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"NOW, IT'S ALSO ABOUT SAUDI ARABIA TRYING, ONCE AGAIN, TO
LEGITIMISE ITSELF ON THE WORLD'S SPORTING STAGE"

FAIR COMMENT

No sooner had the wrath of football fans seen off the spectre of a European Super League (ESL) than golf sprung a similar 'money-grabbing' concept on us: a breakaway golf tour driven by Saudi Arabia, with several big names reported to be among the players who have been targeted.

This is not a new idea in sport, of course. Kerry Packer's World Series cricket, in the late 1970s, saw some of the world's best cricketers sign up to play a series of matches to which only Packer's TV company had broadcast rights. For the players, then and now, it was about more lucrative contracts. Now, it's also about Saudi Arabia trying, once again, to legitimise itself on the world's sporting stage, while being roundly criticised elsewhere for human rights' abuses.

Rory McIlroy, chair of the Players Advisory Committee on the PGA Tour, agrees with officials' stated hard line on rebels who might join – though it should be noted that, at the time of writing, none of the targeted players have agreed to participate. Golf, we've been told for many a year, needs to change. But the change is driven by a need to be more inclusive and a desire to encourage more people to take up the sport, not to reward multi-millionaires.

Those contemplating the switch should heed the experience of many of the clubs who 'joined' the ESL – they were vilified by their own fans. And, while golf spectators are not as demonstrative as football fans, the pros might consider the impact on their morale of being politely booed on the tee and shunned by nervous sponsors. **END**

CONTINUE THE DISCUSSION ONLINE
at golfmanagement.eu.com



Words

Michael Lenihan
Publisher

 **portman**
publishing and communications

FEATURING

SUMMER 2021



RICKY HALL

TRUMP TURNBERRY

"The Trumps understood the commitment to investment, conditioning and service levels. They know what that looks like and what a top-class golf experience should be. That was their world."

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MARC TOPIOL

LA RESERVA CLUB

"We're exploring certain relationships with owners and managers of private golf clubs so that their members, who perhaps cannot enjoy their favourite sport in winter from their primary residence, can come south to Sotogrande."

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ANTHONY ROBERTS

ELY CITY GOLF CLUB

"I would encourage every secretary and every manager to be seen playing as much as possible. I don't know how you can handle the greens staff if you're not playing the course regularly or give them feedback without playing the golf course."

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ALASDAIR DANSON-WEBSTER

SHERBORNE GOLF CLUB

"I'd been proprietary based all my career, and, in that commercial world, it's very driven. It takes its pound of flesh. Yes, it's very rewarding, but as soon as the golf season stops, you're pulled to all the other elements of the resort."

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BRIAN SMITH

BRS GOLF

"That was why, when I started the business, I tried to combine the internet – which I had absolutely fallen in love with – with golf, which I had played since I was eight years old. I've grown up with a golf club in my hand."

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"ONE OF MY MAJOR AMBITIONS FOR OCEANTEE WAS TO INTRODUCE THE GOLF INDUSTRY TO THE LATEST SUSTAINABLE FABRICS"



COVER STORY

OCEANTEEGOLF.COM



OCEANTEE, the sustainable golf brand, has won two prestigious industry awards for its new Oceanic polo shirt range.

Within days of launching the ultra-light-weight OCEANIC polo made from a pioneering TENCEL™ branded Lyocell fibers with REFIBRA™ technology the Oceanic won two Editor's Choice awards.

Put simply, TENCEL™ Lyocell Fibers with REFIBRA™ technology uniquely combine wood pulp and cotton scraps to contribute to a circular economy in textiles and maintains the core strengths of TENCEL™ Lyocell Fibers like enhanced breathability, long-lasting softness and temperature-regulating; this properties that keep you cool, dry and odour free. These qualities make this the suitable choice for summer golf as well as the planet.

This is the first time that and TENCEL™ Lyocell Fibers with REFIBRA™ technology have been used in the golf market, which makes these awards even more important.

Ed Sandison explains: "We are delighted to win the Today's Golfer and Golf Monthly awards because it proves that performance, style and sustainability do go hand in hand.

"One of my major ambitions for OCEANTEE was to introduce the golf industry to the latest sustainable fabrics and technologies in the hope that other brands will use them.

"I do hope that these awards encourage others to look at the fantastic work that TENCEL™ brand are doing and use them in their next collections."

As the leading global supplier of sustainably produced specialty fibers, Lenzing, the brand and technology owner of TENCEL™ and REFIBRA™, is delighted to see OCEANTEE's success.

Andreas Gürtler, senior manager global business development Active Wear at Lenzing Group, owners of the TENCEL™ and REFIBRA™ brands said: "Over the last few years, we have witnessed a rise of eco-consciousness amongst consumers and golfers are no different.

"Everyone wants to see more sustainable product choices which is why we congratulate OCEANTEE on their business success. At Lenzing, sustainability is part of our DNA, and we will continue to stand at the industry forefront to assist businesses with the implementation of eco-practices in their operations."

OCEANTEE donates 25 per cent of corporate profits to marine conservation charities dedicated to combating plastic pollution including the Marine Conservation Society (MCS).

Anne Thwaites, corporate partnerships team lead, Marine Conservation Society commented: "We are delighted to be working with OCEANTEE as a chosen charity partner with their contributions supporting our work for thriving seas and coastlines.

"We would like to congratulate the team for winning two industry awards which clearly showcase their drive for material innovation in the world of golf." **END**



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"DURING APARTHEID, SOUTH AFRICA WAS PERSONA NON GRATA ON
THE WORLD SPORTING STAGE; I CAN ONLY ASSUME IT DIDN'T OFFER UP
AS MUCH MONEY AS THE SAUDIS"



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ON THE FRINGE

I may be in a minority, but I hope the proposed Saudi Arabian Super Golf League – or whatever snappy marketable title they give it – actually takes off. It would give me great pleasure not to watch it and not to put my hard-earned into the coffers of one or other of the media outlets that would pay billions to broadcast it.

I'm tired of all these threats of breakaway sporting factions. I acquiesced when the Football Association ripped out the heart of England's top flight of more than 100 years' history and presented it to Murdoch's Sky TV, because I naively thought it might benefit the rest of the Football League – trickledown effect my a***! I laughed as various sanctioning bodies in boxing materialised in order that the sport could have more world champions and demand bigger pay days from broadcasters, and I began to grind my sporting teeth when football's prestigious European Cup became the televised mediocrity that is the Champions League.

But it was the European Super League which tipped me over the edge. Yet, I wasn't against the concept, per se. My view was that if arrogant, financially bloated clubs wanted to set up on their own, with another broadcast deal to which I would not subscribe, let them. And, would you believe it, money didn't talk for once. Or rather it did, but not the money they were hoping to get from the ESL. Rather, it was the money they were likely to lose in sponsorship as big-name brands were more conscious of upsetting their 'customers' than were the clubs themselves. That, in itself, is shameful, but not surprising. When fans became customers, the writing was on the wall.

And now golf wants to do the same thing, backed by Saudi Arabian money; money which has already seeped into many other sports by the back door. At least this time they're having the chutzpah to be brazen about it. I can't stand Manchester United, but at least the club doesn't silence women's rights activists and journalists – well, not by jailing them, anyway. During apartheid, South Africa was persona non grata on the world sporting stage; I can only assume it didn't offer up as much money as the Saudis, for I see no other reason the kingdom should not be dealt the same hand. Unless of course that hand was busy signing massive banker's drafts.

