

# Bridging cultural gaps with understanding and course design

By DESMOND MUIRHEAD

I am sad and melancholy at the growing rift between America and Japan. I hope that golf can help bridge it.

In the early 1980s I renewed my acquaintance with Japan, after a break with golf course architecture from 1974-1984. At this time I visited Tokyo to secure financing for some new towns we designed in Australia. It was then that I met Sabu Sawamura and Nitto Kogyo Co. They remembered New St. Andrews north of Tokyo, which we had designed with Jack Nicklaus in 1972, and which has since become one of Japan's better known golf courses. (Shinyo Golf Club near Nagoya, recently the venue for the Japanese match-play PGA Tournament, was the result of this visit to Tokyo. It took five years from conception to opening.)

We presently have five new courses under construction in Japan, each of which is unique in its own way. It may not be possible to build a great course each time as is frequently announced. Usually a great course needs time to become great.

After returning to golf course architec-

*Desmond Muirhead was educated at Cambridge University in England. He has designed more than 100 golf courses, including Muirfield Village and Mission Hills. He pioneered in the relationship of golf courses and residential developments. He has homes in Jupiter, Fla.; Newport Beach, Calif.; and Honolulu, Hawaii.*



Desmond Muirhead

ture, I made an extensive study of St. Andrews, which is the mother of golf course strategy, and concluded that there are a few definite underlying tactical principles, most of which were contained in St. Andrews.

They were like musical notes. They could be made into an infinite number of combinations to produce anything from musical comedy to grand opera. I was frankly after grand opera.

St. Andrews was also filled with symbols. Bunkers called Lion's Mouth, Coffin, Principal's Nose, depressions called The Valley of Sin, and so on. I determined to adapt these symbols to a new type of course to fix another important element of design memorability. Since then, I find it easy to recall all 18 holes of my courses and others can remember them by walking them once. Yet I cannot recall accurately all the holes at Mission Hills, Calif., which was designed in 1968.

The other attribute that St. Andrews has in great measure is atmosphere. It is holy ground like Charters Cathedral or the Meiji Shrine. We wanted a similar atmosphere on our new courses but we could not wait hundreds of years for it. So we had to infuse the designs with energy. In this way they could emerge full-blown with atmosphere.

We also felt the best courses had a powerful intellectual component. The best brains at the great University of St. Andrews reworked nature at St. Andrews. It is a myth that it was built by nature alone.

Other famous courses like Cypress Point, Augusta National and Pine Valley, besides having great natural sites, all have a strong intellectual component. We like to feel Muirfield Village and Mission Hills have this component. I believe Mission Hills' intellectual quality is the reason for its success.

Golfwise they are traditional courses. Yet, artistically they are often a break with tradition.

Greatness in a course comes from many ingredients. A great site — of which there are many potentially great in Japan, plus a great conception — is a wonderful start. The way you arrange the elements, the symphony of the hazards, the breadth and sweep of the sequence, the stimulation of the mass, void, distance and contrast which any great landscape must present.

The vast amount of cut and fill needed to build a golf course in Japan allows for sculpture on a large scale, and I like to think of myself as an earth-form artist.

This is exciting whether the course is filled with symbols as at Segovia, an orthodox course such as Muirfield Village, or the new golf course we are doing for Alpha Cubic in Japan. About one-half of our new courses are traditional.

I like working in Japan because I feel I have a more literate audience there than elsewhere. One of our clients, Seiji Tsutsumi, head of one of Japan's largest corporations, is a poet. That has to be very stimulating.

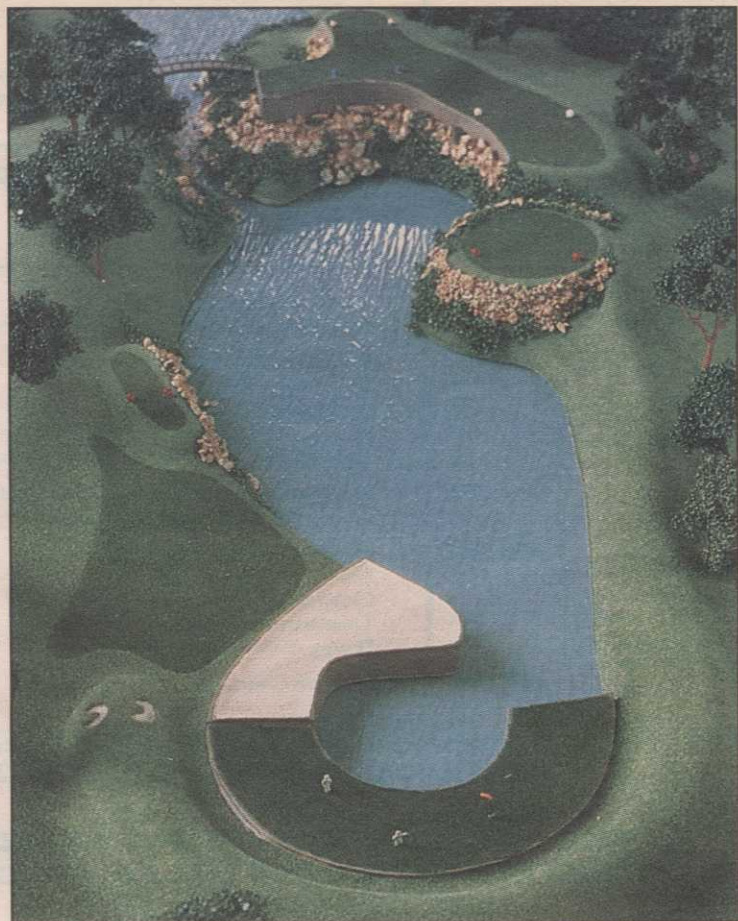
We like to think the wild, incalculable poetry of Japanese porcelain, which I collect, comes out in our work in Japan.

We want to make courses that compress the past, present, and future into one with myth and mystery, emotion and vision. As one designs, there is a surge of clustering

and fragmenting effects that are constantly adapting to the rhythms and sequences of both golf and the evolving landscapes.

In Japan, art is woven into the way of life. In the Anglo-Saxon countries, it is peripheral to it. So I would like each of my courses in Japan to be a masterpiece. I would like to become a national treasure of Japan like my admired acquaintance Kakiemon XIV.

Finally, never forget that everywhere golf is only a game, not a religion, a marathon or an endurance test. It should be entertaining, enjoyable, amusing and memorable.



*Pictured at right is a scale model of the 190-yard, par-3, 17th hole at Segovia Golf Club in Chiyoda, Japan, one of architect Desmond Muirhead's Far East projects. The 7,050-yard private club has a Spanish theme with each hole named after a symbol of that Mediterranean country.*

## Fighting press manipulation with education

Continued from previous page

tel and Mauna Lani Resort, respectively.

Speaking to the Hawaii County Council's Planning Committee, they detailed how their courses are watered and fertilized. They said they use little pesticides and herbicides, and they denied poisoning coastal areas or using water needed for domestic consumers.

Bustamente said much of what has been said about environmental hazards involving golf courses has been based on false as-

sumptions or misunderstandings.

The committee got a taste of the truth, not a dousing of error.

Henry Adams said, "Practical politics consists of ignoring facts."

By acting on your feelings and knowledge, perhaps you can make old Henry out to be wrong. If we sit idly by, watch out! The next action by an ill-informed public — driven on by a "mission-driven" reporter — could be in your own backyard.

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