Projects in China, Philippines roll into 1999

BY ANDREW OVERBECK

CHINA

• KUNMING, Spring City Golf and Lake Resort — Spring City celebrated its official grand opening Nov. 30. The 18-hole Jack Nicklaus-designed Mountain course has been open for play since January 1998 and the second 18-hole Robert Trent Jones II-designed Lake course is due to open in the first quarter of 1999.

• SHENZEN, Mission Hills — The Jumbo Ozaki course is now open for play full time. The course has been tested from the start, playing host to the last leg of the Johnnie Walker Super Tour in November and the Volvo Asian Matchplay and Hugo Boss Foursomes in December. The Nick Faldo course is still under construction and proceeding quickly according to new superintendent, Danny Potter. 13 holes are now grassed with closed turf zoysia and the whole course is due to open for play in early 1999.

• SZECHUAN PROVINCE — Heritage Golf will be constructing the 18-hole Chongqing Golf and Country Club which is set to be completed in late 2000.

INDONESIA

• BINTAN — Over 200 tourists en route to golf courses and resorts on Bintan Island south of Singapore were turned back Dec. 21 by a group of 200 to 300 local demonstrators protesting low re-settlement compensation for their land.

This is the second such protest in as many months as villagers continue negotiations with PT Buana Megawisata, the Indonesian firm dealing with the land resettlement for the island’s Bintan Beach International Resort.

• JAKARTA — Golf course construction in Indonesia has come to a halt with many golf projects in an indefinite holding pattern. However, according to some golf course builders in the region, the advantages to building here are great.

"With the economic crisis, local costs in rupiah did go up, but that was offset by the massive devaluation," says Paul Blackadder, a project manager with Pacific Golf. "On the Klub Golf Cengkareng project in Jakarta we saved $38,000 on fuel costs, $250,000 on equipment hire, and we were able to slash our cement, PVC, electrical cable, and labor cost budgets.

With local costs bottoming out, the advantages for foreign investors appear to be abundant.

THE PHILIPPINES

• BAGUIO, Camp John Hay — The Nicklaus redesign is well on its way to completion and the opening date is scheduled for May of 1999.

• CAVITE, Forest Hills — The Environmental Compliance Certificate for the Arnold Palmer layout is nearing completion and construction will be commencing in the beginning of 1999.

• TAGAYTAY,Tagaytay Highlands — The two Midlands courses are due to begin construction in January 1999. The 36-hole addition will sit below the existing 18-hole Highlands course and will be accessible via an imported tramway.

According to Del Ray, Calif.-based designer, Richard Bigler, these two courses will be infinitely easier to build than the first course and “when we get all three of them done I don’t know of any place in the world that will be set up quite like that.”

SINGAPORE

The Warren Golf and Country Club designed by Nelson & Haworth is under construction in northwest Singapore. The
Mimosa Leisure Estate

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rights to Mimosa’s outstanding rent—not to their assets. MLRC reiterated that they have no intention of abandoning a project in which they have invested over 5 billions pesos ($128 million).

At press time, the court had to compromise with MLRC on the condition that they raise an additional 2 billion pesos ($51 million) to ensure that they can finance further development of the estate. The compromise was offered by the court after they rejected MLRC’s counter offer to pay back 275 million pesos ($7 million) in back rent.

MLRC joins the ranks of other Asian companies that have run into financial troubles after investing heavily into real estate and then getting burned by the regional financial crisis that has caused recession and increased borrowing costs. MLRC’s operating cash flow is only 51 million pesos ($1.3 million) while their outstanding debt is 5.2 billion pesos ($133 million). Mimosa has been fighting a court battle over the ownership of the final 9 holes of golf at Mimosa by refusing to sign off on an Environmental Compliance Certificate. Another point of contention arose when the court tried to charge MLRC with the operating costs that was drawn from wells that MLRC built and operated.

CDD is a government agency responsible for the development of the former US Airbase at Clark Field that was given back to the Philippine government in 1991. MLRC was the former distributor of Nike footwear and Shiseido cosmetics and was attempting to turn a corner of Clark Field into the “Las Vegas of Asia.”

SNC to raise golf’s image

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The reasoning behind this apparent stagnation is multifaceted, said Adam. “People involved in the golf course industry in France have to be discreet. Golf courses are both politically and fiscally, a bad business to be in. There is a definite stigma attached to the sport.”

An indicator of the economic status of French golf is to be found in the lack of golf club management company activity that has so far been a quick market when the economy for the past year, watching the share value of memberships plunge from 1.2 million to 5.2 billion pesos ($133 million). Mimosa has been fighting a court battle over the ownership of the final 9 holes of golf at Mimosa by refusing to sign off on an Environmental Compliance Certificate. Another point of contention arose when the court tried to charge MLRC with the operating costs that was drawn from wells that MLRC built and operated.

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Asian projects roll into 1999

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new layout, which replaces the existing nine hole course built by the British army in the early 1960’s, is being constructed by Heritage Golf and is due to be completed by the end of 1999.

VIETNAM

• PHAN THIET, Phan Thiet Golf Club — The messy commercial dispute between Thai builder, Bangplee, and Phan Thiet Golf, owned by US-based Danao Holdings, may be resolved soon. Bangplee Golf Course Construction has been fighting for compensation in the amount of $1.05 million ever since Danao fired them from the Phan Thiet job in 1994. Since then the battle between Phan Thiet and Bangplee has visited the courts as well as the court of appeals in Ho Chi Minh City and the supreme court in Hanoi without resolution.

The local and appeal courts have awarded Bangplee damages, but Phan Thiet has refused to honor the decision claiming that since Bangplee doesn’t have a construction license in Vietnam, the deal is void. So far, the higher courts in Hanoi have agreed with them helping to stave off the seizure of Phan Thiet’s assets.

To Phan Thiet’s relief, President Tran Duc Luong has since ordered that the matter be immediately resolved.

• SAIGON — The Saigon South development zone close to downtown Saigon netted over $23 million in total foreign direct investments and VND 27 billion (approximately $2 million) in domestic investment in 1998 including a licensed golf course project to be developed by Plus My Hung Corp.

Wright in the Garden

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found the Garden of Eden. They were apparently awe-struck by the native palm tree, the “Coco de Mer,” which bears a football-sized fruit that is strikingly similar to a woman’s lower torso.

But that hasn’t disturbed Wright from the task at hand — his work on the first international-standard golf course in the Seychelles.

The layout of Wright’s 18-hole design at the five-star Lémuria hotel is tentatively rated par-71 and only two are in progress. “We will let the site dictate the final par rating. Because of the ocean front location and the fragile nature of the coastal environment, great care will be taken not to force more golf on the site than it can comfortably support,” said Wright.

Wright has worked up with consulting French golf professional, Marc Ferry, to finalize the design.

The Lémuria course will feature some unforgettable holes. The 459-yard, par four, eighth is destined to become the “postcard” hole according to Wright. The elevated tees will be scattered among huge, naturally occurring red granite boulders looking over a tidal mangrove forest to the freeway which will stretch out along the Grande Anse Kerlan beach.

Construction of the first nine holes is scheduled to be completed in November 1999.

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