

Preparing for the Olympic Games

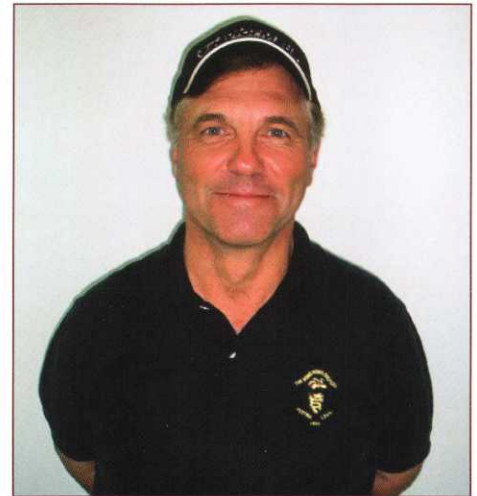
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The countdown to the 2008 Olympics has begun in earnest in Beijing, and here at the Hong Kong Golf Club as well.

The big day for us is August 11 when almost three years of planning, work, frustration and preparation comes to finality. For me, hopefully that day is a day of relaxation and enjoyment to be followed by a tremendous amount of work to reinstate the golf courses back to pre-Olympic condition. Reinstatement will probably be more work and pressure filled than preparing for the Olympics themselves as our golf membership will be anxious to return to playing on the three courses.

The construction of the Olympic Venue began here at Hong Kong Golf Club in early January of 2006. From January through early September the focus was on the actual construction of the cross-country track itself. Phase one consisted of construction of each of the 27 individual jump zones. These jump zones were actually very similar to the construction of a USGA green. Each jump zone or

jump site is approximately 1/3 acre in size. The process was to strip off the turf, excavate the area to a depth of 16 inches, drain tile was installed, covered with pea gravel, and a sand mix installed over the drainage system to a profile depth of 12 inches. Bermuda grass or Zoysia was then sodded on top of the sand. Jump sites were constructed in this manner for the purpose of have a well-drained jump area with firm footing for the horses. Hong Kong summers normally are very wet with frequent rainfalls. This summer we have been blessed with an abundance of moisture. June 2008 set a record for the wettest June in Hong Kong's weather history with a measured rainfall of 1,300 mm or 52 inches. Rain fell 24 out of 30 days during the month with a typhoon #8 occurring on the 25th of June. Early June I was on vacation in Wisconsin, so I was fortunate to experience some nice early summer weather. Along with the specially constructed jump sites, a center 6" drain was installed through the center of the

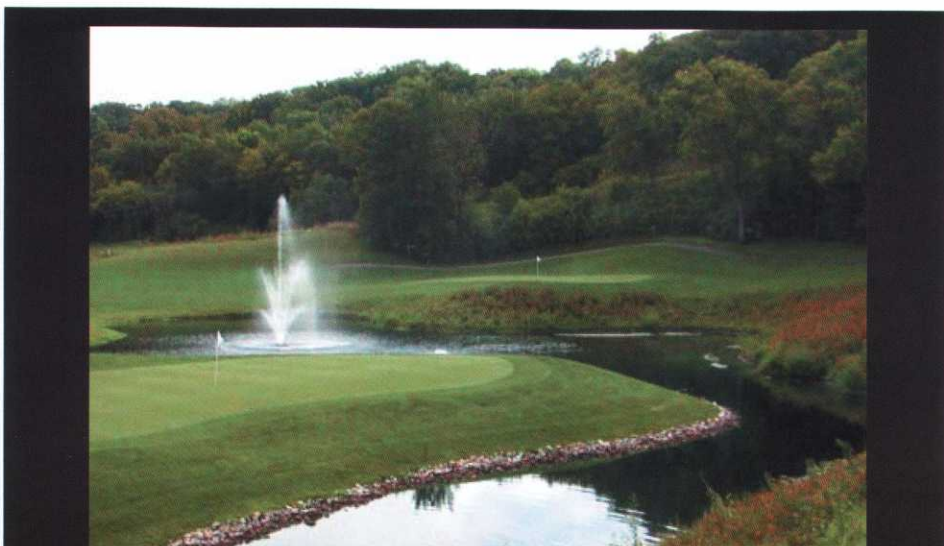


track from jump zone to jump zone. After the center drains were installed, a firm from New Zealand was employed to sand slit the entire track. This basically is a heringbone of sand slits installed every 12 inches radiating off of the center drain. This entire construction exercise was designed for maximum drainage in case of a major rain event occurring before or during the Olympic event.

