Japanese architects organize, set priorities to improve golf

TOKYO, Japan — Aiming to elevate their profession, the country's leading golf course designers have formed the Japanese Society of Golf Course Architects (JSGCA).

Headed by the nation's most widely known architect, Taizo Kawata, the society is open to people who have designed at least three courses that are now open and have a minimum of seven years experience.

Chairman Kato is joined by Vice Chairman Tako Kana and others in the society, which number 25. According to Kato, the Society's goals include:

• improve members' skills;
• put together professional and social exchanges with colleagues from other countries;
• initiate activities that support golf in Japan.

Hiroshi Zaitsu is executive director from the JSGCA headquarters in Minato-ku. Serving as governors are Kazushi Arai, Sho Ohkubo, Hisamitsu Ohnishi, Tatsuo Kazawa and Mitsuki Kobayashi. Yoshiko Komuro and Ken Sato are the society's auditors.

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You have EPA. So has Japan. Japan's EPA made a study two years ago taking the ground water out of 144 golf courses. They took sample water to try to find out chemicals contained in the water. They found 0.0002 percent combination of all chemicals — almost none. That was amazing.

Unfortunately, the Ministry of Trade and Industry and the Ministry of Forestry and Agriculture don't give a damn for that research. They act as if there were no results whatsoever.

I think the responsibility is on journalists in Japan. They try to agitate people so they sell more.

GCN: Was the Japanese Society of Golf Course Architects formed in response to this?

TK: That and other reasons. We dearly had to incorporate internationally.

GCN: Is there work in Japan on using wastewater?

TK: We don't use it in Japan, but I hope we will in the future.

GCN: What other specific problems do you have to contend with?

TK: We're not allowed to build many golf courses, and yet we have [hundreds of thousands of acres of rice paddies]. The solution is to build golf courses. We built these other areas like Indonesia and Thai.

GCN: Are they spending more on their golf courses?

TK: Yes. The USGA greens specifications are very helpful. We don't have good laboratories like in United States. So when Jack [Nicklaus] comes over the workers send the samples to the United States.

GCN: What is the difference between an Indonesian developer, a Thai developer, etc.?

TK: I think they have their own good industries, mostly tin or rubber. Their rich people are really rich. In Japan, most of the rich are corporations. But the individual in Japanese is not so rich because the taxation system is so high. It is a socialist country.

GCN: What about the golf facilities in these other areas like Indonesia and Thailand?

TK: There are not too many golfers there yet. They build golf courses to attract tourists.

GCN: Are they spending more on their facilities?

TK: Labor costs are smaller in those areas than in Japan, so they can spend more. But I don't think they spend such crazy money [as Japan]. Japan did it because of what we call a bubble economy which, depending on the price of the land, causes extraordinary costs.

GCN: How do you see the future of golf in Japan?

TK: We have to lower those extraordinary costs or the future is not so bright.