

for designers Down Under

A lot of money is going into development of the game and the changes have begun to affect the character of play and maintenance at the most staid and traditional clubs. The glitzy clubhouses, the availability of motorized carts, the manicured, all-green look of these new facilities. When members at traditional venues return from their visits to the Gold Coast or to the Murray River resorts along the border of Victoria and New South Wales, the inclination is to ask why these conditions cannot be reproduced at home.

The answer, of course, is money. To emulate these standards a whole

new set of considerations enter into the picture. In many clubs, serious in-house debates concern the propriety of moving along to adopt these modern elements—if not cart paths, then at least better grooming.

Not every innovation has caught on, however. Two courses 70 miles south of Melbourne at Cape Schanck, designed by Robert Trent Jones Jr., opened up in 1987 with much fanfare. They were located on a stunning site of mountainous dunes, with the Tasman Sea on one side and Port Phillip Bay on the other.

Critics say many holes are over-designed and artificial, and the course

is so demanding that rounds take well over five hours—in a country where the native foursomes average just over three hours. The course virtually requires a motorized cart given the severity of the terrain.

The result is that the municipal course at Cape Schanck is underplayed and the private course under-subscribed for membership. The hope now is to bring in a private resort developer who would use the golf course as the focal point of an exclusive corporate retreat.

Cape Schanck is an exaggerated example of what happens as Australia modernizes. The more encourag-

ing signs are that techniques of course maintenance have reached new heights of sophistication.

It remains to be seen whether the newer resort courses going up along the coast will continue exercising their effects on the rest of Australia, or whether the abiding force of British golf club traditions will hold their own and preserve the classical traditions of simplicity and quaintness that so distinguish golf in the (former) British empire from golf elsewhere.

Bradley S. Klein, who lives in Bloomfield, Conn., recently spent 10 weeks "Down Under."

MacKenzie to Norman, Australia's on golf map

As a former British penal colony first settled in 1788, the island continent of Australia has always had the fate of its sports culture shaped by foreign influences. Golf took hold in the early 19th century, but not until the visit of legendary Scottish-born architect Dr. Alister MacKenzie in 1928 did modern principles of strategic course design find a place.

Until then, home-bred architects had fashioned rough-hewn courses following strictly penal principles, or, in many cases, no aesthetic principles at all.

Recruited by Royal Melbourne for the princely sum of \$1,000, MacKenzie supplemented his fee by picking up local work for \$250. He lent his acumen on a piecemeal basis to varying degrees. Though credited with New South Wales Golf Course, for instance, MacKenzie made cosmetic changes there to the design drafted by the popular Australian pro Des Soutar.

He added only light touches to Royal Sydney and The Australian, but both courses have recently been so compromised that nothing remains of MacKenzie's work. At Kingston Heath in Melbourne's Sandbelt, he created what remains today some of the most imaginative bunkering shapes in the world. And at Flinders Golf Course, south of Melbourne on the Mornington Peninsula, MacKenzie rather hastily laid out a seaside venue that is eerily similar to Pebble Beach.

But it was the West Course at Royal Melbourne to which MacKenzie devoted himself wholeheartedly. The club had acquired several plots of land and asked MacKenzie to expedite a shift of grounds that would incorporate several old holes into basically a new course. The good doctor obliged with a plan that cleverly left intact several old cross bunkers and mounds along the 14th and 15th holes. But the larger genius of the new venue was to create massive rolling putting surfaces and strategically placed bunkers that made the holes enjoyable by golfers of every caliber.

Strangely enough, MacKenzie never saw the finished product at Royal Melbourne. Indeed, he never turned a spade of dirt on the course. Travel plans required that he leave before funding for construction could be secured. By the time the club recovered from the effects of the

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\$1-billion resort planned in 'sensitive' Fla. area

BY PETER BLAIS

A major resort complex that will feature six signature golf courses is being planned for an environmentally "sensitive" portion of Florida's Osceola and Polk counties.

The \$1 billion project is known as Johnson Island and is located on 8,500 acres 17 miles south of Walt Disney World. In addition to the signature courses, plans call for an equity membership course, par 3 executive course, two-year accredited Golf Academy, multi-training pod facility, 1,500-room hotel and conference center, retail shopping area, marina and retirement village to be built in three

phases over 15 years.

Developer Louis Fischer, chairman of Fischer Associates Inc. of South Miami and Kissimmee, hopes to have all necessary permits in hand by the end of the year and the first course in operation by early 1992.

But there are several environmental hoops through which Fischer must jump before the project becomes reality.

The Johnson Island area is home to many forms of wildlife, including two endangered species - the Southern bald eagle and the American wood stork. This has raised concerns with local officials and

several environmental groups, among them the Audubon Society and Sierra Club.

"It's a beautiful piece of property. And a lot of people are saying it's one of the best proposed developments they've ever seen," said Fischer, who is hoping to allay those fears by developing just 32 percent of the total parcel. He may also sell some of the environmentally-sensitive land to other developers who would preserve it in exchange for being able to develop wetlands elsewhere as state law allows.

"It has some potential," commented Jack Shannin, development director of Osceola County. "It's

the first project I've seen with that much open space. They've done a good job of looking out for the environment.

"I don't see the golf courses as a problem, but the size of the whole project. It's a rural area, but there's no real infrastructure out there. He might have to cut back some."

Fischer applied in December for a regional development review with the East Central Florida Regional Planning Council and the Central Florida Regional Development Council. Because of its size, the project is considered a Development of Regional Impact, and must be reviewed by the two councils to

determine its effect on local community services.

There are also a number of local, state and federal permits needed before construction can begin. Fischer said he plans to begin the permit application process in March and hopes to have final approval from the counties by December.

That would allow him to begin the first phase, which would include two golf courses and 500 hotel rooms. The first course should open 12 to 15 months later. Fischer foresees all six courses eventually beginning and ending next to a common clubhouse.

Australia

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worldwide economic depression, it was 1931.

The building of the course was left entirely to Royal Melbourne's greens superintendent, Claude Crockford; the execution of MacKenzie's plan was handed over to former Australian Open golf champion Alex Russell. Thus Crockford and Russell actually worked the land that became the two courses at Royal Melbourne. They followed MacKenzie's plan on the West Course, Russell's on the East.

Most of Australia's courses were designed by native golfers turned architects. Besides Russell and Soutar, Sydney-based pro James H. Scott was among Australia's busiest.

In the mid-1960s, the great Australian golfer Peter Thomson joined forces with Michael Wolveridge to create perhaps the most notable of all local design firms. Their work brought them not only many jobs in Australia but throughout Asia as well.

Aerators

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three to five years."

Gillen added that greenkeepers have compounded their problems with sand topdressing over the last 25 to 30 years, so that now they have to get down through those layers of the topdressing, or rebuild the green. He said that sand topdressing, if it is not high-grade sand that is similar in particle size, creates an area that inhibits water movement.

"This is why the universities are saying that unless you get in and deep-aerify you'll have to rebuild your greens or suffer with what you've got," he said. "And there's probably only 10 percent of courses that can afford to rebuild their greens."

Penn show set

The Western Pennsylvania Turf Conference and Trade Show will be held Feb. 20-22 at the Pittsburgh Expo Mart/Radisson Hotel in Monroeville, Pa.

Co-sponsored by the Pennsylvania Turf Council and Pennsylvania State University, it offers sessions on pesticide regulation and use, turf diseases and more.

Interested people may contact the Pennsylvania Turf Council, P.O. Box 417, Bellefonte, Pa.

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