

# Wright launches solo career in Philippines

By HAL PHILLIPS

TAGAYTAY, The Philippines — Architect Rodney Wright, principal of the newly formed Wright Golf Design, has been retained to design a pair of golf facilities here in Asia-Pacific's hottest development market.

The first course, Batulao Golf & Nature Resort, will break ground here this month, said Wright from his Singapore office. The second, Tanay Mountain Spa & Resort, will begin construction shortly thereafter in Tanay, overlooking Laguna de Bay. Both will be constructed by Singapore-based Pacific Golf.

During his eight-year partnership with Robin Nelson, Wright took seriously the marriage of golf courses to their surrounding environment and culture. Singapore-based Wright Golf Design will continue this tradition, he said.

"I enjoy integrating the cultural aspects of a site with the golf course itself," Wright explained. "I think Bali Golf & Resort Club [1991] is a good example of a course that looks like it belongs there.... My philosophy has always been to make the course enjoyable and memorable. Every architect says that, but that is the goal: To design something that people walk away from but remember every hole. They may not like every hole, but they remember them all."

While Wright's new firm has an eye on the U.S. market, it will debut here in Asia's hottest development region. Both projects occupy sites at significant elevation, thus sparing future golfers the full brunt of Manila's heat and humidity.

"The developer [Universal Rightfield Property Holdings] has planned a family of resorts," Wright explained. "There will be five to seven of them, each with its own theme or identity unique from the others. One membership will provide you access to all of them. There is so much development there [in The Philippines], you must have a differentiator and Universal Richfield has a really good feel for this market. These developments are really geared for the upper middle income bracket, as opposed to the uppermost bracket. It's a good niche."

Batulao Golf & Nature Resort will occupy a dramatic piece of ground here in the shadow of Mt. Batulao. The clubhouse and resort are located at the edge of a giant gorge, Wright said, while the course will take up residence between the gorge and the surrounding foothills.

At Tanay, on the northeast shore of Laguna de Bay, large rocks strewn about the virgin

site will play a key role in the layout of Tanay Mountain Spa Resort.

"This is an excellent piece of ground," said Wright. "It's fairly open but rolling, and there 300 meters of elevation change which provide beautiful views of the lake. We will definitely make use of these boulder-type rocks,

incorporating outcrops into the design and using them in the construction of retaining walls."

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A native of Atlanta, Wright got his start in golf course design with Ron Kirby and Denis Griffiths. Twelve years with the Atlanta-based firm left Wright with experience on four conti-

nents and the title of senior designer. "Ron and Denis are two people who really taught me a lot," said Wright. "They know this business inside and out."

In 1987, Wright moved to Hawaii, met Nelson and formed Nelson and Wright Golf Course Architects, a division of the Honolulu-based land planning firm Belt, Collins and Associates. Wright soon started a Singapore

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Rodney Wright on site in Tanay.

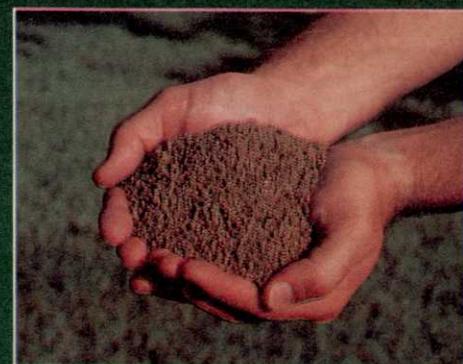
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## Rodney Wright

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office and the partnership resulted in several acclaimed courses, including Bali G&RC, Mangilao Golf Club on Guam (1992), and Maui's Mauna Lani Resort (1994), home to the Senior Skins Game.

In 1995, Nelson and Wright accepted senior designer Neil Haworth as a full partner. However, a market slowdown soon thereafter convinced Wright it was time to strike out on his own.

"It really was an amicable split," Wright said. "Robin and I did some very good work together, but we realized a while back that we were going in different directions. Maybe it was the distance, but it made sense for me to try my own thing. At times it's been a bit scary, but I've been doing this for more than 23 years. It's just a question of using that experience. I still learn something new every day."

"Anyone who's serious about this business does, too. If you think you know it all, you're in trouble."

While his first two solo projects are here in Asia-Pacific, Wright said his practice is a global one.

"I'd like work in the States, even though I'm concentrating my efforts in Asia right now. In the year I've been on my own, I've seen the business grow and that's been extremely satisfying. Things are falling into place — but I've learned you have to put them into place."

Wright Golf Design can be reached in Singapore by phone at (65) 732-5715, or by fax at (65) 734-7812.

## Palmer Design signs 5, breaks ground on 5

CAVITE, The Philippines — The first two months of 1997 have seen an extraordinary amount of activity for the Florida, USA-based Palmer Course Design Co. Always active in the Pacific Rim, Palmer has announced five new project signings for this period and seen construction commence on five other projects.

New projects include Cavite New Town Development, a 36-hole project undertaken here with St. Lucia Development. Palmer Course Design Co. (PCDC) will do the first 18 holes. The architect for the second 18 holes has yet to be determined. H-O-K, San Francisco and Hong Kong are the master planners. Construction is expected to commence later this year.

Also signed with Sta. Lucia were 18-hole projects in Lian and Bacalod in the Philippines. Both developments will feature residential real-estate components.

Palmer Design also signed its first project in China in several years, The Sanya Golf Club, an 18-hole destination resort located on the south tip of Hainan Island.

Fronting the South China Sea, the resort will also include two marinas, a hotel, and other amenities. The client, Hiro Planning Co., is based in Tokyo, Japan. Construction is expected to begin late this year.

PCDC also signed its first project in India. The DLF Quatab project has already commenced construction and should be open for play in early 1998. The client is DLF Universal, the flagship company of the RS. 1000 Crores DLF Group.

Outside the U.S., five PCDC projects have started preliminary earth work. These include Caliraya Springs, a 36-hole project on Lake Caliraya, The Philippines and Forest Hills, a 36-hole project outside Manila. Both projects are residential developments, with Palmer designing 18 holes on each project. Located near Subic, The Philippines, preliminary site work has commenced on the Alta Vista Royale Project, also a residential development with an 18-hole Palmer course.

In Japan, preliminary site work has commenced at the 36-hole Furano Kogen Golf Club. Full construction will begin this spring with an anticipated summer 1999 opening.

The close of 1996 saw commencement of construction of the Muju Resort Golf Course near Muju, Korea. The 18-hole course should be open in the spring of 1998.

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