

Q&A: Kaneda

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transportation, meals, babysitters. It's crazy.

But if the economy is so poor, we have to change some things. One of the golf courses changed the policy from caddy to golf cart so it could lower the green fees almost \$100 — down to \$130. Now they're booked solid for two months.

GCN: To satisfy the craving for golf courses, are you seeing public courses built with private money?

TK: Yes, there are some, but they are very expensive.

GCN: Your society has 25 members. How many other Japanese are designing courses?

TK: Probably 20 to 25 more. But some are not fully qualified. And we tried to eliminate the professional golfer.

GCN: What percentage of new golf course design work goes to Asian architects?

TK: Probably most are by Japanese. The exceptions are Robert Trent Jones Sr. and Jr., Jack Nicklaus and Perry Dye.

GCN: But we do see more and more American architects working in the Asia-Pacific. Do developers there look at Americans first, and why wouldn't they use people from their own area?

TK: In Japan, name comes first. If they hire a big name, they think they can get more money from members. But I'm not satisfied with American architects these days. They are doing a little sloppier work. They used to do much better work. Now they are sending not-so-great shapers. American architects cannot visit Japan every two weeks. So if the shapers are wrong, nothing can be created well. I'd like to see, when the time goes by, how people appreciate these courses.

I think the time now in Japan is a very similar situation to the United States in the 1910s and 1920s. You had the George Thomas book and Mackenzie's, and other publications that promoted the knowledge of golfers.

We don't have that yet in Japan and we need it. Education is very important for leisure sports.

GCN: Golf course design and construction is quite different in Japan than the United States. How so?

TK: In Japan each section of the country has different ideas, how to control the earth-moving and so forth. It's not logical at all. It is trouble and there is almost no written code but it is left up to the bureaucrats for every section.

Environmental restrictions are so hard. We need more land now than ever before because of stupid regulations. We some-

Japanese architects organize, set priorities to improve golf

TOKYO, Japan — Aiming to elevate their profession, the country's leading golf course designers have formed the Japanese Society of Golf Course Architects (JSGCA).

Headed by the nation's most widely known architect, Sunsuke Kato, the society is open to people who have designed at least three courses that are now open and have a minimum of seven years experience.

Chairman Kato is joined by Vice Chairman Takeaki Kaneda and others in the society, which number 25. According to Kato, the Society's goals include:

- improve members' skills;

- put together professional and social exchanges with colleagues from other countries; and

- initiate activities that support golf in Japan.

Hirofumi Zaitu is executive director from the JSGCA headquarters in Minato-ku. Serving as governors are Kowashi Arai, Sho Ohkubo, Hisamitsu Ohnishi, Taizo Kawata and Mitsuaki Kobayashi. Yoshihiko Komuro and Ken Sato are the society's auditors.

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times have to build the Great Wall of China to protect the earth-moving on the golf course.

GCN: Is golf not treated fairly, do you think?

TK: We try to break up the regulations because farmers are using more pesticides than everybody else. A crop of rice in Japan is less than three percent of the world and yet they use almost 60 percent of all the chemicals of the world. They don't talk about that at all because farming is farming, but golf course is thought a sinful thing, for some people. So to do something sinful they cannot use pesticides. That is the point.

Pesticides is just on the surface. Inside, they have anti-golf goals.

GCN: Is this a rich versus poor syndrome?

TK: After the war, the Japan Golf Association volunteered to pay 1,000 yen each time we played. That money goes to the local government. It's a volunteer tax. It's now almost 10 times that much. Still, people think golfing is a rich man's game. Yet there are 4,500 driving ranges in Japan besides 2,000 courses. Golf must be one of the largest participating sports in the country.

But the politicians don't realize that. And politicians don't have any market research. They depend on the media for information.

That is another very important activity we have to do: Educate mass media people about this size, chemicals and the golf course itself. Japan is a very small country and I try to see where else we can preserve nature. But I think the golf course is the only place we can do it.

You have EPA. So has Japan. Japan's EPA made a study two years ago taking the ground water out of 144 golf courses. They took sample water to try to find out chemicals contained in the water. They found 0.0002 percent combination of all chemicals — almost none. That was amazing. Unfortunately, the Ministry of Trade and Industry and the Ministry of Forestry and Agriculture don't give a damn for that research. They act as if there were no results whatsoever.

I think the responsibility is on journalists in Japan. They try to agitate people so they sell more.

GCN: Was the Japanese Society of Golf Course Architects formed in response to this?

TK: That and other reasons. We dearly had to incorporate internationally.

GCN: Is there work in Japan on using wastewater?

TK: We don't use it in Japan, but I hope we will in the future.

GCN: What other specific problems do you have to contend with?

TK: We're not allowed to build many golf courses, and yet we have [hundreds of thousands of acres of rice paddy land] sitting idle to keep the price of rice up. Seventy-five percent of Japan is mountains and almost 65 percent of our land is forest, and what can we do about it? For housing we use only four percent. That is one reason land is so expensive.

GCN: You can only build in the mountains because they won't let you build on farmable land.

TK: Right. We are literally changing mountains to golf courses. I think that's the way we should do it, provided we pre-

serve nature. In fact, we really develop nature and try to grow the nature with the help of God's hand.

GCN: How does course design differ in Japan than the United States?

TK: The way to design golf courses has a pendulum tendency. It goes to an extreme undulation and then back to ordinary playing greens. Depending on the length of the course, I prefer undulating greens, as long as we can maintain them economically and not hold up play. Scottish links have such beautiful undulation. And, of course, Japanese are not as strong golfers as Americans. I like to build shorter courses — 6,500 or 6,700 yards long, rather than 7,000 or 7,200. Americans try to aim for 7,000 all the time.

GCN: Is the boom in Japan continuing?

TK: Right now it's in a freeze. The economy is so bad.

GCN: What about the rest of Asia?

TK: Other countries are doing much better than Japan. In Thailand and Taiwan and all those areas.

GCN: Are there any frontiers there that haven't had golf but may be open to it? Vietnam/China/India?

TK: In China, especially Hong Kong, they are mainly Japanese developers.

GCN: Are golf course builders in Asia-Pacific getting better at it?

TK: Yes. The USGA greens specifications are very helpful. We don't have good laboratories like in United States. So when Jack [Nicklaus] comes over the workers send the samples to the United States.

GCN: Is there a difference between an Indonesian developer, a Thai developer, etc.?

TK: I think they have their own good industries, mostly tin or rubber. Their rich people are really rich. In Japan, most of the rich are corporations. But the individual in Japanese is not so rich because the taxation system is so high. It is a socialist country.

GCN: What about the golf facilities in these other areas like Indonesia and Thailand?

TK: There are not too many golfers there yet. They build golf courses to attract tourists.

GCN: Are they spending more on their facilities?

TK: Labor costs are smaller in those areas than in Japan, so they can spend more. But I don't think they spend such crazy money [as Japan]. Japan did it because of what we call a bubble economy which, depending on the price of the land, causes extraordinary costs.

GCN: How do you see the future of golf in Japan?

TK: We have to lower these extraordinary costs or the future is not so bright.

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