So, if there are Tour players out there, who are seriously considering participating, let them. They would be guaranteed regular big pay days and would never have the fear of failure as a consequence. If they choke over a putt on the 18th it won't matter, because while they may have missed out on a title, they can still go and buy that private jet they've had their eye on. Good riddance.

Golfers worth their salt, of course, would continue to ply their trade as before, hoping upon hope to one day land a Major title, or a spot in a Ryder or Presidents Cup team; or having the cojones to nail an 18-footer to retain their Tour card and put food on the table for their family.

I know who I'd prefer to watch. **END**

NEWS IN BRIEF

GOLFMANAGEMENT.EU.COM/NEWS



CLUB CAR ANNOUNCES FAROL AS NEW UK DISTRIBUTOR

Club Car has appointed Farol Ltd as a UK dealer for its commercial range. Established in 1976, Farol is a family-run business distributing machinery and equipment for golf course maintenance, agriculture, construction and gardening. Its headquarters are in Oxfordshire, and it has five more depots throughout the UK.

SEARCH 'FAROL' ONLINE

at golfmanagement.eu.com for the full story



COUNTDOWN UNDERWAY TO NAVARINO HILLS LAUNCH AT COSTA NAVARINO

With less than a year to go to the opening of Europe's most eagerly-awaited 36-hole golf-design project – Navarino Hills at Costa Navarino in Greece – course preparations are gathering pace and are now 70 per cent complete. Both of the new 18-hole courses at Navarino Hills have been designed by two-time Masters champion José María Olazábal, who has inherited an incredible canvas on which to pen the new designs.

SEARCH 'NAVARINO HILLS' ONLINE

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FARLEIGH GOLF CLUB POWERS UP THE JUNIORS

Farleigh Golf Club is adding extra energy to its junior golf as it underlines its commitment to developing the next generation. Under the supervision of PGA professional, Shain Johnson, regular weekend classes are attracting growing numbers, thanks in no small part to the recent initiative to include junior membership for free with all seven-day adult memberships at the popular Surrey club. And at Farleigh, they certainly start them young with children from the tender age of four and five years old upwards invited to attend the sessions with the emphasis on athleticism and movement, before the more technical aspects of golf are addressed.

SEARCH 'FARLEIGH' ONLINE

at golfmanagement.eu.com for the full story



CLUBHOUSE RENOVATION MARKS LATEST PHASE OF INVESTMENT AT THE SPRINGS

The transformation of The Springs Resort & Golf Club into Oxfordshire's leading golf venue has moved a step closer with the reopening of its stunning golf clubhouse following a major renovation and extension. To help celebrate the full reopening of the hospitality industry in England, the clubhouse's fresh new look was unveiled to members and visitors on May 17, with the interior of the building and facilities all having been updated and given a modern makeover.

SEARCH 'THE SPRINGS' ONLINE

at golfmanagement.eu.com for the full story



FIRST LOOK AT VERDURA RESORT'S SPECTACULAR NEW EAST COURSE

Ahead of the opening in October of this year, golfers can now enjoy a tantalising glimpse of the new golf course at Sicily's Verdura Resort, part of Rocco Forte Hotels. Viewers can plot their way along the spectacular new par-four hole – and you can almost smell the ocean breeze along the coastline. The new signature ninth hole on the East Course is part of the major renovation project – scheduled for completion in October with nine of the holes ready for play in August – as world-renowned golf architect Kyle Phillips returned to the site of his original design in Sicily to work his magic again.

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THE BUCKET PROS HOST FIRST 'BOOST METHOD' TRAINING AT LA CALA IN SPAIN

Following their most recent appointment by PG Golf and Sports Academy, The Bucket Pros have launched their acclaimed and successful 'Boost Method' training in Spain. Hosted at the award-winning venue, La Cala Resort, the training was attended by managers from both the host venue and PG Golf and Sports Academy. The training, which is a four-part course, first looks to shift the focus of the club managers to consider the practice facility as a business, not just a service that incurs costs. Over the duration of the first course – two days – the attendees learned some valuable insights into best practice, digitalisation and profitability.

SEARCH 'BUCKET PROS' ONLINE

golfmanagement.eu.com for the full story



KILADA COUNTRY CLUB BECOMES THE PGA NATIONAL GREECE

Dolphin Capital has announced that Kilada Country Club, Golf & Residences has been unveiled as the PGA National Greece, holding geographical exclusivity and joining an illustrious list of PGA National resorts worldwide. This recognition is testament to the 18-hole par 72 Championship Course meticulously designed by Jack Nicklaus, combined with the quality of the additional services that will comprise the 208-hectare resort.

SEARCH 'KILADA' ONLINE

at golfmanagement.eu.com for the full story



ECOBUNKER ADDS NEW BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT MANAGER

Synthetic bunker edging specialist EcoBunker has made a significant expansion by appointing Hamish Crichton as its new business development manager. Crichton joined EcoBunker at the start of May, from soil surfactant and wetting agent provider Aquatrols. "I come from a corporate background, but a few years ago I decided I wanted to follow my passion, and work in the golf business," said Crichton.

SEARCH 'ECOBUNKER' ONLINE

at golfmanagement.eu.com for the full story



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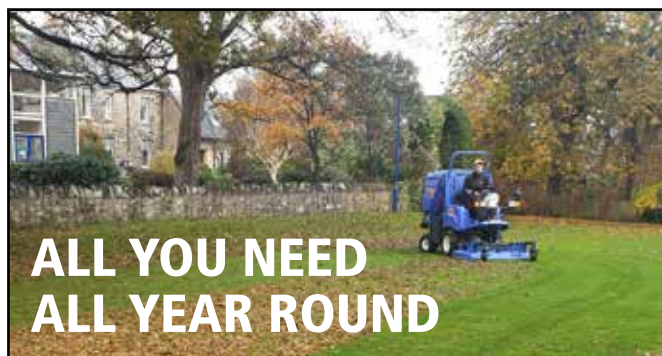
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QHOTELS UNVEILS NEW THREE-YEAR GOLF INVESTMENT PLAN

The QHotels Group has underlined its long-term commitment to golf by announcing a new multi-million-pound investment across its golf resorts over the next three years. The UK's largest golf resort operator will be rolling out an upgrade to its facilities and courses worth £2m at its seven golf venues in England and Scotland over the next 12 months, with further significant investment to follow in 2022 and 2023. The three-year improvement programme will cover all sectors of The QHotels Group's golf-course business, with the renovation work set to start this spring.

SEARCH 'QHOTELS' ONLINE

golfmanagement.eu.com for the full story



THE ROYAL BURGESS GOLFING SOCIETY OF EDINBURGH OPTS FOR ISEKI

With over 280 years of history and curated by design greats such as 'Old' Tom Morris, Willie Park Jnr and James Braid, The Royal Burgess Golfing Society of Edinburgh continues to seek challenge and reward for its members. Since the Millennium, one of the club's focuses has been tree planting to create further visual interest and a healthier environment, and the parkland course at Barnton – which has been GEO certified since April 2018 – is only a few miles from Edinburgh's city centre.

SEARCH 'ISEKI' ONLINE

at golfmanagement.eu.com for the full story



TORO IRRIGATION HELPS ROYAL ST GEORGE'S THROUGH DROUGHT

Having begun its long relationship with Toro with a fleet deal in 2013, Royal St George's Golf Club in Kent has continued to trust in the brand, becoming a Toro Total Solutions customer with the installation of new irrigation in 2018 and leasing further machinery in 2019. And the club, which consistently ranks among the top courses in the world and is the host of The Open this year, has had its faith in the brand pay off, particularly when it comes to Toro irrigation which has helped the course navigate a series of droughts in the last three years.

