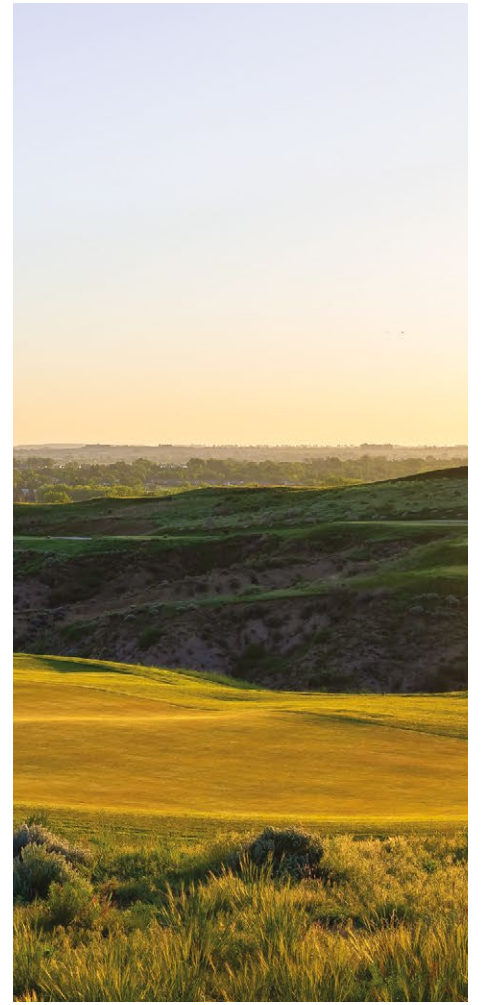


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ADAM LAWRENCE

Restored to glory?

It is more than 40 years since Ron Prichard basically invented the concept of restoring a golf course to its original design, at Texarkana Country Club in Arkansas. Since then, hundreds of courses, mostly in America (mostly originally designed by Donald Ross), have been ‘restored’ by any number of architects.

Though golf architecture has its roots in the UK, the restoration movement has not really made any significant strides here. There are a number of reasons for this; principally, I think, the smaller amount of money available for course projects in the British market. Until recently, it has been hard to persuade British clubs to spend significant funds on their courses and, in truth, the UK has remained in thrall to the post-war design school of Robert Trent Jones and the like, that believed the old courses could, and should, be improved by alterations when funds were available.

There have been projects with a historically sensitive mindset – the heathland courses of Surrey and Berkshire, for example, have mostly been trying to improve their stands of heather for some years – but they have not been big enough, or high profile enough, to constitute a ‘restoration movement’. And in many cases, even where projects have been sold as restorative, architects have proved unable to resist a little tinkering, claiming that the work ‘is what the original architect would have done if he were still here’ (which, I am afraid, is never more than speculation).

In the last couple of years, though, we have seen one or two large-scale projects that could genuinely be called restorative break cover. The work at the Addington, which we profiled in January, is trailblazing, and more recently, St George’s Hill has appointed a team led by Renaissance Golf Design’s Brian Schneider, with a restorative brief. The latter is a reflection of a change in mindset: the club has been talking about restorative work for a long time, but has proved unwilling to press the button; perhaps it now will. And perhaps the post-Covid boom in golf, and the extra money that it has made available to clubs, will see the start of a genuine British restoration movement.

Adam



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Cover photograph courtesy of Jason Michael Lang



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TEE BOX

Heathland restoration for Royal Wimbledon

Surrey club completes eight years of work on course
with Willie Park Jr and Harry Colt heritage.



*The ninth hole at Royal Wimbledon,
with new bunkering and an expanded green*

Royal Wimbledon Golf Club in Surrey, England, has now completed eight years of renovation work, with contractor MJ Abbott executing a masterplan created by Mackenzie & Ebert.

The design firm conducted initial planning and developed its plan in the mid-2010s, and work began in 2016.

Tom Dunn designed the original Royal Wimbledon course in 1882 but the club moved to its present location in 1907, with a Willie Park Jr layout that was redesigned in 1924 by Harry Colt.

A century later and the renovation work aims to ensure Royal Wimbledon remains among the best courses in the

county. “The approach from day one was to make the whole course play more consistently from start to finish and to emphasise the heathland character of many holes,” said Tom Mackenzie. “We have sought to bring elements of that character to the lower areas, which are more parkland in style.”

An extensive heathland restoration is also taking place. “Many holes lie within a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), with trees being removed to give the heather and turf room to breathe,” said Mackenzie.

“This opened views across to the North Downs from the first tee, which had previously been cloaked with trees.”

The plan covers all golf course features, including new forward tees, as well as substantial irrigation and drainage upgrades.

“The first phases on the drier, upper holes were done through operational capital, but the scale of the drainage needed on the lower holes meant that the approach changed, and funds were raised to complete the project quickly,” said Mackenzie. “Each phase was scrutinised before construction started to ensure that the approach was consistent.”

At the par-four first, trees were cleared to open up long-range views from the tee, bunkers were reshaped,





Pine Brook Country Club – Weston, MA
Michael Iacono, Golf Course Superintendent

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At the thirteenth, bunkers have been renovated to a style that is faithful to Colt's 1924 work

and the green was expanded to its original size. The eighteenth was rebuilt with fairway bunkers reconfigured and the green revamped to make it a fairer test.

“As the project developed through the phases, it also became clear that the fourteenth needed to be realigned to address a safety issue and the solution was to make the hole a short par five, breaking up a run of tough par fours from eleven to sixteen,” said Mackenzie. “The additional shot to par means that the overall par matches the course rating, but, more valuably, it has produced a visually stimulating hole with many more choices and options. It has turned a tough par four that most would kindly have described as a slog into a fun birdie opportunity, so it has been a big improvement to the layout.”

Throughout the renovation, the design team has made use of aerial photography from 1924, cross referenced with old plans from the club's archives. “The oblique aerial photographs were from the year that

Colt's revised course opened, with Park's original holes still clearly visible,” said Mackenzie. “We also found interesting ground photography of holes like the fifth, which were used during the shaping process. MJ Abbott did a great job recreating these shapes.

“A wonderful aerial of the thirteenth and seventeenth greens was also found, showing how much these holes had become overgrown and how the style and number of bunkers had been diluted to the obvious detriment of both holes. These images inspired the work, but in researching the club's minute books, it was found that Colt's bunkers had immediately proved impractical to manage, so it would have been folly to restore exactly those bunkers with their associated problems. The look produced is certainly faithful to that of a century ago but in a more maintainable form.”

Bunkers have been restyled and repositioned with the aim of improving the course's aesthetics, playability and strategy. “The club has a great heritage and a priority for

us was to create bunkers that were built to the best modern standards, but in a way that make them look appropriate to a historic course like this,” said Mackenzie.

“A big change in character was the creation of closely mown areas around greens, while also restoring the greens to their original size, both of which emphasise the sophisticated original shapes. Many were the creation of Colt, but our historical research highlighted a surprising number of Park greens had been retained too.

“Understandably, the club saved the hardest and most costly phase until last; those on the lower, wetter holes. This has involved the installation of vast amounts of drainage along with the rest of the irrigation, green and bunkering work. Acidic gravelly soils were selected and brought down to build the fairway bunker surrounds to allow them to become thin and wispy in the same way that those on the upper heathland holes are, bringing the character of the two different levels together.” **GCA**



Mimosa reopens after 36-hole rebuild

Mimosa Plus Golf Course in the Philippines has reopened following a 36-hole renovation project overseen by the Nelson & Haworth design firm.

The Mimosa golf complex was built in the mid-1990s on Clark Field, a former US air base that was damaged in 1991 by the eruption of Mount Pinatubo. As a result, the US military abandoned the base, and its 18-hole course, and returned it to the Philippine authorities.

In 1992/1993, the government redeveloped the Clark area, which is approximately 100 kilometres north of Manila, as a free port zone, and appointed golf architecture firm Nelson & Wright to design a completely new 36-hole golf complex on the former Clark Field. Twenty-seven holes opened in 1994 with the final nine following shortly afterwards. Mimosa now comprises the 18-hole championship

course (Mountainview) and two nine-hole layouts (Acacia and Lakeview).

In the early 2010s, The Bases Conversion and Development Authority sued Antonio Gonzales, Mimosa's chair, and took custody and ownership of the property. "After this takeover, the course saw little in the way of investment or maintenance and over time conditions at Mimosa had deteriorated significantly," said Brett Mogg, partner at Nelson & Haworth.

In 2016, however, a change of ownership signalled a better future. Mogg and Neil Haworth (who passed away in June 2024, see next page) were approached by Filinvest, a major Filipino property developer, and were appointed to develop a 36-hole masterplan.

Filinvest wanted to reserve part of the property for the development of a shopping mall and more, which meant

that several holes on the Lakeview nine needed to be reconfigured, while retaining most of the original routing. "The reasoning for retaining the routing was that the original worked well and there was a desire and government requirement to retain all of the large mimosa trees that form the backbone of the course's character," said Mogg. "Our work was largely to improve playing conditions, which was made possible by a new Rain Bird irrigation system, an AquaFUSION polyethylene fusion system by CMF Global and encouraging the native zoysia to take over."

Other changes have included green expansion and the removal of bunkers on the Mountainview course that were only impacting high handicappers. This work to improve conditions and playability has helped the resort spread play more evenly over the 36 holes.



Photo: Mimosa Plus Golf Course

Gold Hill set to finally open in Korea

Gold Hill Country Club, located an hour's drive away from Seoul, South Korea, is continuing to grow in ahead of a grand opening that has been greatly anticipated.

Construction of the golf course, designed by a local architect, began in 2019 but it never opened. The course has changed hands a few times, with Ramid Group acquiring it in 2022, and now, together with Troon, it is completing construction of the layout and is on track to open for preview play in September with a grand opening later this year.

Troon International is providing support in a range of areas, including development and pre-opening services,

post-opening agronomy, marketing and operations services. Troon Golf will manage and operate the club.

“The entire course exudes warmth and comfort, fostering independent play in a consistently pleasant atmosphere,” said Ahn Hojun, general manager at Gold Hill. “The highlight is undoubtedly the par-four sixteenth, which sits at the highest point of the course, offering a breathtaking panoramic view of four cities.

“Gold Hill will attract golfers from the cities of Cheonan, Pyeongtaek, Anseong and Asan. And given it is located just an hour away from Seoul, it will almost certainly serve golfers from there, too.”

Neil Haworth

1960 – 2024



Golf course architect Neil Haworth passed away in Canada in June 2024.

He began his career at Graham Cooke and Associates before moving to Singapore in 1990 to work for Nelson & Wright. In 2000, he became chairman of Nelson & Haworth and, with Robin Nelson and Brett Mogg, designed courses in a host of countries, including Australia, France, Japan, Pakistan, USA and Vietnam. Following Nelson's death in 2013, Haworth and Mogg retained the firm's name in Nelson's honour.

Haworth's designs include Sheshan International and Jade Dragon in China, Golf Saint-Raphaël in Canada and the rebuild of the Island course at Singapore Island Country Club.



Photo: Gold Hill Country Club

THE BIG PICTURE

The par-four sixth hole at Trump International Golf Club Lido, an Ernie Els Design course in Indonesia that will open this month, as photographed by Jacob Sjöman.

The club, owned by resort developer MNC Land, is located at MNC Lido City, a new destination two hours south of Jakarta that has been approved by the government as a tourism special economic zone.

“It’s such a beautiful piece of land with incredible views, so naturally we wanted to work with that and create a golf course that goes with the flow,” said Greg Letsche, design associate at Ernie Els Design. “For bunkers, sometimes the topography whispers gently to you and, as a designer, you listen. The greens are interesting because the elevation changes and the wider landscape creates something of an optical illusion. Some of the greens look like they go one way, or may appear relatively flat, but they play very differently, so they’re deceptive.

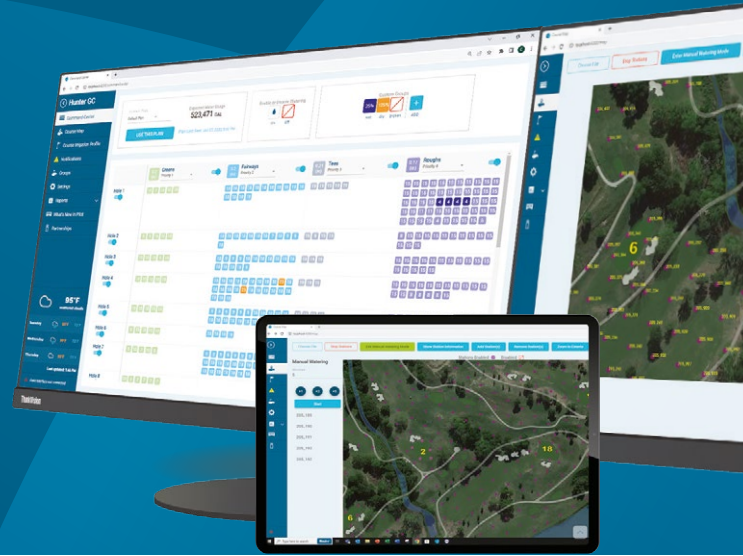
Els and Letsche have worked on the project with superintendent Mick Pascoe, general manager Steven Thielke and MNC’s head manager Dustin Jennings. Atlas Turf International has provided Zorro Zoysia turfgrass for the tees, fairways and rough.

“This place is spectacular,” said Els. “This is going to be a ‘go-to destination’ for golfers in this part of the world.”





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Van der Vaart adds punchbowl green to Keppelse

Michiel van der Vaart has created a new punchbowl green as part of the first phase of work at Keppelse Golf Club in the Netherlands.

Spogárd & VanderVaart developed a masterplan in 2023, which focused on preserving the landscape of the Old nine and bringing the New nine more in line with those holes. The club also wanted to address the crossing on holes fourteen and fifteen, as well as shortening walks.

The first phase, which was completed in July 2023 and opened in June 2024, focused on holes ten and seventeen.

“I added a new hole on a triangular-shaped area between the old tenth and eighteenth,” said van der Vaart. “It was just big enough to create a 136-yard par three... and the seventeenth was born!

“The tenth’s former green was perfect for playing to, but in a completely different direction. The

walk from the new seventeenth to the eighteenth tee [former ninth] was shortened considerably. A new green for hole ten had to be built in the empty triangle. I utilised this area, which comprised a large depression with high mounds all around... I immediately thought, this must become a punchbowl green!”

Read more about Keppelse on www.golfcoursearchitecture.net

EIGCA recognises outstanding contributions of Hawtree and Harradine

During its annual meeting in Copenhagen, Denmark, the European Institute of Golf Course Architects (EIGCA) recognised the contributions of Martin Hawtree and Peter Harradine with the presentation of Outstanding Contribution Awards.

“Both these recipients represent families for whom the major contribution made to the Institute, its predecessor organisations and golf course design are undeniable,” said EIGCA president Caspar Grauballe.

Both the Hawtree and Harradine families have been associated with golf course design for over 100 years. Martin’s grandfather Fred G. Hawtree started business in 1912, working primarily with James Braid. Peter’s stepgrandfather Albert Hockey remodelled his first course in 1920 and worked with his stepson Don, Peter’s father. Don and Peter worked together until 1980, and now Peter runs the firm alongside his own son Michael.

The awards came at the end of a week where EIGCA members, partners and sponsors played rounds of golf at Flommen in



Photos: EIGCA

Sweden and Royal Copenhagen, as well as attending sessions on a variety of topics from robotic mowers and golf course design, the use of digital tools for architects and making a positive impact for golfers with disabilities.



