

Tradition returns

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have been a minority. Since golf gripped the United States – not for the first time, by the way – in the early 1960s, the dominance has been almost complete. Everything American was desirable, from loud plaid trousers in the '70s to highly fertilized fairway lushness throughout the '80s and '90s. Our erstwhile colonists have ruled the golfing roost, with the odd Ryder (hic)cup viewed as mere skirmish defeats.

Yet it was an American who recognized that there was more to golf design than length, punishment and emerald brilliance of the sward. Pete Dye visited Scotland with his partner Alice (partner in life and design), and took the 'Gospel according to St. Andrews' back to the United States for the second time in history. A seed had been sown which would grow into today's

renaissance.

Now the time has come to go back to the future. Suddenly the classic links, heathlands and minimalist style has become desirable once again and true golf courses are beginning to emerge. The days of heavily manicured target golf have not gone; many fine courses will continue to be built and be loved, but the balance has started to swing the other way. To murder Churchill, "This is not the end, nor is it the beginning of the end, but it is the end of the beginning."

The intangible qualities of the classic original courses have probably got much to do with the fact that the site that was available in the first instance – you cannot make a silk purse out of a sow's ear, as the saying goes. But the tangibles, the qualities that can be admired with a degree of recognition, are repeatable anywhere.

This is the nub of it. The sublime absurdity of nature coupled with the

sheer genius of Colt, Fowler, Abercrombie, MacKenzie et al, created the game as we know it. Natural hazards and green locations dictated how the game was played, but the advancement of equipment and the seeming abandonment of strategy as an integral element put the cart before the horse. All of a sudden the game began to dictate design. It is irrefutable that the challenge ahead of a golfer ought to cause him or her to think. This is the charge of the architect, and the return to original design principles – in theory and in practice – will aid them in that assignment.

Recently I had the privilege to play the Old Course at St. Andrews. Sure, it is maintained to the highest degree and, yes, there are occasions when brute force is desirable. But it was the incredible degree of strategic competence that held me spellbound. Every shot had myriad options. Every hole asked questions, and every step on the 'running' fairways reinforced my undying resolution that this is a triumph of design (and blind luck) that will never be improved upon. The fact that such qualities are once again being propounded and acted upon by architects and developers alike brings joy to my heart. Viva 'retro' and adios spectator mounds and diamond-cutting patterns and 'funky' signature holes and all the rest.

HOUSE OF CORRECTIONS

Dear Sir,

In your May 2000 issue, you wrote an article titled "Troon golf moves on Japanese Market."

On page 37 of such issue, column 1, you state "It also operates an Alistair MacKenzie-designed stand-alone course named Yarra Yarra in the Melbourne Sand Belt . . ."

This statement is incorrect as MacKenzie never saw the site of the Yarra Yarra course. It was designed by Alex Russell in 1928.

It is true that Russell—MacKenzie's partner in Australia from October to December 1926—forwarded his plans of the course to MacKenzie seeking advice on a few greens and bunker placements, but MacKenzie certainly did not design the layout. The president of the Club can confirm this information if so required.

Yours sincerely,
J. Lovell
Australia

P.S. The only course MacKenzie designed in Australia-Asia is the Royal Melbourne Golf Club's West Course. Russell designed it's East Course.

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