SEARCH 'ROYAL ST GEORGE'S' ONLINE

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Words Steve Wilson
Photography David Cannon, Ken Hayden

RICKY HALL

DIRECTOR OF GOLF, TRUMP TURNBERRY



Ricky Hall can pinpoint the exact moment his fascination with Turnberry began.

It was the 1986 Open Championship, standing alongside his father who was volunteering as a steward at the back of the 15th green. Greg Norman went on to claim the Claret Jug that year as the event returned to the scene of the iconic Duel in the Sun for the first time.

After Jack Nicklaus and Tom Watson famously battled it out for supremacy in 1977, Norman took the honours with relative ease by comparison as a sensational second-round 63 fired him to the top of the leaderboard before he went on to claim a five-stroke victory.

But away from the glare of the Australian's memorable yellow knitwear, an impressionable youngster had his epiphany which would set him in on his way to his dream job as director of golf at a venue which will forever be woven into the fabric of the sport's heritage.

Hall recalled: "I first came to Turnberry as an 11-year-old kid for the 1986 Open. My dad Morgan was the chief steward at the 15th hole and I came with him every day. I'd started to play golf by that point and I was like 'wow'.

"I remember standing there with him, holding my 'Quiet Please' sign but from that point on, I have been mesmerised by the place.

"My career went on, I played a bit and knew I probably wasn't devoted enough to play full time but I knew I wanted a career in golf and became a PGA pro. I always aspired to be at Turnberry – to play it first and then to work here."

To suggest he 'played a bit', Hall rather downplays the facts that he turned professional with a handicap of plus-one, has shot a personal best of 65 round the Ailsa, has six holes-in-one to his name and once teed it up with a certain Tiger Woods at a corporate event – "a lovely guy", according to Hall.

After moving into golf operations, he has now chalked up 21 years of service at Turnberry, which must be especially hard to swallow for a well-meaning former careers advisor.

Hall said: "I grew up about an hour from Turnberry and I remember one of the careers guys coming to my school and suggesting there was a big world out there and our area may not be able to deliver what you want out of life.

"I remember thinking 'I quite like the west coast of Scotland', so I wanted to forge a career here. I love the people and it's such a special corner of the world. I don't want to be anywhere else – I love the place.

"To a lot of people, Turnberry is a 'bucket list' course and my job is to ensure people enjoy the whole experience, which is great. I love hearing what people thought about it and how special it was to them.

"I never ever take that for granted."

It's fair to suggest, he has seen a few changes during his tenure and dealt with some high-profile owners and figures along the way – most notably the former President of the USA.

The renovation of 2016, overseen and initiated by Donald Trump and in tandem with son Eric, has propelled the resort to new heights.



"THE TRUMPS UNDERSTOOD THE COMMITMENT TO INVESTMENT, CONDITIONING AND SERVICE LEVELS"

The King Robert The Bruce course – formerly the Kintyre – has also undergone a major renovation with Eric as the hands-on driving force behind that aspect of the project and subsequent relaunch. It is now a superb track in its own right, just without the prestige of The Open behind it.

But Hall paints a picture of an owner with a deep affection and loyalty towards the project and as a committed custodian of the course, which may not always fit with his public persona.

He said: "I was in those meetings with Mr Trump, Eric Trump and the architect, Martin Ebert. I wouldn't claim to be heavily involved but I was party to everything and I was often asked for my views.

"But it definitely exceeded my expectations on what could be achieved.

"The Trumps understood the commitment to investment, conditioning and service levels. They know what that looks like and what a top-class golf experience should be. That was their world. They promised Turnberry a lot and they delivered even more.

"They were very excited about owning the property but what struck me was their attention to the history and the heritage of Turnberry. There was serious time and dedication that went into the golf course. They explored what was possible for the very best outcome – hour after hour and day after day.

"Martin is an incredible golf course architect and he really looked into what had gone before. The Trumps really bought into that and wanted to tell the history of Turnberry. I call it a restoration as well as a renovation.

"Myself and Mr Trump were out there in all sorts of weathers and looking at possible tee locations, bunkers and re-siting greens. To me, it showed how important it was to them. They wanted to do it to the highest level they possibly could.

"They were very respectful and knew how important this place was to people in this part of the world. He would often stop by one of the housekeepers or caddies and ask them for their view. He wanted to find out the staff's thoughts and it was fascinating to see.

"I remember during the Women's British Open, he'd been out watching the golf and was delighted with the way the golf course had been presented – it looked great," recalls Hall.

"He asked to meet all of the greenkeeping staff. So 35-40 of them were all gathered at 7am the next morning on the 11th green after they had done their set-up. He gave a fantastic speech about how grateful he was for their hard work and the investment he was going to make in the course to make it the best in the world.

"He looked everyone in the eye, shook them all by the hand and thanked them personally for their work. A lot of those staff had been here for decades and couldn't have picked out our previous owners from a photo. They had no idea who they were.

"And here was the new owner of Turnberry getting out of bed to go and personally thank them for their hard work. For me, that's how loyalty is born."

With the renovated golf course meeting universal positive acclaim and having hosted four Open Championships, Turnberry remains ready to host the event in the future.

On its last outing in 2009, the venue served up yet another memorable Open chapter as 59-year-old Watson so nearly became the oldest Major champion in history, only to be denied by Stewart Cink in a play-off.

Hall said: "We are ready, willing and able. And we firmly hope it will return one day.

"We are very proud of those times we have hosted the Open Championship. We have everything in place, but the venue also has that emotional connection with the history and heritage too.

"The course changes were made in agreement with the R&A and they were firmly part of the discussion so I'd like to think that before too long, we will host it again.

"I'm often asked about it but if you gave me Turnberry with the way that it was and the way that it was going under the previous ownership and the fact that we would still host the Open Championship, or Turnberry with the investment and the scale of what they have done with the property as it is now without an Open Championship, hands down I would take the latter." **END**

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PRESCOTT, WISCONSIN THE CULMINATION OF TWO YEARS PLANNING"



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FOLEY EXPANDS FOR FUTURE GROWTH

Foley grinders has been a popular option at golf courses across the USA for some time and over the last four years has become increasingly the grinder of choice in the UK with machines now installed in many prestigious clubs including St Andrews, Carnoustie, Royal Liverpool, The Grove, Richmond Golf Club and Kingsbarns.

The chief executive officer and president of Foley Company is Paul Rauker, and he has been instrumental in building on the company's success in the USA – they have just had one of their best years ever and looking to further develop what they can do for golf courses in the UK and other parts of the world.

To this end Foley has invested in a new 6,300 square metre facility in Prescott, Wisconsin the culmination of two years planning and executing based on what their current needs are today and future expansion. As the leading supplier of grinders in the America's and globally, they were the first to develop a completely enclosed unit to address dust and noise in 1993, which in turn precipitated full automation. This innovation toward safety and productivity allowed Foley to lead the field in making spin and relief grinding hands-free. They continue to grow and increase market share worldwide because of the simplicity designed into the operation of the machines.

One of the reasons that the top clubs in the US have been using Foley for many years and why several have converted in the more recent years, is that they have recognised that grinders are one of the most important 'shop tool' investments made, and it is truly the only investment made to take care of the equipment that does all the work and provides the quality-of-cut i.e.; the cutting head.

Customer support is a massive factor for any golf club. Foley facilitates this with all its distributors by ensuring face-to-face diagnose and assistance on site wherever practical and immediate access to on-line back-up support from the technical support department in the US. Ian Robson is the highly respected face of Foley in the UK and their other European partner Milati Grass Machines out of The Netherlands maintains a level of stock items with which ensures a quick part replacement or upgrade timeframe.