Q&A
with Jim Nagle

“As someone who has spent most of his career focused on restoring, it was very gratifying to create something new”

Jim Nagle has balanced restoration and renovation elements for his work at both Philadelphia CC and Meridian Hills CC.

In May, the front nine of the Spring Mill course reopened at Philadelphia Country Club in Pennsylvania, and 18 holes reopened at Meridian Hills Country Club in Indiana.

Jim Nagle has led both projects, working on similar briefs: to update the course to modern playing equipment, while also respecting the original design.

What was Philadelphia’s rationale for the renovation?

It needed to replace ageing infrastructure. The irrigation system was over 25 years old, bunkers were draining poorly, the greens were lacking in drainage and the subsoils required replacing. The club also took advantage of the opportunity to look to the year it hosted the US Open (1939)

and attempt to restore as much of the course as possible with the photos from the Open being a tremendous resource in the rebuilding process.

Could you provide an overview of the work you have completed?

We have rebuilt the greens; regrassed fairways and greens; reconstructed bunkers and added new drainage,

Bunkers at Philadelphia CC have been rebuilt closer to Flynn’s original style and now feature Better Billy Bunker liner



Photo: Motin Golf Renovations



Photo: Jim Nagle

At Meridian Hills, Nagle has renovated all bunkers to a single, coherent style

Better Billy Bunker liner, new sand and fescue surrounds; added new forward and back tees; widened fairways; undertaken tree management; and installed new irrigation. Bunkers are being relocated or reinstated on 10 holes to further enhance the playability of the course and to restore the original design intent of William Flynn.

The biggest change will be the rebuild of eighteen. The hole was rebuilt in 1955 and was a departure from the rest of the course in both its bunker construction and the internal undulations of the green. The new eighteenth will draw inspiration from the course's original fifth, which no longer exists, as well as bunker concepts befitting a Flynn design, with an emphasis on a cluster of bunkers on the inside of the dogleg where I drew inspiration from the sixteenth at Shinnecock Hills.

How have you balanced the restoration and modernisation elements of this project?

Greens were laser scanned and mapped and by rebuilding them, we

have the opportunity to recapture over 22,000 square feet of lost putting surface, enabling the club to reinstate lost hole locations not seen in decades. Also, historic aerials and ground level photos enabled Mottin Golf Renovations to recreate the bunkering as accurately as possible.

For your work at Meridian Hills, what was the impetus for the renovation?

Like Philadelphia, it was the ageing infrastructure, which we have also replaced in this project. The original remaining greens had shrunk, and six greens rebuilt in the early 2000s were not performing well. The club had a strong desire to look back at its original William Diddel design as well as reconfiguring those six rebuilt holes.

What has your work at Meridian Hills involved?

In addition to rebuilding those six greens to better match the originals designed by Diddel, Aspen Golf has expanded the remaining 12 to their original size. All bunkers were

rebuilt with nearly all expanded, some relocated, and others eliminated. Numerous bunkers were also reinstated, while others were repositioned further from the tee. Bunkers are now in a single style, play more consistent and won't washout as easily.

Players will also find better playing options on the newly redesigned holes – four to seven, nine and ten – while they will also see greater variety, interest and challenge in the existing 12 holes.

What have been the biggest changes at Meridian Hills?

Both my Meridian Hills and Philadelphia projects have been 'restorations'. Portions of the Meridian course were fully renovated while drawing inspiration from the original William Diddel design. I studied the original bunker style and locations, expanding all greens to their original sizes, and restoring (primarily) the par threes. The par fours and fives had portions restored whereas other areas were renovated to match today's playing equipment and to also add interest and challenge to the property.

As someone who has spent most of his career focusing on restoring golf courses, on the stretch of holes from the fourth green through to the par-three seventh, then the ninth green and tenth hole, it was very gratifying to be able to create something new. Although I drew inspiration from the original design style of the 1923 course, I was able to create something that fits with the remaining 12 holes but is entirely new and something not previously seen at the club.

Jeremy Pern routes Benin's first course around sacred grove and voodoo shrines



Photo: Jeremy Pern

Avlékété Golf Course will occupy a long, thin stretch of land of about 100 hectares

Construction firm Gregori International has started work on Avlékété Golf Course, a new 18-hole golf layout by Jeremy Pern, near Cotonou, the largest city in Benin.

“With government procedures in Africa being quite lengthy, I started working on the project on an unofficial basis around 18 months ago, producing sketches and looking

at sites,” said Pern. “After going through all the procedures, we got the official green light at the beginning of the year. We more or less started building the course straight away.”

The site for the golf course is one kilometre from the coast. “It’s a long, thin stretch of land of about 100 hectares,” said Pern. “Parts of the land are great, and parts are a bit of

a challenge. About half of it is rolling sand, very ‘linksy’, plus or minus a couple of metres in height, where farmers were growing tomatoes, peppers, manioc, maize and all sorts on the sand. Surrounding the sandy area is swampland and a coastal lagoon. There’s also a wide range of trees – including a variety of palms, coconut and mango.

“One thing that I have been impressed by is the level of environmental surveillance and permitting, quite different to my past experience in Africa. There have been comprehensive environmental impact studies extending to social, cultural and financial issues including government compensation to the farmers. All the coconuts and palms in the playing areas will be transplanted into the rough. However, we have to avoid the forest clumps. If there is a special tree that we can’t move, then the golf course has to be routed around it. And with 100 hectares to play with, we have plenty of room.”

It is not just trees that will be protected. “There are seven voodoo shrines on the site, of which there are several we can’t touch,” said Pern. “Three or four of the voodoo temples – they’re shrines and altars in the trees – can be moved by their priests. And in the middle of the site is a sacred grove, which is a clump of trees covering an area of about half a hectare, that has to be preserved and isolated. This sacred grove sits beside the big lagoon and is dedicated to the fishing deities.”

Construction is expected to take two years, with 250 local people employed to help Gregori International build the course, which is expected to open by the end of 2025.

Read more about the origins and design of Avlékété Golf Course on www.golfcoursearchitecture.net



Photo: Harris Kalinka

Städler & Reinmuth design course for the new La Maviglia resort in Puglia

Städler & Reinmuth Golf design has been commissioned to plan the high-end 18-hole golf course for the ultra-luxury La Maviglia resort in the Puglia region of Italy, that will open in 2027.

The resort spans 202 hectares of olive orchard less than a kilometre from the coast of the Gulf of Taranto and accessible from Bari International and Brindisi airports.

“The golf course will integrate countless cultural sites dating back to the 16th and 18th centuries, in particular numerous trulli – traditional Apulian dry stone huts – which can be found everywhere on the resort grounds and come into play visually and strategically on numerous holes,” said Christoph Städler. “The

landscape is also characterised by countless century-old olive and fig trees, dune landscapes and by the macchia – the typical Mediterranean scrub.”

The design team, supported by irrigation designer Giles Wardle of Irriplan and agronomist firm Turfgrass, has been tasked with creating a high-end course that is also capable of hosting professional tournaments.

Städler & Reinmuth’s design reveals closing holes for each nine to be played alongside one of three lakes to be excavated on the property. The designers have central fairway bunkers on several holes and formal hazards are complemented by large areas of exposed sand dune.

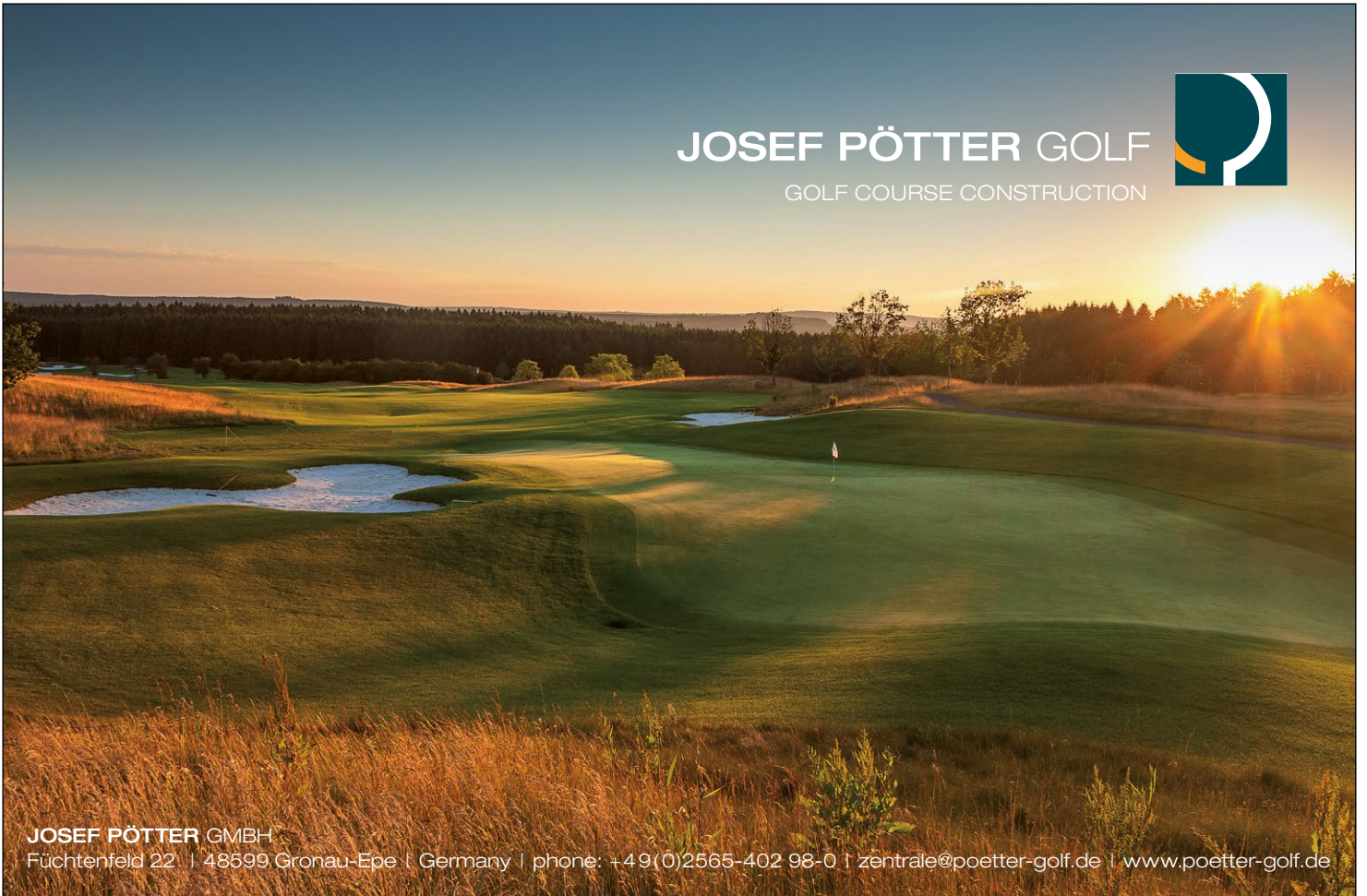


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Pangaea appointed for renovation of two Scottish layouts

Pangaea Golf Architecture, the design practice of Stuart Rennie and Jeff Danner, has been selected by South Ayrshire Council in Scotland to develop renovation plans for its Darley and Belleisle courses.

The authority looks after eight golf courses, with the £5 million investment into Darley and Belleisle aimed at

raising the bar of both layouts, which also includes irrigation upgrades and a new academy.

Rennie and Danner will be supported on the projects at Darley and Belleisle by former Open champion Paul Lawrie. The initial design concepts are expected to be unveiled this summer.

“Having grown up playing historic courses like Darley and Belleisle, this is an exciting opportunity to bring our passion and expertise in design to get it right,” said Rennie. “Our goal is to enhance the playability and natural beauty of these courses, ensuring they meet the highest standards for golfers of all levels.”



Bunkers revamped at West Herts

Marc Westenberg has completed bunker work on 14 holes at West Herts Golf Club in Rickmansworth, England, and will oversee renovation of the remaining four holes later in 2024.

“Part of the masterplan that I created 10 years ago was the bunkers, which required urgent attention because of their eroded lips, contaminated sand, blocked drainage and the fact that some of the fairway bunkers were no longer in the correct location,” said Westenberg.

“The renovation has ensured that the bunkers are in perfect condition, reducing the risk of poor lies. Reducing the number of bunkers by 14, thereby also reducing the intensity of maintaining those that remain, has also allowed the maintenance crew more time to concentrate on improving other areas of the golf course.

“Additionally, the creation of closely mown swales and hollows, which have replaced some bunkers around green complexes, means golfers have a wider variety of shots to play.”



Photo: West Herts Golf Club

COURSE BLUEPRINT

Broomsedge

Grassing is nearing completion on the new Kyle Franz and Mike Koprowski-designed Broomsedge course in Rembert, South Carolina.

“If you intend to design and build a minimalist golf course, routing is the single most important thing – so important that I developed a conceptual routing before I even put in an offer on the land upon which Broomsedge now sits,” said Koprowski. “I needed to feel comfortable that a great course could exist on the land; otherwise, there was no point in even buying the property.”

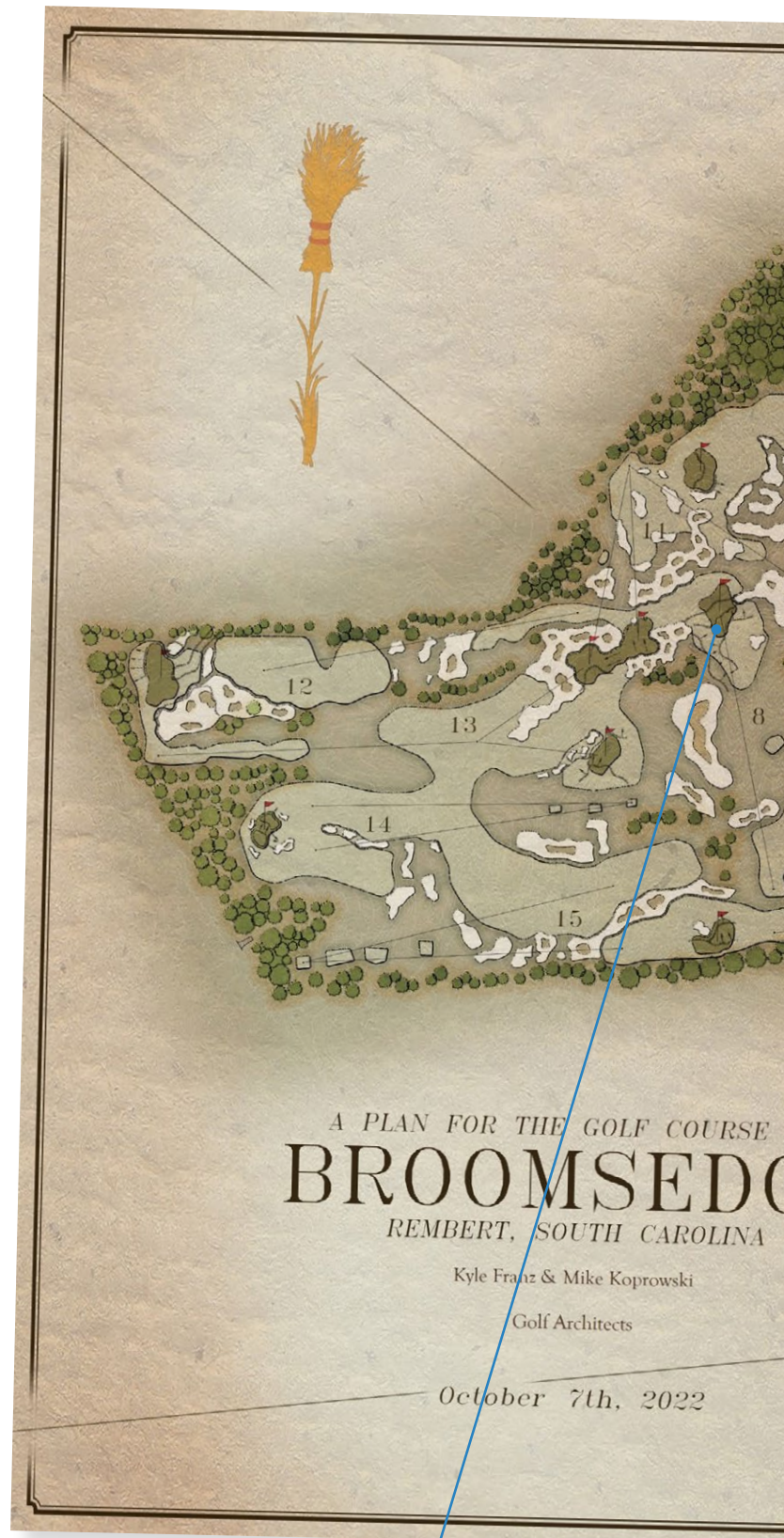
The course will occupy 156 acres of the club’s 235-acre site, which boasts unusually dramatic elevation changes for the Carolina Sandhills.

