

Shackelford strides into Mackenzie's world

By MARK LESLIE

He gave us *The Captain: George C. Thomas Jr. and His Golf Architecture* and *Masters of the Links: Essays on the Art of Golf and Course Design*. Now young Geoff Shackelford strides into the realm of fiction in a sometimes cutting tale called *The Good Doctor Returns*.

The Good Doctor, for those outside the loop, is Dr. Alister Mackenzie, thought by many to be the greatest golf course designer of all time. And in this whimsical excursion, Shackelford may earn himself a few karate chops rather than kudos.

The book is written in the first person, from the point of view of a young golf course architect who gets hired by Dr. Mackenzie, who did not die as we thought on Jan. 6, 1934.

Herewith, a few of those views:

- Regarding bunkers, Mackenzie says, "My experience with today's courses is one of despair and disbelief."

- "I never thought I'd see the day when they would install irrigation on the great links of the British Isles."

- Regarding narrow fairways bordered by long grass, it "makes bad golfers! And

narrow fairways destroy the harmony and continuity of the game, causing a stilted and cramped style, destroying all freedom of play and creative shotmaking. And isn't that the real joy of the game? Creating shots and making bold recovery plays?"

- Regarding green committees, "Many have ruined my handiwork by planting trees like rows of soldiers along the borders of the fairways and turning once beautiful properties into jungles."

For his part, the narrator declares of Augusta National: "There was virtually nothing left of the Doctor's original design



at Augusta other than the routing and a couple of bunkers."

And he tells Mackenzie he can't ask Augusta National's greens committee "if the fool who built the 16th green was drunk and blind."

Well, the Good Doctor gets his site for a final golf course — a property on the ocean in San Diego with grassed-over dunes, sandy soil and undulating land.

The Good Doctor Returns, 180 pages, hardcover, \$19.95. Available through *Golf Course News' Bookshelf*: 207-846-0600, ext. 230.

SPOTLIGHT ON ASIA

Vietnam's growing pains

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attracting members and assuring quality will continue to be a challenge, the club has the backing to maintain its spot as the all-around leader in HCM City.

The No. 2 competitor in HCM City is the Song Be Golf Club which is a joint Singaporean and Swedish venture. They have enjoyed a good share of the membership market since opening in 1995, and now have over 400 members. However, they have had their share of course construction and project setbacks, the most obvious of which is the half-finished concrete and steel shell of their "permanent" clubhouse.

The only permanence it possesses at the moment is as a nagging eyesore which is not likely to go away before the year 2000. The difficulties they have had with the golf course are a bit more subtle.

Perhaps the most encouraging aspect of Song Be is its current membership sales approach to the local market. In order to encourage more Vietnamese to play they have scheduled "open" days to introduce them to golf in a low pressure environment.

Further, they have restructured their membership schemes to tailor them to the Vietnamese market.

"The strategy is to get word of mouth and group power to sell memberships among the Vietnamese — it will just take a handful of Vietnamese members to start this movement," contends Paul Slater, the director of marketing for Song Be.

With that in mind they have extended the payment plan for

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