



GOLF MANAGEMENT

SERVING THE GOLF INDUSTRY SINCE 1997
golfmanagement.online

NUMBER 147 | SUMMER 2024

DETAILS And Dom Pedro Golf Vilamoura Wins IAGTO Award



IRRIGATION HAS
ALWAYS BEEN IN
YOUR HANDS.
NOW IT LITERALLY IS.

CIRRUSPRO™



See how you can **Be Fluid** with
the only mobile-first irrigation
system on the market.

RAIN  **BIRD®**

"THERE ARE A NUMBER OF COMPANIES OUT THERE OFFERING CHARGING POINT INSTALLATION SERVICES, BUT THE FEAR IS CLUBS WILL BE LEFT WITH A WHITE ELEPHANT – ALBEIT A GREEN ONE"

FAIR COMMENT

To EV or not EV? That is the question. And it's a question being pondered at golf clubs right across Europe, as the sale of electric vehicles stalls.

A recent report in *The Times* stated: "One in ten electric cars are being sold for a discount of 20 per cent – and carmakers are so desperate that they are about to start offering free chargers worth £1,000 too. Anecdotally, I flew back into Terminal 5 at London Heathrow recently and was told at the meet-and-greet point that chargers have been removed from the car parks as the interest levels were too low.

The Times story went on: "Andy Palmer, chief executive of the charging company PodPoint, said some carmakers would start giving them (chargers) away with new purchases in the next month. He is in talks with brands including BMW, Jaguar Land Rover, Kia, Mazda and Nissan. He predicts similar giveaways will become widespread as the industry struggles to meet its quotas."

Sales of electric cars in the UK, in the first quarter of 2024, accounted for just 15.2 per cent of new sales, well short of the 22 per cent required under the zero emission vehicles mandate, according to figures, quoted in *The Times* piece, from the Society of Motor Manufacturers and Traders.

So, what are golf clubs to do? There are a number of companies out there offering charging point installation services, but the fear is clubs will be left with a white elephant – albeit a green one...



Words

Michael Lenihan
Publisher

READ THE FULL COMMENT ONLINE
golfmanagement.online/comment/147



FEATURING

SUMMER 2024



ANTHONY CAIRA

EDUCATION CITY

"I was one of the first directors of golf in Scotland. Sandy advised that I should be called director of golf as by the time I left Kirriemuir I was running the club. So, I took his advice and changed my job title."

22



PHILIP HENDERSON

AL ZORAH

"Openings are great to do, and it's great to bounce around and get that experience in the early days. But when you start to get a wife and children, that's when you need stability. You're looking for a role that's going to give you a decade."

26



JACK HEDGES

THAI COUNTRY CLUB

"When I returned to the UK, I realised very quickly that I wanted to be overseas, and that I was more interested in the management side than I was the playing side and that was when the seed was kind of planted."

30



JUAN MANUEL FUENTES

ROYAL GOLF CLUB

"Where I come from in Spain is a very special place – it's not just a place, it's like *the* place for golf. A lot of the good positions there are taken for life, so I wanted to explore ways in which I could make myself more valuable to the industry."

34



PAUL DAVIDSON

TROO

"For me, you can email as much as you want, but I think understanding the character and the person behind the phone is key, especially in golf, as what I've learned since I was a young kid is it's a community."

42

"THIS ACCOLADE UNDERSCORES OUR PURSUIT OF EXCELLENCE IN
DELIVERING UNPARALLELED EXPERIENCES TO OUR GUESTS"



COVER STORY

DETAILS.NET

DETAILS

HOSPITALITY • SPORTS • LEISURE

Dom Pedro Golf Vilamoura has secured its first recognition since DETAILS took over its management, winning Golf Resort of the Year in Portugal at the 2024 IAGTO (International Association of Golf Travel Operators) awards.

The win reinforces the committed work the hospitality, sports, and leisure management company has undertaken across the Dom Pedro Golf & Hotels Collection portfolio in Vilamoura since its acquisition by Arrow Global last year.

A total of 660 golf tour operators worldwide voted for their best golf courses, resorts, and destinations which delivered outstanding service to their clients, with the Algarve resort holding off a challenge from several of Portugal's most established golf properties.

DETAILS has set its sights on confirming Dom Pedro Golf Vilamoura as one of Europe's finest leisure resorts, aiming to reposition it among the industry's elite. Significant developments are currently in progress across the wider Dom Pedro portfolio in Vilamoura.

Designed by Frank Pennink, the Old Course, which is the second oldest in Portugal, has already undergone significant change in a bid to attract premium golfers to the tee boxes of this esteemed golf destination.

Providing guests easy access to multiple golf facilities within a 4km radius of each other, the resort also boasts the Victoria,

Laguna, Millenium and Pinhal courses. The Victoria, which hosted the European Tour's Portugal Masters between 2007 and 2022 is currently closed undergoing renovation before re-opening in 2025.

Peter Walton, CEO – International Association of Golf Travel Operators said: 'Dom Pedro Golf Vilamoura has always been a standout resort in a region blessed with more than its fair share of stunning venues. There are ambitious plans afoot, but we recognised that the resort is already in the top drawer when it comes to sophisticated, 360 facilities and hospitality.'

Nuno Sepulveda, Co-Chief Executive Officer at DETAILS – Hospitality, Sports, Leisure, said: "I am immensely proud of our team's dedication and commitment, which has culminated in our recent win of the prestigious IAGTO Golf Resort of the Year 2024 – Portugal award.

"This accolade underscores our pursuit of excellence in delivering unparalleled experiences to our guests. We want to elevate this resort to new heights and solidify our position as a leading destination in the world of golf and hospitality."

