

The Last Horizon: Moscow opens first golf course

By MARK LESLIE

NAHABINO, Russia — Coups, changes in leadership and incredible fluctuations in currency are all memories now that the new Russia has its first golf course.

Moscow Country Club officially opened here Sept. 2 with prestigious members of the world golf community on hand to see the new mixing with the old.

Golfers will note a unique complex of bunkers at the 2nd green and 3rd tee. "They were built by the Russian soldiers defending against the Germans in 1943," said Robert Trent Jones Jr., who designed the course in this Moscow suburb. "This is the place where the Russians stopped the advance of the Germans — exactly 18 miles from Red Square."

Jones invited golf friends, like Royal & Ancient Golf Club's Michael Bonallack, "who recognize the first golf course in the last major country of the world is a significant event, and let's welcome them in," he said.

Jones first met on the project 20 years ago with officials of the Russian foreign



The 1st hole at Moscow Country Club displays the course's deep-woods character.

ministry's diplomatic corps UPDK, which owns Moscow CC. A contract was signed and crews began clearing the ground in 1988. The past six years were very long ones, Jones said.

Comparing it to building a golf course throughout the American Civil War, he said: "We had revolutions and changes of government. The currency has gone from one ruble to a dollar to 2,000 rubles to a dollar. Just getting this project done was immensely satisfying and immensely difficult — a lifetime experience."

"It was like skating on ice which was melting."

The golf course, which Jones called

"world-standard and very traditional," sits on relatively flat terrain in deep woods with marshland and two creeks running through it. It plays 7,000 yards from the back tees.

"It could hold any major championship, and it will," he said.

The facility sports a clubhouse and an 80-room operating hotel, and a large center is being built for other sports like tennis.

Golf is new to Russia. But already the country has "candidate golfers, young people out of school who do nothing but play golf," Jones said. "They want to do in golf what they did in hockey."

Bridger Creek open for business

BOZEMAN, Mont. — A silo behind the 5th green sits as a sentinel to its past and a 568-yard monster looms foreboding in its future. But for now, Bridger Creek Golf Course stands as a public nine-hole facility that makes proud its operator — Great Northern Golf Co.

Great Northern, which completed construction and is leasing the course from Golf Course Partners Inc., the originators of the golf and real-estate development, opened the front nine at Bridger Creek in July. PGA head professional and Great Northern President Mark Holiday said the back nine has been seeded and should open around July 1, 1995.

"We think golfers are going to love this course. We also believe it will be one of Montana's best," said Holiday, whose partner is Dane Gamble, a former president of Peaks and Prairies Golf Course Superintendents Association. Gamble, who is returning to the state he called home in the 1980s, is the superintendent.

When the back nine, pro shop, clubhouse and driving range open, it will end eight years of planning this facility which sits in the foothills on what once was a dairy farm.

Two trout streams — Bridger Creek and East Gallatin River — run through the property, which is set at the base of the Bridger Mountains.

The par-36 front nine measures 3,295 yards. The final par-71 18 will reach 6,503 yards. Former Riviera Country Club head pro Mac Hunter of Bozeman routed the course, while Holiday and Gamble have revised the tee-to-green design of the back nine. Huppert Brothers construction of Billings performed the dirt-moving.

Golf Course Partners, under Rex Easton, is responsible for creating the course and surrounding Bridger Creek Meadows housing development.

This is the second course Great Northern has taken under its management wing. It also owns The Pines at Lake Isabella in Weidman, Mich., near Mt. Pleasant.

Tom Watson takes course design business on worldwide tour

By HAL PHILLIPS

ASOTOWN, Japan — With four projects poised for opening — including The Nine Hundred Club here — Tom Watson, the architect, has arrived on the Asia-Pacific design scene.

It's been a deliberate, patient process for Watson, whose Tom Watson Design now has seven projects under construction worldwide. After consulting on various U.S. projects — including the acclaimed

Links at Spanish Bay with Robert Trent Jones Jr. — and studying the intricacies of turf, soil, topography and design strategy, Watson is prepared to commit a solid block of time to his architecture practice.

Tom Watson Design has formed a partnership with HNTB Corp. of Kansas City, Missouri, USA. HNTB Corp. will provide architecture, engineering and planning service on all Tom Watson Design projects.

Watson, who worked with architect Scott Miller on the Forum Country Club in Chichibu, currently has four more projects under construction in Japan:

- The Tom Watson Golf Course in Miyazaki
- The Yashima Country Club in Awano
- The Nine Hundred Club here
- and The Pricia-Takehara Resort Course in Takehara City

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