent

Generally, in Vietnam, water is cheap. You aren't trying to get water to the course, you're trying to get it off the course through drainage rather than huge and expensive irrigation systems. Many projects rely on surface water – you dig a lake, route the drainage to it and you get your own water. You tend to get water year-round, so most of the time your lakes look like lakes. You can get to sites, dig a hole two metres deep, and it's sloshing with water. Even on the sand dune sites at the beach, there's water."

Curley's mention of sand dunes brings us to what makes Vietnam a truly exciting country for golf. Just glancing at the map shows how long the country's coastline is, and quite a bit of it is sandy. "Vietnam is a spectacular country. There is an energy and vibrancy to the country unlike anywhere else I've ever been. When you look at the coastline from about Hue

past Da Nang and going another 200-300 miles, it is all sand, some of the best dunesland anywhere," says Gorman.

"If you go straight across the water from Hanoi, you're in mudflats," says Curley. "But at a 45-degree angle south, you hit the sand, and it is mostly all sand down the coast. I've

coastline and a lot of sand. Some have rock mixed in with the sand but there could be a considerable amount of great coastal golf courses."

There are already plenty of good courses along the Vietnamese coast. The best, according to *Top 100 Golf Courses* rankings, is the Bluffs

“From a tourist standpoint, Vietnam has the potential to be a hub for southeast Asia”

seen some of the best sites I have ever seen. You basically have two kinds of sites, those along the coast, and on the lower parts of the mountains, Sand dunes that are not used for agriculture. The rice lands are protected. You're either at the beach or you're in the rocky hills."

Calver adds: "I drove from Dung Hoi to Ho Chi Minh, basically hiking over sand dunes. There is phenomenal

Ho Tram Strip, designed by Greg Norman's practice and part of a large casino resort, 80 miles south-east of Ho Chi Minh City. The course explores enormous, 50-metre-high sand dunes, and every hole has a view of the sea, but they do not actually touch the water; that land has been reserved for future development.

The Jones-designed Hoiana Shores, ranked second, does have some golf



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along the coastline; it is also part of a large resort (as far as we have been able to discern, all the golf in Vietnam is public). The Jones firm, Gorman says, has two further projects in development in Vietnam, one near Hanoi, the other outside Ho Chi Minh City.

“I first went to Vietnam in 2005/6 with Tony Cashmore and Tom Phillips of the Faldo group – Tony was doing work for Faldo in Australia,” says South African architect Paul Jansen. “Tom got a couple of leads and called me to say, ‘We have a few potential projects in Vietnam’. A few weeks later I was there.

“We toured a couple of sites, including the one that became Laguna Lang Co. We completed the drawings a year or two later and it broke ground in 2009. At that time the road only reached the top of the mountain and we had to walk all the way down to the site. A few months before, the only way the site was accessible was by boat. But it was stunning – we drew a lot of our inspiration from the surroundings. A third of the site was rice paddy fields, so quite wet, and we had to do some clearing in the jungle areas.”

According to Calver, the Faldo firm now has two new projects in the country, Royal Long An near Ho Chi Minh City, with 18 holes open and nine in rough shaping, and Silk Path near Hanoi, which has started grassing and has a third nine in planning.

“The golf courses in Thailand don’t have the natural settings that Vietnam has, but the operations are nailed down,” says Curley. “In Vietnam, the courses are there, but the operations are behind. When they figure that out, they are going to be impossible to beat.” **GCA**



Asia’s next golf destination

Kevin Ramsey of Golfplan provides insight into his experiences of working in Vietnam



Photo: Golfplan

Vietnam has made a concerted effort to become the ‘golf destination of Asia’. It is a beautiful country with wonderfully diverse natural landscapes, perfecting for creating a wide range of golf course experiences.

Having travelled throughout the country to look at a wide mix of sites and play many golf courses, both David [Dale] and I have found that as a country there is tremendous potential to achieve this designation and Vietnam is going about it in a much different way than other countries before them.

Vietnamese companies are bringing high levels of talent and proven experts to guide the process in creating internationally recognised golf courses and resorts. Da Nang is a perfect example as it has successfully created a wide variety of designs, including links, sand belt, Florida-inspired, jungle and most importantly indigenous-inspired courses that give a flavour of Vietnam. Areas like Na Trang are beginning to follow this model with an international airport and new courses coming up such as our Anara Binh Tien [pictured], which opened in 2022.

Typically, in developing golf markets we see so called ‘golf experts’ come out of the woodwork, which unfortunately leads to a lot of missed potential in the best of cases and much worse in others. We are not seeing nearly as much of this as the developers are methodically seeking international talent with proven portfolios. You combine this diversity of golf, with sunny weather, great food, a welcoming population and you have a strong recipe for success.

Golf's great explorer

PETER HARRADINE

Peter Harradine is part of golf design's most enduring family business – and is one of the best-travelled men in the profession. Adam Lawrence found out the lessons of his long career.

Jones, Fazio, Hawtree: there have been several golf design dynasties in the century and a bit since the profession was established. But, as far as I can tell, only one has got past the third generation.

The Dubai-based designer Peter Harradine has been active in golf architecture for many decades; his father Donald practiced as an architect for over half a century, in the process bringing golf to parts of Europe where the game was previously almost entirely unknown. Don's stepfather Albert Hockey, though principally a golf professional, remodelled his first course in 1920, and in 1925 took the family, including a 14-year-old Don, to Switzerland when he was asked to upgrade and extend the eight-hole course at Bad Ragaz to a real nine-hole course. And now, Peter's son Michael

is a key part of the family business, so the Hockey/Harradine dynasty has, uniquely, entered a fourth generation.

When one meets Peter, who will be 80 in 2025, for the first time, it is natural to see him as an English gentleman, though perhaps a slightly rakish one: he is a natty dresser with a particular fondness for stylish scarves. In fact, though his family background is English, he is a Swiss national, born in 1945 next to the old golf course in Gurten, just to the south of the Swiss capital, Berne; his father was the manager of the course at the time. When Peter was three, Don was asked to move to Lugano, in the southern Swiss district of Ticino, to manage the golf course there. Ticino is close to the Italian border, and is largely Italian-speaking. Here, Peter grew up speaking Italian as his mother language: to this



day, it is the language he uses when talking to his children.

Most of Don Harradine's early work was in Switzerland; he also built courses in Germany and Italy in the 1950s. In 1962, he built the Glyfada club outside Athens, Greece's first golf course – "there is a street near the course called Donald Harradine Road," says Peter with pride. Until his retirement in the 1980s, he worked across the continent, including courses in Austria, Yugoslavia (the Bled course in what is now Slovenia), France and



Peter Harradine, pictured with the construction team at his project in Hyderabad, India, has designed courses across Europe, Africa and Asia in a career that now spans seven decades

Photo: Harradine Golf

the Netherlands. It was the 1960s when his son Peter entered the ‘family business’, though he lived the spirit of the times beforehand!

“I went to the States for two years to landscape school. That was a lot of fun, but it was also the base of my future career”

“Every year during my school holidays in summer, from 13 onwards, he would take me on site for a month – which I hated, because I wasn’t

enjoying myself with my friends,” remembers Peter. “When I was 18, I did a few other things for a while – sang in a band, DJed – then I went to

the States for two years to landscape school. That was a lot of fun, but it was also the base of my future career. When I got back from America, I

started working with him properly. In 1968, when I was 23, we were building the Golf Club de Campagne in Nîmes, in the south of France, and he gave me the opportunity to design the greens. That was really the first time I designed anything.”

Peter and his father worked together for the best part of two decades. Don was, according to his son, a good boss, even if their attitudes to life were not that similar! “My dad was a very serious Englishman – he actually joined the Salvation Army,” Peter says.



Photo: Harradine Golf

Peter on site in Montechiarello, Italy, with long-time construction supervisor Arne van Amerongen

“My style of life and his were not that similar – he couldn’t really understand me going out and having a great time. I used to listen to him a lot; he was very informative and spent a lot of time explaining things. He was a very good teacher. Apart from the different lifestyles, we got on very well.”

Also, in the very early stages of his career, Peter built the Rhodos Golf Club course next to Glyfada. “At that time, the Greek government was trying to encourage golf to promote tourism,” says Peter. “The government was quite authoritarian, and so a few golf courses were built. Later, it was more democratic and harder to get anything done!”