Customer support can also be set up to ensure coverage in different time zones.

Foley has recently acquired the globally popular Air2G2 – available in the UK through Campey Turf Care Systems – which is new ground for Foley as a company. As Foley has always been focused on the health of the turf, primarily the cut of the grass, they are looking to expand to a more complete offering of 'Above and Below' so acquiring Air2G2 fits into the ethos to be more about the turf. " **END**



MARC TOPIOL

CEO, LA RESERVA CLUB



While Europe's travel and tourism sector remains affected by the Covid-19 pandemic, a new kind of traveller has emerged – one that is more discerning and, often, seeking the very best that there is to experience – thanks largely to the paradigm shift in life that 2020 has caused.

With the opening of SO/SOTOGRADE – the latest new opening under Accor Hotels' luxury 'SO' brand – on the horizon in late spring, the resort formerly known as Almenara will bring a quality of accommodation and experience that such discerning travellers will be yearning for.

It will be, perhaps, the final piece of the jigsaw for Sotogrande – one that has so far been lacking in what is a unique enclave of European exclusivity.

Expected to officially debut in July, the luxury hotel will present an exhilarating combination of social spaces, exclusive experiences and distinctive "Just Say SO" services that celebrate Mediterranean culture.

The SO/SOTOGRADE resort will sit at the heart of Sotogrande, at an idyllic and accessible location, just 20 minutes from Gibraltar and 50 minutes from Malaga airports, respectively. Such ease of travel links, combined with a plethora of amenities, will result in an offering for golf travellers that will be hard to beat.

At just a stone's throw from no fewer than four world-class golf courses; Real Club Valderrama, La Reserva Club, Real Club de Golf Sotogrande and The San Roque Club, the new five-star resort will reflect the SO brand's rebellious luxury in this idyllic setting within the Costa del Sol, blending exclusivity

with the brand's commitment to dynamic gastronomy and upbeat, vibrant well-being.

Upon completion of an extensive renovation and repositioning program of the historical Almenara Hotel, SO/SOTOGRADE is expected to open its doors in July.

Sotogrande was established as an exclusive enclave inside a private world in the 1960s. Since its inception, it has been a home for the elite who seek refuge from the hustle and bustle of a fast-paced city life and crave space, sunshine, and access to the facets of life that really matter most.

At the destination's epicentre and just a five-minute shuttle ride from SO/SOTOGRADE is La Reserva Club; a one-of-a-kind sports and leisure club with world-class facilities and amenities, including a highly rated championship golf course and Spain's only man-made beach club, all set atop the hills of Andalusia with views down to the Mediterranean.

Opened in 2003, the Cabell B. Robinson-designed championship course has quickly built its reputation as one of the premium golf and leisure resorts in Europe.

Carved into the Andalusian hillside with natural vistas in every direction, La Reserva Club is a wordclass.golf destination, and has become a firm favourite with golfers worldwide and considered a must-play for any golfer visiting the area.

Highlighted by generous, sweeping fairways and large, undulating greens, La Reserva Club is always in exceptional condition and will test every aspect of even the most accomplished golfer's game, with the opening hole as picturesque as any in Europe.





“WE’RE EXPLORING CERTAIN RELATIONSHIPS WITH OWNERS AND MANAGERS OF PRIVATE GOLF CLUBS SO THAT THEIR MEMBERS, WHO PERHAPS CANNOT ENJOY THEIR FAVOURITE SPORT IN WINTER FROM THEIR PRIMARY RESIDENCE, CAN COME SOUTH TO SOTOGRANDE”

The addition of SO/SOTOGRADE will add the perfect starting point for visitors to explore Sotogrande as well and the wider aspects of Andalusia. Guests will have the opportunity to enjoy Tarifa and its “boho” spirit, stroll through the wine region of Jerez, or enjoy authentic and picturesque villages like Ronda and its rich Moorish history.

“We are thrilled that Accor has placed its trust in Sotogrande as a destination. The opening of The SO/SOTOGRADE Resort & Spa will mark an exciting new phase in our consistent efforts to present all the attributes expected of a high-end destination like ours,” said Marc Topiol, chairman of Sotogrande SA.

“The concept of Sotogrande is to create experiences for our residents and guests where those living or visiting here can enjoy the very fundamentals of life. That being, the things that really matter to them; family, security, safety, privacy, and access to the desirable amenities – such as golf – that form their recreational habits,” added Topiol.

“The addition of this new resort will only further our offering and enable more like-minded families and individuals to get a taste of what Sotogrande has to offer, 365 days a year.

“SO/SOTOGRADE will bring a fascinating blend of social spaces, sophisticated experiences and distinctive services that celebrate our Mediterranean culture.”

Overlooking the whole of Sotogrande, the hotel will feature 151 stylish rooms with 24 suites, setting new standards for true luxury hospitality within the destination.

It will also feature extensive landscaped gardens with breathtaking views of the sea, Gibraltar and the Andalusian countryside, and will enjoy an enviable location for sports travel enthusiasts in close proximity to some of the world’s most exceptional golf courses as well as polo fields, watersports, horse-back riding trails and an extensive array of other sports and wellness amenities.

This authentic oasis will capture the essence of Sotogrande’s originality.

Sotogrande SA, the developer of its namesake destination, led by Topiol, is committed to building on Sotogrande’s legacy and finding harmony between residents at their new gated communities and sophisticated travellers looking for a sample – or perhaps more – of Sotogrande life.

With the new hotel on the horizon, one avenue of interest for Topiol is reciprocal arrangements between La Reserva Club and like-minded members’ golf clubs across Europe and beyond:

“With the accessibility that this new resort creates, we’re exploring certain relationships with owners and managers of private golf clubs so that their members, who perhaps cannot enjoy their favourite sport in winter from their primary residence, can come south to Sotogrande, stay at the SO resorts and enjoy some unbelievable golf courses,” he said.

When not on the golf course, visiting golfers and their families and associates will enjoy SO/ SOTOGRADE’s extensive landscaped gardens with breathtaking views of the sea, Gibraltar and the Andalusian countryside.

Moreover, an expanded equine infrastructure, including three polo clubs, is a celebration of the Andalusian equestrian culture, while the Mediterranean shore provides the perfect setting for watersports.

Close by is the region’s 1,300m² nature reserve which also provides visitors with the perfect space to either lose yourself in the most tranquil of environments or invite friends along for adventures.

Whether there to play golf, relax or work, guests will be spoiled for choice with five swimming pools, nine dining spaces, and more than 2,000 square metres of spa and fitness facilities.

And with nearly 1,000 square meters of conference and meeting space – including an outdoor auditorium – SO/SOTOGRADE is destined to become one of the most exclusive holiday and leisure destinations in southern Europe. **END**





Words Christopher Stratford
Photography Ely City Golf Club

ANTHONY ROBERTS

CLUB MANAGER, ELY CITY GOLF CLUB



Seldom can the mantra that you must speculate to accumulate have been less persuasive than in this past year during the global pandemic.

Golf clubs were not immune from the shivers of financial apprehension that convulsed industries throughout the world in March 2020 and so it came as no surprise to Anthony Roberts when his offer to become club manager at Ely that month was put on hold.

Scroll forward just over a year and Roberts is not only in situ at the Cambridgeshire track, but Ely are reaping the benefits of the 52-year-old being able to convince them to invest £300,000 in their future.

The clubhouse has undergone a £180,000 refurbishment and an additional £120,000 was spent on course machinery, two bold moves that, along with strong marketing through local media, Facebook and other social platforms, have led to them being in an unprecedented situation of having a waiting list for membership – a membership that grew by 162 in the months after Roberts finally took up the post in June of last year.

