



Bahamas draws big names

By TREVOR W. JACKSON

NASSAU, Bahamas — Not since the 1960s has the Bahamas experienced the attention of the world's leading golf course designers — until now. Back then, Dick Wilson, Joe Lee, Gardner Dickenson and Robert Trent Jones Sr. were among those leaving their mark on these sun-splashed cays and islands. Today's golf course developments are being designed by Tom Weiskopf, Greg Norman and Robert Trent Jones Jr., ushering in a new age of golf on spectacular oceanside property from Grand Bahama to Paradise Island and to the Exumas.

Weiskopf has two projects in hand, the Island Club on Great Exuma and the Atlantis Resort Course at Paradise Island. Jones is working towards a June opening of his Reef Course at Lucayan Resort on Grand Bahama, making 36 holes available to guests of this destination resort.

The Lucayan Country Club's original 1962 Wilson layout continues to attract players from around the world, hosted by Director of Golf Gary Slatter. The Reef Course is being built on the site of an earlier course and is Jones' first effort in the Bahamas. His father's Cotton Bay Golf Course opened in the early 1960s, attracting Shell's Wonderful World of Golf to record a great match between Arnold Palmer and Julius Boros. Today, Cotton Bay remains open for play, but the resort hotel is no longer open waiting for re-development.

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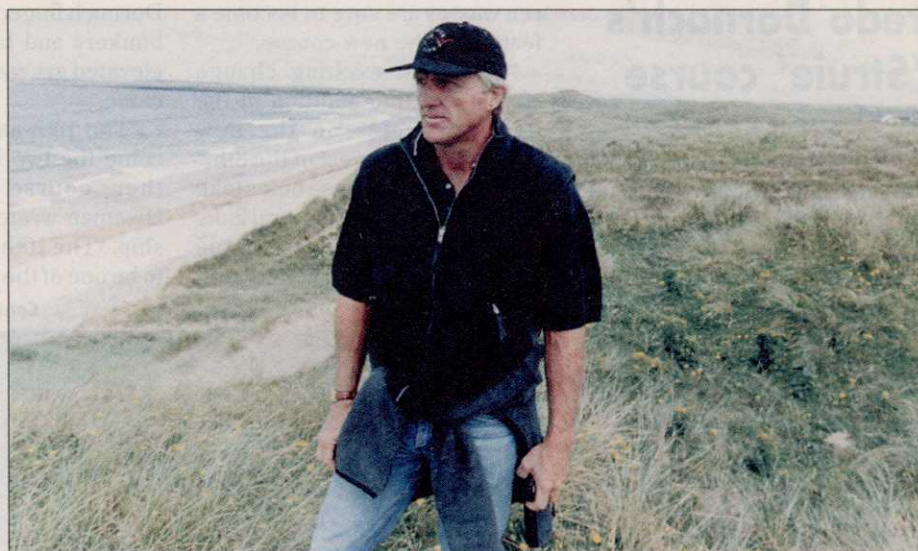
Returning the Olde World to the Olde World

By MARK LESLIE

DOONBEG, County Clare, N. Ireland — Greg Norman is so enthralled with the property that he had been on site four times before ground was broken in December. His senior designer, Jason McCoy, had been here seven times to walk the land and route the 18-hole golf course for Shannon Development and Landmark International.

"Doonbeg is 100 times the site of the Ocean Course [in Kiawah Island, S.C.]," said McCoy, who worked on the Ocean Course with architect Pete Dye. "It has 1-1/2 miles on the ocean and the dunes are 100 feet versus 10 feet at Kiawah. It's an unbelievable links site."

Norman and McCoy have "routed, rerouted and rerouted it again," McCoy said. "Every time, we change a tee or green 20 feet. Every time, we find something even better. We might move just 25,000 square feet of dirt on this project. We will start cutting the fairways just as they are right now."



Greg Norman visits the site of his upcoming golf course in Doonbeg, Northern Ireland.

Norman and McCoy plan to keep Doonbeg "old Irish style — old hard and creeping fescues," McCoy said. "We will not Americanize it in any way."

Flann Quilligan is working on the

project with Shannon Development, which has formed a joint venture with Landmark International. They hope to finish Doonbeg by mid-2000 and open it in 2001.

Fream-Dale Golfplan rolling round the globe

By ANDREW OVERBECK

SANTA ROSA, Calif. — Newly renamed Fream-Dale Golfplan based here is rolling into 2000 with two courses set to open and new projects on the books and in the works. The firm's two openings this year prove there are still fabulous sites available for golf development.