For the next two decades, Peter built courses all over Europe – more in

Germany than anywhere else – until in the early 1990s things began to change.

The Karachi Golf Club, in Pakistan’s largest city, was founded as an affiliate of the Sindh Club in 1888 and registered as an independent

“Harradine’s first projects in the Gulf were the Doha Golf Club in Qatar and the Abu Dhabi Golf Club, both of which were the first grass courses in their respective emirates”

club in 1891. There were a number of golf clubs in British India in the 19th century; the oldest, Royal Calcutta, was founded in 1829, and is the oldest club in the world outside the UK. The Karachi club moved to its present site

in 1953, six years after Pakistan gained its independence; but its course was purely sand, with no grass.

From 1985, the club sought to change its course to a grass one. In 1991, Harradine was commissioned to

design a new course for the club and change the existing layout from 18 to 27 holes, which was completed the following year. And now, more than 30 years later, the architect is back in Pakistan, building a new course as



Photo: Harradine Golf

Harradine describes the site for his new course near Islamabad, Pakistan, as the best he has ever worked on

part of the enormous Islamabad Smart City development near the country’s capital. “It is the best site I have worked on,” he says. “The differences in levels are incredible, and I have actually been able to leave a valley, or ‘canyon’, right in front of the clubhouse, with the ninth and eighteenth greens on either side. It has many natural rocky features and will have only natural indigenous vegetation. We have created many lakes to capture water during the monsoon, and there are already many types of birds that have appeared since we constructed the lakes.”

It was some time before this that Peter made the move that would change his life. “I first came to Dubai in 1976, but it was not for golf,” he says. “I was building a course at Saint-Cyprien

in the far south-west of France, not designed by me, and working for a contractor called VEB that did a lot of landscape construction, not just golf,” he explains. “They decided they wanted to open an office in the Middle East and, as I knew a fair bit about irrigation, I went out to set it up. I met a local Sheikh who said to me, ‘Peter, you’ve got to stay here, we’re going to build golf courses, plant trees and everything. We’ll start a company, and I will be your partner’. I didn’t believe him, but he agreed to my conditions for staying, and that’s why I’m still in Dubai. We opened our landscaping company in 1977, and Harradine Golf in Dubai started up in 1989.”

His first projects in the Gulf were the Doha Golf Club in Qatar and the

Abu Dhabi Golf Club, both of which were the first grass courses in their respective emirates. Doha started first, in 1995, and has been a regular feature on both the European men’s and ladies’ tours ever since. Abu Dhabi followed shortly afterwards; the course played host to the European Tour’s Abu Dhabi Championship from 2006-2021. “The project started in 1995, both the main National and the nine-hole Garden courses were built in 1998, and the club opened in 2000,” says Harradine.

Since then, Harradine has made regular trips – at least monthly – back to Europe; he maintains an office in Switzerland, in Caslano, where he grew up. The globetrotting has got ever more intensive; apart from



Harradine's Abu Dhabi course hosted the European Tour's Abu Dhabi Championship from 2006 to 2021

eastern, central and southern Europe, he has worked in Algeria, Egypt – he designed the Mirage City course in the late 1990s and has since built four more projects – Morocco, Kuwait, India and even Iran, though that project fell afoul of the 2008 financial crisis and was never finished. But, when asked the most outlandish place he has worked, the answer is quick to come. “Sudan is the most extravagant place I ever built a golf course,” he says. He built the nine-hole Fenti course outside Khartoum in 2008. “Actually, it was quite easy,” he continues. “We worked for a very big company that has a lot of experience in the country – and we got paid on time. They have their own terminal at the airport. The course is very successful. The usual uninformed

reporters said that we were taking water from the Nile which was not true – we had some wells. It was next to a very densely populated, quite poor area. But I never felt threatened – in fact I’ve never felt threatened anywhere. I feel more threatened at the main railway station in Milan.”

“My own philosophy of design might be summarised as ‘easy to play, difficult to score’”

And his design influences (apart from his dad, obviously!)? Peter says that he has a particular admiration for Robert Trent Jones Sr, and especially his course at Valderrama in Spain. “I think Jones is the father of modern golf course architecture,” he says. “His detailed designs, specifications

and tender documents gave the contractor a clear idea of what he should be quoting for and building. My own philosophy of design might be summarised as ‘easy to play, difficult to score’. Golf designers should never forget that the people who pay our fees are principally the 24-54 handicappers,

not the professionals and scratch or better amateurs. There are too many ‘Championship’ courses, but not enough ‘champions’ to keep them busy! And it is quite easy to transform a ‘normal’ course to host a championship if you need to. Golf must be fun, not a drudgery, if it is to prosper.”



Photos: Harradine Golf



Peter now works alongside his son Michael, pictured here at Golf Club de Campagne in France. Above, the Fenti course in Sudan

As might be expected from someone who has lived so cosmopolitan a life, Peter is multilingual. But therein lies one of his biggest regrets. “I speak four languages fluently – English, German, French and Italian,” he says. “I pick up languages quite easily. But I really do regret living out here in the Gulf for so long and not learning to speak Arabic fluently.”

If not learning Arabic is Peter’s greatest regret, one of his proudest moments happened in July 2000 when the British Association of Golf Course Architects (of which Don was a founder), the French Association and the European Society, of which Peter was president at the time, merged to create the European Institute of Golf Course Architects – which has been a partner of GCA since the magazine

started in 2005. “My dad started the International Society of Greenkeepers and that, I think, drove me to pursue the amalgamation of the architects’ societies,” he said. “People said to me, ‘You’ll never manage this’. It took three years of negotiations, but eventually we brought it off. And the continued success of the EIGCA makes me very proud.”

The Harradine name will continue in golf. Peter’s son Michael has now joined the business after graduating in landscape architecture from a Swiss university and five years playing golf on the amateur circuit –

to a handicap of plus five. “I always really wished that Michael would enter the family business,” Peter says. “That is why I strongly urged him to study and obtain a degree in landscape architecture, which I firmly believe is one of the requirements most needed to become a good golf course architect.”

Peter Harradine may be approaching his eightieth birthday, but he is still lively and enthusiastic about the golf design business, and still putting in the miles. “I’m not going to retire,” he says. “I’m having a great time; I love what I do. Why would I retire?” **GCA**

PROFILED

Hey Shorty

SHORTY'S AT BANDON DUNES, OREGON

Bandon celebrates its birthday with a new course, designed by WAC Golf, of 19 par threes built on fiercely undulating sand.

Photo: Bandon Dunes Golf Resort



Photo: Bandon Dunes Golf Resort

The first green (foreground) at Shorty's, a 19-hole par three layout among sand dunes that will be Bandon Dunes' seventh course



WAC Golf's Keith Cutten described the Shorty's site as "more undulating than elsewhere on the Bandon property"

May 2024 is a special month for Bandon Dunes.

Not only will it see the grand opening of Shorty's, its seventh course, but it also marks 25 years of golf at the Oregon resort.

Since the opening of David Kidd's Bandon Dunes course in 1999, the resort has become the poster child for destination golf, with Kidd's course being joined by two world's-best layouts from Tom Doak (one with Jim Urbina) and three from Bill Coore and Ben Crenshaw. Many of Bandon's architects will return to join developers Mike Keiser and his sons Michael and Chris for the quarter-century celebrations.

