Jackie Nicklaus: Making his own mark

By HAL PHILLIPS

W ith an eye toward establishing his own name in the region, Jack Nicklaus II has signed his first two design deals in Asia-Pacific.

The first project, an 18-hole golf course community in Surabaya, Indonesia, was finalized at Golf Asia '93 in March. Located 10 minutes from downtown Surabaya, Budi Darmo Golf Club will feature 1,000 'somesantes and a Jack Nicklaus Golf Academy. The younger Nicklaus has also signed on as lead architect of an Indian project in Bangalore.

"I'm trying to establish myself as a quality designer," said Jack II, who has completed three courses in the United States and England. A fourth will open this summer in Ohio, USA.

"I think I have the creativity and knowledge to be a good architect, a top-notch architect. And it gives me unbelievable satisfaction to create something great from nothing so terrible — to see an end-product when nothing was there before." Nicklaus knows the region fairly well, having played on the Asian Tour. Yet, even thousands of miles from his Florida home, Jack II faced the inevitable comparisons to his father's playing ability.

The design game is no different. Jack II and his father both toil under the Nicklaus Design banner, and while Jack Sr. has been pretty busy in the region (he has three projects underway, to go along with his recently completed Bumi Serpong course in Jakarta), Jack II sees Asia-Pacific as a place to make famous his own style of architecture.

"I think I have the ability to be my own person in the design field. More so than on the playing side," he explained. "You have to establish relationships with this business. It's a long-term deal. It's not a week, like some tournament. Or two- and-a-half years, like some project. It's a long-term commitment that goes on after the course is finished."

"In that sense I feel I can establish myself as my own person, through my own actions." The Bukit Darmo project is ambitious. In addition to the 18 holes, an aquatic range is planned and a short, three-hole course will ring the range facility.

Though Nicklaus paid his first visit to Vietnam — yes, Vietnam — joins blitz

By HAL PHILLIPS

No longer an insular backwater content to watch its neighbors soak up the foreign capital, Vietnam has leapt into the golf development arena with both feet.

While investors are looking at numerous projects all over the country, two projects — one outside Hanoi, the other near Ho Chi Minh City — illustrate the opportunity in Vietnam and the willingness of its government to embrace free-market notions. Indeed, both golf resorts are being developed in concert with the state-run tourism department.

"It's a one-party system that wants to establish a free market economy," said Rose Earhart, marketing director for King's Island Golf Club and Resort outside Hanoi.

"The government has been very cooperative. This is a country that sees the opportunity."

"We've even had the army assist in building the course — driving bulldozers, for example. They're good workers, very disciplined.

King's Island, situated on Dong Mo Reservoir 45 km west of Hanoi in the Hai Tay Province, will eventually feature two 18-hole courses — designed by American architect Bob McFarland — a golf school, sports center, boating facilities, 80-room guest lodge and 50 corporate villas for long-term rental. Ground was broken on the first 18 holes in February. The first nine should open before the close of 1993, said Earhart.

"I've seen him hitting golf balls off the dike into the Red River," Earhart explained. "There's a Korean businessman in the city who's doing something with a golf course, but I don't know how long he can hang on."

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Sun rises on two Casper, Nash additions out West

Two golf courses designed by Casper/Nash architects have opened at Del Webb's Sun City communities in Palm Springs, Calif., and Las Vegas, Nev.

The course in Palm Springs is designed around the new Sun City retirement community there. "It's a beautiful desert golf course," said Greg Nash. "The layout features sand dunes, 14 lakes, palm trees, ornamental flowers, water falls, and large greens.

"We've planted over 1,000 new palm trees, and have about 1,500 other trees on the course — 800 of those are mature date palms, and about 200 surround the 18th green."

The course in Las Vegas is on the north-west hillside, said Nash. "It's built on the highest point overlooking the city. We took advantage of the terrain. Most holes play uphill or downhill, with elevated tees and greens. We planted a lot of pine trees, so it doesn't look like a desert course. The greens are large, the pin placements varied, and the terrain rises and drops 800 feet. The last five holes are all downhill, and the view is spectacular."

The Las Vegas course is 6,330 yards long and plays par 70.

"Billy Casper and I represent a unique design team," says Nash. "I'm the artist and technician. Billy looks at a course from a player's point of view. I know how to make a course fun to play for senior players. He is very particular about the greens. For example, some of the greens on these new courses are 10,000 square feet, large and contoured, with various pin placements, making putting interesting every time you play the course," said Nash. 