

With Stenson, Faldo steps up design activity

By HAL PHILLIPS

WUHAN, Peoples Republic of China — With marketing guidance from International Management Group and architectural help from veteran designer Brit Stenson, Nick Faldo has leaped into the Asia-Pacific golf development fray.

With seven Asia-Pacific projects in the works — including Wuhan International Golf Club here — Faldo is executing his decidedly traditional design style and enhancing project cachet as only a world No. 1 can.

"Nick's objective is to remain at the top of his sport while, at the same time, steadily increasing his design activities," explained IMG's Mike Rielly, who handles Faldo from the firm's Singapore office. "What Nick Faldo means to a golf development is immediate credibility, especially in Asia where the process is always membership-driven."

"Asia is probably the world's most active market, and that's why Nick is focusing his efforts here. But there's a desire for Nick to be in every market."

Faldo has eschewed the idea of reeling off various "signature" courses with a series of different lead architects. Instead, he has wedded himself to IMG and Stenson, who cut his design teeth with the U.S. PGA Tour during the 1980s.

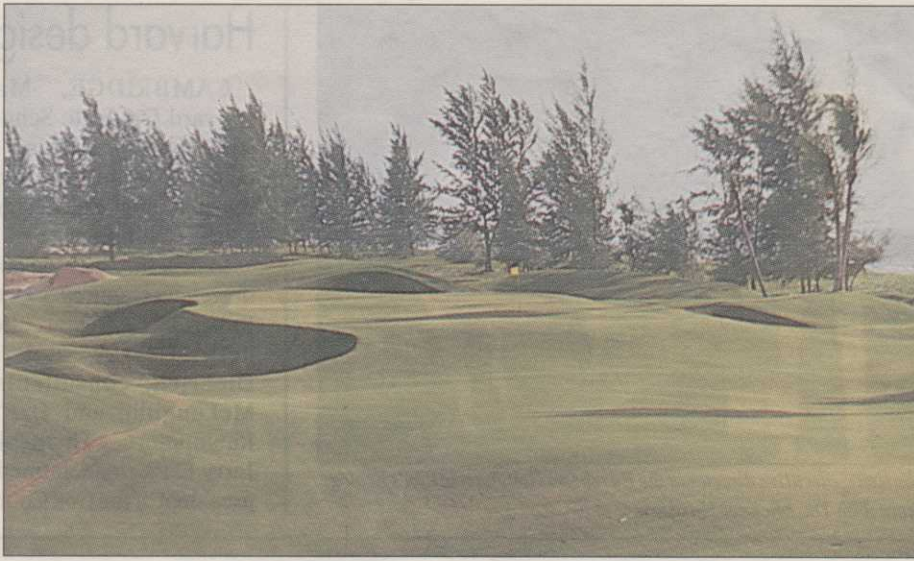
Working alongside Bobby Weed, Stenson handled construction of the highly successfully Tournament Players Club (TPC) courses before being named the PGA's director of design in 1988. He's responsible for the routing of TPCs in Nevada, Connecticut and Florida, all of which play host to PGA Tour and PGA Senior Tour events.

"If there's one thing that distinguishes Nick, it's that he wants the golfer to be confronted with options," Stenson explained. "He has a very strategic approach to the game. He wants the golfer to see the choices before him.... Nick has a very traditional approach and that comes through in the design. Smallish, grass-faced bunkers — what you might expect from a guy who grew up playing golf in Europe and Scotland."

It should come as no surprise the only finished Faldo projects reside in Europe: Chart Hills in Kent, England, and Sporting Club Berlin in Germany.

Yet the Briton is busiest in Asia-Pacific, where two Thai projects in Rayong should open this year. According to Stenson, nine holes at Great Lake have been grassed, while Century Country Club is close behind. Another Thai course — Floraville, north of Bangkok — is well under construction and remains about year away.

Rounding out Faldo's Asia-Pacific portfolio are Cikarang Estates in Jakarta; Royal Sumatra in Medan, Indonesia; and Mayflower in Sapporo, Japan.