In the Algarve, the Dom Pedro portfolio also includes the Dom Pedro Portobelo, Dom Pedro Marina and Dom Pedro Vilamoura hotels, plus courses in Palmares (Lagos), Aroeira (Lisbon) and Vale Pisão (Porto) all of which fall under the management expertise of DETAILS, with more developments planned over the next two years. **END**

BUNKER EDGING REDEFINED

Reduce your operating costs
by up to 28k per year and
enjoy consistent, attractive
bunkers that last.

Visit www.ecobunker.co.uk
to see our range of tried and
tested products including our
newest innovation, AquaEdge.

ECO
BUNKER
build it once

59club

ACHIEVE CUSTOMER
SERVICE EXCELLENCE



Mystery Shopping
Satisfaction Surveys

MyTell App
Virtual Mentor
Succession Digital
Business Metrics
Training & Support

MEASURE - TRAIN - SUPPORT
www.59club.com

obbi

Simplify your Safety, Compliance, and Training

Less compliance paperwork =
more time to focus on members



obbi.golf



"YES, WE ALL STILL HAVE OUR CLUBS AND ALL THE MYRIAD
ACCOUTREMENTS GATHERING DUST IN THE GARAGE, BUT SELDOM,
IT TRANSPIRED, DO THEY EVER GET USED"



IN ASSOCIATION WITH
thebucketpros.com

**THE
BUCKET
PROS**

MY QUEST FOR VILLAGE GOLFERS

It's been a little more than three years since *She Who Must Be Obeyed* and I moved to a beautiful, small village in south Somerset, and we've now made sufficient new friends that we have a regular meet up on a Friday evening in the village pub. This social gathering can comprise anything up to 20 people of, roughly, the same vintage, with various topics of conversation firing about randomly across the two or three tables we attempt to group together.

It was the advent of the ladies' book club recently that, bizarrely, proved the catalyst for a discussion among the book club widowers. One of our ilk suggested heading off to a nearby town for the evening for a few 'sherbets' and a 'Ruby'. It was a suggestion which met with unanimous approval.

During the curry, the subject of golf came up and I hadn't realised that quite a few of the guys used to play – some quite regularly. Personally, apart from a couple of visits to the local driving range with my son, I haven't picked up a club in three years since injury struck me down – that and the fact my game appeared to be, inexplicably, actually getting worse.

But, as it turned out, not one of us played regularly anymore. Yes, we all still have our clubs and all the myriad accoutrements gathering dust in the garage, but seldom, it transpired, do they ever get used for anything more than acting as a buttress against an ancient shelf unit.

Given that golf is widely perceived to be a sport for middle-class retirees that came as something of a surprise even to yours truly, who hasn't bought into that cliché for many years. The reasons were manifold, but, I'm sure, certainly not unusual. Niggling injuries are, of course, a common harbinger of doom for the ageing golfer – and as we're all over 60 it accounted for a few of us. Surprisingly, for retirees, time constraints were also mentioned, with so many pursuits in the diary meaning giving up four or five hours at a time just wasn't possible for some.

And one of my chums said he simply got too tired playing 18 holes.

"I get to about the 15th and I just want to go for a beer and relax," he said, to murmurs of agreement, most loudly from your own correspondent. I realise much of this can be put down to our age – and, maybe, because we'd have to travel some distance for a proper course – but what perturbed me the most was we all seemed to have fallen out of love with actually playing the game.

So, I have made it my ambition – despite being one of only a few still in full-time employment – to rekindle the passion for golf among the group. We'll start with a visit to the local range and then move on to nine-holes somewhere. It may well stay at nine holes, but as long as we enjoy ourselves that's not a problem. **END**



NEWS IN BRIEF

GOLFMANAGEMENT.ONLINE/NEWS



BASINGSTOKE GOLF CLUB UNVEILS PHASED OPENING OF £15 MILLION REDEVELOPMENT

Basingstoke Golf Club has outlined plans for a phased opening period that will begin in June, as the Hampshire venue tees off on its journey to a full reopening following a £15 million redevelopment project. The club, which first opened for play in 1907, relocated to a new site in the village of Dummer in 2021 — acquiring the land that was home to Dummer Golf Club on the outskirts of the town — before development on a new 18-hole championship course began last year.

SEARCH 'BASINGSTOKE GOLF CLUB' ONLINE
at golfsmanagement.online for the full story



PORTMARNOCK RESORT COMPLETES RENOVATION OF JAMESON GOLF LINKS

Portmarnock Reort has completed the multi-million-euro renovation of its rebranded Jameson Golf Links, an exciting two-year project which has seen numerous holes remodelled on the championship golf course. The opening of the reimagined 17th hole — previously a challenging par three but now a thrilling risk-and-reward par four — brings to an end work which has created one of Ireland's most exciting and picturesque links courses.

SEARCH 'PORTMARNOCK RESORT' ONLINE
at golfsmanagement.online for the full story

Elevate the membership experience



**Industry-leading membership management
begins with BRS Golf**

For a feature-rich platform designed to make club management easier, look no further than Memberships from BRS Golf.

From built-in billing to online payments, automation, sales, financing, and much more, grow your memberships and save time doing it with the only membership management solution you'll ever need.



To learn more about our offerings, please contact our sales team

Email: sales@golfnow.co.uk

Email: 00800 7808 8888

**TURF IS
BETTER
WITH
FOLEY**

THE WORLD'S TOP COURSES CHOOSE

FOLEY



+31 (0)627 383013 | www.milati.nl

Superpower Your Sustainability Future Now

Say goodbye to polluting plastic water bottles.
Say hello to an unrivalled hydration alternative to
help you hit your green targets today and
boost your bottom line.

