Czech This Out!

Ex-Pat, Graham Shiel, gives you a flavour of life working on a golf course in the Czech Republic.
Golf Park Plzen (Pilsen) is an 18 hole, par 71, 5597 metre, course. It is five years old, work having started on it in 2003 and it opened in August, 2004. The Architect was German, Christopher Stadtler, and the construction work was carried out by the German-based company Sommerfeld A.G.

The course differs from others in the Czech Republic in that most of the 18 holes are laid out in a line - following the river Klabava up stream to the beautiful large Epovice lake where we have our famous par 3 11th hole - an island green.

The course is set in a forest of birch and alder trees along the river, giving it a feel of a much more mature course than its four and half years imply. We have 40 golf carts for hire with tarmac cart paths around the course.

Golf Park Plzen was voted Golf Course of the Year 2008 in the Czech Republic, by the readers of Golf Digest, and also the Best Individual Hole of the Year in 2008, for our 11th, which also won this award in 2006 and 2007. In 2007 we were placed fourth as Course of the Year 2008 in the Czech Republic in that most of the golf is only just starting to take off here in the Czech Republic there is a problem getting workers with any knowledge of greenkeeping or golf. It has reached the point where they take some pride in what they have done.

As golf is only just starting to take off here in the Czech Republic there is a problem getting workers with any knowledge of greenkeeping or golf. It has reached the point where you don't speak the lingo! (I really should speak some Czech as my wife is Czech, but we speak German to one another). 

The problem now is trying to stay on the top group, as the team and I have set the standard, we must keep there or even improve in the years to come.

We are always looking at ways to improve the course and, with one eye on environment, the golf club is planning to re-open an old long unused hydro-electric site near the 7th, to supply the golf club/hotel and restaurant's power needs. How green is that?!

Also, this year, we will be implementing a more organic based fertiliser programme for the Greens and Tees. We have a more traditional greens grass mix using Agrostis capillaries, Festuca rubra commutata and Festuca rubra trichophylla, with a low feed and watering programme. Mowing heights for the Greens are normal: 5mm down 4.5mm and with this we get a good speed on the greens. The golf club is privately owned by four men so we have no committee. Thankfully this means more stable and consistent decision making at the top.

Golf Park Plzen is also known for its four live crocodiles, which live in the clubhouse, but we will be getting an outside pen soon for summer use. I did suggest that they be named Miroslav, Petr, Jan and Ivan after the four owners…and I've still got my job!