The Government had allowed golf courses to re-open by the time Wirral-born Roberts arrived in Cambridgeshire and he accessed quickly the need to improve things both inside the clubhouse and out on the course.

"There was no restaurant in the clubhouse, and there clearly had been no investment in the clubhouse for 20-odd years," he says. "The course wasn't particularly up to scratch, the manpower on the course wasn't right, and so there was lots to do.

"But everybody was being encouraged to socially distance and get as much exercise as you can and the best sport for that is golf, isn't it?"

The strong push to increase membership bore fruit, generating a considerable sum that Roberts wasted no time in earmarking for expenditure on the clubhouse and course machinery.

He recalls: "That £120,000 investment [on the machinery] was a brave and bold move, and just recently, because we were closed for three months during the most recent COVID situation, I was able to say to the club, 'let's use this time wisely, we've got some money in the bank and let's spend that wisely, let's refurbish the clubhouse'.

"We have successfully done that during the last lockdown. Convincing people to spend £180,000 when we don't know what's going to happen was difficult, but fortunately I sold it to [the board] well. Two of the directors were immediately on board and there are only six of us anyway and it has turned out well.

"All the members who joined last year renewed and now we have got a waiting list, which is just unprecedented. We have been able to push the joining fee a little bit higher, and we have got a brand-new clubhouse and new course machinery. It's a great story really. In less than ten months we have used the opportunity to invest, with the help of local grants and taking advantage of Barclays' Bounceback Loan."

Ely's trust in their new club manager was evident from the moment they appointed him given his insistence during his interview



"I WOULD ENCOURAGE EVERY SECRETARY AND EVERY MANAGER TO BE SEEN PLAYING AS MUCH AS POSSIBLE"

that he would expect to be able to do his job without interference.

"One of the things I did say to them before I started was that I was happy to take the job, but they must let me manage. I am not going to be micromanaged because it just doesn't work. I asked for autonomy to do what is right and to improve the golf club so, thankfully, I have done that and it has all turned out well, touch wood."

Roberts' career in golf began at 16 when he decided to turn professional, but it was not as a Tour player that he saw his future. "I never hit it far enough," he explains. "I couldn't consistently birdie the par-5s or drive the short par-4s, which all of my peers could. Also, I never did practise that well."

However, he did take his first steps as an assistant club professional at a world-renowned tournament venue, Royal Liverpool. Also known as Hoylake, it has held both the men's and women's Open championships as well as the Walker Cup and the Amateur Championship. "It was an incredible place to start, but it's only looking back that you realise that's a decent start, that is," he laughs.

He would move on to Wallasey before joining Belton Woods Hotel, a then new and De Vere-owned golf resort near Grantham in Lincolnshire where, after a year or so, he was appointed head professional at the age of 22.

"I don't know for a fact that I would've been the youngest head professional in the country at the time, but there can't have been too many 22-year-olds that were head professionals," he says, "albeit it wasn't my shop, I was just managing it on behalf of De Vere hotels."

"Obviously working for a hotel chain as successful as De Vere, who had The Belfry at that time [where he worked during Ryder Cup week in 1993], you got more into the managerial side of things than a normal club professional would do."

"I was administrating competitions, looking after the membership, creating databases, learning about the importance of marketing, membership retention and all that side of it."

"Because it was a very big enterprise we were very well trained and I enjoyed that

side of things, which is why I probably ended up being a club manager, secretary, or whatever you want to call them."

He left Belton Woods in 1999 for his last role as a head professional, at Ellesmere Port Golf Centre, before eventually heading into the world of club management.

"I didn't enjoy teaching, I didn't enjoy working in the pro shop," he recalls. "I did enjoy selling memberships, marketing, organising competitions, that type of thing really. I also got interested in agronomy, I've always had very good friends who are head greenkeepers."

Chilton Forest near Wendover in Aylesbury was his first secretarial role at a golf club. "It was an 18-hole, nice little golf course, and I took over at a time when golf clubs were struggling for memberships," he says. "I used my marketing and data capture skills that I had learned from De Vere, that type of thing, and increased the membership at Chilton Forest, increased society visits. I did a good job."

So much so that he was head-hunted for the same position at Bath, and during his time there helped the club host the golf discipline for the Special Olympics in 2013.

"The Special Olympics is for the mentally disabled, and I was quite prominent in making that happen at Bath," says Roberts. "It was rewarding to be involved in that event, particularly the ceremony at the end where they got the medals. It was just like in the Olympics, so that was very humbling to be involved in."

Ely members will have become used to seeing a lot of self-confessed workaholic Roberts, including out on the course. Many club secretaries shy away from being seen playing their own course for fear they will be seen as shirking. Not Roberts.

"I disagree with the old-school mentality," he insists. "I would encourage every secretary and every manager to be seen playing as much as possible," stressed Roberts.

"I don't know how you can handle the greens staff if you're not playing the course regularly or give them feedback without playing the golf course. That's just me, that's my style." **END**

ALASDAIR DANSON-WEBSTER

GENERAL MANAGER, SHERBORNE GOLF CLUB



Picture the scene: it's late April; early evening in West Dorset. The sun is still shining brightly on our outside table as we enjoy a cup of coffee and a chat while looking at the Quantock Hills in the distance.

It's a glorious setting; a USP, in fact – but more of that later. The only pointer to things not being quite normal at Sherborne Golf Club is that general manager Alasdair Danson-Webster and I are drinking from paper cups – rather than the club china – in front of a temporary marquee located on what was, previously, part of the 10th tee. We couldn't retire to the clubhouse even if we wished to, as it's not yet allowed to open.

Such tableaux are, one assumes, replicated across the continent as golf clubs emerge from COVID lockdowns. But not everywhere can boast these vistas, or – in the UK at least – today's temperature, the incongruity of which is confirmed by a significant drop during the following days and weeks. As the young people might say: we lucked out!

Regardless of temperature, the backdrop to the golf course remains the same: glorious Somerset countryside as far as the eye can see. So, for once, it negates the need for the normal query as to why somebody would return to the UK from the sunshine of the Middle East. But, ever vigilant, your correspondent goes there anyway.

For the amiable Danson-Webster, 35, these surroundings played a part, but not as much as the quest for the right work-life balance.

He explained: "My approach to work has certainly changed. I think it does when you

have a young family. I have a three-year-old, and a soon to be five-year-old. When you're younger, you look at your career pie chart and it's split into two: it's about job title and salary, whereas, now for me, it's split into six. When you have a young family your priorities change greatly.

"It's still job title and salary, but there's also mental and physical wellbeing, time away, family, and enjoyment of what you do. For me, those are the key components, now. I felt the only way I could do that was to enter the private golf club world and continue to do what I enjoy."

That may explain why he decided to return to the UK after ten years in the Middle East, but his subsequent route was not straightforward. He left his role as director of golf at the prestigious Jumeirah Golf Estates, in Dubai, in 2018, to move to Celtic Manor Resort, in Wales, where he took up the position of head of golf and retail.

However, while the job itself was fulfilling, he felt that, like U2, he still hadn't found what he was looking for, and that he owed more to his young family. So, in early 2020, he walked away from the position. It was a brave step to take – and he could be forgiven for deciding it was, instead, foolhardy, as almost immediately, coronavirus landed on these shores and threw the golf industry (and much more besides) into turmoil.

He said: "Celtic Manor was a wonderful journey that was ended, sadly, after 12 months. I saw it becoming more and more like what I'd left in the Middle East, and I had come back to the UK craving for that work-life balance.