After the initial construction of the track and jump sites was completed, the reclamation of the golf course areas affected by the construction was undertaken. As one can well expect, numerous areas not part of the track were damaged. Many areas of damaged turf had to be repaired and returned. Cart paths and service roads were severely damaged, in some cases virtually destroyed. Good breaker run and road gravel is very expensive in Hong Kong. Thus, most cart paths were originally installed with very little stone base and blacktop at a thickness of 2 inches or less. Five and ten yard dump trucks along with other heavy equipment quickly destroyed most hard surfaces. Approximately 75% of the hard surfaces within the venue area had to be resurfaced. These areas were repaired and repaved, as quickly as possible, and along with a lot of turf repair, the courses were opened and playable within a month.

After Phase One of the construction ended, the Equestrian team led by Sam Bauer undertook the maintenance program to bring the jump sites and track up to the standards as determined by the track designer and the Hong Kong Jockey Club. The Hong Kong Jockey Club acts as the parent organization for the equestrian activities in Hong Kong. A major part of

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the Jockey Club is located adjacent to the Hong Kong Golf Club facilities. This provides a very convenient location for housing the horses during their stay in Hong Kong. A tremendous amount of work was also done at this site. Special air conditioned stalls were constructed to provide a safe location for them during their stay in Hong Kong. Specially designed warm-up areas and cool-down areas are a large part of creating a safe environment for the horses. A very intensive maintenance program for the equestrian track was designed and put in place in preparation for the Olympic Event. The Equestrian Track Superintendent, Sam Bauer, designed much of this program. Sam, another Wisconsin native and recent graduate of the University of Minnesota, was brought in as the Equestrian Team Superintendent. 2007 was devoted to preparing the track for the targeted Olympic day as well as and a test event held in August of 2007 as a trial run for logistics for the event and to see how the track and jump sites would perform. The

night and early morning before the test event was marked by rain with measured rainfall of 75 mm. This did provide some good feedback as to track drainage and how the track handled the test event. Overall, the track performed well with a few areas and issues that needed to be addressed after the event.

Since August 2007, Sam and his staff have been focused on maintaining and creating a track to the expected standards and requirements. In some instances, this has proven to be rather challenging. Growing turf on sand and in many cases in heavy shade, with a very dry winter season and an extremely wet summer has been challenging to say the least. Steady applications of nutrients have been the norm. A good deal of rainfall together with a growth medium of sand makes for maintaining adequate nutritional levels a real challenge. Weekly application of nutrients both granular and foliar has been the backbone of the program. Insects are always a challenge, especially armyworms and grubs of various species. Adding to this challenge is Sam's staff of Nepalese workers who do not understand English well nor have ever been involved with growing or maintaining turf grass

before. At times, this has been a true adventure for all involved.

June 2nd of this year marked the beginning of the construction of jumps, structures, fencing, etc. The golf holes of all three courses affected by the Olympics were closed on June 2. Most of the Old Course and the Hong Kong Open composite golf course were still open for member play. Each day has been marked by a tremendous amount of various workers installing a particular structure or structures for the event. Large 2-story viewing marques, the jumps at the jump sites, security fencing, communication lines and towers, camera towers, refreshment stands, bathroom facilities, first aid stations, the list goes on and on. All this construction has been made immensely more difficult by the 50 plus inches of rainfall received during the month. The wet weather has put most construction behind schedule, heightening the daily activity as the day of the Event quickly draws closer. At times my favorite term, Chinese Chaos seems more than appropriate. Next up is the Olympic Event itself.

In the September 2008 issue of the *Hole Notes* I'll report on the Event itself in the continuing *Adventure in Life*.

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