As Official Hydration Supplier to St Andrews
Links at the Home of Golf, Bluewater is
pioneering the future of sustainable on-course
and restaurant water solutions that eliminate
single-use plastic for good.

Join our revolution now. Discover your power to
change the world for the better at Bluewatergroup.com
or contact fran.bune@bluewatergroup.com





POWAKADDY ANNOUNCES SCOTT ANDERSON AS MANAGING DIRECTOR

Powakaddy International Ltd, has announced the appointment of Scott Anderson as the company's new managing director. Anderson, who brings extensive experience in premium consumer brands, joins Powakaddy from Bang & Olufsen, where he was brought in as managing director to lead the UK & Ireland team to transform the business performance. Anderson had previously accrued substantial experience with tech giants Logitech and Sony, building a wealth of knowledge and skills. This included leading sports partnerships and marketing.

SEARCH 'SCOTT ANDERSON' ONLINE

at golfmanagement.online for the full story



FINCA CORTESIN RENEWS LPGA AND LADIES EUROPEAN TOUR AMBASSADORS

Finca Cortesin, the Andalusia resort and host of the 2023 Solheim Cup, has announced the renewal of its ambassadorial agreement with LPGA Tour professional Ana Pelaez Trivino, and Nuria Iturrioz, a four-time winner on the Ladies European Tour. As ambassadors to the prestigious Solheim Cup venue, both golfers will receive exclusive access to the resort's world-class facilities for year-round training, reaffirming Finca Cortesin's dedication to supporting Spain's best female golfing talent.

SEARCH 'FINCA CORTESIN' ONLINE

at golfmanagement.online for the full story



GOLFSTAR ADDS GAUDÍ AND PANORÁMICA GOLF CLUBS TO SPANISH PORTFOLIO

GolfStar has expanded its golf operations in Spain and has signed a multi-year co-operation agreement with Gaudí Golf Club and Panorámica Golf Club whilst launching a new additional membership for its members — GolfStar Play ALL Spain. The completely new unique Play All Year membership is aimed at golfers who want a great variety of golf courses all year round. With Play ALL Spain, golfers have the ability to play freely on all courses in the network, including 19 courses in Sweden; two courses in Finland, and now three courses in Spain as Gaudí Golf Club and Panorámica Golf Club joins GolfStar's own nine-hole facility in Cambrils.

SEARCH 'GOLFSTAR' ONLINE

at golfmanagement.online for the full story



swan golf designs
GOLF COURSE ARCHITECTS

GOLF COURSE DESIGN
AND
RENOVATION

www.swangolfdesigns.com
enquiries@swangolfdesigns.com



ROYAL BLEĐ, SLOVENIA



ClubNet Systems

BEHIND EVERY GREAT CLUB SHOULD BE A GREAT SOFTWARE SYSTEM

All -in-one Member Management
cloud based software



FEATURES

- Member Invoicing & payments
- Tee Sheet
- Event Management
- EPOS
- Pace of Play
- Live Scoring
- Email marketing

CALL US
+353876074274
+447821908597

EMAIL US
Patrick.Reilly@ClubNetapp.com
Jerry.Kilby@ClubNetapp.com

VISIT US
www.clubnetsystems.com




Proud to support the game of golf






*Feel Your **Tempo***



TERRAS DA COMPORTA SETS OPENING DATE FOR SERGIO GARCIA COURSE

Sergio Garcia has revealed that he can't wait to unveil his first major golf-course design project as excitement starts to build towards The Torre Course at Terras da Comporta opening in Portugal next summer. The Dunas Course at Terras da Comporta has earned widespread global praise since opening last year, and the luxury golf development's second 18-hole layout is expected to receive a similar reaction when it is unveiled to the golfing world in June 2025.

SEARCH 'TERRAS DA COMPORTA' ONLINE
at golfmanagement.online for the full story



DOM PEDRO GOLF VILAMOURA NAMED PORTUGAL'S GOLF RESORT OF THE YEAR

Dom Pedro Golf Vilamoura has secured its first recognition since DETAILS took over its management, winning Golf Resort of the Year in Portugal at the 2024 IAGTO (International Association of Golf Travel Operators) awards. The win reinforces the committed work the hospitality, sports, and leisure management company has undertaken across the Dom Pedro Golf & Hotels Collection portfolio in Vilamoura since its acquisition by Arrow Global last year.

SEARCH 'VILAMOURA' ONLINE
at golfmanagement.online for the full story



59CLUB UK ANNOUNCES PARTNERSHIP WITH TAGMARSHAL

Tagmarshal, the market leader in golf course optimisation technology, has announced a partnership with 59club UK. This collaboration presents an exciting opportunity for Tagmarshal to engage with and elevate the experiences of golf professionals across the region. Tagmarshal's state-of-the-art technology provides golf courses with full, real-time operational oversight and reporting.

SEARCH 'TAGMARSHAL' ONLINE
at golfmanagement.online for the full story



How Many Strokes

Digital Info & Handicap Board

Modernise and Enhance
the player experience

Clubs in 24 countries on five continents

Hillside	Whistling Staits	Royal Dublin
Costa Navarino	Royal Auckland	Lübker Resort
Druids Glen	Dunas Course	Amata Spring
Barsebäck	Heritage Resort	San Roque
Hallamshire	La Hacienda Links	Tron

Contact us to hear more

www.howmanystrokes.com • info@howmanystrokes.com

TURF CARE MACHINERY THAT'S HELPING CREATE THE WORLD'S FINEST SPORTS SURFACES



Campey supply market leading, innovative
turf care machinery worldwide.