Thai Muang Resort is a newly opened Perry Dye design in Phuket, a resort area of Thailand.

Perry Dye redirects; eyes American market

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land. The last U.S. opening we've had was Cypress [Golf Club in Cypress, Calif.] in 1992."

The new focus for Dye Designs is not theoretical. It has already taken hold. A fall opening is expected for a city of Sacramento course, now well under construction. Dye reported his firm has just signed a deal to design and build a 27-hole golf complex, complete with driving range and teaching facility, in Jefferson County, Colo. Another municipal project — nine holes and range for the city of Englewood, Colo. — is nearly signed, sealed and delivered.

"The Jefferson County project is only 30 minutes from my office," said Dye. "It's our first project in state in about six years, which is sort of exciting — driving to a site."

"And these are less complicated jobs. Instead of moving three or four million cubic yards of dirt, we'll move 300,000."

Dye Designs was one of the first U.S. firms to take its product overseas in a big way, opening the door for flocks of architects to ply their wares in the lucrative, albeit speculative Asia-Pacific market. Yet Japanese money fueled much of the fire and, when the bottom fell out last year, Dye found himself overextended.

"We're still reacting to the Japanese bubble-burst," he said. "Right now, we have three projects under construction in Japan, whereas there have been times when we had 14!"

"I'm gratified the value of Japanese memberships at my courses has held up 10 to 20 percent better than those at other courses. Not only my courses: A few designers have seen memberships at their courses really hold their value, which speaks to the quality of our work."

Will the Japanese funding return anytime soon?

"I don't think so," he answered. "It's got to be second-stage. And by that I mean they've got to start spending money in Japan before they'll fund anything overseas. Singapore, Thailand and China will be the funding mechanisms in Southeast Asia for the time being."

Indeed, according to Dye, business is continuing as usual in Southeast Asia. He said the firm has just signed another deal in southern Thailand, while Thai Muang Beach Resort opens for play near Phuket this spring. Laguna National — the 36-hole, upscale Singapore project designed by Andy Dye — is about to christen its second 18.

"And I'm still getting calls to do par 3s — because of Chicago," said Dye, referring to the 9-hole collection of famous par 3s from the Family Dye, located on 30 acres in

downtown Chicago. "It was sodded before the snow came. We'll just have to see what lived and what didn't."

There's no getting around it: Dye Designs has been forced to downsize. Ten positions were eliminated in January, said Dye. The firm's focus has changed dramatically since the early 1990s, but some basic premises have not.

"You have to judge every deal by how much work it will be; where it's located, and how much you can do for the client," said Dye. "That never changes."

Baird chosen to design course at Riverbend Ranch

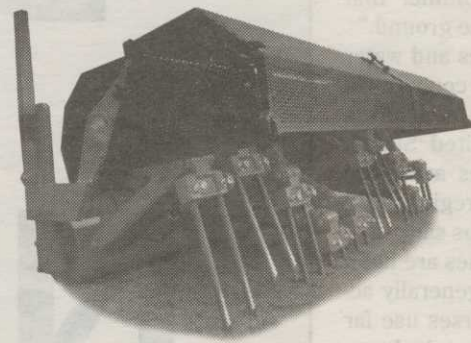
SANTA ANA, Calif. — Coombs, Inc., a Fresno developer, has appointed Gary Roger Baird Design International, Ltd. as the designer for its 18-hole golf course on the Riverbend Ranch site, just north of Fresno in southern Madera County.

The daily-fee track, situated on the banks of the San Joaquin River, will gently wind through some of the last remaining stands of great valley oaks and be adjacent to the river's riparian corridor.

Construction is scheduled to begin in June.

Private equity financing and contributed work in the amount of \$6.5 million will be used for the golf course. Bond financing of \$10.5 million may be used for the residential infrastructure scheduled to start in summer of 1995.

The engineering firm of Foresgren Associates of Salt Lake City and Gary Meyer of GRM Properties will be partners in the project with Coombs. Foresgren Associates/PA will also be acting as construction manager for the course.



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