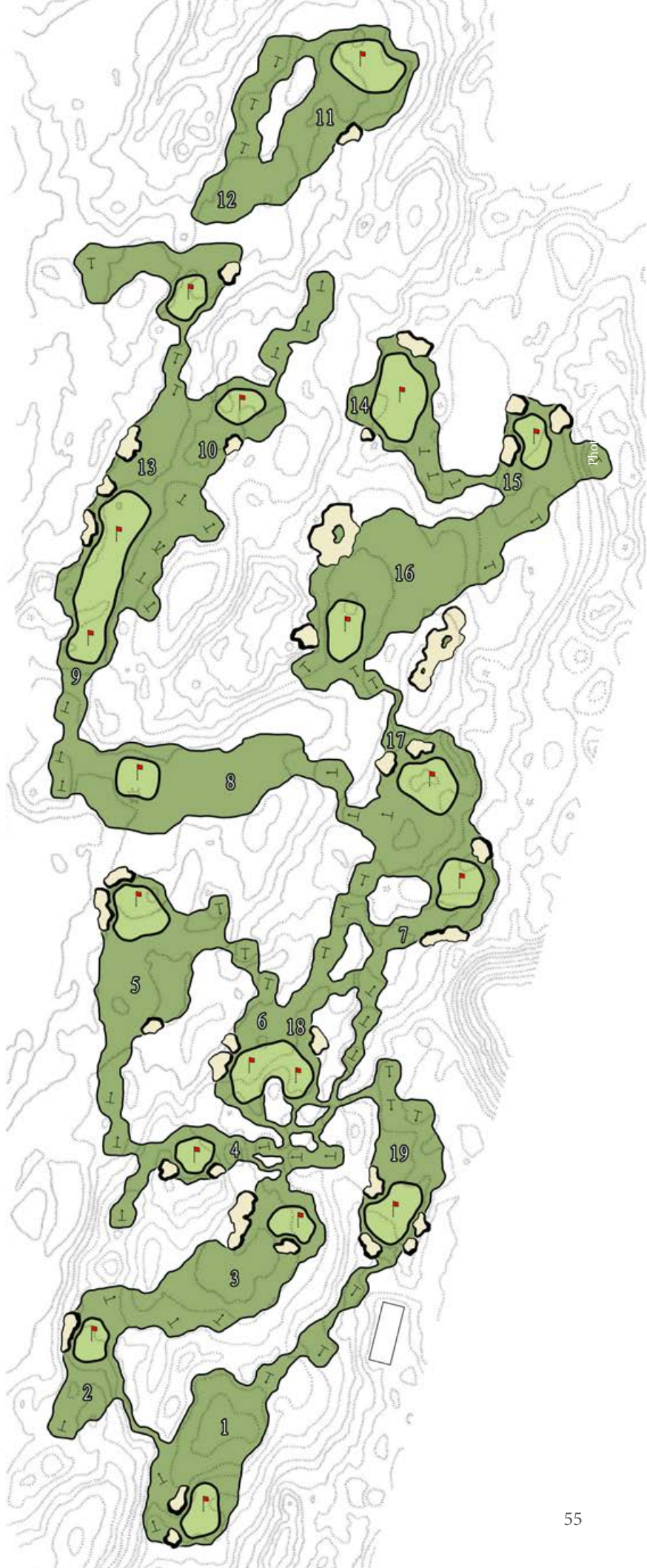
They will be joined by another team of designers too – Rod Whitman, Dave Axland and Keith Cutten – who have become the first new architects at Bandon for almost twenty years – since Coore & Crenshaw laid out Bandon

Shorty's has been built on sand dunes immediately south of Bandon Preserve. Cutten has described the site as "more undulating than elsewhere on the Bandon property" and their goal being "to make the best short course in golf".

"This site was made for a par-three layout, as any longer holes would have required the removal or flattening of the abrupt ground movement"

Trails in 2005. All three principals of the WAC Golf team have spent substantial time on site over the past year to shape the features of the new 19-hole par-three course, with assistance from their design associate Kurtis Lavis.

"We spent a great deal of time figuring out the sequencing and placement of the holes within the undulating terrain," says Cutten. "The routing itself evolved over several months, starting with a 12-hole loop – this initial sequence was through



the most walkable portion of the site. We were then urged to keep going and easily added another six [holes one to six]. However, the clubhouse shifted, giving us enough room to add an additional short hole, raising the total to 19. We could have easily kept going south, but the routing as it stands today takes full advantage of the site.”

Another short course – Coore & Crenshaw’s Bandon Preserve is a 13-hole par-three layout – was a priority for the resort, and was to be designed with fun and memorability in mind. Both of the short courses fund the Bandon Dunes Charitable Foundation. “The dunes on Shorty’s are some of the most severe on the property, and the sand is consistent and pure,” says Cutten. “This site was made for a par-three layout, as any longer holes would have required the removal or flattening of the abrupt ground movement. For a short course this



WAC Golf has shaped bunkers and greens to mimic the natural forms of the site, as seen at the eighth

land was ideal – we have used all the best attributes of the property for the creation of 19 memorable par threes.”

The site has numerous ridges, some rising up to 30 to 40 feet, which create some particularly dramatic holes, like seven, eleven and fourteen. “We utilised natural green sites scattered across the landscape as the foundation for our design,” says Cutten. “However, the key to the routing was to link these greens together using the natural dune ridges between each hole. This allowed us to traverse this wonderfully undulating site in the most pragmatic of ways, making each hole not only a pleasure to walk but also puttable!

“The greens and bunker strategies presented at Shorty’s are as varied as the dunes in which they reside. A

variety of scale and severity of contour were purposeful design goals, some greens are more dynamic, while others lay more quietly on the ground. Our shaping mimics the natural forms of the site, therefore green complexes were shaped to best fit within their

“The greens and bunker strategies presented at Shorty’s are as varied as the dunes in which they reside”

surroundings. Whereas the biggest bunkers are simply natural blowouts, other smaller pits were added to set off strategies. These additional bunkers were shaped to reflect the more natural dunes look of the site. However, it is the abundance of shortgrass and

funnelling contours that will make navigating the site so enjoyable.”

Golfers are barely a hole in before Shorty’s delivers its first big thrill.

“The view from the second tee will make your mouth drop,” says Cutten. To the south is the town of Bandon

and the Face Rock formation, and to the north is an outlook of the entire course, and long views to the Bandon Preserve, Bandon Dunes and Sheep Ranch layouts beyond. “There is no doubt that a round at somewhere special is underway,” adds Cutten.



Photos: Bandon Dunes Golf Resort

The design team used the site's dune ridges to frame holes, as well as link tees, fairways and greens together

“The hole itself features a tabletop green perched on a dune ridge. The green is hidden behind a portion of the dune, which masks its generous size. A contoured putting surface places a premium on accuracy from the tee. However, generous feeding contours from the right will allow for creative shotmaking, even putter strokes, to reach a variety of pin locations.”

Another highlight among the opening holes is the fifth, a change from WAC Golf’s original routing. Local constructor Tony Russell, who has worked on every course at Bandon, cleared some trees to the left of the planned fifth green site. “When we looked at the result, the benefits to golf were great,” says Cutten.

“The new clearing allowed the fifth green to slide left and closer to the property line. This new siting allowed for a green that, instead of sitting into the dune and being pitched from back to front, now sits beside the dune ridge and runs away from play. The result is a unique green unlike anything else on the property. The variety of shots that can be hit to this green are infinite.”

Russell and his crew assisted WAC Golf with the heavy lifting components for the construction of Shorty’s, and the project team also included irrigation designer Greg Baer and Bandon’s head of agronomy Ken Nice and team, who assisted with irrigation and managed grow-in.

“Among the many natural holes at Shorty’s, that nature simply gifted us,

the sixteenth was so very obvious; just sitting there waiting to be grassed,” says Cutten. “With a natural blowout front-left, and the largest dune sitting directly behind, the formation of surrounding sand had created a huge natural bowl for the green. We kept the natural movement and simply enhanced the existing contours within the bowl to create a hole with a lot of options. From the elevated tees, the most fun shot here would be to simply send the ball low and allow for it to rollercoaster over the contours onto the putting surface.”

It would be fair to say that Bandon’s new design team has delivered a gift for the resort. And fair too to say vice versa. Either way, golfers will be enjoying the present when Shorty’s opens on 2 May. **GCA**

ON SITE

Many hands make links work

THE INSPIRATION CLUB, LONDON, UK

A new course in west London has had a complicated and, at first glance, not very promising birthing process. But the course is rather good, says Adam Lawrence.

The eighth green at the new Inspiration Club in London



Photo: The Inspiration Club

Routed by one architect, earthmoving largely overseen by the client, and greens and bunkers designed by another architect.

The recipe for The Inspiration Club's new layout in west London, little more than five miles from Heathrow Airport, is not, in truth, all that inspiring. Building a golf course unarguably takes a village, but general wisdom holds that, of that village, one vision must drive the project forward. Given that, to find that the Inspiration is really rather good is a very pleasant surprise.