"I SAW IT BECOMING MORE AND MORE LIKE WHAT I'D LEFT IN THE MIDDLE EAST, AND I HAD COME BACK TO THE UK CRAVING FOR THAT WORK-LIFE BALANCE"

"I'd been proprietary based all my career, and, in that commercial world, it's very driven. It takes its pound of flesh. Yes, it's very rewarding, but as soon as the golf season stops, you're pulled to all the other elements of the resort.

"The higher you climb in that organisation chain, the more corporate it becomes, and the more you move away from the shop floor and that day-to-day interaction with people.

"When I returned from the Middle East I wanted to get back on the ground, doing the things that brought me into this trade: building relationships with people, getting back to those roots, and I had always had a burning desire to move into the private golf club world."

Searching for the 'right' role during a national lockdown was not easy, so, in the meantime, Danson-Webster and his wife, Karen, renovated a property they had bought as a rental project. It was a liberating and worthwhile experience, but what the University of Central Lancashire alumnus really longed for was that opportunity to work at a members' golf club.

He added: "I felt I could bring some different skills or maybe a different approach to help a club make itself more sustainable – but it had to be a club that had potential and one that wanted to move with the times and embrace the changes in the golf industry.

"Sherborne presented itself as that to me, plus I bought into the people here. I had two other opportunities at the same time while I was interviewing here, but the process was a lot more professional, and it just felt right," he added.

"The location is beautiful; we're from the Fylde coast and I felt there were a lot of similarities in the countryside and surrounding areas, and, from what I understand, Dorset does get an awful lot of sunshine.

"Sherborne Golf Club is in a wonderful place. The vistas are quite special, a USP, one of our big selling points. Plus, from the course's perspective it's very good for drainage.

"We have a minor challenge with some shallow bedrock on the far side of the road on holes 1 to 11 which, on two greens in particular, doesn't help, but, overall, our course drains a lot better than others in the area, which does mean, in the winter months, we are open when others are closed."

As the industry emerges, butterfly like from the enforced chrysalis of COVID, it will face new challenges, not the least of which in the UK – whisper it quietly – are the effects of Brexit.

"We don't know from an economy perspective where 2022 will take us, and what changes there will be. Could there be a financial recession? It's an unknown, isn't it?" pondered Danson-Webster.

"The key factor is for clubs to engage with the new members they gained during the pandemic, as well as those who have returned and to ensure we can retain them and maintain lower attrition rates, because the life-blood of a private club is your membership.

"We also need to make the memberships appeal to a younger generation, so we're launching an in-house flex membership. It's something the club has flirted with and trailed before, but, in May, we introduced our own Sherborne FLEX. With sole control of that, it just gives you a little bit more flexibility in how it's managed.

"There will also be challenges maintaining participation and those new members. The lifeblood of a private golf club is the annual memberships, so the key factor is to engage with the new members gained during the pandemic, as well as retaining the existing members. These, combined, will help to maintain lower attrition rates.

"People will forget what you said, forget the words you use, but they'll always remember how you made them feel, and that's vital. If people have a sense of belonging and if they feel it's good value, they will keep coming back."

I, for one, will return, even if only for the views. And the company of Danson-Webster was enjoyable too. I have a feeling he might just be the perfect fit here. **END**





Words Christopher Stratford
Photography BRS Golf

BRIAN SMITH

GENERAL MANAGER, BRS GOLF



Brian Smith accepts that he was privileged to have been able to travel through the internet landscape long before most of us even knew of its existence.

But it was his prescience in being able to see this virtual scenery's opportunities that made him a pioneer rather than just a passenger.

Northern Irishman Smith, along with his brother Rory, would go on to create the UK's foremost internet tee time management and online booking application, BRS Systems, because he had not journeyed far before: "it became apparent to me that the internet was going to become absolutely huge."

He would not have been alone in coming to this conclusion, but it was his personal conviction that his future needed to be aligned with that of the worldwide web that set him apart.

"I decided around about the age of 26 that I would start a business and I wanted it to be an internet business, just because I saw the potential," explains Smith, now 50 who, through his father, eminent mathematician Prof Francis J Smith, had gained both a love of computer science and access to "the biggest computer in Europe."

"I grew up in a family of five children, three brothers and one sister, and our dad ran the data centre at Queen's University, Belfast in the '60s and '70s. He was doing a lot of research into the stars and the formation of the world and even things like GPS, the early days of satellites and all that orbiting the Earth.

"So I grew up with computers in the house.

"We didn't do a huge amount of programming when we were in our young days, but they were always there. We were very, very fortunate and our dad encouraged us to go into computer science and all four of us brothers ended up doing that basically."

After getting a BSc first-class honours degree in computer science, physics and electronics at Queen's, Smith was employed by BT as a software engineer while also working towards a PhD in digital signal processing. This was in the mid '90s and was the period when, as part of his PhD research, he saw the internet for the first time.

"They were very basic browsers and very basic search tools," he recalls although this is no way deterred him nor diminished his sense of awe, and his fascination led to him teaching himself how to program on the internet.

Smith moved on to work for Nortel Networks, but when the communications company began to hit problems he volunteered for redundancy and his payout of around £12,000 plus £10,000 in savings gave him a modest financial platform that was underpinned by his belief that an internet business was his destiny. This is the stage where he showed both the nerve and the nous of a successful entrepreneur.

"What happened was that the Internet crashed in 2000 and I just saw that as the opportunity to get in," he says. "Everyone else was running away from the internet and saying, 'this is a disaster', but anyone who was invested in and knew about the internet knew this was the opportunity you'd been waiting for."



"I TRIED TO COMBINE THE INTERNET – WHICH I HAD ABSOLUTELY FALLEN IN LOVE WITH – WITH GOLF, WHICH I HAD PLAYED SINCE I WAS EIGHT YEARS OLD"

So he knew where he wanted his business – in cyber space – but in what field? The answer came aided by a friend's father, who ran a painting business, who over a beer advised he should start a business in something about which Smith was passionate.

"That was why, when I started the business, I tried to combine the internet – which I had absolutely fallen in love with – with golf, which I had played since I was eight years old. I've grown up with a golf club in my hand."

He elected to offer to build or improve on golf clubs' websites and his initial foray earned him free membership at his home club, Ardglass, but with brother Rory on board they looked to attract more paying clients.

One of the first was nearby Belvoir Park, whose manager, while interested in their proposal, said what her club really needed was a new tee-time booking system.

"Bookings were coming into the office and the pro shop and duplicate bookings were happening," he says. "They didn't have a connected central system, it was all done on paper."

So it was that the Smith brothers were alerted to the potential to provide golf clubs with a web-based system that allowed both members and visitors to book tee times online. "We literally started writing the system that day," he continues.

"That was about halfway through 2003 and we installed the system in Belvoir in January 2004, so within six months we had a system developed and installed. We were the first in the UK to market this concept of allowing people to book."

Working from Rory's home, they would expand the business from an initial handful of clients to 800 by the time they sold it to GolfNow in 2013 for a sum that Smith says "would have allowed us both to retire" had they wanted to.

Along the way two significant influences were fellow Ardglass member Brian McGee, who became their sales director and taught Brian the art of selling, and Wilma Erskine, Royal Portrush's then secretary manager when the club became BRS's 10th customer.

Erskine, a driving force behind Royal Portrush being awarded the 2019 staging of the Open Championship, was so enthusiastic about the system that she would refer people to BRS.

GolfNow, through which over six million tee times were booked in the first month after lockdown ended in March, retained both brothers as part of the buyout – although Rory is now semi-retired – and also built their UK offices in Belfast at the pair's insistence. The workforce has grown from 15 people to 70 and Smith predicts it will become "hundreds."