Bonari Kogen Golf Club in Numajiri, Japan, which sits in the hills northwest of Tokyo, is slated to open June 3. Aiming to bring the course into the market as the best in Japan, the project owner opted to let the course grow in for an entire year.

"The course was ready to open last May," said senior architect, David Dale. "They took a year to work on their maintenance practices and make sure their soil chemistry is balanced. As a result, it looks magnificent."

According to Dale, the most dramatic hole on the course is the par-5 3rd that runs along a canyon ridge and features views of the inactive Mt. Bandai volcano. "You can cut the corner off the tee," he said. "But it is a 260-yard drive to cross the canyon. It is a gutsy shot."

Also set to open in June is Sparrebusch Golf Resort in Knysna, South Africa. Nine holes opened this December and Dale expects to have the remaining nine shaped and seeded by the end of January.



The Dale- and Fream-designed Sparrebusch Golf Resort in Knysna, South Africa.

The course sits along the Indian Ocean, the estuaries of Knysna and is adjacent to an indigenous forest.

As a result, it took nine months to get the regulatory approvals. All the work was worth it in the end, said Dale. "These are both sites that you'd give your two front teeth for."

Fream and Dale will also be busy in Southeast Asia in the coming months.

In Korea, the firm is working the Nine Bridges Golf Club on Cheju Island and Dale is doing the grading plans for another course at Yong Pyong Re-

sort. Movement is also possible at Sun Chon Country Club in Kwang Ju, a course that the firm first looked at 2-1/2 years ago.

In Singapore, Fream and Dale will be renovating the Sentosa Golf Club in Serapong that Fream designed in the late 1970's. The course will be getting a full-scale facelift, according to Dale. "It has been in the ground for 20 years," he said. "And we will be retweaking the course, flashing out the bunkers, etc. On a course that has mature vegetation it will make for real fun architecture."

New Golf Unlimited eyes German growth

By TREVOR LEDGER

ÖSTRINGEN-TIEFENBACH, Germany — Some of the golf industry's most experienced professionals in Germany have joined in a partnership designed to handle a golf project from concept to management.

Golf Unlimited is the brainchild of Managing Partner Christian Bohn, formerly a project manager with Paragon Construction and now the representative of Nicklaus Design in Europe.

"I don't think that anyone else in Europe has put together such a committed

team in order to actualize such a concept," said Bohn.

The 36-hole, Tony Jacklin-designed project at Stifterhof, south of Heidelberg, is the first to benefit from the formation of Golf Unlimited. The company has already successfully negotiated the planning phase, and building will commence this year. The multi-skilled nature of Golf Unlimited is highlighted by the ease of planning consent at Stifterhof.

While each new project receives individually chosen team members, project managers, superintendents and shapers,

etc., a more permanent team of core partners has been established to ensure that reputable and acclaimed professionals are involved at every stage of the development — be it a small-scale renovation or full-blown resort project, Bohn said.

Key members include Nicklaus Design, Weitz Golf International, J.L. Pierrmann International Associates and Michael Redd Associates, all of whom are based in Florida, USA. Between them, they are responsible for some of the highest quality and famous golf courses in the world, including The London Golf Club in En-



Christian Bohn



Mark van der Looy

gland, Muirfield Village Golf Club and Kiawah Island in the United States, and the Hyatt Regency Resort in Abu Dhabi.

It is this recognizable quality that Bohn believes will bring success for Golf Unlimited. "We know that there is a need in

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Bahamas goes big-time

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PARADISE ISLAND

Atlantis Resort on Paradise Island has re-defined Bahamas' tourism since being taken over by South African hotel magnate Sol Kerzner. With the grand opening of the Royal Towers at Atlantis last season, the re-design of the Paradise Island Golf Course was inevitable. The Wilson layout opened as the "Arawak Country Club" in 1962, with owner Huntington Hartford at the helm. Gary Player was brought in as professional, along with Pancho Gonzalez and Pablo Segura on the tennis courts at the Ocean Club. Hog Island was still the name, although Paradise Beach was beginning to sound right to the "Thunderball" James Bond movie fans who flocked to see Sean Connery in the 1964 blockbuster filmed on the island's deserted beaches and lagoons.

Weiskopf will have a beautiful site to work on: the whole east end of Paradise Island, with nonstop ocean views and swaying palms. By closing the small airport and developing bayfront condominium residences, the course and surrounding beaches may become prized golf resorts.