“Inspiration will be a relaxing place to play golf. It doesn't feel suburban; especially at the far end of the course, the feeling is genuinely one of being out in nature”

The course has been developed by the Bridgedown Group, headed by former fashion industry entrepreneur Tony Menai-Davis. He also built The Shire in north London, which opened in 2007, and is also currently working on The Legacy Club, formerly known as the Dye London before the deaths of father and son Pete and Perry Dye. The group also owns the West London Golf Centre, a driving range, nine-hole course and adventure golf complex, across the Ruislip Road from the Inspiration. Menai-Davis, a cheerful, charming and pleasant man, is far

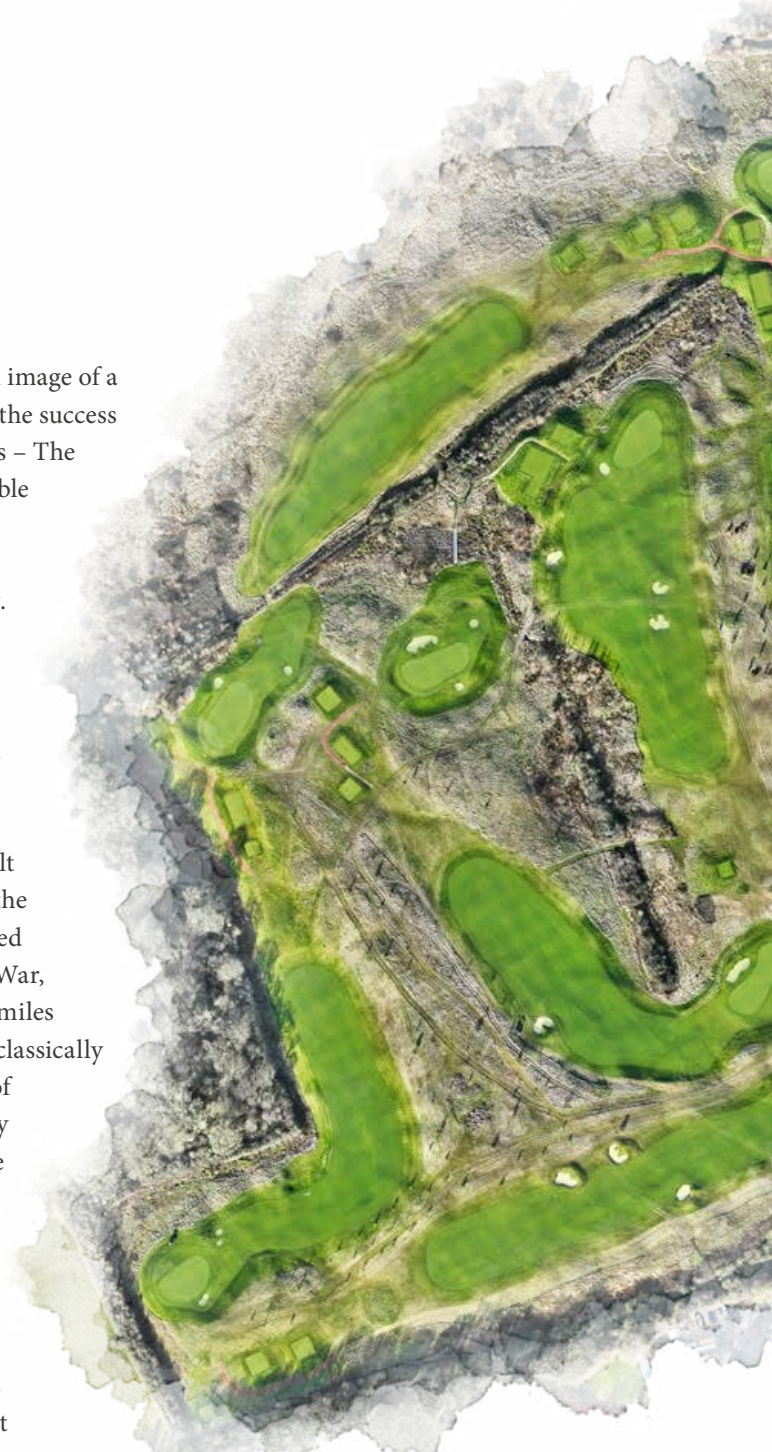
from the stereotypical image of a British 'golf guy', and the success of his various ventures – The Shire has been profitable throughout its life – suggests that this is probably a good thing.

The single most remarkable thing about the Inspiration is its site. Located just to the south of the A40 Western Avenue, opposite RAF Northolt and the memorial to the Polish airmen who died in the Second World War, it is no more than 12 miles from Charing Cross, classically viewed as the centre of London. Yet it is really rather peaceful. There is inevitably some road noise, though a lot less than one might imagine, and when a plane takes off from Northolt it is in clear view from just about the whole course, but overall the Inspiration will be a relaxing place to play golf. It doesn't feel suburban; especially at the far end of the course, the feeling is genuinely one of being out in nature. It is quite remarkable that a property like this has survived undeveloped – it used to be farmland – for all this time.

The Menai-Davis family has been working on the project for a long time. The golf course was routed in 2005 by Trajectory, the design firm owned and headed by Seve Ballesteros, which also

designed The Shire, and the planning consent dates back more than a decade. Trajectory ceased to exist after Seve's death in 2011, so Menai-Davis had to find a new design solution for the property.

Initially, he found it close to home. Very close to home, in fact. On assessing the site and its challenges, Menai-Davis concluded that a links-like theme for the golf course was





The routing was originally created by Seve Ballesteros's Trajectory design firm, with Tom Mackenzie making some small tweaks after being brought in to design greens, bunkers and tees

Image: Clere Golf

the best option. As former farmland, the site was relatively short on feature: essentially it was a tilted table sloping down towards the A40. Extensive tree planting was disallowed because of the proximity to Northolt, and the construction of significant lakes was also ruled out, so the links theme was a natural selection. Over a period from 2015, working with shaper Nigel Ely, Menai-Davis oversaw the reshaping of the ground to fit the Trajectory routing plan. They did a good job. Perhaps there are a few too many holes that follow the model of valleyed fairway with higher ground at the sides, but this is hardly an uncommon theme, even on real links. The out of play

'dunes' are well done, not too high or too steep, as is so often the case on such courses, and there is plenty of interest in the ground contour.

Knowing your limits is an important skill in life generally, and it is to Menai-Davis's credit that he did not try to do the entire course himself, but recognised he needed a professional golf architect to design greens, bunkers and tees. It was at this point that the firm of Mackenzie & Ebert became involved, with partner Tom Mackenzie taking the lead. Coming into a project where the routing and the earthmoving were largely complete cannot have been easy for Mackenzie, but he remained flexible, and made some subtle changes to the plan.

"When we first visited, the course had already been seeded, but we came with an open mind," says Mackenzie. "We really like the shapes that had been developed by Nigel Ely and the Menai-Davis family. We agreed that Tony's links inspired concept seemed to fit the site well. We were able to refine the layout with the adjustment of the twelfth into a par four and the par-three thirteenth over the ditch, which we believe has produced a better overall routing. We were also able to adjust some angles through the movement of green positions and tee locations, such as shortening the seventh at the green, which allowed the fifth to extend at the tee. The pars of the seventeenth and eighteenth were also reversed to leave an exciting

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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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Bunkers are revetted, using the EcoBunker method, as seen at the short par-four tenth

par five finish. We tried to get links-inspired greens to fit each individual green site where possible.”

The thirteenth hole, as mentioned by Mackenzie, is a fun par three, quite short at 148 yards from the back tee, playing over a diagonal ‘creek’ feature that protects the front and right side of the green; the left side is defended by a deep bunker. The back of the green is raised, offering the possibility that a tee ball hit slightly long might run back down into prime position. If I were caddying at the Inspiration, I should advise my player to take an extra club here!

One of my favourite holes on the course was the par-three sixth, which plays just over 150 yards to a long, left-to-right green that slopes significantly away from the player. It would take a pretty bad shot, if the pin was located near the bottom, to leave a ball right at the top, but as a golfer who is perfectly capable of that,

I would not fancy the resulting putt one little bit! I also liked the sixteenth, an uphill dogleg right par four of just over 400 yards at the far end of the property. The hole turns almost ninety degrees around a woodland, and there is a significant reward for a tee shot hit right to the corner of the dogleg. Leave the tee ball a little short, and you will have a shot to the green, but it will be over broken ground, and

“We tried to get links-inspired greens to fit each individual green site where possible”

the view will not be that clear: 20 or 30 yards extra on your drive will give a much more appealing approach.