Smith, who is GolfNow International's general manager, adds: "One of the things about NBC Universal GolfNow is the way we ran BRS with integrity and honesty and really looked after the customer, and this really lined up well with NBC Universal GolfNow and the way they treat their team, and the way they treat their staff."

"One of the things I'm most proud about that I've managed to do in the last ten years is create a really good culture within the business."

"I want people to look forward to coming into work at GolfNow and BRS and I want them to enjoy their day in work and leave with a smile on their face having enjoyed all the interactions they've had in the business that day. That is what I've tried to achieve for the team, and largely we have created this really, really great environment for people to work in."

"To have this brilliant big business investment in our product becoming the number one product in the world, it was kind of like putting a rocket on our back. It is now the biggest one of its type in terms of internet tee-time management products," adds Smith.

"It is installed in 1,000 clubs in the US and growing. We are now going to expand into Australia and other countries."

"This business will continue to grow in Belfast over the coming years as we continue to roll out different products and services. It has been great fun, it has been a great experience. I obviously wouldn't be here if I didn't enjoy it still." **END**



LES BORDES, FRANCE

LESBORDES.COM

Words Peter Simm
Photography Ludovic Letot

When it comes to style and sophistication, the French have a certain 'je ne sais quoi' that puts them in a class of their own. Elegance, finesse, grace, call it what you like but whatever it is, there's no doubt they have it in spades.

From its stunning array of lavish palaces and chateaus and some of the finest art collections on the planet to legendary French fashion houses and Paris, the most romantic city in the world, there's so much to recommend for a visit to France.

It's an often overlooked fact that, when it comes to golf, France also has a product to match the leading golfing nations in the world, and its golf offering is set to get even better this summer with the opening of the New Course at Les Bordes.

Nestled within a magical 1,400-acre estate in the heart of France's famed Loire Valley, Les Bordes is regarded among the world's most prestigious golf clubs. Just a 90-minute drive south of Paris in the enchanting Sologne Forest, the exclusive private members' club is one of the game's dream destinations, with its acclaimed Old Course the envy of clubs worldwide and one of the top-rated venues in Europe.

With acclaimed architect Robert von Hagge having made such an impression when he created the Old Course, Les Bordes needed a golf designer with the X Factor for their latest addition so they turned to American Gil Hanse, designer of the 2016

Rio Olympic Course and world top-100 courses, Castle Stuart and Ohoopee Match Club, to fulfil their requirements.

The first golf course to be designed by Hanse in continental Europe, the New Course is set to be officially unveiled at the start of next month.

Heathland in style, the par-72 layout is in direct contrast to the Old Course and, when combined with the venue's 10-hole short course – the Wild Piglet, also created by Hanse and opened last year – Les Bordes Golf Club's members will receive one of the greatest golfing experiences in the world.

"With the two golf courses and the amenities that are already in place and the ones that are coming, I can't see how Les Bordes won't be considered one of the finest golfing destinations in Europe or in the world," said Hanse.

"You have all the cultural attractions around you, you've got the food and the wine, the quality of the amenities. It will be an idyllic place to spend time even if you weren't playing golf, and then to have these two golf courses so different and varied in their challenges and their presentation really runs the full gamut. I don't know where else in the world you could find that sort of variety.

"We've never built anything in continental Europe and we wanted to make sure that our first project there was going to be something special, and Les Bordes gave us that opportunity."





"I CAN'T SEE HOW LES BORDES WON'T BE CONSIDERED ONE OF THE FINEST GOLFING DESTINATIONS IN EUROPE OR IN THE WORLD"

Hanse was first approached about designing the New Course after he was introduced to Les Bordes' owner by mutual friends. After visiting the estate and reviewing the landscape, he knew it was a project that he simply couldn't turn down.

Taking inspiration from legendary golf architect Tom Simpson, Hanse and his team set about creating Les Bordes' latest masterpiece, with the American working from dawn to dusk when he was on site.

With maximum care and attention taken to clear the location and preserve the natural environment, the New Course fits harmoniously into its surroundings, with the fairways blending seamlessly into the natural vegetation and trees.

Featuring large bunkers, subtle elevation changes and incredible green complexes, the layout measures 7,211 yards from the back tees but, in contrast to the Old Course, is expected to play shorter than its overall length due to the firm and fast playing conditions.

Hanse said: "There are elements of a number of golf courses (in the New Course) including a lot of the great heathland courses around London and several heathland courses around Paris. I think that I am always influenced by Pine Valley, which is very near to my home, and I think that some of the scale of National Golf Links is apparent out there. If you roll all of those into one, I think that's a pretty good recipe.

"(Players) can expect fun golf in a natural, perfect setting. We were given the opportunity from the ownership to build some interesting golf holes; stylistically, it was fun for all of us to focus on Tom Simpson and some of his beautiful creations and some of his inspired designs, not that we copied him stylistically or design-wise but we were certainly influenced by him and that was a treat for us."

The New Course is not the only exciting golf development to have taken place at Les Bordes in recent years.

In addition to Hanse and his team working alongside the golf club's greenkeepers to implement a series of improvements to the Old Course to further elevate the playing experience for members and their guests – in-

cluding introducing a new maintenance and watering program to make the fairways and greens firmer and faster and reseeding the tees and fairways to improve their condition all-year round – the architect also completed work on an accompanying 10-hole short course, the Wild Piglet.

One of a number of par-three layouts to have recently been designed by high-profile architects, the course opened to rave reviews last summer, with US authority Golf.com immediately rating the layout in its top-25 par-three courses in the world.

Off the course, leading architects Michaelis Boyd have completed a redesign of the clubhouse and renovation of 24 member cottages, with a new member gym, sports bar, mini-spa and private lounge and games room, including golf simulator, also opening this spring.

It's little wonder, then, that the global allure of Les Bordes Golf Club is greater than ever, with members of Pine Valley, Merion, Riviera, Sunningdale, Royal St. George's, Friar's Head, Royal Melbourne and Morfontaine among the approximately 150 members who have joined since the club – which is accessible only to members and their guests – was formed in August 2019.

Les Bordes Golf Club remains a private club, governed separately from the rest of the estate and, although membership is not tied to property ownership, many members have reserved homes.

The opening of the New Course headlines three years of investment at Les Bordes, developing a community where all family members have endless possibilities for fun and adventure. Completed on-site amenities include natural swimming lakes and pools, beaches, watersports, go-karting, fishing, equestrian, petting farm and biking and walking trails.

And further investment is on the way, with plans including an announced partnership with Six Senses for the transformation of the 19th century 'Chateau Bel Air' into a luxury hotel and spa, a village square with shops and restaurants and a variety of residential villas in various styles, as well as an equestrian centre, an organic farm, an art gallery and outdoor amphitheatre. **END**

GLAMPING; THE NEW FRONTIER

FOR GOLF CLUB ACCOMMODATION



The leisure industry has had it incredibly tough since the beginning of 2020, no less so than in the United Kingdom with relevance to organisations that rely on gatherings of people to bring in revenue. Naturally, as we begin to transition back to normal life, club owners and management are seeking innovative ways to inject new lifeblood into an industry that so readily needs it.

The golf industry is at a stage of maturity with memberships at peak levels throughout Europe. The challenge is to create an additional revenue stream that is on-brand, eco-friendly and sustainable with a strive to continue the current growth trajectory whilst generating income through the introduction of new services.

Without a clearly defined timeline as to when courses will be able to resume full operations, it is of paramount importance that clubs are astute with their investment decisions. Whilst few of the larger and more adequately recession-proof organisations have used the downtime to deliver refurbishment plans, most mid-tier clubs cannot justify such expenditure during a period of low income.