“We spent hours walking various alternatives,” said Koprowski. “By the end of summer, we arrived at the conclusion that the original routing sketch was about 75 per cent the correct solution. We moved around two par threes, but overall, our first instincts were mostly right.”

The routing was created in October 2022 and, since then, some course features have changed. For example, Broomsedge will feature only one split fairway despite the original illustration showing many.

“The land was always doing something interesting that allowed us to simply drape the holes over it,” said Koprowski. “And despite the expansive sprawl of modern golf development, we created a routing that is highly intimate, which is a big part of what makes many of the old classics great. If you can marry the right land with the right routing, I think you can often build a better golf course on 200 acres than you can on 500.

“Broomsedge can still stretch to 7,500 yards, showing that you can still achieve distances to challenge elite players on a relatively small footprint. And you get so many benefits out of the compactness: standing on the first tee, you can see 15 different greens, the clubhouse will be visible from every hole, shared tee boxes, six holes that could theoretically change par from day to day, and alternating green sites to keep things fresh for members.”



The par-three eighth plays 40 feet downhill through a dramatic half-pipe chasm

"The par-three sixth, with its diagonal Redan-y green, was a no-brainer," says Koprowski. An alternative green allows the hole to be played at 122 yards

The course begins with four fairly long par fours before being followed by back-to-back par threes



Image: Kyle Franz and Mike Koprowski

The par-four sixteenth can play over 500 yards long and has bunkers as a key defence at the landing area and green

The par-five eighteenth traverses a huge valley and offers plenty of risk and reward

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Photo: Golfplan

Golfplan brings Golden Age character to Kasugai

Kasugai Country Club in Japan will reopen its East course in October following a renovation by Golfplan.

“This was originally a single-green course that reverted to a two-green system due to management concerns,” said Kevin Ramsey of Golfplan. “While the routing was relatively solid, strategy and options were minimal. Also, shaping and bunker character were nondescript, leading to a course with a lot of missed potential.”

Golfplan began renovating the course in December 2023, with addressing greens a priority. “Kasugai had roundish greens with tilts back to front and rounded edges with putting surface areas not exceeding 300 square metres,” said David Dale of Golfplan. “The surrounds were gently concaved or slightly elevated. There was little challenge and made for a pedestrian and mindless playing experience.

“We decided to transform them to have a more classic, Golden Age character with some plateau greens and collection area surrounds to create a variety of short-game recovery options. The surfaces are now capable of hosting national championships.”

The putting surfaces now have multiple pinnable locations to allow for the preferred angle of attack to be changed from day to day. “Our design strategy is more about providing variety, interest and options for a better playing experience,” said Ramsey.

Golfplan has overseen the removal of more than 1,000 trees. Many were pines and Japanese cedars that were blocking air flow, sunlight and views. “Holes were completely encapsulated by a wall of trees,” said Dale. “Now, we have opened up the course to have distant mountain views, vistas of the city of Nagoya as well as views of

adjacent holes, lakes and valleys. The atmosphere of the layout has been completely transformed.”

The renovation has also included new irrigation, drainage upgrades, Better Billy Bunker liner, new grass varieties and new cart paths to collect storm water.

Once the East reopens, Golfplan will turn their attention to the West.

“The West has more width than the East with both sited on beautiful rolling land with holes routed on ridgelines and valley floors,” said Dale. “The West will be equally dynamic in architectural approach but with green sites that gather and funnel the ball to the various hole locations with bolder undulation within the green surfaces. The bunkering will have its own contrasting character to the East and an emphasis on ball position as a priority from the tee.”



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Image: WAC Golf

WAC has high hopes for Hillsdale

WAC Golf, the design firm of Rod Whitman, Dave Axland and Keith Cutten, is continuing with the redesign of Hillsdale Golf Club in Mirabel, Quebec.

Hillsdale was home to two golf courses designed by Howard Watson, who studied under Stanley Thompson. “However, due to the tight and quirky nature of the 36-hole property, which had only become more restrictive with

the maturation of the site’s numerous trees, it had become evident that change was needed,” said Cutten.

A masterplan was developed in 2023 to convert Hillsdale’s two layouts into a new 18-hole course, a nine-hole short course and expansive practice areas. Construction started in autumn 2023 with select tree clearing and the mining of native site sand for golf course feature development.

“Ultimately, the work being completed aims to turn Hillsdale into a must-see golf facility,” said Cutten. “The new, reimagined Hillsdale will feature a bigger, bolder golf course than those previously realised, and allow Quebec to really experience creative, fun, and exciting golf.”

Work will continue throughout 2024 and 2025 with the redesigned Hillsdale slated to open in 2026.

GOPHER WATCH

Sandy was in the Midwest of the US in the last issue, paying a visit to the Erin Hills course, northwest of Milwaukee in Wisconsin. Erin Hills is located in an area known as the Kettle Moraine, which was formed by glaciers that left a lot of sand in the area. Golf architects Dr Michael Hurdzan and Dana Fry, with the help of former *Golf Digest* architecture editor Ron Whitten, built the golf course, which opened in 2006. It became the longest course ever to host the US Open in 2017, when Brooks Koepka took home the trophy, his first Major, and the start of a two year sequence in which he won four. Congratulations to Jordan Kvasnicka of Atlanta whose entry was the first out of the hat.

A very famous course – regarded by many as one of the best in the world – in this issue, so no clues, except to say that it is



generally viewed as one of the two finest by its architect. And the other was the focus of the whole world’s attention recently! Entries, as ever, to gopher@golfcoursearchitecture.net.

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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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Keisers expand portfolio with new Texas courses

Michael and Chris Keiser, the sons of Bandon Dunes developer Mike Keiser, are adding a new golf destination in Texas to the Dream Golf portfolio.

Wild Spring Dunes will feature two new public 18-hole layouts, a short course and practice centre, as well as

accommodation and dining facilities. The site occupies 2,400 sandy acres with 120 feet of elevation change and varied topography.

Construction is due to begin on the first course, designed by architect Tom Doak, in autumn 2024, with opening

expected in 2026. “This land has a different feel from anything I’ve worked on,” says Doak. “I think the course will be unique and interesting for golfers.”

Wild Spring’s second course has been routed by Bill Coore and Texas-native Ben Crenshaw.

Ten-year project complete at Tewkesbury Park

Tewkesbury Park in Gloucestershire, England, has completed a 10-year renovation of its golf course and resort facilities.

In 2014, the McIntosh family, who have a background in the hotel sector, bought the Frank Pennink-designed golf course and hotel and invested in a programme of renovation projects to transform the venue.

British architect Peter McEvoy led the renovation of the Deepark golf course, alongside a project team including DAR Golf Construction, course manager Paul Hathaway and his greenkeeping team.

Over the last 10 years, work has been undertaken across the course, with a particular focus on bunkers, which have been redesigned or repositioned in line with the advancement of club technology.

“Golfers in the UK now have a major new resort to consider when making their plans to take a domestic golf break,” said



Photo: Andy Hiseman

Patrick Jones, general manager. “At Tewkesbury Park, our beautiful Deepark golf course matches the superb quality of our accommodation, dining and leisure facilities.”

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Photo: James Hogg

New short course to open at Apes Hill in December 2024

A new nine-hole par-three course will open at Apes Hill in Barbados in December 2024.

Little Apes will join the resort’s 18-hole course, which was redesigned by Ron Kirby in 2021. The short course has holes ranging from 70 to 154 yards and are based on some of golf’s most well-known designs.

“From the outset, the vision at Apes Hill has always been to create an enjoyable and memorable golfing experience where you can feel at home no matter your skill level, age or how long you have been playing the game,”

said Jody Addison, director of golf at Apes Hill. “Ron Kirby embodied that philosophy with his redesign of our championship course, and it is an ethos that we have carried into Little Apes, which we believe will provide endless fun for young children and the whole family in equal measure.

“In many ways it is like a bite-sized version of our 18-hole course, and we can’t wait to see everyone playing it.”

The new short course follows Apes Hill’s introduction of a 19th hole – an island green-style challenge inspired by the seventeenth at TPC Sawgrass.

GOOD READ

“All options were on the table”

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 – Bobby Weed, Chris Cochran, Brett Mogg and Bill Bergin discuss how golf clubs that are facing uncertainty can, with some reconfiguration, secure their future prosperity.

“All options were on the table,” says Weed about the revamp of Waynesville Inn and Golf Club in North Carolina. “It was apparent that the 27 holes were too shoe-horned and compressed. We quickly determined that reducing the routing to 18 and creating much-needed practice areas was the best path forward. It also presented us with a special opportunity to restore Ross’s nine to its former glory.”

The Summer issue of *By Design* also includes insight from Larry Hirsh of Golf Property Analysts about club culture and Chad Ritterbusch reflecting on his 20 years as ASGCA executive director.

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





Resurrection of Las Iguanas continues apace

Grassing of Las Iguanas, a new golf course by Nicklaus Design in the Dominican Republic, is nearly complete.

The course was planned to open in the mid-2000s as part of the expansion of the Cap Cana development, which also includes the Nicklaus-designed Punta Espada layout that opened in 2006, however, Las Iguanas was abandoned due to the 2008 financial crash and has sat dormant for over 15 years.

In 2023, the project was resurrected with Troy Vincent, senior design associate at Nicklaus Design, in charge of completing the course, which is located next to Punta Espada.

“Las Iguanas is going to be available for the public to use and very different to the private Punta Espada,” said Vincent. “The biggest difference is the number of ocean holes. At Punta

Espada, there are eight while at Las Iguanas, we have the twelfth green touching the ocean, the par-three thirteenth playing alongside it and fourteen’s tees playing away from it.”

At Las Iguanas, there are 10 lakes, which were used to generate fill and help create contouring on the fairways and greens. “There is plenty of room off the tee, but the shot into the green is where the challenge lies,” said Vincent. “In addition to the contouring, a lot of the greens are protected by bunkers.”

A unique feature at Las Iguanas is a bluff that comes into play on some holes. “It is visible behind the seventeenth green and is on the left side of the par-five eighteenth,” said Vincent. “You also tee off it on ten. This kind of natural feature can be difficult to design for, especially in the Caribbean.

“We demonstrated similar design skills for holes twelve to fourteen, as there’s a lake running along the right side that connects to the ocean. When you do it right and take advantage of what nature gives you, you can create something unique.”

The only routing change from the original plan comes at holes five and six, with that area now marked for development purposes. This has enabled Nicklaus Design to take advantage of a different area on the property that has a natural wetland.

“We have also toned down some elements as we thought some of the shaping was a bit too strong for the type of golfers that will be playing it,” said Vincent. “The principal challenge will be the wind. Ten is a great example – a short par four with a decent sized



Photo: Nicklaus Design

fairway bunker on the inside of the dogleg and a greenside bunker front and centre. You're going to have to throw a shot up in the air, and depending on what the wind is doing that day, it could be a challenge.”

Grassing is nearly complete on nine holes, with Pure Dynasty seeded paspalum from Atlas Turf International the chosen variety. “The reason we chose Pure Dynasty is to meet the schedule – we had a nursery but that is now gone,” said Vincent. “As an architect that has had the opportunity to work with a number of different paspalums, I can say that Pure Dynasty has performed wonderfully, and I am thrilled with how the grow in process has gone.”

Nine holes are expected to open for preview play in October 2024 with the goal to complete the course next year.

Paul McGinley to continue Donegal renovation in autumn

Paul McGinley Golf Course Design is overseeing a renovation at Donegal Golf Club, located on the Murvagh Peninsula on Ireland's Atlantic coast.

The first phase was executed between March and May and focused on the closing three holes. The second phase, holes two to five, will begin in autumn, while the final phase, which focuses on seven holes, will take place in 2025.

“I am advocating for the redesign and expansion of sections of the greens,” said McGinley. “Initially, all will remain in their current locations however there are a few greens – such as seven, eight and fifteen – that potentially could be moved to new positions.”

The project also includes tees, irrigation, native grasses and bunkering. Bunkers will be renovated to a revetted style, with the number of them to be reduced by around 25 per cent to improve playability and reduce maintenance costs.

McGinley said: “What is clear and needed is a coordinated and uniform design as well as a strategy around the building and maintenance of the course features.”

The design team will consult environmental experts when adding new wild grasses to out of play areas, while the dunes will remain untouched in accordance with national ecological policy. “Moving sand will be kept to a minimum, however, the fifth hole will need substantial earthmoving to enhance its playability,” said McGinley. “For any sand that is removed, we will have a plan on where it is to be relocated for playability reasons or to enhance the framing of a hole.”



Photo: Paul McGinley Golf Course Design

The closing hole at Donegal



GIULIA FERRONI

The art of project management

Giulia Ferroni of Leeds Golf Design spells out the intricacies of executing a masterplan and the skills required from a golf course architect.

Golf course architects often act as a project manager, overseeing various phases of work from the early design concepts to the end of construction. Being a project manager requires many skills, such as planning, leadership, communication and quality control.

We also bring our own unique approach. For me, that comes from a deep commitment to delivering sustainable golf course design solutions that respect the existing environment and landscape.

In 2019, I became an official independent verifier for the GEO Foundation, and through my work at Leeds Golf Design, I have made sustainability and inclusion my mission. We are also supporting the R&A's Women in Golf Charter initiative to assess, design and improve

courses to promote women's play and, ultimately, improve women's participation and retention.

Most of my work is the renovation of historical courses, where the focus is to ensure they are up to date with modern technology and meet sustainability requirements. In preparing a masterplan, I often adjust hazards and tees to consider the shorter hitters like juniors and seniors. The right distances are crucial to avoid penalising beginners, which helps to contribute to attracting and retaining players.

An architect intuitively leads the design stage, moving from concepts to the detailed masterplan. Typically, the work shown on the masterplan is not undertaken all at once but is phased, depending on the club's budget and other factors. From the detailed masterplan, I develop construction

drawings for the agreed scope of work, including contour plans for the contractor to shape the course. Along with construction drawings, an architect prepares a construction specifications document and the so-called bill of quantities. This quantifies the work to be carried out and together with the construction specifications are fundamental documents to price the work – we can then spot any budget-related issues.

We designers lead a wide team of professionals, so a key part of our role is also dealing with other consultants. We're in regular dialogue with a course manager and their team, irrigation and drainage consultants, ecologists and agronomists, planning officers and the contractor. Each of those can give valuable input for the final masterplan, especially the course manager as they



Photo: Leeds Golf Design

Giulia Ferroni is currently guiding Cirencester GC through a phased renovation

know the course intimately and can provide a useful perspective.

