American designers still drive Asia-Pacific market

OBIHIRO, Hokkaido, Japan — After seven years of grueling permitting to meet local and federal regulations, the 36-hole Kamishihoro Kogen Golf Club is nearing completion.

“They’re grassing part of the first 18 now, and the entire 36 holes should be completed by the fall of 1996 and open for play in summer of 1997,” said course architect Robert C. Walker of Atlantic Beach, Fla.

The 36-hole resort course is being developed by Seibu Co., owner of the Prince Hotel chain. “It is more of a stand-alone facility than others Seibu has done,” Walker said.

The Kamishihoro Kogen Golf Club project was signed back in 1987, but it took seven years to obtain the permits for construction, Walker said. Causing major difficulty in routing the courses is a regulation that requires a 20-meter-wide corridor of native vegetation and buffers between golf holes as well as property lines.

SILANG, the Philippines — Bernhard Langer and Fred Couples have agreed to design their first signature golf course projects in The Philippines. The German and American stars will each design a course here at new 36-hole residential community in this Manila suburb, under agreements with AFP Retirement and Separation Benefits System of the Philippines (AFRRSSB).

International Management Design (IMD), a division of Cleveland-based International Management Group, will provide land-use planning, technical and design support for Couples and Langer, as well as general marketing support.

HANOI, Vietnam — The Daewoo Corp. continues to emerge as one of this country’s most influential foreign investors, and it has paid dividends in the development of Van Tri Marsh Golf Resort.

Premier Kiet decreed in July that rich fields could no longer be converted to non-agricultural use. Shortly thereafter, the Korean conglomerate Daewoo received a controversial exemption to build the 18-hole Van Tri Marsh just outside the city limits. The course design and routing have been finalized, according to architect Gary Roger Baird of Nashville, Tenn. Construction should begin sometime in October, as the rainy season subsides. The group is pointing toward a 1997 opening.

With US$500 million already committed to Vietnam, Daewoo is the country’s largest South Korean investor, according to Business News Indochina. Likewise, Daewoo has committed more funds to Vietnam than any other country in Southeast Asia. Yet the Vietnamese are protective of their rice production, and some object to paddies-turned-golf courses cited the expense and the game’s appeal to largely foreign playing populations.

“Tm hopeful that some of the projects we’ve created will improve the environmental situations,” said Baird, who has collaborated with Daewoo on other projects in China and South Korea. It was basically very flat, marshy land. Some of the paddies we’ve dealt with were pretty stagnant.

“Many times these big corporations do their work, reap their profit and leave. The people at Daewoo are very, very concerned that their efforts, their investments have a spill down effect to the lower-income in Vietnam.”

TOKYO — Dye Designs International Inc. has been extremely active in the past year on the Japanese golf scene. The Denver, Colo., USA-based firm has opened five courses in the past 12 months, according to O’Brien McGarey, Dye Designs director of business development. Two are in Tokyo, two in Hokkaido and one in the Nagoya area of Mie Prefecture.

Following are the clubs, their locations and opening dates:

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Americans keep busy in Asia
Continued from previous page

• Sapporo Bay Golf Club; Sapporo, Hokkaido; August 1995.
• Musashino Mori Golf Club; Saitama, Tokyo area; August 1995.
• Alpen Bibai Golf Club; Bibai, Hokkaido; June 1995.
• Kumozugawa Course; Mie Prefecture; Nagoya area; May 1995.
• Maple Point Golf Club; Yamanashi Prefecture; November 1994.

McGarey was particularly intrigued by Kumozugawa, which translates to Third Place Club.

Larry Nelson, while another by Graham Marsh nears completion. The developer, Haas and Haynie of San Francisco, expects to eventually build 36 holes, Morrish said, adding that a new hotel is also anticipated for the resort facility. The time frame to get the project approved and under construction is unknown.

Of the 12 holes on the ocean, Morrish said: "That's probably too much of a good thing. But I figure if a golfer flies all that way from Japan or Hawaii, you might as well give them a chance."

HIROSHIMA PREFECTURE, Japan — What is believed to be the first daily-fee course in the Hiroshima region is scheduled to open next year.

The US$65 million Hiroshima Airport Golf Course was originally slated to be a private club serving the US$300 million airport village complex. But the prefectural government recently took over the project when private investors withdrew.

Hiroshima general assembly speaker Toshihiro Hiyama and supporters decided the course should become the first daily-fee operation in the area, ideally providing a model for others to follow. He estimates green fees will be approximately US$300.

The course was roughly half finished when the government asked American architect Lester George of Richmond, Va., to visit the site in June and make recommendations on the design, playability, conceptual philosophy, operational concepts, structures and marketing. This will be George's first international course.

"Over 50 percent of the 3 million cubic yards of earth moving was complete when I arrived," George said. "I was amazed at the quality of the work on such a rugged site."

George provided the government with a report of his findings and recommended changes. He returned to Hiroshima in mid-August with several consultants to continue work on the project. Among them were Bill Atwood of William Harrison Atwood Architects in Charlottesville, Va., who will be clubhouse architect and John Mason of Fairway Management Ltd., in Hamilton, Bermuda, who will act as the operations and management consultant.

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