

# An Adventure in Life A Blog from the East

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In an attempt to show my computer proficiency or lack of, this month's format will be an attempt at a blog.

It's a quiet Sunday afternoon on the last day of the Hong Kong Open.

Since returning in mid-October from vacation in Wisconsin, I've been very busy preparing for this year's Hong Kong Open. The tournament preparations are a lot of work, but also fun and rewarding. The weather conditions for the last month have been ideal for producing excellent tournament conditions. This marks the 49th consecutive year for this tournament at the Hong Kong Golf Club. Many American Tour players such as Tom Watson, Greg Norman, Ernie Els, Padraig Harrington, Mike Weir, Retief Goosen, and Nick Faldo have participated and in many cases have won.

**During Open week**, it has become a tradition for the Equipment Supervisor to have a barbecue brunch for all the staff supervisors mid-morning after the days' tournament preparations have been completed. Squid, ribs, chicken, eel, bacon, eggs, steak for Guilos (Americans), and potatoes are part of the daily fare. The Asians have come to really enjoy this barbecue. It is amazing to see how much they can eat and never seem to put on any excess weight. This has been the only time I've seen a meal eaten without the presence of rice.

February 2008 will mark the start of my third year in Hong Kong and Asia. It only seems like yesterday that I stepped off the airplane into a new life experience. On occasion when I look back over two years, I'm amazed at all the experiences I've had and the places I've been fortunate to travel to. The adage that time seems to pass more quickly as you get older has definitely been the case for me.

I eagerly am looking forward to 2008 with the Olympics and the 50th anniversary of the Hong Kong Open.

It took 8,000 miles for me to be able to experience extended vacations. Prior to coming to Asia, a week to maybe ten days

was the maximum time I was ever away from the golf course. My vacations to the States now usually cover about three weeks -and the three golf courses have



*Hong Kong Open week mid-morning barbecue.  
Yellow food is Squid. "It's Great!" - RW*

fare well in my absence. I sure regret not taking more time off earlier in my career. If there is one bit of advice I now give younger superintendents is that the golf course will be there when you return. If you have a good staff and well-developed programs in place, you should be able to take some extended time off.

**I have not noticed any living creature to be off limits to the Chinese people when it comes to food.** Since coming to Hong Kong, I've had three different instances where a staff member has captured a snake. One incident occurred last year during the Hong Kong Open. While searching for a ball in the rough, a golfer was startled by a snake. Within an hour the snake was captured and skinned out by a couple of my staff members. Two days later I sampled snake stew-a bit salty but good. Snakes fear for their lives on our golf courses, along with other forms of wildlife.

**The Chinese have a real love of cell phones and talking**, speaking quickly, and a lot. One will observe just about every Chinese person talking on a cell phone no matter the location. If in the future it is found that cell phones cause cancer, the Chinese population will be in for a drastic reduction in numbers.

In regard to speech, I've had a difficult time adjusting to some of the British and Australian people's expressions and use of language. Tidy, Cheers, and being called

Mate are expressions I've just not gotten used to very easily.

**Americans in Asia learn to speak very slowly and in short phrases** when dealing with the Chinese. Long sentences tend to produce a look of confusion on the faces of the Asians that do speak and understand English. I find myself having to relearn Midwest English when returning to Wisconsin.

The Asian people prefer foods that are very soft and bland. Thus their reliance on rice for every meal. I enjoy rice, but not for breakfast. Beef is not popular because of the course texture compared

to chicken or fish. Recently I was discussing the American tradition of Thanksgiving with a couple of my assistants. I was surprised to learn that Asians find the texture of turkey meat to be too coarse for their enjoyment. That explains the absence of turkey on Asian restaurant menus or in the fresh markets. One has to go to a Western grocery store to find a turkey.

**Television stations in Hong Kong and China are government controlled.** While this does limit expressions of opinion, it does eliminate the need for advertising revenue for the operation of television stations. When American television programs are telecast, the shows end about ten minutes early due to no commercials, the one positive to government controlled television. Monk, House and David Letterman along with ESPN continue to be my favorites, even in Hong Kong. During lunch break, many of my assistants have been watching American football on ESPN. They are amazed at the size of the American football players. I assure them that the majority of the American population is not that large in physical size. They do enjoy the American cheerleaders.

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A Hong Kong Open update. Manuel Jimenez defeats Robert Karlsson by one stroke to capture the 2007 Open. Karlsson double bogeys eighteen, Jimenez bogeys to win by one stroke. Can you say choke?

Just as in the United States, Asian stores bring out the Christmas decorations after Halloween. It's amazing to hear Christmas songs being played in the malls in Hong Kong. The Chinese really enjoy Christmas. On Christmas Eve, the entire downtown area of Hong Kong is barricaded off for a large celebration. Music groups are scattered around the downtown playing everything from Christmas songs to heavy rock. At midnight a large fireworks display takes place over the harbor. People party and celebrate into the early morning hours.

With the approach of the Olympics in China next year, air pollution is and has become a very important concern for the International Olympic Committee. Most of the factories in China are coal powered, and traffic in the city of Beijing is ever increasing. Recent newspapers articles detail that some events may be postponed or not held due to potential air pollution problems. Long distance running events are the events that may be in jeopardy. One solution brought forward by the government is to close down all factories three weeks prior to the Olympics and continuing until the Olympics are over. Unfortunately, at times the pollution is so bad that many Olympic and government officials are concerned that that will not be enough for a short-term solution. Another concern for the IOC is the sand storms that can occur over Beijing. It is not unusual to have a sand storm sweep through from the desert and deposit a couple of inches of



*"Another snake bites the dust. It'll be stew soon." - RW*

fine sand on the entire city. Stay tuned.

Red China has a new Country bird – The Manitowoc Crane. With all the construction going on for the Olympics, Manitowoc Cranes can be seen against the skyline throughout all of Beijing.

**I would like to thank the Association** for choosing me to receive the Watson Award for 2007. It is deeply appreciated and I say Thank You to all members of the MGCSA.

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