Architects don't stop advising after the planning stage. We continue to oversee these professionals into the construction, relaying questions, answers and requests from the club to all those involved. We are, in a sense, the link between all those advisors and the club, and much of our work is 'translating' the information coming from all the different professionals to the club and explaining why things are necessary or done in a certain way. So, golf course architects need to be good communicators and patient educators.

We deal with the entire club's hierarchy, from the general manager and green committee to the captain, pros and other club representatives. Preparing presentations to explain the project to members and the community is another example of when top communication skills are needed. Technical plans often are difficult to read, so we prepare colourful masterplans and photomontages to show before/after proposals as well as

creating 3D visuals and flythroughs to provide everyone with a better understanding of the work.

As soon as the 'construction package' is ready, plans and documents are submitted to the contractor – or contractors if we go to tender. If the latter, the golf course architect will be dealing with the different proposals supervising the process and advising the club if required.

When the contractor is appointed, and the construction window is booked, my work is primarily quality control. I supervise the construction phase from start to finish, ensuring the contractor is following the plan, specifications and the contract. Typically, this requires us to monitor construction on a weekly basis or checking in at key stages.

We are not on site daily, so course managers are our eyes when we're not there. We're in close communication with them, making sure things are getting done according to the plan. The aim is to move the project forward as smoothly as possible and to keep track of the progress.

So, we monitor the schedule, attend regular progress meetings and document activities to create a project record. We approve acceptable work and materials, note defective work to be corrected and we can reject work and materials that don't comply or haven't been corrected.

As a project manager, we also keep an eye on the expenses and bottom line of the project to ensure it is completed to a quality standard as well as within the agreed budget.

At the start of my career, I thought managing a design project from beginning to end was hard because of the many professionals you must speak with along the way. It can be overwhelming when you're not an expert. But I soon realised how much you can learn from each other's background and how rewarding leading an effective team can be. It really gives satisfaction when all the pieces come together, when everybody contributes to a successful golf course project and you, as the architect and project manager, facilitated that process. **GCA**

An end to templates?

BIRDIE BILL

Written by Adam Lawrence

Legislation before the US Congress would extend the copyright protection that currently exists for buildings architecture to golf course design. But would that preclude the construction of classic hole designs, asks Adam Lawrence?

Imitation, said Oscar Wilde, is the sincerest form of flattery that mediocrity can pay to genius. Picasso put it slightly differently: “Talent borrows, genius steals”.

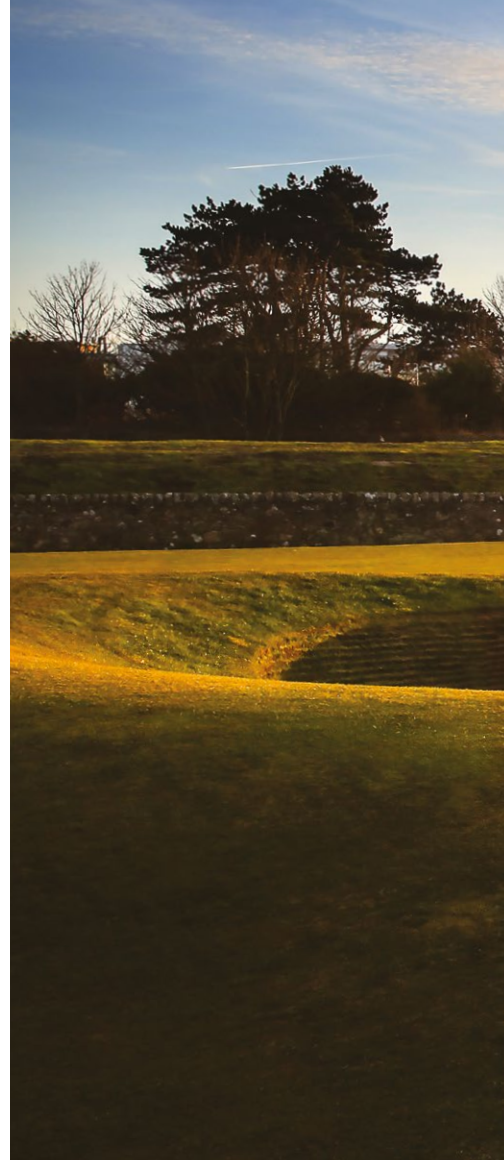
Pretty much every creative person that has ever lived has drawn on the examples set by those who came before him: as Sir Isaac Newton put it, “If I have seen further, it is by standing on the shoulders of giants”. There are times when using quotations serves no purpose other than to demonstrate the author’s erudition. But in this case, the message is pretty clear: creativity does not exist in a vacuum, but depends on the work done before by others. A creative person is one who produces something new. But almost never entirely new.

Creative people the world over give thanks every day for the existence of intellectual property laws, and curse those geographies where they are not so well implemented. It is intellectual property laws that stop the plagiarism of creative work – or at least punish it when it occurs – and which mean that writers, artists, musicians and the like, can make a (sometimes very good) living from what they do.

But IP protection is not a clear-cut area, as the often rather complicated court cases that occasionally hit the headlines show. If someone steals an entire article, or song, and passes it off as something they have created, then all is fairly straightforward. But that isn’t usually what happens. Take the famous recent case when musician

Ed Sheeran was sued by the estate of the late Marvin Gaye for allegedly copying Gaye’s ‘Let’s Get It On’ in his song ‘Thinking Out Loud’, which won the Grammy for Song of the Year in 2015. It is unarguable that the chord progressions of the two songs are very similar, but a chord progression cannot be copyrighted. In essence, the court decided that the elements of ‘Let’s Get It On’ that Sheeran was supposed to have copied were not, in themselves, sufficiently distinctive and original to warrant protection under copyright law.

By contrast, the classic rock group Led Zeppelin had a habit of ‘basing’ their songs on classic blues numbers (but forgetting to credit the original author. Most obviously, The Lemon Song, from the 1969 album Led





The famous seventeenth, Road, is one of many hole designs at St Andrews that have been copied throughout the world

Zeppelin II, was based on Howlin' Wolf's 'Killing Floor', though Wolf was not originally listed as a songwriter. His publishers sued in 1972, and subsequently he was listed as a co-writer.

Few would argue that architecture of any kind is not a creative activity. Architectural drawings, given that they class as artistic work, have been protected since copyright law was originally codified, but the structures that are produced using them were not, in the US at least, until the passing of the Architectural Works Copyright Protection Act in 1990, which extended copyright protection to the actual buildings produced by architects. But note the word 'buildings': landscape architecture (which, for the

purposes of this debate, includes golf architecture, was specifically excluded). Golf architects, and other landscape architects, have been urging American politicians to correct this apparent oversight ever since.

This has, eventually, led to the Bolstering Intellectual Property Rights against Digital Infringement Enhancement (Birdie) bill, currently before Congress, and sponsored, in a rare Congressional display of bipartisanship, by Representatives Jimmy Panetta, a Democrat from California and Brian Fitzpatrick, a Republican from Pennsylvania. Panetta's district is one of the 'golffiest' in America, containing as it does the likes of Cypress Point, Pebble Beach and Pasatiempo, and Fitzpatrick's

occupies some golf-heavy suburbs of Philadelphia, so it is not entirely surprising that they should take an interest in the subject.

Even so, this seems a rather specialised subject for Congress to get its teeth into. "Clearly the sponsors have connections with a vested interest. It is odd that you would think copyright protection for golf course architecture is something worth legislating about," says Mark Pearce, a leading British intellectual property lawyer with the firm of Mills and Reeve, and a golf architecture junkie of long standing. "The list of things protected by copyright in the US is inclusive not exhaustive. So, you could always have argued that a golf course design is a work of authorship and

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Image: Toptracer

Courses like Pebble Beach are popular among video game, range and simulator businesses

thus copyright protected. In the UK, by contrast, that list of things in which copyright can subsist is an exhaustive list, not an inclusive one. So, if something isn't on the list it can't be copyrighted. The language of the bill is a bit weird. Identifying the bits of a golf course design that are included, and thus protected, strikes me as a surprisingly limited list. For example, it includes a lake, but not a stream. To be honest it looks as though it has not been terribly skilfully drafted – perhaps by a GCA rather than a professional draftsman!”

That said, the scope of the bill is fairly limited, simply seeking to extend the protection given to buildings architecture by the 1990 Act to golf course design. As such, the cut-off date for protection is December 1, 1990: nothing designed before this date would be covered by the proposed law. “It corrects an oversight

from 1990 when the architectural clause was brought in and the actual building was protected and landscape architecture – or anything except buildings – was specifically excluded,” says golf architect Forrest Richardson, who has been campaigning on the subject for many years, and who has played a role in getting the proposed

“Right now, the plans are protected, but the finished golf course is not. If the law passes, that will change”

legislation before Congress. “Right now, the plans are protected, but the finished golf course is not. If the law passes, that will change. But it is important to realise that it is the entire course that is protected, not a feature – if, say, Bill Coore designs a fresh, new bunker that no one has seen before, it will not be protected.”

This point from Richardson is at the core of the bill. When first presented with the suggestion of copyright protection for golf design, the natural reaction is to ask, ‘Does that mean that building template holes or ones that in some way replicate the features or strategies of previous ones will be illegal?’ Just as there are said to be

only seven different basic plots in the whole of storytelling, golf hole strategy is not a massively complex business: it is impossible to argue that the concept of bunkering different sides of fairway and green, for example, is a sufficiently original concept to justify protecting it. “Copyright protects what is on the page – in the



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The replica Lido course at Sand Valley would not be impacted by the Birdie Act

work – not the concept behind it,” says Mark Pearce. “Copyrighting a Cape hole is impossible; the concept is not protected. It is the actual design that is protected. To an extent, when you are working with what is on the ground, no matter how many bulldozers you use, you are copying a concept rather than the expression. And to be protected by copyright, a work has to be original, and copyright only subsists in those parts that are original. European copyright law protects an artistic work for 70 years after the death of the creator. So, Harry Colt’s courses went out of copyright three years ago, given that he died in 1951!” Given the 1990 cut-off date, and the sheer quantity of Redans, Edens, Biarritz and the like that were built before that date, it is patently obvious that lovers of such classic holes should

have no fears that the construction of new ones might be banned!”

A recent example featuring a classic-era course does illustrate the kind of issues that copyright protection of golf course designs might prevent. The reconstruction of CB Macdonald’s Lido course by a team headed by Tom Doak, using detailed data of the original contours – which was programmed into GPS-controlled machinery to shape the new course – would be extremely problematic had the original course been designed after the 1990 cut-off date. “I think it’s difficult to copy something exact in most cases. I would never want to do that, but I have done interpretations of template holes as have most GCAs,” says Jim Wagner of the newly-formed Curley Wagner firm. “Lido is obviously a case of copying something in its entirety

but was done in the greater good of the game and to allow golfers to experience that all these years later is simply incredible. Tech is great in that sense.

“Let’s say a developer says, ‘I like this course’, goes and flies a drone over it, and replicates it somewhere else in the world: that would be actionable,” says Forrest Richardson. This seems uncontroversial, but perhaps slightly unlikely: there has not, as far as I am aware, been any flood of such courses, though replica courses do exist in reasonable numbers, and these would presumably be impossible to build under the proposed law, unless the developer negotiated a satisfactory deal with the copyright holders. “If I owned a classic course, and I wanted to get protection, I would trademark the name, and not worry so much about copyrighting the design,” says Pearce.

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But a more real problem, which is where the legislation seems really aimed, is the proliferation of electronic reproductions of courses, for video games or simulator use. “It is possible that getting protection for the physical design, it may protect the designer against it being replicated in a virtual format,” says Pearce.

“With simulators, gaming and the like, golf course architects are left out in the cold,” says Richardson.

Fellow architect Jason Straka outlines the reality of the issue: “I recently had a friend tell me he ‘played’ one of my courses, only to learn he had never been to the facility but had experienced it using a virtual reality device. Someone had copied the course in detail without permission from myself or the club and made it available to be played virtually. The Birdie Act that is being discussed would prevent this sort of thing from happening without approval.” **GCA**



Protecting design

Robert Trent Jones, Jr., who has been at the forefront of campaigning for copyright protection for golf design, shares some thoughts.

I understand that many architects have clauses in their contracts around how their names may be used (trademarks) and how their designs (copyright) may be used. We first licensed our designs to ‘Sim Golf’ nearly 30 years ago. Since that time, we have had clients in other countries insist we exercise our rights to prevent poor simulations of their courses from appearing on digital platforms and we have worked with clients such as Chambers Bay (pictured above) and the USGA to help make games promoting the course and the 2015 US Open available to the public. In each one of these cases, success was defined by the owner and architect working together towards a common goal of making sure the golfer receives an authentic experience of the design. Because the copyright law, in its current form, has been unclear in court cases, it is easily misconstrued and abused. This proposed clarification should enable the architects, owners and whomever may wish to license those designs to work through the commercial process more efficiently to the benefit of all.

Read more of Robert Trent Jones, Jr.’s insights into copyright for golf courses in the Summer 2024 issue of By Design magazine, from the American Society of Golf Course Architects (www.asgca.org)

Sustainable golf gamechangers

SUSTAINABILITY

Written by Richard Humphreys

Ten golf course architects have been recognised for design solutions that serve the broader environment, operational efficiencies and local communities.

GEO Sustainable Golf Foundation has named 10 golf course architects as its ‘Sustainable Golf Champions’ for 2024.

Starting in 2021, the GEO Foundation has recognised professional players, clubs and course managers for their sustainability efforts. In June 2024, the Champions collective has been extended to single out individuals involved in the design, construction and renovation of golf courses around the world.

Each of the golf course architects has taken steps to raise awareness of important global issues, while working hard to find effective, sustainable solutions for course sites and their immediate environments.

The 2024 honourees include: Andy Haggart of Faldo Design, Bruce Charlton and Mike Gorman of Robert

Trent Jones II, Cynthia Dye McGarey, Gary Johnston of European Golf Design, Jorge Santana da Silva, Martin Ebert, Paul Kimber, Peter Matkovich and Scott Macpherson.

“This first group of champions have either achieved GEO Certified Development status for one of their projects or have been the lead designer on more than one of our current 40+ projects that have started the journey,” said Sam Thomas, developments director for GEO Sustainable Golf Foundation. “They’ve pushed their golf course projects to prove their commitment to sustainability – and that is not as easy as it sounds sometimes.” **GCA**

Read more about the Sustainable Golf Champions and the projects on the GEO Foundation website

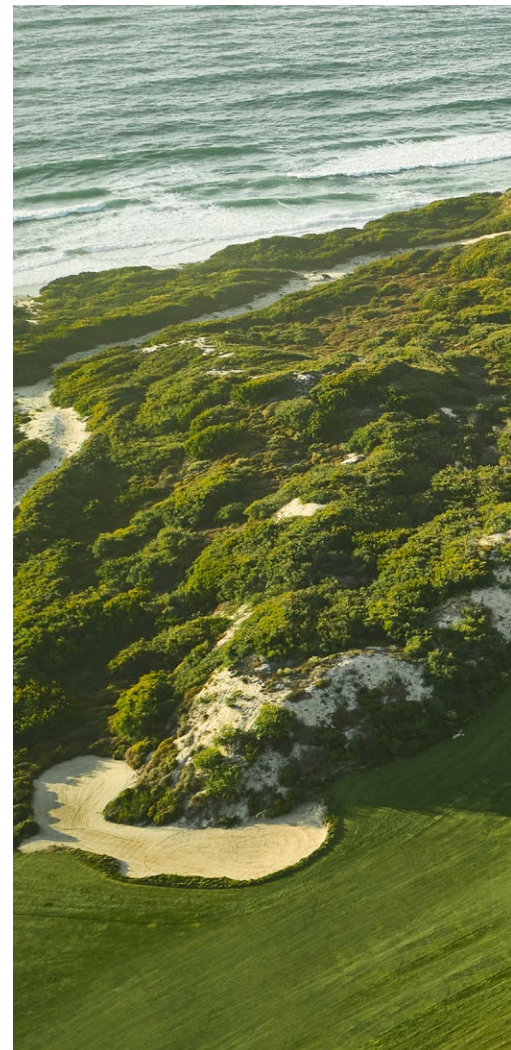




Photo: Jacob Sjöman



Architect: Peter Matkovich

Location: La Réserve Golf Links, Heritage Golf Club, Mauritius

The project has reduced the risk of soil erosion and flash flooding in the surrounding community, as well as returning over 100 hectares of sugarcane monoculture into native habitats.