Call +44 (0)1260 224568,
or visit www.campeyturfcare.com

Campey
TURF CARE SYSTEMS
QUALITY GROUND CARE EQUIPMENT



Is your golf club underinsured?

Are you aware of the financial impact that
underinsuring your property can have on
your business?

We can help you to find out the reinstatement
value of your property and provide you with
peace of mind.

Please contact chris.rhodes@marsh.com

This is a marketing communication.

Marsh Sport is a trading name of Marsh Ltd. Marsh Ltd is authorised and regulated by the Financial Conduct Authority for General Insurance Distribution and Credit Broking (Firm Reference No. 307511). Copyright © 2024 Marsh Ltd. Registered in England and Wales Number: 1507274, Registered office: 1 Tower Place West, Tower Place, London EC3R 5BU. All rights reserved.. Copyright 2024.



THE BUCKINGHAMSHIRE REOPENS HISTORIC 17TH CENTURY HOUSE

The Buckinghamshire welcomed VIP guests and members to the grand reopening of its 17th century house last Friday, following an investment of more than £10 million. The transformation of the historic country estate just 15 miles from Notting Hill and ten miles from Heathrow Airport is part of a major investment to create a prestigious private members' club on London's doorstep — and signals plans by the Arora family to develop a portfolio of world class golf venues.

SEARCH 'THE BUCKINGHAMSHIRE' ONLINE
at golfmanagement.online for the full story



RED SEA GLOBAL REVEALS DESIGNS FOR SHURA LINKS GOLF COURSE

Red Sea Global (RSG), the multi-project developer behind regenerative tourism destinations The Red Sea and AMAALA, has officially revealed the name and designs of its golf course and clubhouse on Shura Island at The Red Sea set to complete and open in full in 2025. Shura Links promises a one-of-a-kind golf experience, offering Saudi Arabia's first 18-hole island golf course with holes on the water, marina views and spectacular fairways framed by the Red Sea.

SEARCH 'SHURA LINKS' ONLINE
at golfmanagement.online for the full story



GOLF CLUB ST LEON-ROT FIND PERFECT PARTNER IN 59CLUB

Within days of opening a dedicated 59club office in Germany, the iconic Golf Club St Leon-Rot located on the Southwest of the Country, has become the first German club to partner with the leading customer service specialists — signaling that demand across the DACH region for 59club's global insights, management tools and training services will be high. Golf Club St. Leon-Rot was famously founded on one man's vision of wanting to create a unique golfer's paradise of world-class golf courses, clubhouses and practice facilities.

SEARCH 'GOLF CLUB ST LEON-ROT' ONLINE
at golfmanagement.online for the full story



A Revolution in Golf Bag Storage

The Carousel Golf Bag Storage System is easy to install, safe to use, and allows your club to increase, and often treble your golf bag storage capacity. Installations include...

Costa Navarino
R&A St Andrews
Penha Longa
The K Club
Portmarnock
Aphrodite Hills
The International
Royal Óbidos
Royal Birkdale
Roehampton Club
Royal Malta
Mickleson National
Royal Antwerp
Curacao
Club de Golf Alcanada



www.carouselgolfing.com

+44 (0)1242 702967
info@carouselgolfing.com



"So reliable, powerful and easy to use. I wouldn't hesitate to recommend ISEKI tractors."
Neil Hamilton, Head Greenkeeper, Powfoot Golf Club



Contact your local dealer to book a demo today!
www.iseki.co.uk



Topturf Irrigation is a family run business and one of the leading irrigation companies in the UK.

Working to the highest industry standards we design, build and install irrigation systems, as well as offering full servicing for all existing and new systems.

Call us on **01903 278240** or email
info@t irrigation.co.uk

www.tirrigation.co.uk



HILLSIDE GOLF CLUB IN ENGLAND PARTNERS WITH HOW MANY STROKES

As a top-class venue Hillside Golf Club in England is always looking for new ways to improve the experience for their members and guests. On one of his many journeys James Hogg, golf photographer and Hillside member, James Hogg came across the Digital Information Board & HCP Conversion Table. He brought this to the attention of the secretary/manager at Hillside Golf Club, Chris Williams.

SEARCH 'HILLSIDE GOLF CLUB' ONLINE
at golfmanagement.online for the full story



VOLVO CHINA OPEN AND BLUEWATER ENTER SUSTAINABILITY PARTNERSHIP

In a ground-breaking move at the 2024 Volvo China Open golf tournament, the organisers teamed up with Sweden's Bluewater for the second year in succession to redefine sustainability standards in sporting events by providing attendees, athletes, and staff with purified, mineral-enriched water directly at the source. A record number of fans in their hundreds of thousands joined with players and event staff to hydrate with ambient, sparkling and hot water from 21 water stations sited strategically around the stunning Shenzhen Hiden Grace Golf Club.