The Inspiration’s bunkers are revetted using the EcoBunker method, and built by that firm’s head of construction, Llewelyn Matthews. As is usual for Matthews’s work, they are beautifully done, and will absolutely be one of the

defining features of the course. Some are extremely deep and threatening: I stood in one and estimated the height of the revetted wall to be at least five feet. Given the intended market, this is a brave decision on the part of the owner, but it is a deliberate one. Mackenzie says of the bunkers: “Tony was keen to have a controversial and demanding course setup, which the bunkers, we believe, help to achieve.” He’s not wrong.

When the Inspiration opens in the summer, it will be priced at around £90 for a weekend round. Given its location, this must be seen as a bargain. Menai-Davis may not be planning to switch careers and become a golf architect but, given his role in the creation of this course, perhaps he should! **GCA**

A new era for Canal Shores

The revival of Evanston muni nears completion thanks to huge community efforts.

When the Canal Shores Golf Course in Evanston, a suburb of Chicago, reopens this summer, it will mark the end of a long journey and the beginning of a new era for the public facility.

Originally opened in 1919, Canal Shores has for some time been in dire need of repair. A USGA Green Section evaluation several years ago noted that the course's turf and infrastructure were in an "end of life" state.

"The course had aged to a point where turfgrasses were compromised, greens were failing, the irrigation system was no longer providing the necessary coverage and the lack of drainage was becoming a major issue," says Doug Myslinski, from Wadsworth. The golf construction firm had, over the years, provided "band-aid" repairs while Wadsworth Golf Charities Foundation had made annual contributions to assist Canal Shores in youth golf development programmes.

"The Wadsworth Company was first introduced to Canal Shores Golf Course nearly 15 years ago when a similarly planned project was being discussed. Although that plan never materialised, a relationship between

Wadsworth and board members representing Canal Shores developed."

"Assembling the right team and defining the future programming of the facility was essential to raising the required funds to enhance the property," says Chris Charnas, vice president of the Evanston Wilmette Golf Course Association (EWGCA). "The commitment of the Western Golf Association (WGA) to have Canal Shores as the home to its youth caddy programme, combined with this being a flagship facility for the First Tee of Greater Chicago, meant that youth golf development was key. KemperSports, Wadsworth Golf Charities Foundation and the Chicago District Golf Association embraced this vision by providing the required resources and significant financial backing."

Other donors, individuals and groups that were key, especially for community engagement related to fundraising and support, included a core group led by Charnas, Matt Rooney, Rick Bald, David McPherson, Steve Neumann and Pat Hughes. Mario Salas was the on-site project manager for Wadsworth, with Myslinski and Matt Lohmann providing assistance.





The revived Canal Shores public course near Chicago is now growing in ahead of a summer 2024 opening

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Photo: Canal Shores

The sixth, the 65-yard putting hole seventh and the eighth (foreground) occupy the northern tip of the site, directly across the canal from the Baha'i House of Worship

“The pieces were assembled, and the execution was a matter of having the owner trust the team to deliver a golf course that will achieve the defined goals,” says Myslinski. “Another piece of the puzzle was having a golf course architect willing to embrace the vision for both the golf and environmental aspects, while developing a sustainable approach.”

That architect was Todd Quitno, with KemperSports’s Josh Lesnik contributing design input.

Quitno set about developing a masterplan and by March 2023 work to revitalise the facility was ready to begin.

A fundamental change to the routing was the conversion of the former first hole to a large putting green, with the second becoming the new opening hole. To compensate

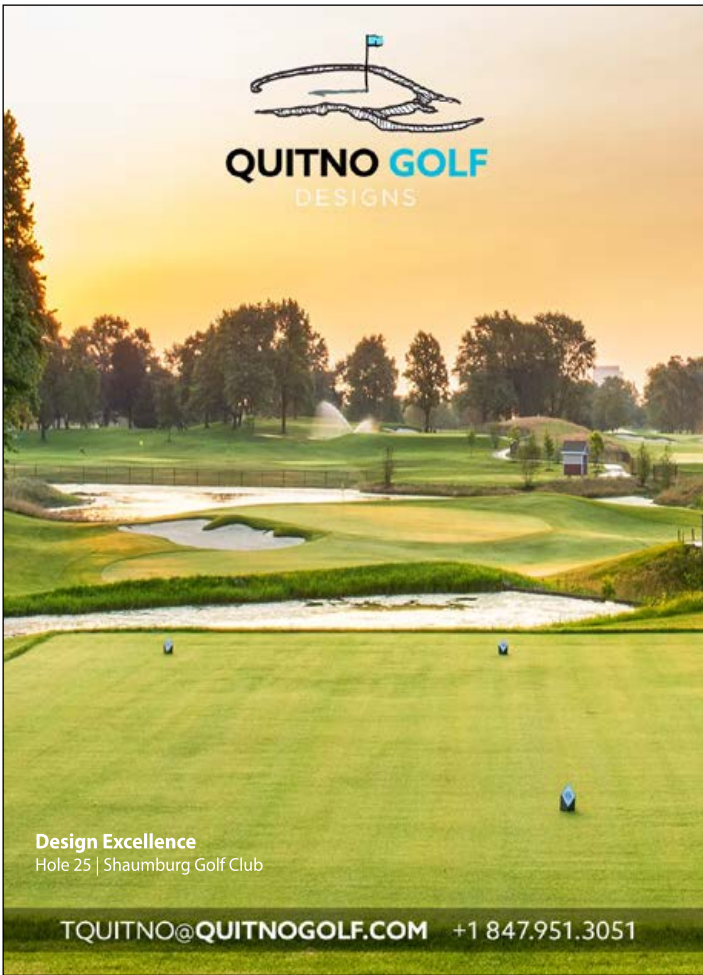
for the loss of the old first, Quitno created a unique hole at the north end of the property, close to the Wilmette Harbor. “We’ve added a 65-yard putting hole that will be a great source of fun,” says Quitno. “This will play as the seventh, with the nearby Baha’i temple serving as a backdrop.”

“We’ve added a 65-yard putting hole that will be a great source of fun, with the nearby Baha’i temple serving as a backdrop”

The former seventeenth has also been reconfigured to include an 85-yard par-three bonus hole, designated as 17B. The green has been doubled in size with a small but pinnable central plateau dividing the surface into sections.

The eighteen-hole course will play to a par of 60 and now also features several new template greens, with Quitno paying homage to nearby Chicago Golf Club and Shoreacres. The remaining greens have been restored to their original pads, which date back to the 1920s when Tom Bendelow redesigned the course.

“Our decisions on greens came from a historic angle,” says Quitno. “Several of Bendelow’s green pads still existed on the course but the actual putting surfaces had shrunk down to little circles. Where it made sense,



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Photo: Canal Shores

The area beside the clubhouse, which was previously occupied by the two opening holes, is now home to a large putting green and new first hole, and can also be configured into a four-hole junior loop

we tried to recapture the original corners and then add some fun to the interior contouring. In areas where the greens were unremarkable or where we rerouted, we incorporated some templates, as an ode to Macdonald and Raynor's influence in the area. Our goal was to give 'Joe Public' the chance to experience the fun of the templates, since almost all those greens can only be found on private courses.

"We worked hard to make greens visually interesting with a variety of pinnable areas, but still manageable for the novice golfer. The greens really are the centrepiece of Canal Shores and the highlight of the course."

The new putting green in particular is expected to draw a crowd. At 27,500 square feet, it can serve as a putting course, and will also become part of a four-hole junior loop. "We are excited about the potential for this space to be a community gathering spot," says

Quitno. "Besides its value as a place for kids to learn and have fun, there is hope that the green might also be a revenue source and attraction that draws people to the outdoor patio for food and drinks."

"Our work at Canal Shores has helped create a facility that is environmentally sustainable and enhances the lives of the community"

While youth development has been a major focus of the Canal Shores project, preserving the course's history and environment have also been key. "This course has been a part of the community fabric for over 100 years," says Quitno.