Photo: Dye Designs



Architect: Cynthia Dye McGarey

Location: West Cliffs, Óbidos, Portugal

Over 15 hectares of rare native coastal habitats were uncovered, 100 per cent of surface water redirected to irrigation reservoirs and the native seed bank has helped to recolonise native areas.



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Cynthia Dye, ASGCA

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West Cliffs Golf Course, Portugal

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Photo: Gary Lisbon



Architects: Bruce Charlton and Mike Gorman, Robert Trent Jones II
Location: Hoiana Shores Golf Club, Quang Nam Province, Vietnam

The pair restored over 23 hectares of degraded land into native coastal scrub landscape and planted over 1,500 new native and locally sourced trees.



Architect: Scott Macpherson
Location: Golf It! Glasgow, Scotland

The bulk materials used in construction were 100 per cent locally sourced, the water vole (a protected species in Scotland) were successfully safeguarded, and the facility's energy supply is a 100 per cent renewable source.



Photo: Golf It!



Photo: New Craighend Golf Course



Architect: Martin Ebert
Location: New Craighend Golf Course, Royal Troon, Scotland

Fifteen holes were created that are accessible to people of all ages and abilities. The course has been a great addition for the community and can be played with just a putter.

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Mike Gorman, ASGCA (left) and Bruce Charlton, ASGCA (right)
were named 2024 Sustainability Champions by GEO.

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SUSTAINABILITY



Architect: Jorge Santana da Silva
Location: Ombria Resort Golf Course, Loulé, Portugal

The architect oversaw the restoration of riparian zones, the planting of over 700 oaks and future-proofed the resort with a new greenhouse and organic farm.

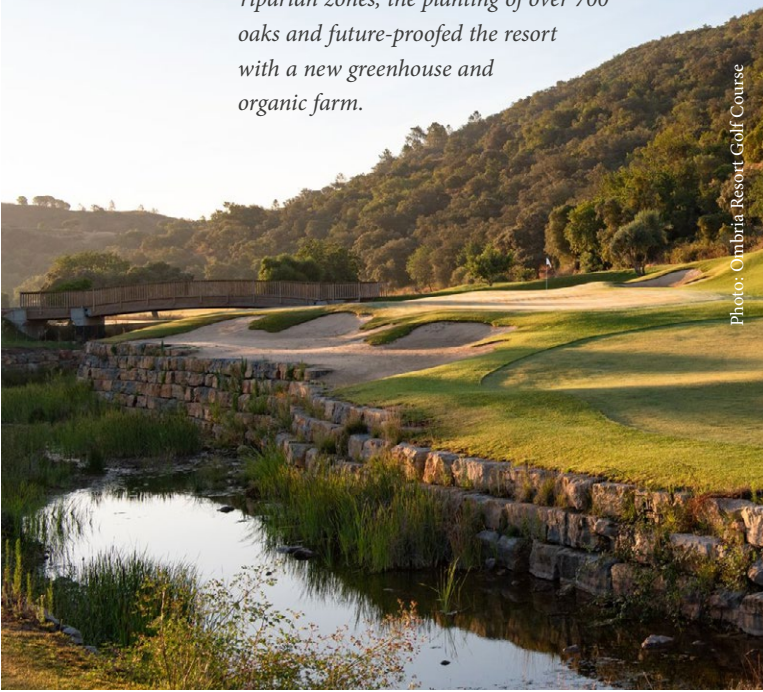


Photo: Ombria Resort Golf Course



Architect: Paul Kimber
Location: Allan Robertson House, Kingsbarns Golf Links, Scotland

Kimber created over 9,000 square metres of native habitats, including for rare orchids, with his design also redirecting water into an attenuation pond.



Photo: The R&A



Architect: Andy Haggart, Faldo Design
Location: Rumanza Golf and Country Club, Multan, Pakistan

Over 50 hectares of cereal crop has been regenerated into new, diverse native habitats, and 12,000 cubic metres of rootzone material was sourced on site.



Photo: Rumanza Golf and Country Club

Life of Brian

BRIAN CURLEY

A golf designer for close to 40 years, Brian Curley has surely clocked up more air miles than anyone else in the business. Adam Lawrence caught up with him in between flights to discuss his career and his new venture with Jim Wagner.

Few men can be said to have done more to help golf spread its wings around the world than Brian Curley.

From growing up in Pebble Beach, northern California, right next to Spyglass Hill and Cypress Point, to getting into the golf business just as the great golf real estate boom began, to pioneering the development of golf in China with the giant Mission Hills group, and now spreading his wings all over Asia, his is a tale of happy events. He met his long-term business partner, Lee Schmidt, on his first day on a golf course site, and the two of them became one of the most successful golf design firms the world has seen. And, since Schmidt's retirement, Curley has gone from strength to strength, initially still under the Schmidt-Curley banner and

now in new company, Curley-Wagner, in partnership with former Nicklaus Design architect Jim Wagner.

Talk to a golf architect about how he came to do what he does, and you probably will hear a tale of a sequence of fortunate accidents, but Curley's story is more blessed than most. "I knew what I wanted to do when I was 13," he says. "I grew up in Pebble Beach and caddied and cleaned carts at Spyglass, Pebble and Cypress Point. Jack Nicklaus would come and win the Crosby each year, and I grew up idolising Jack. I was a good golfer, but pro golf was not for me. All the pros in the shop would bitch about their job, so I knew I didn't want to do that. Bobby Clampett was at the next high school: I was trying to play

in the Monterey Open when I was 16 and he was playing in the Open Championship. So, I knew I wasn't going to be a golf pro.

"I walked into the snack bar at Spyglass one day and there was a little tiny photo of Robert Trent Jones, sitting on a sand dune in his bucket hat, and it said, 'Robert Trent Jones, golf architect'. I thought to myself, 'People get paid to design golf courses?' A bit later, when I was 14 or 15, in the mid-70s, before the great golf residential boom, my mom drove me up to the Bay Area, and I went to see the golf architect Robert Muir Graves. He told me that there weren't a lot of people who did his job, and you had to go to work for the right guy and carry his bag for 20 years





The architect with local workers during the construction of the Forest Dunes course at FLC Quang Binh in Vietnam

until you got your break. That didn't sound too encouraging, but I didn't give up my dream."

Curley went to the California Polytechnic State University (Cal Poly) at San Luis Obispo, one of the very top colleges for architecture in the US, and not long after he graduated in 1982, he got his big break. "In 1984, I had just got married, and my father-in-law was a commercial real estate developer," says Curley. "He told me to go see these guys in La Quinta called Landmark Land who were buying up all the land round there. I went to see them and told them I'd do anything. The real estate boom had just started, and Palm Springs was the epicentre of that. They hired me and my first day on the job we started PGA West, and

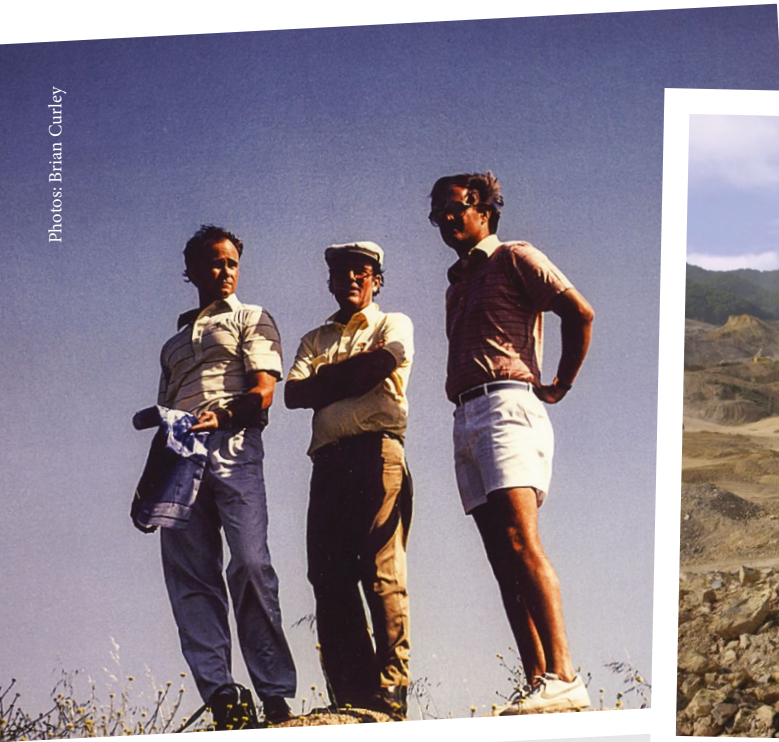
I met Pete Dye and Lee Schmidt. Lee was on the construction team. Pete latched on to me because I could draw. He couldn't draw his own breath – that's why he spent so much time on site waving his arms around."

Weed, Jim Urbina, Rod Whitman and many others. Dye was a big personality, and everyone who worked for him seems to have a favourite 'Pete story'. "That whole Pete Dye family tree of designers dominate the

“Landmark Land hired me and my first day on the job we started PGA West, and I met Pete Dye and Lee Schmidt”

Dye, of course, as well as being in his own right one of the most significant figures in golf architecture, has gone down to history as perhaps the greatest mentor of talent in the industry's history. The list of Dye alumni includes names such as Bill Coore, Tom Doak, Tim Liddy, Bobby

industry now," says Curley. "If you were in Trent Jones's office and were low on the totem pole, you'd probably have been drawing plans all the time. Because Pete didn't draw, it wasn't like that with him. Pete was a great talker, and I spent so much time around him that I can impersonate him pretty



Curley with Pete Dye and Lee Schmidt in 1987, and with Mission Hills chairman David Chu in 2001

well. He wasn't bashful, he talked a lot. The people who came out of his family tree are loose and talk a lot. Other big firms are run in the style of the boss. Pete was never the boss, in fact, given that I was representing Landmark, if anything Lee and I were his boss. But being with him was just like going to school. If you want to be successful in this business, you have to be good at what you do obviously, but you have to be able to get on with people and sell. Pete was the best salesman, and that ability is a massive help.

"Courses by the people who learned with Pete don't always look like Dye courses, but there's a lot of commonality in terms of angles and how they are set up. I believe it would be a lot easier to take a manufactured Pete Dye course and redo it in a naturalistic style than it would be to take a Jones course and do the same.

"Landmark built the PGA West Stadium course, and they bought the

Ryder Cup for a tiny sum of money. Then the US lost the Ryder Cup for the first time in forever and it became competitive and a huge thing. The cup was going to be in Palm Springs in September when it's incredibly hot, and the PGA came to them and said, 'We want you to move it to the East Coast for TV reasons'. Landmark

"Courses by the people who learned with Pete don't always look like Dye courses, but there's a lot of commonality in terms of angles"

had just bought the Kiawah Island site and they committed the Ryder Cup to go there before they'd even started building it. Lee and I went to visit the site with Pete, and there were deer ticks all over the place. Pete was obsessed by the ticks. We were having lunch, and Pete had pushed his chair back from the table. He had his shirt right up and he was scraping

his body with the butter knife looking for ticks."

Curley headed up Landmark's design office for years, until the opportunity that would change his life came about. "It was when the World Cup was held at Mission Hills in Shenzhen, China, in 1995," he says. "Fred Couples and Davis Love won; it was the first uncensored

TV event in China. The guy who ran the event knew the people from Landmark and mentioned that Mission Hills wanted to do a couple of other courses, so I went to China, and really hit it off with the chairman, Dr David Chu. We went out for karaoke, and I sang House of the Rising Sun. People said to me, 'You can't sing that, that's the chairman's song, but we ended



Photo: Tom Breazale

Mission Hills, which has 22 golf courses across its Shenzhen and Hainan Island locations, is where Curley made his name. Pictured is the fifteenth hole on the Blackstone course at Mission Hills Haikou

up singing it together and bonding. When I decided to go off on my own, Landmand and I worked out a deal, and a part of that was that I had to come up with a bunch of money very quickly. I raised the money – somehow – from people in the golf club bar!” Curley and his old Dye mate Lee Schmidt became partners, and the name Schmidt-Curley would soon be almost everywhere in the developing golf world.

Very quickly, Mission Hills became a behemoth, and before long Curley was Mr Golf in Asia. “People ask me, ‘How have you become so successful in Asia?’ The answer is that I’m pretty good at what I do obviously, but also that I’m really good at travelling – a lot of people say that they can’t work in Asia because it takes them a week to get over the flight. And it may sound silly, but I’m the king of karaoke and across Asia, that’s how you bond with people.

“And I take decisions quickly,” he goes on. “To paraphrase Johnny

Rotten, I know what I want, and I know how to get it. We had done the Faldo course at Mission Hills, and they added some land. I showed up on a Thursday and there was a note to me to see if they could add another course next to it. I drew a very rough grading plan, and they started construction on Monday! I always tell people that concentrating on Asia was both the best and worst thing I ever did. We had a chokehold on China and Asia when most guys in the industry had very little on. But at the same time, we became so China-centric that we lost our hold on domestic jobs, and when there was a little bit of a resurgence, we were the ‘China guys’, which didn’t really help.”

Another thing that was both a boon and a curse was the firm’s involvement in the signature design business. Mission Hills’s original Shenzhen property has courses each ‘designed’ by different golfing

personalities including Annika Sörenstam, Vijay Singh and David Leadbetter, though the later Haikou resort eschews the signature design model, and Curley has worked in the guise of top pros at many other courses. “Signature design was hugely helpful for us at first, because it kept us busy, but the flipside is that it has reduced our profile and kept us somewhat anonymous,” he says. “As the signature model has become less dominant, that has been something of a problem, and it is something we’re working to fix.”

Lee Schmidt retired in 2019, and since then Curley has continued to run the business on his own. But that has now changed. “I have become very busy, all over the place. I’ve gone around the world seven times over the last eight months. I guarantee I get 15 per cent of my sleep on airplanes,” he says. “I realised I need to work with someone, and ideally someone I could



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The Ocean Dunes course opened in 2019 at FLC Quang Binh Resort on the coast of the East Vietnam Sea

hand over the business to down the road. I don't want to retire, I just want to slow down, and I need a partner who can eventually run the business and let me do what I do. I needed to create a model that would allow me to do that."