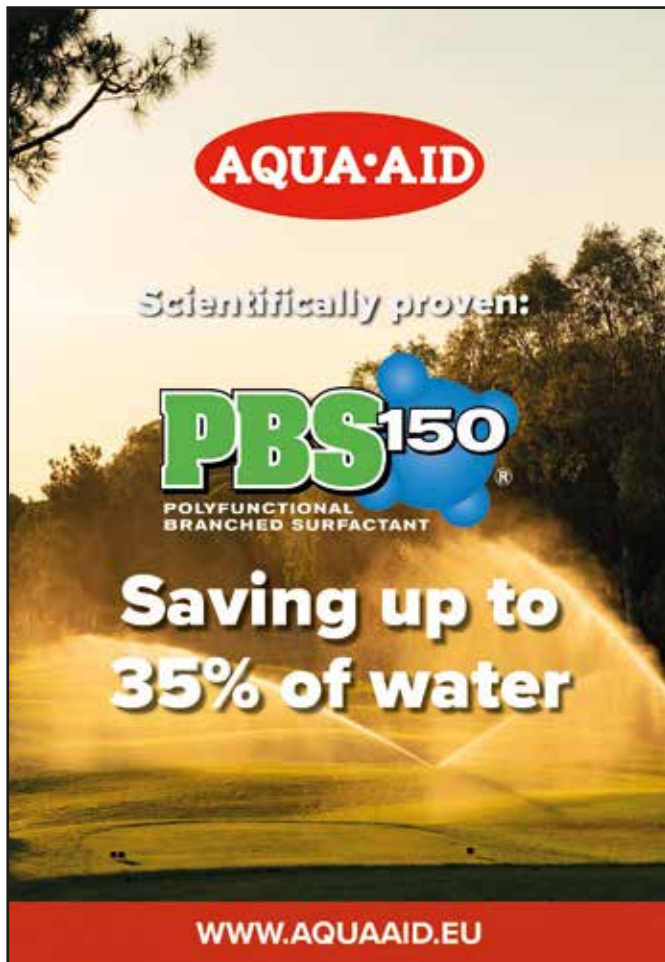
SEARCH 'BLUEWATER' ONLINE
at golfmanagement.online for the full story



NORTHAMPTONSHIRE COUNTY GOLF CLUB COMPLETES KITCHEN REFURBISHMENT

Northamptonshire County Golf Club has completed a major kitchen refurbishment that will ensure the continued production of high-quality catering that is more environmentally friendly whilst improving the work-space for kitchen staff. Costing £200,000, the kitchen area has seen a complete refit with the installation of new extraction system, rational ovens, cold room, together with new work tops, sinks, and storage solutions, that has created more workspace and easier access to all of the workstations.

SEARCH 'NORTHAMPTONSHIRE COUNTY' ONLINE
at golfmanagement.online for the full story



AQUA·AID

Scientifically proven:

PBS150
POLYFUNCTIONAL
BRANCHED SURFACTANT

**Saving up to
35% of water**

WWW.AQUAAID.EU



troo.

**We're here to
shake up
the business
energy market**

We offer :

Expert energy advice, a
free energy health check,
invoice validation and
management of siteworks.

Our services:

- Procurement Services
- Energy Management
- Invoice Validation
- Site Works & Metering
- Water Bill Analysis
- Compliance & Legislation
- On-Site Generation

Visit our website: **troocost.com**

Call us on: **0808 164 2222**



**VERSATILITY
THAT WORKS**

**THE MOST
PRODUCTIVITY YOU'LL
EVER BUY**

VENTRAC

SCHEDULE A DEMO TODAY
1.866.836.8722 VENTRAC.COM

NEW DESTINATIONS

WORLDCLASS.GOLF



TERRAS
da
COMPORTA



The second quarter of 2024 has seen two new destinations join worldclass.golf – a portfolio of the world's premier golf courses, destinations and resorts.

Located one hour south of Lisbon, The Dunas Course at Terras da Comporta is David McLay-Kidd's first golf course in mainland Europe and has made headlines around the world since opening in June 2023 – including being named as the 'World's Best New Golf Course' and 'Europe's Best New Golf Course'.

Owned by Vanguard Properties who took ownership of the development in 2019, Terras da Comporta features two large developments: Torre, comprising 365 hectares of land and where a second course designed by Sergio Garcia is being built (set to open in 2025), and Dunas, which occupies around 1,011 hectares.

Located in the spectacular Umbria region of Italy, and designed by Robert Trent Jones II, Antognolla is a 6,112 meters long, par 71 championship golf course, with excellent full-length practice facilities.

The 18-hole course is positioned under the magnificent 12th century Antognolla Castle and surrounded by wild and wooded hillsides, with the natural beauty of the 600-hectare estate creating an amazingly unique backdrop for any round of golf.

"Commenting on the two new additions, Michael Lenihan, CEO of worldclass.golf said: "It's humbling to be working with two outstanding destinations, both of who are worthy of the term 'world-class."

"Having visited and played both courses, they represent everything that worldclass.golf stands for, and they are a welcome addition to the portfolio." **END**



from bag-drop, we are world-class

A portfolio of 42 of the world's premier golf courses, destinations & resorts, worldclass.golf celebrates the visitor experience, from bag-drop to après golf.

For entry criteria, and learn how membership can benefit your destination in 2024, visit worldclass.golf or email experience@worldclass.golf for a prospectus.



ANTHONY CAIRA

GENERAL MANAGER, EDUCATION CITY



When Sandy Jones, PGA regional secretary for Scotland at the time, recommended a fellow countryman for a golf professional role back in 1984, little did both Scotsmen realise quite how much of an impact they would make on the sport.

Jones spent 11 years as regional secretary in Scotland before taking over the reigns as PGA chief executive, a position he held for 25 years.

And as to the young golf professional who Jones recommended for his first role at Kirriemuir Golf Club in Scotland, well he hasn't done too bad for himself either.

Hailing from an Italian family, Anthony Caira spent many summer holidays in southern Italy as a child. His father, Phil, competed in five consecutive Commonwealth Games between 1954 and 1970 representing Scotland in weightlifting – winning two gold medals – and when he retired, he took up golf introducing his son to the game.

They both began playing together at Kirkcaldy Golf Club, which is where young Anthony's love affair with golf began.

And it soon became clear that young Caira would be more than just your average golfer, and aged 17, became the youngest ever club champion at Kirkcaldy. Encouraged by the club professional, Brian Lawson, to turn pro, Caira took his advice and started playing on the Scottish Tour, which was better known as the Tartan Tour at the time.