"It has always served as a public concert venue, as well as for walking paths, commuter access and a sanctuary of nature in a pretty dense urban area.

"All our work has sought to preserve these functions, and where possible improve them. We've accounted for safer walking paths – the routing adjustments on the north and south holes considered this aspect. And we have intensely removed invasive buckthorn species and general tree overgrowth. By creating better growing conditions, we will have healthier turf, which will provide more runoff filtering, atmosphere cooling and erosion control."

Myslinski adds: "Our work at Canal Shores has helped create a facility that is environmentally sustainable and enhances the lives of the community around it. Canal Shore will be a blueprint for more facilities like this to be built across the country." **GCA**

A test for all

The Old course at Broken Sound has been renovated to suit tour pros and club members alike. Toby Ingleton spoke with the design team to find out more.

One good test of a golf course's ability to accommodate players of all standards is a pro-celebrity tournament. So when the PGA Tour Champions' new James Hardie Pro Football Hall of Fame Invitational debuts in 2025, we'll find out whether golf course architects Rees Jones and Bryce Swanson have met their brief for the renovation of the host venue: the Old course at Broken Sound Club in Boca Raton, Florida.

The opening two days of the tournament will see 78 tour players joined by 26 NFL legends. The course will need to be challenging for the elite golfers and playable for the average for the designers' work to be deemed a success.

We already have a good idea that they have delivered. The TimberTech Championship in late 2023 was played over the renovated layout and proved to be a solid test for the pros, with only eventual winner Pádraig Harrington managing double digits under par, and nearly half the field finishing at or above par. Members of the private club, however, are finding the course significantly more inviting and enjoyable than before.

Originally designed in 1975 by Joe

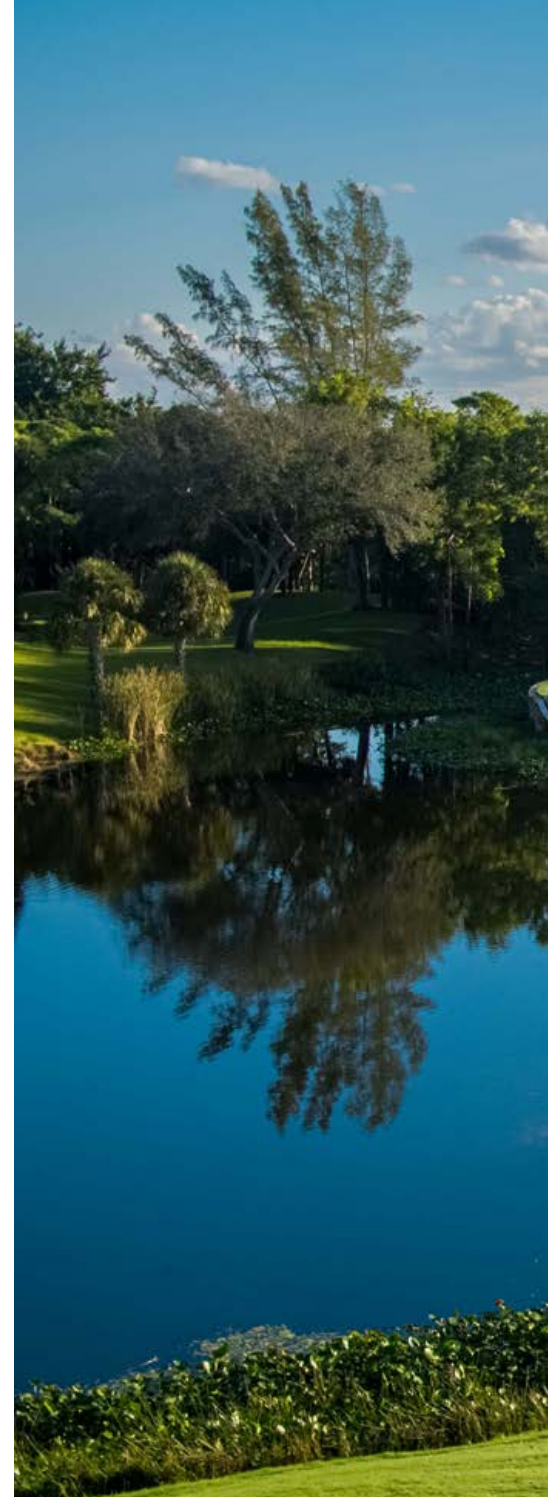
Lee (whose remark that the silence was only broken by the sound of a golfer's swing gave the club its name), the Old course is a relatively rare example of a Florida course with a core layout. Holes wind through stands of large, mature trees and fairways are flanked by lakes rather than housing, eliciting a feel of natural retreat.

It had, however, become quite difficult. "Like many courses of that era, greens tended to be perched up in the air, requiring golfers to hit a highly elevated shot," says Swanson. "As members have got a little older, and are taking more long irons and hybrids into greens, the course had become quite punishing."

The club wanted good shots to be rewarded, and that became the theme for Jones and Swanson's overhaul.

"It was a new design, restored to the original routing," says Jones. "We've given it a classic old style; features on the green are not overly pronounced but by the same token an accurate shot is required for a good chance at birdie. If you play safe, you may have a long breaking putt just to get close."

The new greens are designed to suit the length of the hole. "We kept some of the higher elevated greens,



on the shorter par fours and even the shorter par threes and fives," says Swanson. "On the longer par fours, we lowered them to create more of a ramp approach that allows the ball to feed onto the green.

Before the renovation, several greens were fronted by substantial bunkering, meaning an aerial approach was the only practical option. Jones and Swanson's design offers more choice.



The third is the first of four attractive and varied par threes on the Old course at Broken Sound

That's not to say there are no bunkers in front of greens – but there is always the option to play along the ground into the green. On the par-four ninth, for example, extensive bunkering protecting almost the entire front of the green has been replaced by a single, central pot, small enough to allow the green to be accessed along the ground either side of it. The careful placement of that pot now means it will make

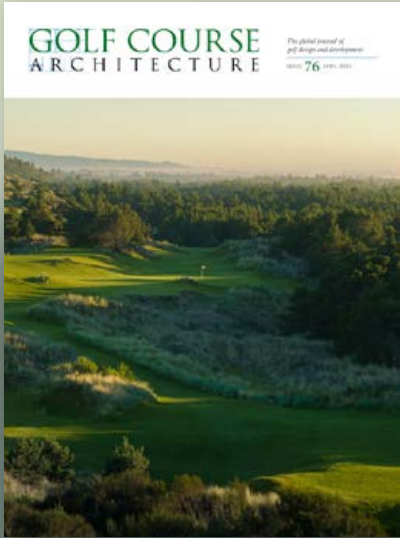
“Features on the green are not overly pronounced but by the same token an accurate shot is required for a good chance at birdie”

sense to plan your approach to the hole from the tee, taking into account the pin position to decide the best route into the green and therefore which side of the fairway your tee shot should favour. Small central bunkers have

been employed to similar effect at the par-four fourth and eleventh holes, too.

Overall, the bunkering is a little more restrained than before, with the longer, winding swathes of sand largely removed and each hazard now having

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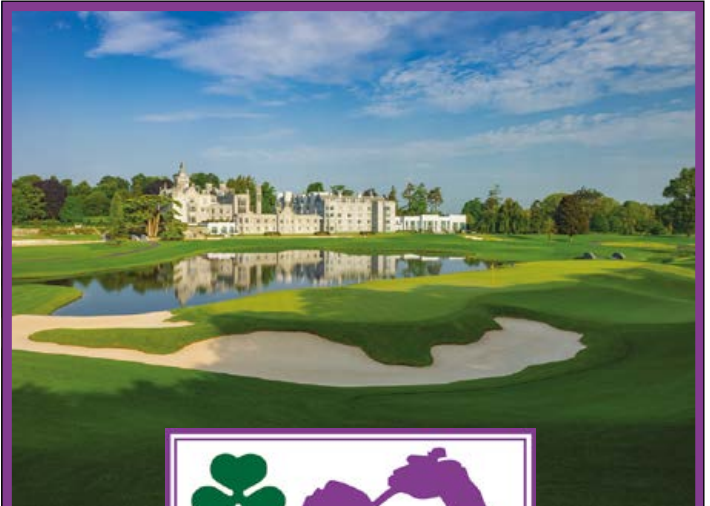
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At the par-four ninth, a pot bunker bisects the approach to provide two distinct entrances to the wide green. Right: Rees Jones with Pdraig Harrington, who won the 2023 TimberTech Championship on the newly renovated course

a greater impact on strategy. Their depth and pitch provides sufficient challenge to be worth avoiding, while at the same time making a successful recovery at least a possibility for regular members.