Curley thought long and hard about who his new partner might be, before identifying longtime Nicklaus architect Jim Wagner, with the help of his colleague, contractor Martin Moore of Flagstick Golf Construction. "Martin and I go way back," he says. "Lee and I started Flagstick and brought Martin on and eventually he bought the business from us. He is the best in the business, and he has for a long time wanted to find someone he can hand it off to, like me. We kept kicking around names, and eventually we came up with Jim Wagner. I thought he was very set at Nicklaus, but I called him, and he was very enthusiastic. We have a bunch of common friends, and they all said, 'You guys would be fantastic together'. I would run into roadblocks with potential candidates, because they wanted to go to Asia only say three



Photos: Brian Curley

Earlier this year, Curley partnered with ex-Nicklaus associate Jim Wagner to form Curley-Wagner Design. The pair are currently building Dhoho Golf Club in Indonesia

times a year, but Jim said, 'I want to move back to Manila'.

So now Schmidt-Curley is no more, and Curley-Wagner has replaced it. But some things don't change. On any given day, Brian Curley is likely to be on a plane somewhere.

Recently, that somewhere has been the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia with Red

Sea Global. The Shura Links course, spread across an idyllic island site, is well into construction and is now being grassed," says Curley. "This project is unbelievable in its size and quality and will undoubtedly be seen as one of the best in the Middle East, offering numerous holes with massive sea views." **GCA**

ON SITE

A new level for Thai golf



STONEHILL GOLF CLUB, BANGKOK, THAILAND

Kyle Phillips has transformed some desolate mud land north of Thailand's capital into one of the country's best golf courses. Richard Humphreys reports.



Stonehill stands as an example of the amalgamation of modern design principles and the timeless elegance of Golden Age architecture.

Hosting Asia's inaugural LIV Golf event in October 2022, just a few months after opening, the 7,861-yard Kyle Phillips layout received glowing reviews from the LIV pros for impeccable conditioning and providing a fair test of their golfing skills.

With carefully contoured landforms that rise and fall to meet players as they traverse the course, Stonehill's environment was crafted to provide an exceptional golfing experience. Two

years on, it is considered among the very best layouts in Thailand.

Much like the opulent clubhouse designed by Hart Howerton and built with Veronese limestone and local teak wood using the unique techniques of Thai craftsmanship, Stonehill brings the old West of Europe and the new West of North America together in Southeast Asia.

Owner Sarath Ratanavadi envisioned a world-class golf destination that would stand the test of time. It would be his golf legacy. He was also fully aware the 340-acre featureless clay site north of Bangkok was little to work

with. It was his oldest son Ing, who was playing college golf at USC at that time, that had visited Yas Links and believed Phillips had what it would take to achieve his father's vision and transform their land accordingly.

Phillips is known for transforming mundane land into top-class golf. Take Bernardus in the Netherlands, for example, where outstanding results were



The par-three seventh plays over a creek to an angled green fortified by several bunkers

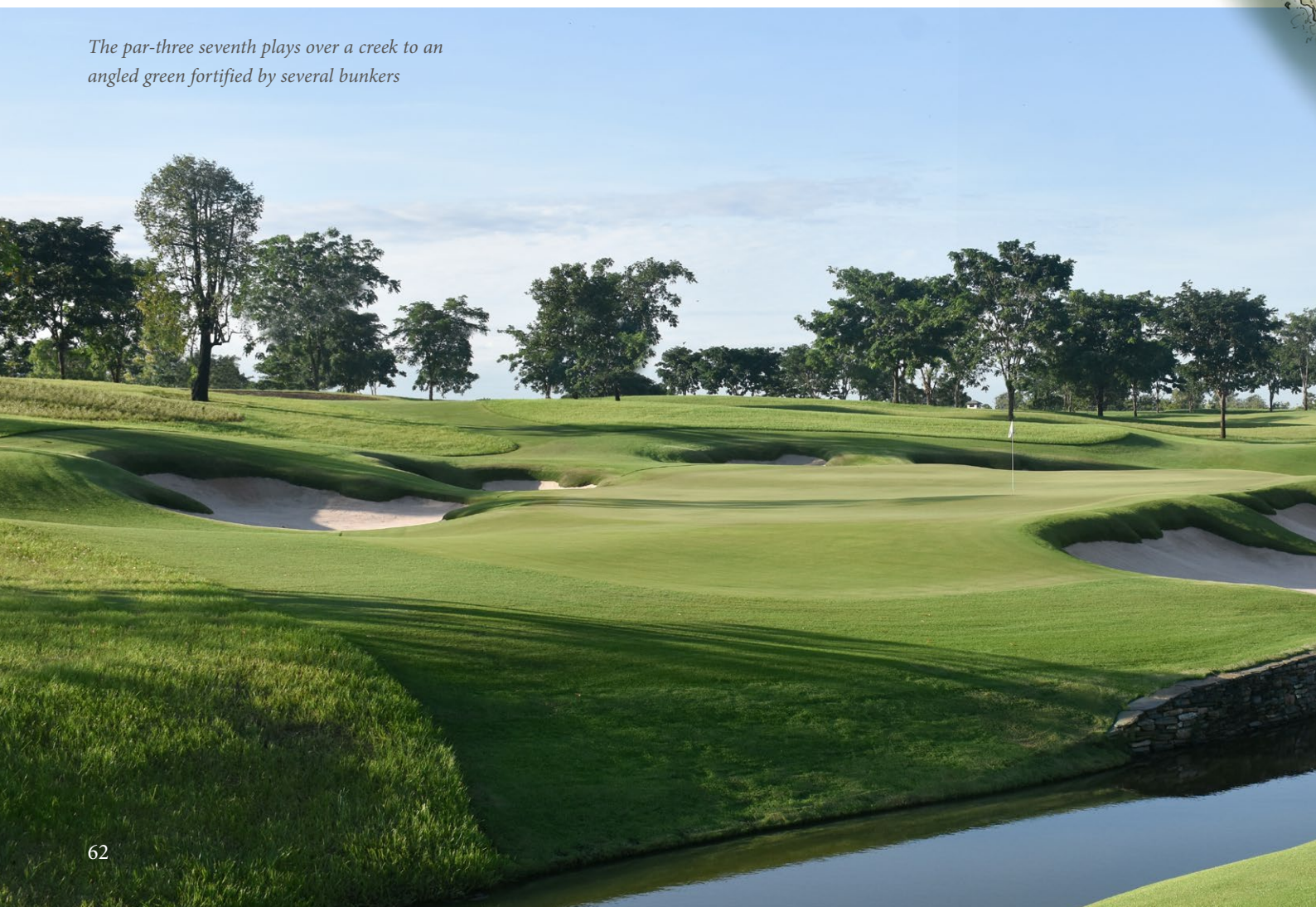




Image: Kyle Phillips Golf Course Design

Phillips' routing features generous fairway width, expansive bunkers, short green-to-tee connections, and water as a defence on several holes



Photo: Jason Michael Lang

achieved on a site with a complete absence of redeeming features. Even at Kingsbarns, where the coastline setting provided obvious potential, the land itself was featureless – a few gently sloping farmer’s fields – before Phillips got to work.

Their overriding theme for the entire development – course, clubhouse, villas and spa – was to be fresh and modern, but with elements that were traditional and distinctly Thai. “We always wanted to have the roots of a traditional club, but to also push the boundaries to make Stonehill the best in the country and a great experience-driven product,” says Ing.

Phillips made his first visit in 2017. “The site was flat. A big delta with layers of thick clay,” he says. Marcus

Reams of Flagstick Golf Course Construction, whose team built the course, adds: “It was essentially overgrown rice paddies, scrub brush and various trees.”

Work on the landscape began with the clearance of that brush. Specimen trees were preserved or relocated elsewhere on the property – a key to delivering that Thai identity. Around 380 trees were saved or replanted, and 4,200 more were brought in from other areas of the country.

“We identified which groups of trees were nicer in character and, where possible, worked around them,” says Phillips. One particular existing tree, on the seventeenth, is a marker for the property’s original elevation. All other areas of the undulating course have



The par-three thirteenth is 229 yards from the back tees and gives players the option to run a ball in from the left

been sculpted above and below that level by Phillips' team of shapers.

A key consideration in Phillips' plan for the landscape was to ensure the golf course would be protected from the Chao Phraya River. It is a source of good-quality water, but the Chainat and Chao Phraya dams, about 80 miles upstream, are prone to breaching. With the guidance of the civil engineers, a three-metre-high landform was built around the property to mitigate the risk of flooding. Inside the property, Phillips created landforms up to 14 metres high along with creeks that move water efficiently around the course,

"There are two creeks, one that starts near the second tee and one that starts above the sixteenth green," says Phillips. "They merge on the tenth and then flow down to the large lake adjacent to the fourteenth and seventeenth greens. That lake then overflows into an even larger lake that provides the necessary water storage capacity during the tropical rainy season."

A flat site, of course, provides something of a blank slate for design.

"When you have a blank slate, the challenge is to create variety and uniqueness. That can be by building something that is a little unexpected," says Mark Thawley, design associate for Phillips.

A good example of this comes early in the round, at the 495-yard fourth, in the form of an element of blindness created by the rolling fairway that obscures the putting surface. A small mid-bunker opens up a window in the ridge, leaving only a glimpse of the bunkerless green and, for some pin positions, a walk filled with anticipation of how closely the ball will have fed to the pin.

The turf varieties selected for firm, fast playing conditions and supplied by Sports Turf Solutions were Trinity Zoysia for tees and surrounds, Zeon Zoysia for fairways, Bahia for rough and TifEagle for greens.

The fifth, a short par four, might – if the tees are forward – entice players to go for the green, taking on the creek that runs up the entire right side of the hole. It's a little reminiscent of the challenge of the famous fourteenth at

Loch Lomond, in that the safe play is a lay-up left, before crossing water to the well-guarded green.

The fourth and fifth were particularly challenging for players at the 2022 LIV Golf Bangkok event. For Eugenio Lopez-Chacarra, who won the tournament, his only two bogeys of the entire three rounds came at this pair of holes.

By this point in the round some of Phillips' hallmarks have already been revealed, including generous fairway width that in some places, for example at the first and ninth, is shared, superb shortgrass connections between greens and the next tee, and boldly contoured putting surfaces. The two par threes, the heavily protected third tucked into the southwest corner of the site and the seventh, which plays over a creek and a huge bunker, punctuate a stimulating opening nine.

On the back nine, however, the course ramps up a gear.

It opens with a picturesque par four, with water running down the left side of a fairway that is shared with the eighteenth. Where the creek crosses



The eighteenth green marks the end of a closing stretch of three holes – pars of three, five and four – with putting surfaces that sit just above the creek

the line of play, in the approach area, it is lined with local stone – which is used again to great effect on the final three holes. The tiered green has a false front, defended by large and deep bunkers on each side.

Fairway width and contour combine to deliver multiple options for play. Phillips highlights the fourteenth as another example of this: “It’s a hole that has good dimension and a bit of mystery to it, like a hole you might find on a links course. There’s

The final three holes give the course a mighty crescendo. First, the wee downhill par-three sixteenth plays to the course’s smallest green, hanging over a creek. Hit it short and you’ll be in the water, but long lies the hole’s only bunker, a snarling hazard ready to punish those who take too much club. “The slight diagonal green along the creek poses a challenge not unlike the short twelfth at Augusta, where anywhere on the green is a good result,” says Phillips.

“When you have a blank slate, the challenge is to create variety and uniqueness”

a strong ridge that runs across the landing zone that’s higher on the left and lower on the right. You can either play up short-right to see the top of the pin, or you can drive left over the top of the ridge where the green surface becomes visible.”

The fourteenth green sits on the bank of a large lake, alongside which the fifteenth, a par four that can play 497 yards from the back tee, also plays.

The par-five seventeenth plays back up towards the lake, with the specimen tree providing the ideal line. The green angles along the lake edge, with the creek cutting across the approach. Good players will need a decent drive to get home in two. Those who favour a lay-up, will still find themselves faced with a demanding short approach.

“As many courses in this region do, we didn’t want the eighteenth to finish

on a lake.” says Thawley. Instead, the hole plays uphill off the tee, with the clubhouse visible on the horizon. The approach shot plays back downhill, this time with the creek cutting directly across the front of the green and the surrounding ground rising to the clubhouse, providing a natural grandstand finish.

From a landscape point of view, the owners’ desire to deliver an experience that is distinctly Thai is achieved primarily through the planting. As the newer trees mature this will only be heightened. But special mention should also be made of the structures around the course. There must be 30 elegant bridges spanning the meandering creek, most impressively at the seventeenth, between tees and fairway. The absolute highlights, though, are the traditionally styled tea houses. Stop at them all, for a moment of reflection and to take in the long views across the course. Take time at the sixteenth to enjoy the courtyard and water feature, and a moment of meditation before throwing yourself into that thrilling finishing stretch. **GCA**

ON SITE

A break from tradition

SEdge VALLEY AT SAND VALLEY GOLF RESORT, WISCONSIN, USA

*The adjacent fairways of holes three, seventeen,
four and sixteen at the new Sedge Valley layout*

Tom Doak's newest creation at Sand Valley might convince American golfers that courses do not need to be long to be great. Richard Humphreys pays a visit.

The Sand Valley resort was a bucket-list destination even before its latest addition. Now, it offers golfers more variety and appeal than almost any other resort in the US.

Sand Valley debuted in 2017 with 18 holes of firm and fast golf laid out by Bill Coore and Ben Crenshaw over massive dunes in central Wisconsin. In 2018, David McLay Kidd added a second course, Mammoth Dunes,

with fairways of epic width and player-friendly contouring. In the same year, the resort opened another Coore and Crenshaw design, the Sandbox, a 17-hole par-three layout. In 2023, The Lido opened, a first-of-a-kind project that saw the historic and lost Charles Blair Macdonald course in Long Island recreated by Tom Doak and team, who replicated its blend of classic template and original holes in as precise detail

as possible based on a combination of extensive historic research and modern digital technologies.

But the Keiser family – who have defined destination golf in the US with their Dream Golf business that owns Sand Valley, plus the seven-course Bandon Dunes resort in Oregon, and the upcoming Rodeo Dunes in Colorado and Wild Spring Dunes in Texas – were not ready to stop there. When exploring





The green of the challenging par-four third sits beyond a cluster of cavernous bunkers

a parcel of land near the back nine of the Sand Valley course, they spotted an opportunity to add something different to the resort's portfolio.

"I had done routings for three different locations at Sand Valley previously, but never looked at this part of the land," says Doak. "When Michael Keiser first reached out, he said another architect really liked the land, but he didn't think there was enough for 18 regulation holes. Michael asked if I would be interested in doing a shorter course – something more like 4,500 or 5,000 yards. I replied that I had always wanted to do something in the 6,000-yard range, like Swinley Forest, Rye and West Sussex, so when I received the maps, that's what I started to look for."

Those English layouts provided Doak with inspiration for Sedge Valley, with the architect casting aside any notion of

trying to achieve a par of 72 or 7,000-plus yards, and instead routing a course that would mix par threes, short fours and par fours with just a single par five (albeit perhaps the longest in the state).

"Michael initially thought that the course would start up behind the seventeenth green at Sand Valley, which

"I had always wanted to do something in the 6,000-yard range, like Swinley Forest, Rye and West Sussex"

would be the closest possible spot to the main lodge, so I started trying to route from there," says Doak. "Later on, he decided to build a separate clubhouse for Sedge, so what I routed as the eighteenth hole is now the first, and my opening hole became the second."

On early visits, Doak had identified a rock outcropping at the western end of

the site that could become a focal point for the back-to-back par threes. "My initial routing played up and around the rocks, but wandered onto an outparcel that the resort does not own, so the back-to-back par-three holes I had designed would not work," he says. "In the end I came up with a different set of

par threes at the base of the rocks, but the idea of back-to-back threes came from the parcel we couldn't use!"