"I started playing on tour, but I always wanted to be a club pro," recalls Caira. "I never felt I was good enough to be a tour player, even though I was in the top ten in Scotland.

"I was 22 years old at the time, and Sandy Jones had just recommended me for the position of club professional at Kirriemuir," recollects Caira. "I was playing in a competition at Carnoustie and after my round, Sandy suggested I'd be right for the job, so I went for the interview."

Caira clearly impressed the board at Kirriemuir and was offered the role, but only a few weeks into the position, needed to seek the advice of Jones once again.

"I remember being invited to attend an Horizon Stars of the Future training camp at La Manga Club in Spain which was hosted by Brian Barnes who used to teach young tour players about his experience as to how to become a successful tour pro.

"At the time I said to Sandy Jones that I've just got the job at Kirriemuir so can't possibly go away – I'd only been in the roll for about two weeks!

"But Sandy said that I had to go as it would be great for me, and great publicity for Kirriemuir and he was proved right. When I came back from La Manga, I was doing radio interviews and a lot of press as the new club pro at Kirriemuir.

"Sandy Jones was a great mentor, with a vast amount of experience and knowledge and as it turned out, going to La Manga was a worthwhile decision"

Caira spent 15 "lovely" years at Kirriemuir, progressing from club professional to director of golf, a role, which Caira once again attributes to Jones.

"I was one of the first directors of golf in Scotland," claims Caira. "Sandy advised that I should be called director of golf as by the





'WE HAVE A HEALTHY NUMBER OF QATARI MEMBERS NOW, AND OVER THE YEARS WE HAVE SEEN MORE NATIONALS TAKE UP THE SPORT'

time I left Kirriemuir I was running the club. So, I took his advice and changed my job title."

In 1997, that change of role, led Caira back to where his interest in golf first started, Kirkcaldy Golf Club, where he was director of golf for 18 years, until in 2015, inspired by his father, he left to start his own business.

"As an athlete, my father taught me the importance of proper nutrition for peak performance, and my whole approach to teaching has always been holistic – it's not just about the swing, it's about performance.

"I had a lot of my pupils who after giving them a lesson and seeing them progress would improve their swing, but not their scores, and the more I investigated it, the more I realised that people weren't performing from the 12th or 13th hole.

"So after some experimenting and a bit of thought I came up with the concept of Niblick69 – an energy snack in the shape of a golf ball designed specifically for golfers.

Caira, together with his family, invested a great deal of time and energy (if you pardon the pun) into Niblick69 for three years before deciding to suspend activities following the offer of a job – and a first role overseas – at Education City in Doha, Qatar.

Featuring one of the best centres of excellence in world golf, Caira was offered the role of head professional in September 2018 working with then general manager, Michael Briadwood, both of whom studied together back in Scotland to obtain their CCM certification with the CMAE.

"Mike made me aware of the position at Education City as head of their centre of excellence, and he said that I should apply for the role. Mike always talked very highly of my teaching abilities, so I applied, and they flew me over as part of the interview process and I was blown away by the facilities which are some of the best in the world.

"As part of the interview, I had to undertake a playing lesson with the CEO, Mohammed Alnaimi and also a short game lesson."

And when Braidwood returned to Scotland to take up a role as CEO at Bruntsfield Links, in January 2022 Caira was encouraged to apply for the role of general manager, a position he appears to be relishing especially when it comes to trying to grow the game in Qatar.

"We've been very successful in introducing team building and corporate events," states

Caira. "We recently had 120 people from North Oil, split into 12 groups of ten, and to look at the number of new golfers and new members that came from that single event is amazing.

"We have a healthy number of Qatari members now, and over the years we have seen more nationals take up the sport."

Aged 62, Caira appears to be content in his professional and personal life and is showing no signs of wanting to retire anytime soon.

"The job's going well, so it would be nice to finish here, but you never know," he states.

"As a GM, it's my job to push things forward and keep the standards high and develop the staff and keep the experience good for the customers.

"That's why I recently recruited Karl Rowe from Dubai Hills as his experience has helped a lot, and he's made our team stronger."

But with the added responsibility of being GM, does he miss coaching, or Scotland?

"Regrettably, I teach very little these days," he admits, "There are still members here that were my pupils when I was head coach, and obviously you build up a relationship.

"If I am needed I am always more than happy to step in and help out my fellow golf professionals with a bit of teaching at the Centre of Excellence."

As to Scotland, he adds: "My family are here, and my two girls have got good jobs here. My wife, Donna is settled as well, so I still think I've got a lot to give.

"One of many things that appealed to me about accepting the position at Education City Golf Club, was it gave me an opportunity to contribute to the development of the sport, aligning with my passion for connecting people from all diversities through golf.

"It's wonderful to be part of a state-of-the-art facility that honours Qatar Foundation's approach to education, innovation, sustainability, research and development, and culture through sport.

"Her Highness Sheikha Moza bint Nasser has, through her various initiatives, played a key role in supporting the country's National Vision to transform Qatar into a thriving, knowledge-based society by 2030.

"I very much hope that I can be involved for the next few years, contributing to growing the game and encouraging both beginners and experienced golfers to visit and use our wonderful facility." **END**





PHILIP HENDERSON

GENERAL MANAGER, AL ZORAH



If you were to cut Philip Henderson in half – like a stick of Blackpool rock – the word ‘Troon’ would run through his entire core.

Having been associated with the management company most of his career, Henderson, has been the man tasked with shaping the future development of Al Zorah Golf Club in the UAE – soon to be re-branded Al Zorah Golf & Yacht Club.