The course is also well protected by water, which comes into play on all but a handful of holes and is a defining characteristic. The lakes provide great visual appeal but with sensible play can be avoided. “We wanted to make sure that the ball would not roll into the water if you did hit your target,” says Jones. This has involved the construction of some retaining walls, including at the tenth and eighteenth, so that ground around greens could be flatter, rather than sloping down to the water.



Photo: Scott Halleran

The final two holes have been cleverly switched, meaning the course’s previously underwhelming finishing hole is now replaced by a dramatic par four that plays alongside a lake to a green in front of the clubhouse patio. For the best chance of getting on in regulation, the tee shot

will need to thread the needle between the lake and a distinctive tree in the centre of the fairway, behind which lies a bunker that will be in play for longer drivers. The final approach will test the nerves, as a large greenside bunker looms for those who shy too far from the water. **GCA**

Spicing up a Kentucky classic

Kevin Hargrave has rebuilt greens and widened playing corridors at Lexington Country Club, which has reopened for play.

The golf course at Lexington Country Club was originally designed in 1912 by Tom Bendelow, but was being tinkered with before a shovel even hit the ground.

The club feared Bendelow's design may be too difficult for average players so made minor modifications before construction began.

Several more designers have reworked the design since then, including Pete Dye in 1961 and

Benjamin Wihry in 1975. "Hardly anything remains of Bendelow's routing," says Kevin Hargrave, the latest architect to make his mark on the Kentucky course. "Our aim has been to make Lexington more interesting and to set it apart from the other golf courses in the area. The changes we've made give the course bigger scale, make it more appealing to the eye and gives it some much needed oomph!"

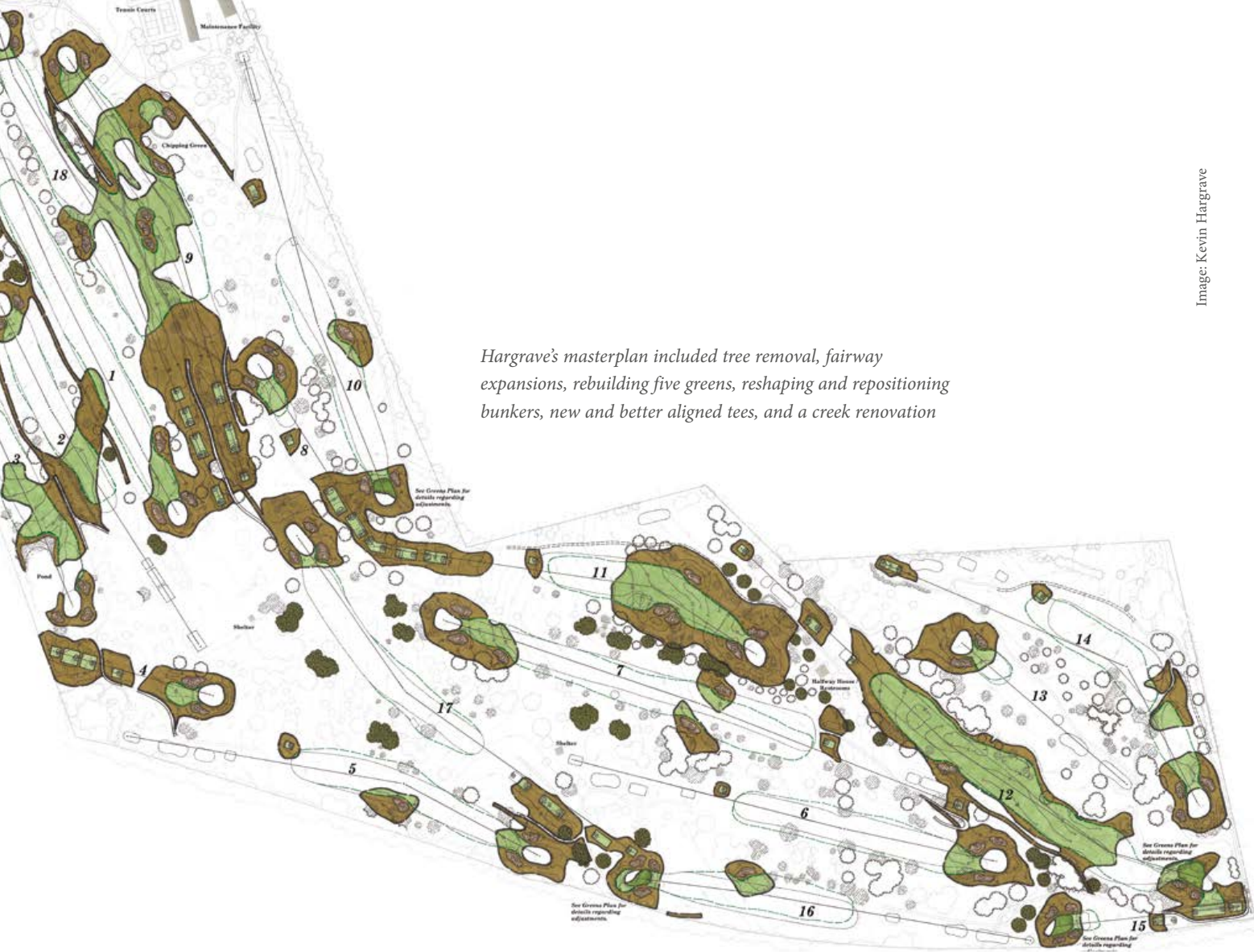
Hargrave, who has worked alongside Keith Foster for 28 years as his lead design associate and has also built a portfolio of his own, revamped the masterplan in 2022 with the intention of completing work in phases. But contractor NMP Golf Construction was hired in 2023, and the club elected to complete all 18 holes in a single season.

Green complexes were to be a major focus. "We weren't able to relocate



Photo: Kevin Hargrave

The sixteenth green was rebuilt to make it more visible from the fairway. Its slopes were also softened to add more pin positions



Hargrave's masterplan included tree removal, fairway expansions, rebuilding five greens, reshaping and repositioning bunkers, new and better aligned tees, and a creek renovation

greens,” says Hargrave. Their feel and look has, however, been changed significantly. He softened surface slopes on the eighth, tenth, twelfth, fifteenth and sixteenth, which were in areas considered unplayable.

The eleventh hole was completely rebuilt. “That hole was one of the worst on the course, but our changes have made it, in my view, one of the best,” says Hargrave.

The par-five twelfth required a different solution. “A previous contractor had built a stone wall around the pond, flanking the left side of the green,” says Hargrave. “The elevation of the wall as well as the water elevation were improperly set higher than the existing green surface. Due to cost limitations, the rebuilding of the wall was out of the question.

Working within the parameters we had and to give the green complex more appeal and improve playability, we raised the front-right side of the green surface up 18 to 24 inches, expanded the front of the green and softened slopes throughout.”

“The changes we’ve made give the course bigger scale, make it more appealing to the eye and gives it some much needed oomph!”

Darryl Bartlett, senior project manager for NMP Golf Construction, adds: “The elevation of this hole now feels vastly different. It feels like you’re playing uphill, even though you’re almost below water – it is a much better hole with a completely different visual.”

The transformation of the twelfth didn’t end there, with work completed on a creek too. “It looked like a ditch and bit of a mistake,” says Bartlett. NMP installed liner and rocks transforming its appearance. “It looks like it belongs there now,” adds

Bartlett. “There are waterfalls and pools of water, which is much more pleasing than a dry ditch. The water now runs down to a pond and then at the head of the stream, we put in an irrigation line so we could turn the water on and recirculate it to make it look like it is an active creek.”