The opening holes of the final routing give little hint of what's to come. The start is four consecutive par fours; two relatively gentle holes that provide ample width and might be reached with a drive and a wedge – a



Photo: Brandon Carter

The short par-four sixth can be reached with a long drive played to the left centre of the fairway

warm handshake that is immediately followed by what may become two of the toughest holes of the round – both around the 450-yard mark and the third playing over rolling terrain and featuring a cavernous cluster of bunkers that must be avoided at all costs with the approach.

From the fifth though, any thoughts of traditional par pacing are thrown right out of the window. A par three is followed by a short par four and then the back-to-back par threes that Doak did get into the routing. All four of these greens are long and thin, but oriented in different directions to the line of play, with beautiful and individual bunkering that really evokes those classic English heathlands that Doak drew on for inspiration.

“With five par threes in total and a bunch of short par fours, we felt that we should create some difficult green

targets, but we couldn’t build really small greens with the amount of traffic the resort gets,” says Doak. “So, we opted for long, skinny greens. A few of them lay 90 degrees to the approach so they present as wide and shallow; while others are long from front to back, and with the bunkering we’ve done, they play much more difficult as you start to put the hole further back.”

Michael Keiser has pointed out that none of the short par fours are a walk in the park. Bigger hitters will not be able to resist the temptation of driving the green at the sixth, twelfth and eighteenth, the first two of which are under 300 yards and the closing hole a little over that. But in each case, there are several layup options that may well result in a lower score. On the sixth for example, the glory hunters will need to thread their drive through the gap between deep bunkers that

guard the the deep green, knowing the punishment for a shot that leaks either side is quite penal.

“The sixth was one of the first holes I settled on,” says Doak. “You really want to place your tee shot left centre so you can hit your approach straight up the green, but the fairway kicks everything to the right, so you have to judge the tee shot perfectly depending on how long you’re hitting it.”

The closing hole has a split fairway where the choice is a partially blind approach to the L-shaped green set into a huge dune, or the inviting but exacting slither of fairway on the right.

Building the eighteenth required a different approach than some of the other holes on the back nine. “The stretch from nine to fourteen was on flatter ground, and Michael encouraged me to think about doing some significant earthmoving, as we had

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The L-shaped green of the eighteenth, which Doak modelled on one of his favourite creations, the fourth at Barnbougle Dunes

done for Lido,” says Doak. “Ultimately, we didn’t do so much of that, but we did move more dirt to make the short par-four finishing hole something special. The eighteenth is modelled after the fourth hole at Barnbougle Dunes, one of my all-time favourites.”

The back nine may feel slightly more conventional than the front – but still includes two short par fours, a par five that could probably stretch to 600 yards. There is also the delightful, while quite long, par-three fifteenth with a generous green that nestles sublimely against the rock outcrop but incorporates a small back-right plateau that will be an extremely challenging target when the pin is placed there.

Sedge Valley certainly feels distinctly different to the other eighteens at Sand Valley, and that in part is due to the more restrained presence of sand. The fourteenth, for example, has a completely bunkerless green, protected by contour alone. “The first

two courses at Sand Valley have sandy wastes surrounding nearly every hole,” says Doak. “At Sedge, we were trying to do something on a more intimate scale, and there was a lot of native sedge and other plants worth saving. But some of it can present difficulties in finding your ball, so we bunkered the course fairly liberally as a buffer between the target areas and the native plants. Eric Iverson spent a lot of time working on the margins of the course and trying to incorporate the native stuff as much as we could without it becoming too difficult.”

Sedge Valley opened for public play in July, and some early observers feel it could quickly become the most popular at the resort. Those with an interest in golf design will surely be enthralled by it, but it will be fascinating to see how the wider US golfing public responds to a layout that is a par 68 (we think – we’ve not seen a scorecard yet and wouldn’t it be great

if the resort didn’t bother listing par?) and close to 6,000 yards. Those figures haven’t stopped Colt’s Swinley Forest from becoming one of the most-loved layouts in the UK.

“We are very curious to see how the American audience receives the course,” says Doak. “In the UK, that doesn’t matter much, because most casual golf is played in matches, and nobody really cares about the score. Americans tend to post a score, and we think we’re going to have a course where it’s a real challenge for good players to break par, but where breaking 80 or 90 is a bit easier, because you have more shots in hand. And I’ve always thought that would be the ideal for both groups.

“It’s possible some low-handicap golfers will look down on the course because it isn’t longer, and dismiss a good score as misleading, because the course is short. But it’s also possible that a lot of people will enjoy the chance to better their usual score!” **GCA**

ON SITE

Old and new

SPEY BAY, SCOTLAND

Spey Bay in Scotland is a very old-fashioned links with very modern ownership, an interesting mix, says Adam Lawrence.



Photo: CDP

Golf has a reputation of being a game stuck in the past, and largely played by older people.

Although there is some truth to this stereotype (stereotypes tend to be based on at least partial truth, which is how they emerge), there has been a pretty significant change in the last few years, with the post-Covid golf boom seeing the emergence of a new generation of golfers.

In early 2022, the New York-based LinksDAO (decentralised autonomous organisation) raised \$11 million in a little more than 24 hours by selling NFTs (non-fungible tokens). With the proceeds, the leaders of LinksDAO set out to buy a golf course, which their members, the people who bought the NFTs, would be able to join. After a search, they settled on Spey Bay, a links dating from 1907, originally designed by Ben Sayers, an hour east of Inverness (and an hour and a half north and west of Aberdeen) in the Scottish Highlands.

Spey Bay has a lot of history. Ramsey Macdonald, the first Labour prime minister of the UK, who was born in nearby Lossiemouth, was a member for many years. But the course had fallen on hard times. Maintained by one part-time greenkeeper, it had become choked with gorse. Gorse, when in bloom, is unarguably attractive, but it is a savage plant; a ball in a gorse bush is unequivocally lost; and it spreads rapidly. As part of the landscape texture of a golf course, particularly a links, it can be tolerated; once it dominates, the course is rapidly on the way to being overrun. In this era of large fairway width being the done thing, Spey Bay was the height of anti-fashion, with

Spey Bay dates back to 1907 when it was originally designed by Ben Sayers

SPEY BAY



super-narrow bowling alleys separated by huge fields of gorse.

LinksDAO acquired Spey Bay last year. It was obvious to all concerned that the place would need substantial investment both on and off course: as well as the gorse issues and everything else that comes with a lack of maintenance over many years, the clubhouse is simply not adequate for a place with aspirations to be anything more than a cheap game for locals. The new owners hired Bert Mackay, a Scot who, for the last ten years, had run Castlerock Golf Club, only a few miles from Royal Portrush in Northern Ireland. Mackay is no stranger to extensive course works, having overseen a substantial renovation by Martin Hawtree at Castlerock, but the plans at Spey Bay are significantly larger.

The new owners also hired some heavy-hitting architectural support, in the form of the three-headed transcontinental design firm Clayton DeVries and Pont (CDP). Naturally, the change from a small, undermaintained course for locals (Spey Bay is five miles from the tiny town, a village really, of Fochabers) to one with a global membership of thousands, required a fair amount of design thought, and Sam Cooper of CDP, after he visited the site, came up with a fairly radical idea: make the course reversible. Partner Frank Pont has some form in this regard; a few years ago he built the highly-regarded reversible nine hole Links Valley course in the Netherlands, and had an idea to build similar courses in cities anywhere, as a way of

bringing golf back into large urban environments.

It is not hard to see the attraction of this idea. If members are largely going to be travelling several thousand miles to visit Spey Bay, being able to alternate the direction in which the course is played from day to day, and thus give them two different layouts occupying the same piece of ground and keeping them on the property has obvious appeal. But if creating a new reversible layout is tricky, trying to produce two sensible, playable and good routings on an existing one is massively challenging, something akin to a 3D jigsaw puzzle occupying more than a hundred acres. It is a monumental job, though, I guess, made very slightly



Photo: CDP

LinksDAO acquired Spey Bay in 2022 and appointed CDP, which would adopt a radical mindset to renovating the course



Image: CDP

CDP's plan is to transform Spey Bay into a reversible layout with the creation of new tees and greens

easier given that Spey Bay's current routing is essentially out and back – only a couple of holes, the eighth and fifteenth, both par threes, presently play in a direction that is not parallel to the coast.

That said, Spey does have quite a bit going for it. The course's site is dominated by gravel ridges that also run parallel to the sea; most of the holes occupy the low ground between these ridges. The reconstruction will see a number of gaps cut into these ridges to enable holes to play in a less parallel fashion. In front of the newly-established maintenance building, in what used to be the driving range,

just hired an extra person on the greens crew whose job would essentially be watering – all day every day.

Spey's greatest attribute, though, is its ground contour. I have genuinely never seen a golf course with so much microcontour in the fairways – to the extent that, Mackay told me, mowing the golf course takes a hugely long time, because the machines have to move so slowly. It reminded me in places of some of the most famous old links that do not have big dunes and are essentially about small-scale

for a dual layout. When either of these conditions are not met, new green complexes have to be built, something which we try to avoid due to the additional cost and disruption. Again to mitigate costs and also for maintenance reasons, a secondary issue is the need to ensure that as many tees as possible can handle play in both directions. Ideally, the angle between the two different playing lines into greens should be between 90 and 180 degrees.

“Spey Bay is an excellent candidate for ‘reversing’ as many of its green complexes offer compelling play from two directions. When finished, the two versions of the course will be noticeably different but equally fun to play.”

A substantial hotel, the Richmond Gordon, used to stand next to Spey Bay's eighteenth green: it burned down in the 1960s. But the purchase of the golf course came with a lot of additional land in the form of woods to the interior: it is likely that woodland lodges will be built in here to accommodate visiting members. The transformation of Spey Bay is in its early stages. I do not yet know how well it will work out – there is plenty of potential for things to go wrong. But watching it develop will be exciting and I look forward to returning to see what is done. **GCA**

“The two versions of the course will be noticeably different but equally fun to play”

the team has excavated a huge hole to extract sand and gravel. If a more rapacious developer had bought the club and managed to secure a permit to do so (which would most probably, and thankfully, have been impossible), quite a lot of money could have been made by selling these materials. What the gravel does, though, is ensure, even by links course standards, quite phenomenal drainage. Water just hits the course and goes straight through – Mackay told me, during my visit, that the club had

ground contour, most obviously and famously St Andrews. No course that brings the Home of Golf to mind can easily be dismissed. A lot of new tees, and several new greens, will need to be built to bring the reversible courses to fruition, but the site has great potential.

CDP partner Frank Pont says: “When changing an existing course into a reversible one, the main challenge is to ensure that the existing greens have shapes that allow for play from two directions, and that their locations work

Elevating the experience

Kipp Schulties returned to Florida’s Hunters Run to oversee a near-\$10 million project on the East course.

The 54-hole Hunters Run Country Club in Boynton Beach, Florida, has continually sought to improve the golfing experience for its members.

Over the last 15 years, all three of the club’s 18-hole courses have been renovated as Hunters Run strives for top playing conditions in a very popular golf market.

The club’s South course was renovated in 2001 by Mark McCumber and the North in 2018 by Sanford Golf Design.

Now, the club’s attention turns to the East, which was redesigned in 2008 by Kipp Schulties, adding elevation change and rerouting some holes.

“The toll of the South Florida weather, our year-round play and the dramatic rise in golf since the pandemic has brought the need for improvement to the forefront,” says Larry Savvides, chief operating officer at Hunters Run. “Action had to be taken to ensure competitive playability

and aesthetics to protect real estate values and the club’s reputation.

“The maintenance team did its best to keep the East in a respectable condition, but there were many aspects of the golf course that needed to be fixed, from the condition of the subsurface soil and its low elevation to the drainage and irrigation systems.”

In September 2023, the membership approved a near \$10 million renovation to be led, again, by Schulties. Hunters



Photo: Hunters Run Country Club

Every green on Hunters Run’s East course will either be redesigned or rebuilt



Photo: Hunters Run Country Club

Adding more elevation and addressing playing surfaces have been key drivers for this project

Run is funding the project over 10 years with a monthly capital assessment per membership household. Construction began in March with all major works expected to be complete by mid-August.

“The 2024 renovation continues the trend in trying to pull up the higher parts of the course while resolving some select low areas,” says Schulties. “My intention has always been to make the East the most contoured course of the three at Hunters Run. Florida is very flat, so elevation and contouring is what makes a course in the South Florida market unique.

“We are not making any major changes in 2024, but there are

numerous subtle ones all over the course that will be a noticeable difference to members. While the East may not be the longest or biggest course at Hunters Run, we think that it is the best and through this renovation we are trying to optimise everything this course, and the land beneath it, has to offer, with no regrets that we left something on the table. In 2008, we did a large scope of work, but we did that work to meet a budget. In 2024, the club has given us everything we need to make the course the best it can be.”

In addition to adding elevation and addressing playing surfaces, Schulties’ plan calls for many tees to be

expanded and/or moved, formalising the back tees, new cart paths, lake expansions, new bunkers, new greens and new wooden bulkheads.

One of the biggest changes will be the relocation of the ninth green towards the approach area and a little right towards the eleventh green, to create space for future club amenities. The back shelf on the two-tiered green will also be expanded to better receive a shot.

At the sixteenth, plans include lowering the green complex and moving it closer to the lake and the bulkhead wall. The green will be expanded and moved right as out of bounds left is close to the existing

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Photo: Hunters Run Country Club

Lakes have been expanded across the East course property

cart path. A new bailout area will be created left of the green.

The first step in the 2024 renovation involved the installation of silt fences, clearing the site, and the stripping and burying of the old Tifway 419 turf. This portion of work also included locating areas to harvest additional fill to raise the low areas that are prone to flooding.

“We then moved on to reshaping the course, raising low areas by 18 to 24 inches to improve drainage and redesigning course features such as tees, bunkers and greens,” says Amy Volk, golf course maintenance at Hunters Run. “TifEagle grass will be used on greens, while Bunker Solution liner will be used in bunkers to maintain and extend the useful life

of the bunker sand and, at the same time, provide more playable bunkers.”

Schulties adds: “We have used Bunker Solution liner at many clubs to ensure consistency in playing conditions and maintenance.”

The second half of construction involves installing a new Toro Lynx irrigation system, sodding fairways with Celebration bermuda, which will grow in ahead of reopening in January 2025.

Savvides says: “In keeping with the club’s mission statement: ‘We strive to be a country club community dedicated to providing exceptional facilities and memorable experiences’, it will be a priority for the club to preserve the courses for the enjoyment of our current and future members.” **GCA**



Preparing to succeed

Amy Volk, director of golf at Hunters Run, provides insight into the preparations for this renovation project

During my tenure at Hunters Run, I’ve been responsible for managing the day-to-day operations of 54 holes and planning long-term maintenance. This has given me an in-depth knowledge of the property and available resources, which allows me to emphasise the primary need of keeping playing conditions at their best throughout the season.

Over the past 20 years, we at Hunters Run have gained more experience with course conditioning, which has enabled us to excel, specifically in areas such as turf management and efficient irrigation practices. Using these skills, we can pinpoint challenges with soil quality, erosion and drainage problems. This is beneficial and essential as we navigate through the current East course renovation project.

Our experience with past renovations has certainly been instrumental in preparing Hunters Run for this project. Each renovation brought its own challenges and learning opportunities – we can take all of that to build a better project the next time over. The East course is a significant milestone that will definitely reflect our commitment to excellence.

Out of the woods

Sahalee Country Club prepared for the 2024 KPMG Women’s PGA Championship with a programme of sensitive renovation work. Toby Ingleton reports.

The enduring appeal of Sahalee Country Club – where in the late 1960s Ted Robinson carved 27 holes from evergreen forest just east of Seattle – is a reminder that great golf design is not a one-size-fits-all exercise.

