

Ristola scores environmental victory in Germany

EMSTAL, Germany — A success story has been created here on the banks of the River Ems by architect Tony Ristola in the shape of an extension to the Lingen Golf Course.

The extension was vehemently opposed by environmental group Bund für Umwelt und Naturschutz Deutschland e.V. (BUND).

"The beginning of the construction phase was, for both the environmentalists and the club, a small part of Hell," said Ristola.

The resulting course, Ristola's second in Germany, led BUND to announce: "We admit this: We made a mistake. [The project] is now a model for the integration of a sports park in a protected area."

The flat site was covered with 7-foot-high stands of corn.

"The second site visit got my heart racing with excitement," Ristola said. "A property bordering the course gave me the feeling that something truly special could be created."

To the southeast Ristola stumbled upon a 28-acre natural

reserve of sand dunes, hillocks and hollows. The way forward for the Lingen extension suddenly became crystal clear — "To restore the barren farmland to a version of it's original beauty."

Test borings on the property revealed differing varieties of sand throughout, allowing Ristola to plan for extensive areas of exposed sand and sandy waste.

Course construction began on a Tuesday and by the Friday

BUND had called in the police and work was halted. A missing permit was finally granted and work recommenced in an atmosphere of hostile tension. Ristola can now laugh at the situation which confronted him, but at the time, "No one was happy; the club, contractors, BUND or myself."

All interested parties met for a site visit and Herr. Claus Alfes of BUND expressed his displeasure at the prospect of a "glorified graveyard" of flat, green ex-cornfield.

It was here that Ristola made the breakthrough in communication. "I pointed to the eroded dunes on the nature reserve and explained that we would have vast expanses of open sand with grassy islands and native plantings. Herr. Alfes expressed his approval and I added that there would be more than he could possibly imagine."

A much healthier communication line was opened up and construction continued with the support of both the city authorities and BUND itself.

At the end of May the finishing touches were applied. BUND cited the following aspects as being crucial to its cooperation: That the new section of golf course (10 holes) has the dunes-like character of the Ems river banks; that a wide corridor between the course and the reserve be left fallow; that the underground pipe drainage (in place from agricultural use) be replaced with creek and wetland drainage system; that only native deciduous trees are planted; that a 1.5-km public footpath should run through the new section of the course.

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Nickels project

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Developed by Tong Yang Leisure Co., Tong Yang Country Club is a good example of just how huge Korean golf course construction projects can be.

Being a semi-mountainous country, Korea's flatter land in the bottom of the valleys is dedicated to agriculture or urban growth. Golf, and other recreation, is relegated to the mountains.

Tong Yang was carved out of a mountainside following the movement of 7 million cubic meters of earth and rock to accommodate not only the course, but access roads and other construction amenities.

"Golf courses are huge civil engineering projects in Korea," said Nickels. "Our involvement has been to work with the Korean architects, who are basically civil engineers. We lend our expertise in the design and sculptural side. They move the millions of yards, we work with them to sculpt it."