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Photo: Kevin Hargrave

New greenside bunkering at the fourteenth. Throughout the course hazards are now more visible, dramatic and playable

Hargrave's plan also included work to make the course more appealing for players of all abilities. Tee work has added almost 200 yards to the overall length of the layout, while new forward tees have also been introduced. "Around 40 per cent of tees were redone, mainly for better alignment and to change the line of play," says Hargrave.

Around 90,000 square feet of bunkers have been renovated, which

point of view, ease of walking into them and their playability."

Hargrave worked at Lexington in 2014 when the club regrassed the fairways to bentgrass but were prevented from widening them because of the existing head spacing of the irrigation. For the 2023 project, with entirely new irrigation going in, installed by an irrigation contractor, Hargrave was finally able to widen fairways to how he envisioned.

NMP completed construction in December 2023, and the club reopened on 2 April. The contractor had a crew of 28 to 30 on site during the project, including shapers Ricky Mendoza and Mario Gutierrez. NMP completed work on time, even including a short-game area within the original budget.

"The overall experience at Lexington is much better," says Bartlett. "Aesthetics, maintenance and playability are all vastly improved. This is the best club in Lexington, Kentucky, right now. They are the measuring stick, no question."

Hargrave adds: "The playing experience has improved dramatically. Bunkers are much easier to get in and out of and they look so much more dramatic in comparison to what the club had – you couldn't see half the sand in them before, everything looked too small. Now you can see everything." **GCA**

“Bunkers are much easier to get in and out of and they look so much more dramatic in comparison to what the club had”

all now feature Better Billy Bunker liner and Best Sand. "Instead of an ocean of green, Lexington now has these big flashes of white with the new sand," says Bartlett. "It is a tremendous difference from a visual

The removal of at least 300 trees further widens the playing corridors. Unhealthy trees were removed – including one on the eighteenth that was held in place with concrete – and selected others were taken out to open up vistas.



Rogers serves up some Lemon aid

JDR Golf Design has reimagined an under-the-radar course in Florida to add variety and make it more memorable.

Lemon Bay Golf Club in southwest Florida has, in 35 years, gone somewhat under the radar.

This may be due in part to the sheer quantity of golf in the state, but also possibly because the course hadn't reached its full potential.

The club was established in 1989 by six founding members, including real estate developer Kim Honey, who purchased what was then the Lemon Bay Beach and Country Club course, designed by Jim Petrides in 1980.

Petrides laid out the course on a compact site among the mangroves and backwaters of Lemon Bay. Unlike the courses of the nearby Rotonda West community, Lemon Bay is core golf, with the few houses that do overlook its western boundary separated by water.

"Lemon Bay gradually developed a reputation for its great location, the very friendly and welcoming membership and an abundance of amazing wildlife," says Rogers. "However, the golf course

was noticeably underwhelming and out of balance with their stated mission: To offer an exceptional golf experience by promoting the love of the game; encouraging congeniality among members, staff and guests; as well as being responsible citizens of our community and dedicated stewards of our environment."

In 2020, club president Tom O'Shane approached Rogers and his JDR Golf Design team to propose major changes to the course. Rogers says the Lemon Bay taskforce and membership

nuance," says Rogers. "It possessed very few defined playing strategies or shot values."

Rogers' plan, approved in 2021, embraces the course's intimate setting and natural beauty, while providing more of a sense of identity, greater variety and memorability.

"Drew immediately grasped the vision here," says O'Shane. "It was never his intent to change Lemon Bay Golf Club, but he was determined to make it a better version of who we are and what we represent."

"The redesigned greens complexes are the star of the show, employing much needed diversity and character"

provided "the perfect framework for what I thought could become a really outstanding golf experience".

Rogers set about creating a new masterplan. "The course was mainly lacking in design personality and

In 2022, prior to construction, the winds exceeding 150mph of Hurricane Ian caused substantial damage. Most of the course's mature stands of native loblolly pines were destroyed, but will, over time, be reintroduced.



Construction on the renovation – which included a new irrigation system – was completed in 2023 by Leibold Irrigation. “Every aspect of the course was reimagined within the agreed context and then reconstructed using the identical hole corridors and sequencing that were for many decades is familiar to its members,” says Rogers.

“The redesigned greens complexes are the star of the show, employing much needed diversity and character. The new green contours are all complemented by the varied approach and recovery opportunities through the introduction of more defined angles of play and an abundance of short grass. The holes are now detailed by dramatically etched bunkering as well as some subtle but impacting ground movements – all with a more balanced scale of presentation.”

The new bunkers include Better Billy Bunker lining. Rogers has also revamped tee complexes, converted turf to Bimini bermuda, expanded short grass areas and removed invasive plants.



While embracing Lemon Bay’s intimate setting was key, Rogers was keen to give the course a better sense of identity

“Despite maintaining a consistent theme, each hole at Lemon Bay now bears its unique character and challenges, a testament to Drew’s unparalleled vision and execution,” says Lemon Bay’s superintendent Eli Rahz.

The club’s leadership have used the course renovation as a platform to rebrand and boost Lemon Bay’s identity. “Drew’s keen

understanding of the nuances of the site, combined with his creative vision, resulted in a course that not only met but completely exceeded our expectations,” said Lemon Bay’s general manager Damon Williams. “His ability to strike a balance between honouring the club’s heritage and infusing innovative design elements was truly remarkable.” **GCA**

HOLING OUT

Photo: The R&A

Making a difference

The R&A's Golf It! facility in Glasgow is recognised for its sustainability efforts.

When the Golf It! facility in Glasgow, Scotland, opened last year, the R&A's primary aspirations were to grow the game among the local community, particularly those who had little to no contact with golf.

The new facility was built on the site of the former Lethamhill golf course, and includes a full-length nine-hole layout, a two-deck floodlit driving range, adventure golf, park golf, padel courts and walking trails.

Eight months in, and the facility is already proving a hit. "In the first eight weeks, there were 50,000 people through the door, and two million balls hit on the range," says golf architect Scott Macpherson.

And now, Golf It! has had its credentials recognised by the GEO Sustainable Golf Foundation. "The

achievement of becoming a GEO Certified Development underlines our commitment to sustainability and the efforts we are making to ensure that golf has a positive impact on the environment and provides real value to people living in local communities," says Russell Smith, general manager at Golf It!

"We have worked tirelessly to develop a venue which allows people to enjoy the many health benefits of golf with their family and friends and promotes the importance of time spent outdoors in the fresh air. It reflects the requirements of a sustainable golf development which many other facilities worldwide can look to in the progression of their own venues and activities."

Sustainability has been a big part of the vision for Golf It! throughout the

entire development, including design, construction and management.

"The project has transformed the site to include far more important wetland and woodland habitat to boost biodiversity and create more spaces for priority species to inhabit," says Sam Thomas, director of golf development at GEO. "The result is an urban golf facility that is accessible to so many people to enjoy golf in a variety of formats. I don't think we have seen a community impact as positive as this before in golf developments."

A sustainable development strategy will evolve over the next five years with a focus on increasing biodiversity, incorporating a detailed carbon management plan and working towards achieving GEO Certification for the facility's long-term operations. **GCA**



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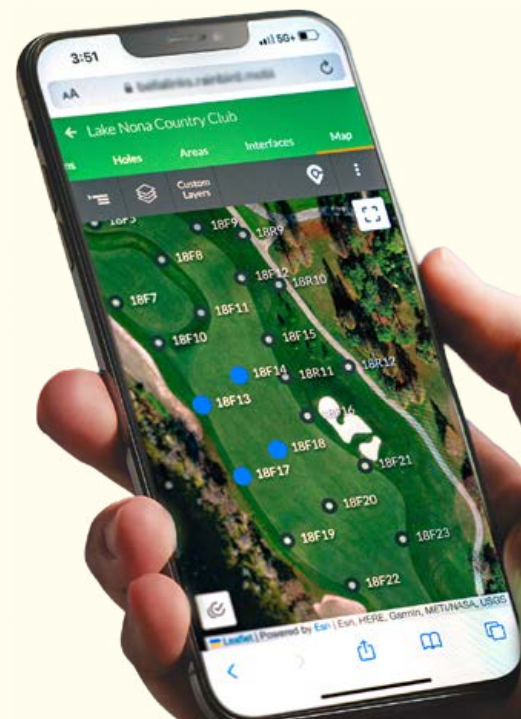
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