Shenzen Golf Club wraps up renovation work

By ANDREW OVERBECK

SHENZEN, China — After more than 30 months of work, Global Golf Engineering, Ltd. (GGE) is wrapping up the Robin Nelson and Neil Haworth redesign of all 27 holes at Shenzen Golf Club (SGC) here.

The course has been transformed from a flat, featureless track to a modern, more challenging layout. Japan's Isao Aoki designed the first 18 holes, which opened in 1985, and Hong Kong's Tang Shu Chen designed the final nine that opened in 1990.

"The main design philosophy was not to limit ourselves by the existing course," said Haworth. "We looked at it as a whole new site where we would keep all the trees. "As a result, the routing of the holes is almost unrecognizable from the original. We made it a more dramatic course through the use of lakes and bunkers."

While the existing tree line provided instant character and landscaping, fitting the new course in amongst the trees proved to be a challenge.

"Tying the course into existing tree areas and making it look as natural as possible was important," said GGE Director Stephen Alexander. "The hard part was not damaging the root zones and keeping construction and earthworks outside the driplines of the trees."

Additionally, GGE transplanted trees which were hidden in densely planted areas or ones which needed to be moved because of the re-direction of a hole.

"There were a lot of nice old fig trees that were on site, but that were not noticeable. We moved these trees to areas to help landscape the newly renovated holes," said Alexander.

Club management also insisted that 18 holes of the layout be open at all times during the renovation work.

"The most challenging part of the design was keeping 18 holes open. That took a lot of planning to keep from compromising design or construction," said Haworth.

GGE worked closely with SGC management and outside contractors to help the project run smoothly.

"The key was good cooperation," said Alexander. "The important thing about working in China is to foresee and avoid problems. For example, we had the club purchase new bulldozers so that we would not have any time lost due to machinery downtime."

Improving the course's water supply and irrigation system was another formidable task.

"One of the largest problems was a lack of irrigation water storage. In addition to adding more lakes, we have made sure that the course drains into the lakes to improve storage," said Alexander.

Hong Kong-based Bothgreat Technology Ltd. installed a new irrigation system and GGE upgraded the existing drainage system.

The native turf has also been replaced with Paspalum on the fairways, tees and rough and Tifdwarf on the greens and aprons.

Construction on the final nine holes began in October and the entire 27-hole layout is due to be open for play in August.

"This may be our best effort to date," said Haworth. "The old course was just long, with not much thought required as to where to drive the ball or where to lay up. The new course is just as long, but more strategic."