With its single-file fairways framed by towering firs and cedars, Sahalee exemplifies a style of course – where each hole sits in natural isolation – that some decades ago was considered the

ultimate golf experience. It stands in celebratory defiance of the modern movement to extreme width, and as one of the best of its kind retains a lofty position in rankings; *Golf Digest* places it third in the state of Washington.

At the 2024 KPMG Women’s PGA Championship, which was played over the South and North nines, Sahalee was met with glowing praise. “It’s almost majestic; very peaceful and



Photo: Patrick Oien

amazing,” said Brooke Henderson, who won the PGA the previous time it was held at Sahalee, in 2016.

Once a tee peg is in the ground, that majesty defines the golfing challenge. The extreme height of the trees appears to further narrow chutes that set out a very precise requirement for the drive, which on most holes requires fearless accuracy. Negotiating the tee shot successfully brings a sense of relief and maybe a moment to breathe in the glorious natural environment, albeit knowing the sound of urethane on cedar is never far away.

Sahalee’s trees are central to its appeal, character and challenge – so their management must be carefully considered. This is not the place to get too cavalier with a chainsaw.

The newly bunkered closing hole of Sahalee’s North nine



Photo: Patrick Oien

On the first hole of the North nine (pictured from behind the green), a bunker in front of the green was removed and the pond was expanded, to make the downhill approach shot more thought-provoking

The club's relationship with architect Rees Jones was established ahead of the 1998 PGA Championship. "He started by doing the bunkers, and saw that we kind of had a diamond in the rough," says Jim Pike, who has worked at Sahalee since the 1980s in several roles from golf pro to general manager. "Some of the trees created double penalties; we had trees in bunkers and trees in front of bunkers. So Rees carefully selected which trees to take out to make the golf course more playable."

That first major championship was a hit, the US Senior Open followed in 2010 and the club has never looked back. Following a masterplan prepared by Jones and his associate Steve Weisser, Sahalee prepared for

its 2024 major with a comprehensive overhaul of bunkers and perhaps its most extensive phase of tree management yet.

At most courses, the removal of 500 trees would completely change the character of the design. At Sahalee, that represented a modest and thoughtful trimming of its stock. "For some people, a tree management plan means removing all of them," says Weisser. "But we analysed about 7,500 at Sahalee and, between the arborist reports and shade studies, we pretty much know every one of them. Everyone at the club knows them too; you can mention a maple on the left of the fourth to members and they'll know which one you're talking about. Jim and I spent a lot of time

watching how individual trees come into play for different types of player, their effect on shade, their health and a whole lot of other things. It was a long process – I don't know how many versions of the tree management plan we did, but there were lots."

Some 'controversial' trees that were very much in the line of play have been removed, notably on the eighth, close to the green on the eleventh, on the approach to the twelfth, and in the second landing area of the sixteenth. "Now that they are gone, I don't think people miss them," says Weisser.

But arguably the most important aspect of the tree work has been to raise the canopy. "Under the direction of Rees and Steve, our superintendent has removed lower branches of trees



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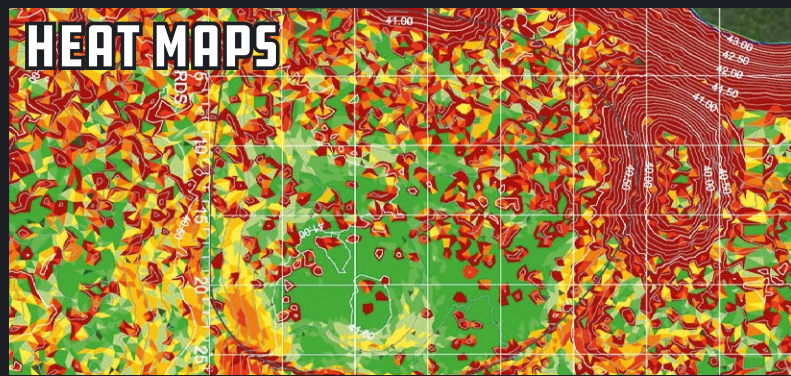
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Photo: courtesy of Rees Jones, Inc.

The 2024 KPMG Women's PGA Championship was the fourth major championship hosted by Sahalee

to get some airflow," says Pike. This is helpful for turf health but has two key additional benefits: there is now more often a route to recovery when shots end up in trees, and the removal of lower limbs has "highlighted the beautiful terrain of the golf course," according to Pike, and provided more of a sense of the overall site and the connections between holes that previously felt very separate.

this was to improve performance – by installing new lining, drainage and sand – but it has also given the design team an opportunity to make some significant revisions to bunker style and placement. The latter is driven primarily by the desire to retain strategic relevance in keeping with modern hitting distances, but the tree clearance has also opened opportunities for new locations that embrace the site

"The focus has always been, number one, making the golf course playable for the members, and number two, being championship ready," says Pike. "I think every club in America complains about bunkers, but ours are now 100 per cent better."

There have been other changes too, notably the extension of the pond and removal of a saving bunker on the front left of the tenth green (the opening hole of the North nine), making the short downhill approach more thought-provoking. The East nine – which is a similar length and stature as both the South and North but not part of the tournament configuration – has also received attention in equal measure.

The result of the renovation is a layout that further endorses Sahalee's credentials as best-in-class, and may give many visitors a newfound appreciation of tree-lined golf.

"The beauty of Sahalee is that you have got to manage and master the mental side of the game as much as on any major championship course in the world," says Jones. "You can never let up and there is never a free shot." **GCA**

“When we took out trees, it gave us more room to tie in the bunkers to the natural grade”

"It's what a lot of clubs should be doing," says Jones. "They shouldn't be taking out as many trees as they do. They should just raise the canopies because you then have to manufacture shots, turn the ball one way or another. And you have to think about how to recover from a bad shot. With wide open golf courses, it's the same shot every time."

Jones and team have also redesigned the bunkers at Sahalee. Primarily,

topography. "When we took out trees, it gave us more room to tie in the bunkers to the natural grade," says Jones.

In terms of style, bunkers now have the wavy edges that are becoming something of a hallmark of Jones's recent work, aspects of bunker design that were slowly lost over years of maintenance have been restored, and some adjustments have been made for accessibility – it is now easy to walk in and out of each bunker.

Golden and modern

Kevin Norby has completed a centennial project at Minnesota's Golden Valley, to modernise infrastructure and restore much of AW Tillinghast's design philosophy.

The renovation of The Club at Golden Valley, formerly known as Golden Valley Country Club, in Minnesota, has been driven by a desire to modernise the course's infrastructure while also respecting its history.

Golden Valley opened in 1914 as a nine-hole layout by Tom Bendelow. In

1924, AW Tillinghast redesigned and expanded the course to 18 holes. Aside from the removal of some bunkers in 1937 and a bunker renovation in 1990, the course has remained largely unchanged since Tillinghast's day.

In 2020, as the club neared the centenary of Tillinghast's work, Kevin Norby was hired to oversee a



renovation to modernise the course and improve playability. "Greens had shrunk and become round circles," he says. "Trees had grown, fairway corridors narrowed and bunkers had lost some of their relevance and Golden Age character. The club also wanted to replace the old poa turf in the tees, fairways and greens with newer bentgrass, and rebuild greens."

Duininck Golf executed the first phase of construction in 2022, which involved renovating bunkers, regrassing and laying the groundwork for larger scale projects. "After this phase the club realised that they had something pretty special and overwhelmingly supported a second phase," says Norby.

"In addition to modernising playing conditions, I wanted to restore and enhance Tillinghast's original design philosophy by widening playing corridors and reinstating some of the strategic fairway bunkers that had been removed."

Norby, working with Tillinghast experts Philip Young and Brad Klein, studied the architect's original routing



Photo: Patrick Jacobsen

At the par-five closing hole, Kevin Norby reinstated four fairway bunkers and added six new ones consistent with AW Tillinghast's design philosophy



“Our work was a renovation directed at modernising the course and respecting Tillinghast’s original design intent,” says Norby

plan from the 1920s as well as historic photos from the late 1920s and 1930s. “The plans were critical in helping us understand what he envisioned for fairway width, bunker placement and putting surface shape and orientation,” says Norby. “The plethora of historic photos were also helpful in understanding the shape and character of the bunkers and support mounding.”

The team developed a plan to adjust bunker locations and reinstate more Golden Age character. “The depth of the greenside bunkers ranges from four to eleven feet,” says Norby. “The bunkers had flat floors and steep grass faces, which often left golfers with downhill lies. We were reluctant to change the depth and character of them but one of the club’s primary goals was to improve playability and access. Therefore, we increased the slope of the faces and recontoured the floors. Also, by lowering the leading edges, we made the bunkers more accessible, more visible and easier to maintain.

“For the fairway bunkers, we focused on repositioning them to

better challenge the modern golfer. We also emphasised Tillinghast’s ‘master bunker’ concept and, on many, eliminated the rough cut between the bunker and the fairway.”

Seventeen new bunkers were also built, with many restored to the design following their elimination in the 1930s to reduce maintenance.

One of the biggest changes came at the 574-yard par-five eighteenth, where Norby reinstated four fairway bunkers and added six new ones. “The new bunkers are consistent with Tilly’s design philosophy and something he might have done if he was here today,” says Norby. “One of his trademark concepts was ‘the great hazard’, which he first crafted when he oversaw construction of Pine Valley. Often these crossed the entire width of the fairway. However, at Golden Valley, we incorporated a complex of bunkers that jut into the fairway as Tillinghast did on the third at Fenway and the holes nine and ten on Bethpage Red.”

Over the years, the corners of greens had generally become more rounded

off. “The putting surfaces had slopes of four to six per cent and the surrounds still had their characteristic perimeter mounding and sharp falloffs,” says Norby. “However, many of the corners had been lost and the tie-ins had become hinged and disconnected. We didn’t want to lose the distinctive steep slopes and false fronts, but we wanted to restore the edges and soften select areas enough to create new pin positions.”

The most significant green renovation came at the 209-yard par-three eighth. “The green was GPS mapped and moved 50 feet to the left,” says Norby. “The putting surface was also enlarged by nearly 800 square feet. We relocated the complex to reduce the likelihood of errant balls landing on the ninth tee. Furthermore, the green also sat in the floodplain for Bassett Creek, so we had to design the changes to offset and mitigate the risk of flooding that this spot is prone to.”

Golden Valley reopened for play in June 2024. [GCA](#)

Turning up the contrast

Fry/Straka and NMP Golf Construction are embarking on a huge rebuild of the North course at The Club at Quail Ridge in Florida.

Five years ago, The Club at Quail Ridge in Boynton Beach, Florida, invested \$7.5 million into a Bobby Weed renovation of its South course. In 2022, the club hired Fry/Straka for a \$21 million revamp of its North course and practice facilities.

Weed’s work on the South saw playing surfaces raised, with the course noted for its small bunkers and crowned greens. One of the key drivers for the

modernisation of the North is to make it a stark contrast.

“The club wants something completely different from anything else in the region,” says architect Jason Straka. “Even though the course is within an upscale housing community – all of whom are members – they wanted us to create as much vertical relief as possible. To that end, we are expanding lakes in key areas to not

overly complicate play but to generate significant amounts of fill to create uphill and downhill shots.

“We are also filling in five ponds and piping a large canal, which is now a forced carry. The course will have kickplates and ground contours to feed shots into play and to tucked pin locations. This is different from the South where almost everything feeds balls away from play. We will also be creating significant elevation changes, containment slopes, dramatic flashed bunkering and heavy landscaping.”

NMP Golf Construction completed the first phase of work last year, which comprised holes one, eighteen, the short-game area, range and new practice green. At the first, the fairway has been significantly widened through tree removal, a landscaped berm has been created behind the green to hide a busy road from view, and a kickplate has been added short left of the green to allow golfers a chance to avoid the right greenside bunkers but still reach the green. Bunkers will feature liner from Better Billy Bunker.

At the eighteenth, lakes have been expanded near to tees and the green, several bunkers have been removed to leave only one, and the green has been lowered eight feet to accommodate recovery shots.



Photo: Fry/Straka

NMP Golf Construction is executing the renovation, which includes rebuilding greens and new bunkers



Photo: NMP Golf Construction

Landscaping work has created more elevation change, setting the stage for a revamped playing experience

“Jason and Dana’s work has made the practice facilities much more user friendly,” says Darryl Bartlett, senior project manager at NMP. “He has removed the blind shots on the range and ensured golfers can practice proper distance control. We have also enhanced the aesthetic of the range and short-game area with improved landscaping and views.”

The second phase consists of holes two to seventeen, which includes some rerouting of the layout.

“The routing has been resequenced to provide shorter transitions between holes,” says Straka. “The original back nine now encompasses much of the front nine. The ninth hole will finish at a new comfort station that will double as a community comfort station too.”

“Holes were also shifted to create room to ‘go vertical’ in many areas,

giving golfers both uphill and downhill shots rarely seen in this area of Florida. This also allows for elements such as more dramatic looking bunkering, kickplates, false edges and long-distance views.”

These views have been enabled by relocating many trees and removing old landscaping. The course now has new native landscaping, including many new littoral shelves. “The goal was to use as much landscaping as possible to minimise water use and the long-term maintenance cost of reduced turfed areas,” says Bartlett.

Water is a big part of the project on the North course, but Bartlett is confident of the task at hand. “Lake excavation can be difficult, but if well thought out, the challenges are minimised,” he says. “The discharge point for pumping water is a critical

first step. Several of the lakes relate to levelling pipes, and these pipes will need to be plugged so no pumped water is recirculated back into the lakes we are excavating. We’ll then create a low point in the lake about two to three feet below the lake’s bottom to help lower surrounding water levels under excavation elevation. Ultimately, we want to remove the material as dry as possible so it can be used in shaping of features.”

The results of the lake and landscaping work is already promising. “The amount of elevation change this place now has, and the cosy feel of the landscaped berms, makes for a very private feel, vastly different from the former layout,” says Bartlett. “And as a long-time shaper, I can already tell people that this golf course is going to be hot!” **GCA**



MacKenzie restoration completed at just 17

Junior golfer William Carlson speaks about his first foray in golf course design

The Alister MacKenzie-designed Northwood course, set among towering Redwoods in Monte Rio, California, is a gem of public golf that I was lucky enough to play for only \$5 with my Youth on Course membership. Who knew that this great opportunity to play this course would lead me to work on it at 17 years of age?

Last year, having played the layout many times, my interest in Northwood peaked, so I attempted to learn all I could about its design. Course manager Gaylord Schapp and his son Trevor Schapp, the superintendent, gave me a few old postcards showing the course in its

early days. This, along with more photos and aerial flyovers I found in county archives enabled me to create a map (above) of what I believe Northwood would have looked like as originally designed by MacKenzie.

Gaylord and other staff at Northwood were also excited by the historical findings, and the map was hung up in the pro shop where it gained even more attention from visiting golfers. My experience playing the course made me think about what it would have been like back in the day, and how the bunkers would affect strategy. I had been eager to do some sort of design project of my own and I wondered if it would be a possibility to restore a

MacKenzie bunker at Northwood.

I reached out to Trevor in January 2024 about the idea of bringing the original MacKenzie bunker on the sixth hole back. We went out and determined the original bunker shape and formed a proposal for the board. By emphasizing the significance and benefits of restoring the bunker – aesthetics, strategy and pace of play – the plan was then approved.

Construction started on 24 April and the bunker was open for play on 8 May. It received a lot of feedback from local players during and after the project. People have spoken about how beautiful the bunker is and that it makes the hole more interesting. [GCA](#)

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