Located 45 minutes north of Dubai in the Emirate of Ajman, Al Zorah is a unique property, in a unique location. Unlike many courses in the UAE, Al Zorah is close to the beach and a marina – hence the re-brand – and a 1.3 million sq m Mangrove Forest which acts as a backdrop to the course.

And come the end of the year, a brand-new clubhouse will open, all of which has been designed and constructed under the watchful eye of the 43-year-old, Scot.

Henderson's journey in golf began at the age of ten when his father introduced him to the sport. He quickly developed a passion for the game, spending countless hours on the course and competing in amateur tournaments.

However, as he grew, Henderson realised that he didn't love the game enough to want to pursue a professional career saying: "I didn't want to stand on a driving range and hit golf balls all day for a living. That was something which wasn't on my radar. I enjoyed competing at an amateur level."

Henderson's first break in golf management came when a friend mentioned an opportunity south of the border in England.

"When I was 19 or 20, a friend of mine who was in the PGA mentioned that there was

an opportunity down in England, which kind of got me thinking about what I wanted to do for a career," he explained. "So, I kind of stumbled into it."

That role was at Farnham Park, an 18-hole municipal course, which was the precursor to much bigger and better things, thanks in part to Henderson's girlfriend at the time.

"She worked for a hotel company that was the parent company of The Grove, and saw a job come up on her job board which she told me about. So, when I went to The Grove I didn't necessarily know where this path would lead.

"But when I started to see aspirational leaders like Blyth Reid and Spencer Schaub – who were director of golf and head professional at the time – I said to myself 'these guys have travelled the world and have lots of stories to tell.'

"That's where I wanted to go, as my personality lends itself to people."

Managed by Troon, Henderson spent two-and-a-half years at The Grove – during which time they hosted the World Golf Championship in 2006 – before hinting that to progress his career, he wanted to move overseas.

"I remember this still to the day," recalls Henderson. "I was having my appraisal at The Grove with Spencer, and I said that my time's probably coming to an end as I'd really like to go international as that's something which I'm attracted to.

"And sure enough, after about two weeks Spencer came and got me saying that they'd got to be an opportunity in Portugal and did I want to go?



"WHEN YOU WORK WITH TROON, OPPORTUNITIES PRESENT THEMSELVES"

"About two weeks later I had an interview [in Portugal] with the GM, and we went out for dinner with some of the Troon guys, and 24 hours later I flew back to the UK and resigned from The Grove."

However, Henderson's move to Vilamoura in Portugal lasted only six months, before moving to the glitz and glamour of Dubai.

"When you work with Troon, opportunities present themselves," he explained. "I remember having breakfast with Bruce Glasco and he told me about an opportunity in Dubai at a high-profile opening, and they wanted me because of my growth experience."

"It was for a premium luxury brand and at the time I was very adventurous, so I said yes to every opportunity. It was all about gaining experience – that was really my goal."

Aged 26, Henderson moved to The Els Club in Dubai, recalling: "The Els Club was a fantastic brand, with great standards. We had a visionary leader in Thomas Rubi who was GM at the time."

As per The Grove, Henderson spent two-and-a-half years at The Els Club, leaving in the summer of 2010 to work for Troon at numerous venues across the EMEA region including Egypt, Morocco, and Azerbaijan.

"We had just opened up The Els Club and it was the heart of summer," he recalls. "Troon were opening up this property in Egypt, so I was seconded, and I was happy to go."

Henderson also spent time in Baku, Azerbaijan – again for a two-and-a-half year period – at the Troon-managed National Azerbaijan Golf Club describing the experience as "a real honour because how many people can say that they opened up the first golf course in a country?"

It was at this juncture, that Henderson was looking for his first long-term role, explaining: "Openings are great to do, and it's great to bounce around and get that experience in the early days."

"But when you start to get a wife and children, that's when you need stability. You're looking for a role that's going to give you a decade, not six months here, three months there."

And so, in September 2015, Henderson returned to the UAE just a few months prior to the opening of Al Zorah Golf Club.

Al Zorah began its journey nine years ago, with a vision to create a world-class golfing destination. Back then, the club consisted solely of the golf course, with no surrounding properties. The focus was on attracting golfers from Dubai, as the local expat community was still in its nascent stage.

Over the years, Al Zorah has witnessed significant growth and development. The addition of surrounding properties and the construction of soon to be completed clubhouse have transformed the club into a vibrant community hub.

The club's strategic location, coupled with the commitment of its owners to invest in the product, has attracted a diverse range of golfers and residents.

As GM, Henderson is tasked with the continued development of the project and appears to thrive with the day-to-day challenges faced in doing so.

Approaching nine years in the role, he has been passionate about nurturing local talent and providing opportunities for growth and believes that having local figures as leaders in the golf industry is essential for creating a sense of belonging and pride within the community.

"We're good at promoting from within," he stresses. "We've got Stephen [Payne] who is our operations manager who, if he does well this year, will be promoted to head of golf and leisure."

"So, he'll be a natural replacement for me when I choose to leave here. We're a big believer in succession planning."

One however, doesn't quite get the feeling that Henderson is quite ready to move on yet although having more responsibility within the project – perhaps in the hotel or real estate elements of Al Zorah – would add to his personal growth.

He comes across as settled and content in both his professional and personal life, and away from golf, has embraced CrossFit, a high-intensity fitness program, which allows him to switch off from work and focus on his physical well-being.

"I do CrossFit five times a week, am an avid reader and I'm also learning to play the piano," he says. "Those are the things which I'm doing now away from golf, and also trying to be an involved father as well, and that's important to me." **END**

JACK HEDGES

GENERAL MANAGER, THAI COUNTRY CLUB



Driving to the Thai Country Club on the outskirts of Bangkok, one could be forgiven for thinking that Google Maps had the incorrect coordinates.