THE ISLAND CLUB

Further south in the chain of islands known as the Exumas, Weiskopf is moving on the Island Club's 18-hole private resort project. A few miles from Georgetown, which sits right on the Tropic of Cancer, the Island Club is attracting a lot of attention for its unique get-away-from-it-all luxury concept. No crowds, no gambling, no hotels, no cruise

Trevor W. Jackson is an international golf development consultant, based in North Palm Beach, Fla. A founding member of the Bahamas Golf Association in 1964 he is always active in the Bahamas and the Caribbean.



Greg Noman-designed Grand Exuma's 15th hole is complete (inset), while crews work to finish the rest.

ships, just top-class service in a private residential club setting. Members can purchase estate lots, build custom homes for private residential living, or take advantage of the club's residential shared ownership plan for those who want to be at their club 30 or 60 days a year.

The Island Club boasts views to Stocking Island to the east and sunsets overlooking the famed western bone fishing flats. The club's private Citation jet runs members out of Miami for the one-hour flight to Georgetown. This fantasy island will be fully operational by spring 2001, and real estate is selling fast.

EMERALD BAY

Norman's design is also under construction on Great Exuma, where the Emerald Bay Resort is taking shape. Emerald Bay's crescent-shaped beach will provide the backdrop for a destination resort offering a 5-star hotel, marina, golf and real estate. As a destination resort, Emerald Bay will provide a full range of resort activities to keep hotel guests active during their vacation.

Salt-tolerant grasses are already being sprigged on several fairways and will have

plenty of growth in time as the resort will not be open for another 12 to 18 months. Projects of this magnitude take lots of money, time and care to bring to a grand opening. As the date approaches, golfers will be planning their own "shark attacks" on these family island fairways.

BAHAMAS GOLF FEDERATION

Amateur golf in the Bahamas is administered by the B.G.F. under the leadership of volunteers. With the various clubs spread out over the half-dozen islands where golf is available, the B.G.F. provides a vital service to bring United States Golf Association and Royal & Ancient standards to the Bahamas. While some courses have fallen into disrepair or have folded, the future of Bahamas' golf for residents and visitors is bright.

The opportunities for golf course architects, builders, irrigation, grass and agronomy experts are many, and club operators, management and resort marketing firms are negotiating their deals. When the planned projects are complete, the Bahamas will have more than 12 golf courses for their 300,000 population and 3 million visitors to enjoy. ▶

Caribbean leaders put golf high on priority list

By TREVOR W. JACKSON

MIAMI — As tourism continues to grow in the Caribbean and Latin America, smaller island governments and British-dependent territories are looking to resort hotels, and golf, as a life-saving replacement for bananas and other agricultural products.

This was the consensus from seven heads of state and a number of others gathered at the third year Miami Conference on the Caribbean and Latin America, held here in December. More than 1,200 business and political leaders from throughout the Americas and Europe came to set the agenda for the region's economic development in the coming years. From cruise ports, to resort hotels, from health care to electric power, 14 country exhibitions, and 75 corporate exhibitors took over the Intercontinental Hotel for a week in early December.

The direction toward development of resort hotels and golf is almost inevitable as each small island nation and the Central American Latin nations improve their tourism infrastructure with new airports and cruise ports. The burgeoning cruise industry, in particular, needs onshore activities for its passengers, and golf is high on the list.

The trend of new destination golf resorts is underway throughout the region. In Barbados, for example, where Tom Fazio has 36 holes being built at Sandy Lane in a multimillion-dollar redevelopment, it will join the Royal Westmoreland layout by Robert T. Jones Jr. The Bahamas has Greg Norman, Tom Weiskopf and Robert Trent Jones Jr. designs being turned into reality. Robert von Hagge's White Witch golf course near Montego Bay in Jamaica is expected to open in June. Anguilla's tiny island is looking for a golf course to go with its upscale tourism product and financial services network.

Puerto Rico has 16 courses now and at least two more coming on stream. The Dominican Republic, which is home to Pete Dye's classic Teeth of the Dog layout, is getting another Dye course, and other developers are talking to course architects to see what they need to do to attract the golfing tourist.

On the Caribbean coasts of Belize, Cancun (Mexico), and Isla de Margarita (Venezuela) more golf is on the way.

And already golfers are teeing it up in the A-B-C islands (Aruba, Bonaire, Curacao), where Tierra del Sol is attracting many knowledgeable golfers.

CUBAN REVOLUTION OF GOLF

Even Cuba's Varadero resort island 60 miles east of Havana was the location of a European PGA Tour event last October. While the U.S. embargo remains in force, Canada, Mexico, the United Kingdom and Spain, among other countries, are going ahead with Cuban tourism plans, and golf is certain to be a part of it. While it may seem strange to some, it is not impossible that the Havana Open, an event that Arnold Palmer and Billy Casper once dominated, may return to the pro golf tour.

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