Ganning: No tricks in redesign getting Belfry ready for Ryder

By TREVOR LEDGER

SUTTON COLDFIELD, England—In 1981, the Ryder Cup was to be staged here at The Belfry. But the five-year-old course hadn’t matured. Enter course manager Derek Ganning with the charge of developing the Dave Thomas-designed course to the required standard. Twelve years later, Ganning is still here with two Ryder Cups behind him and a third looming Sept. 24-26.

Ganning has plenty of day-to-day responsibility in tending to the Belfry’s two courses — the Derby and Brabezou, the latter being the Ryder Cup venue. To have 24 of the world’s finest golfers playing the course is a wonderful added bonus. But it is just that — a bonus.

I work for a progressive company [De Vere Hotels],” Ganning explained. “The Ryder Cup will come and go in September and the 10-year project plan will continue. The investment will continue.

The investment has certainly been there up to now. Between autumn 1990 and spring 1992, Ganning oversaw approximately $1.2 million worth of redesign. Much of this was spent bringing in 40,000 cubic meters of soil to build spectator mounds and hummocks on eight of the Brabezou holes. Coupled with a number of new tees and bunker locations, this work has cost more than the original 36-hole layout.

“We’ve tried to lay out a golf course that is fair to both sides,” Ganning said. “We have no tricks up our sleeves.” Unlike Kiawah’s Ocean Course, site of the ’91 Ryder Cup, the water fauna at The Belfry is all harmless. But Ganning did take part in a publicity stunt involving a couple of crocodiles from Drayton Manor Zoo.

“I was photographed holding one of them. I held on tight!”

The British climate ultimately spoiled this attempt to rival Kiawah’s alligators. What a shame to have lost the headline: “The Belfry Bites Back!”

Like many successful Brits, the 53-year-old Ganning has his roots in the military, serving with the Northumberland Fusiliers and 22nd Airborne. This is where he received the spark which illuminated his career path.

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Killer bees are here

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a tree or moving debris. • Wearing long-sleeve shirts, trousers, light-colored clothing, and especially white socks, because bees are known to sting ankles covered with black socks. • Avoiding wearing shiny jewelry and leather. • Using perfumes and other odorous products sparingly, because the bees are sensitive to odors. • Being aware of insect flights from a central point. • Being aware of escape routes.

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