Edinburgh-based design services consultancy: Glampitect believe they have the solution, building on experience of assisting many hospitality businesses and landowners successfully plan and launch glamping sites.

The glamping industry is going through a period of exponential growth, which comes as little surprise as holidaymakers look towards staycations due to restrictions on international travel. Expansion opportunities suitable for organisations that are already

involved in leisure, hospitality or accommodation industries are often overlooked with regards to glamping. A market segment that – due to revenue losses in the current climate – is booming.

Launching a glamping site as part of an existing business model is one of the lowest cost investments from conception to launch with the quickest return-on-investment compared to any other accommodation type.

The golf industry is undergoing a period of transformation. Many club owners and managers have identified that by focusing solely on golf players and less on providing a wider appeal with amenities relevant to families, partners and friends; they are missing a trick, and indeed missing a buck.

The endeavour to innovate is nothing new with many clubs already offering an event hire function as an additional service for weddings and other formal gatherings as well as accommodation options such as accompanying hotels or bed-and-breakfasts.

Building on successes of these ventures, many clubs are looking to capitalise on the gap in the market for a more family-friendly environment targeted at a wider audience.

The necessary shift allows the industry to adapt to the needs of a new breed of golfer as well as create a more inclusive culture for clubs attractive to the general public.

Glamping is already a popular accommodation option that offers customers the luxuries of a boutique hotel with dwellings that blend respectfully into the environment within areas of scenic beauty. The attraction for club owners is the ability to satisfy the





"A STANDARD SITE OF FIVE PODS WILL INCUR A REVENUE OF £99,000 PER ANNUM AT A HIGHLY CONSERVATIVE 50 PER CENT OCCUPANCY"

needs of customers with a business model that is highly lucrative due to low development costs, quick construction times, marginal land requirements and an unparalleled timescale to achieve full return of under two years from initial investment.

During an initial consultation Glampitect walks clients' through the process to provide glamping accommodation, work to understand their vision and advise accordingly on how best to conceptualise the launch of glamping at your golf course.

The first step is to consider the feasibility of the project. Glampitect have worked with hundreds of councils throughout the UK in every type of location. Using this expertise, the team conduct a holistic feasibility study for your glamping site taking into consideration any obstacles clients may face during the planning or construction stages.

The feasibility study provides accurate return-on-investment and profitability calculations considering issues such as competition, market share & volatility. The comprehensive document outlines a rigid timescale as to when the initial investment will be recouped and at what stage this line of business will enter profitability.

By completing a feasibility study, an organisation can quickly gain a thorough understanding at a minimal cost to the likelihood of success for incorporating a glamping component to the business.

Once a feasibility study has been completed and the decision made to proceed with developing the glamping site, Glampitect can fully manage the process for gaining planning permission from the local council to begin construction. Planning permission applications are complex and extremely time consuming.

By using Glampitect's services (rather than a generic planning consultant or similar) clients are allowed the best possible chance of having a site approved with little input required.

With experience of successfully launching hundreds of glamping sites, Glampitect are well-positioned to advise what to expect when considering introducing glamping to your business model. Generally speaking, a standard site of five pods will incur a revenue of £99,000 per annum at a highly conservative 50 per cent occupancy rate across nine months within the year.

Meaning that the majority of sites will see a full return on their initial investment in under two years.

Glampitect streamline the process from conception to launch covering all aspects of setting up your glamping site with due consideration to assuring a realistic revenue stream by assisting with marketing activities involved in securing optimum occupancy rates.

Golf is an industry ahead of the curve in addressing the urgent requirements to mitigate against climate change by implementing new regulations with a focus on environmentally friendly practices and infrastructure.

Industry initiatives such as the R&A Golf Course 2030 launched in 2018 bringing stakeholders together to mitigate against the impacts of a changing climate, and with golf managers focusing on going green towards a more sustainable future, glamping is attractive as one of the most eco-friendly accommodation options.

Developed using sustainable materials such as wood, glamping structures have a very low carbon footprint compared to most types of brick-and-mortar construction.

This is complimented by sites being setup at areas of natural beauty with minimal disruption to the local landscape, scenery and wildlife.

Glampitect work with the best manufacturers within the UK with structures that are crafted using premium, eco-friendly materials and scaled to serve our customers exact requirements. There are pods, huts, small houses and other bespoke types of unit available to suit every budget.

Whether a client has a concrete vision of the aesthetic desired, the team's in-depth industry knowledge ensures clients receive the best quality housing at the lowest possible cost.

A key partner of Glampitect: Enchanted Creations have designed a range of high-end glamping units specifically for golf courses, a bespoke version of their popular Kabina Hut model. Working closely with Glampitect, they are on hand to deliver unique designs suited to clients' individual golf course or club.

Visit glampitect.co.uk for a discussion, and quote 'golf management' for a 10 per cent discount on your feasibility study. **END**

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NEW DESTINATION

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Dumbarnie Links in Scotland has become the latest destination to join worldclass.golf, a portfolio of the world's premier golf courses, destinations and resorts.

Opened in 2020, Dumbarnie Links is blessed with an expansive beach and water frontage, and can claim to be one of the true links courses in world golf – of the 34,000 golf courses currently in play around the world, only 246 of them are authentic links courses.

Dumbarnie Links aspires to produce a world-class, prestigious daily fee golf course on a site of genuine links land that is only minutes away from St Andrews. This rare piece of land has a mile and a half of sea frontage with panoramic views over the Firth of Forth, and at first glance has the appearance of the style of the classic links courses.

However, the dual elevations which are connected by a flowing escarpment have provided the opportunity to create a number of elevated tees where holes play directly towards panoramic views of the expansive Firth of Forth.

A further outstanding feature is that a number of tees and greens are in close proximity to the water – in fact, 14 of the holes have views of the sea.

The design incorporates three potentially driveable par-4s and features several holes that engender 'risk and reward', with the layout designed to inspire, rather than intimidate golfers.

Comfortable locker rooms provide pre and post round solace before heading to the well appointed bar and restaurant where hearty traditional food will satisfy the largest of appetites. **END**



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"NEVER BE WORRIED TO STEP OUTSIDE YOUR COMFORT ZONE AS A
LITTLE RISK CAN OFTEN TAKE A BUSINESS TO ANOTHER LEVEL"



Words

Andrew Darker
Director of Golf
Aphrodite Hills

GUEST BOOK

ANDREW DARKER



Most of us are tired talking about the covid crisis, so let's start thinking about covid opportunity. Our Aphrodite Hills team were presented with exactly that – the perfect opportunity to host two European Tour events, back-to-back in the latter part of 2020.

As we agreed to be the host venue with only nine weeks' notice, an inexperienced team were thrown into the deep end delivering beyond the expectations of the Tour and their players. The events were a complete success, gaining exposure for Cyprus and Aphrodite Hills with an estimated reach of 430m households across the globe; it was a risk, but we took the opportunity, resulting in a three-year deal to host the event annually from 2022.

The exposure has boosted demand, and due to the international awareness, our owners have accelerated plans to develop our facilities starting with the new PGA National Academy facility. We are working closely with the PGA to create a state-of-the-art facility, including a six-hole par-3 course, designed by our course architect, Cabel B. Robinson. The new course development starts this summer with a planned opening in spring 2022, with swing rooms, a third putting green and academy suite to follow.

Even when our minds are engaged with the crisis, make sure you look at opportunities, and never be worried to step outside your comfort zone as a little risk can often take a business to another level. **END**

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