Turning off the main highway, my faith in GPS technology was pushed to the limits, as the road wound its way through an industrial estate before suddenly – like a mirage – the entrance to the club mystically appeared.

And within seconds, I was transported inside the tranquil oasis of the Thai Country Club, one of the most respected golf clubs in Thailand with a rich pedigree dating back to when the club first opened in December 1996.

Designed by Dennis Griffiths, the former president of the American Society of Golf Course Architects (yes, I had to look him up as well), Thai Country Club is a prime example of a golf course that is world-renowned due to its playability, and not because of a famous named architect.

The 7,097-yard course was first seriously tested a year after opening, when Tiger Woods won the Asian Honda Classic driving the par 4, 10th, an impressive feat celebrated with a plaque on the tee box.

And the man currently tasked with running the club is equally impressive... 35-year-old Jack Hedges.

Hedges, who hails from Berkshire, took over as general manager at the beginning of 2023 replacing John Blanch who returned to the UK to assume a similar position at Wentworth, before moving to Loch Lomond.

With extensive experience working in Asia, Hedges has an impressive CV having worked in Cambodia, China and Vietnam

previously. Yet, things could have been quite different if, aged 20, he had decided not to follow his gut, and shun the PGA Management programme in favour of real-world experience in Cambodia as he explains.

"Growing up I played all sorts of sports, but golf wasn't one of them for a while. I picked it up about 13 years old from a friend and his Dad going to the driving range in the summer holidays.

"I lived ten minutes from Blue Mountain [Golf Club] and just got hooked immediately and was there pretty much every day. By the age of 14 I was helping them pick-up balls on the driving range, and in return, would get driving range cards, so my practice was paid for."

Hedges quickly got down to scratch, and by the time he was 16, was working part-time in the evenings on the range. And with a career in golf uppermost in his thoughts, it was suggested he attend Merrist Wood College, not knowing what the future held.

"I went through the whole process not really knowing if I wanted to be a player or a coach. I wasn't that clear. I just knew I wanted to be in the golf industry.

"I played in a few tournaments here and there, but I ended up focusing more on the work side of things than I did on the playing side, and I really enjoyed that.

"I then moved to Sand Martins Golf Club in September 2008, and that's when it was time to start looking at the future. And as usual for a young man in the golf industry, I was encouraged to do my PGA training and that's when it all kind of changed," he continues.







"I WOULD BUY BOXES OF BOOKS ON CUSTOMER SERVICE, FINANCE AND ACCOUNTING TO PREPARE MYSELF AS MUCH AS I COULD"

As an assistant professional at the time, aged 18, Hedges was encouraged to go away for a month in winter so as he could work on his game, with the intentions of returning to complete his PGA qualification.

"I was searching for places to go, and Thailand came up. A family friend who was based in Thailand put me in touch with the general manager of a resort three hours from Bangkok, and I trained in the morning with Thai golf professionals, and then in the afternoon, helped the GM which was my first experience of golf operations.

"When I returned to the UK, I realised very quickly that I wanted to be overseas, and that I was more interested in the management side than I was the playing side and that was when the seed was kind of planted.

"I started my PGA at The Belfry and recall them asking: 'who wants to be a coach, who wants to be a player and who wants to be in management'. And I was the only one out of a class of 50 who put my hand up for management," he recalls.

Hedges decided to cease his PGA training – returning the fees paid by Sand Martins – and to the surprise of his head pro, announced that he was resigning to pursue his dream of a career in golf management overseas, in all places, Cambodia.

"They obviously thought it was not the best idea, which I can kind of understand, but I stuck to my guns and thought that at some point it would come back to haunt me. That was 14 years ago."

Aged 21, Hedges moved to Angkor Phokeethra Golf & Spa Resort in Cambodia as golf operations manager in January 2010 learning every aspect of golf club management during his three-year tenure, including one experience he has never forgotten.

"The hardest, and most challenging aspect of my career was not managing the quantity of people but being such a young age. I remember I had to fire someone for stealing something, and this guy was 50 years old, and I was 21... my legs were shaking under the table.

"You kind of remember that, and I soon realised that you never quite get accepted for being the younger one, but then, it doesn't really matter."

A period working for IMG in China at Pinerock, and Ba Na Hills in Vietnam followed before spending Covid back in China at The Players Club in Beijing.

For someone so young, Hedges rise to prominence in Asia is impressive, but it hasn't happened by accident. His dedication to learning has paid off, and rather than opting for university, decided to, in his words, "work, work, work."

"I was a worker and that was what I was really good at," he admits. "I would buy boxes of books on customer service, finance and accounting to prepare myself as much as I could."

So, when the opportunity to return to Thailand presented itself, Hedges put himself front and centre to take the role.

"I knew the reputation that Thai Country Club had, as it was known for its hospitality and its service," said Hedges, who took over as general manager in January 2023.

"I took the first few months just to observe and talk to staff and the owners to get an understanding of what people think. Then, the first thing we focussed on was the golf course, which was good, but there was a lot of room for improvement, and conditioning still is one of our top priorities.

"Then internally, the realisation that the club is coming up for 30 years old at the end of 2026.

"Our staff make the experience, from the pro shop to the bag drop and then of course, the caddies. A lot of our staff have been here for nearly 30 years, and so with them coming towards the end of their career, and with a new generation coming up, my goal for this year is to start putting a plan in place for the next 30 years."

Primarily a high-end, semi-private club, Thai Country Club opens its tee-sheet to visiting golfers and is experiencing a post-pandemic boom, which appears to be keeping Hedges busy in his professional life.

Personally, he appears more than happy in Bangkok saying: "I'm very comfortable in this part of the world. I know it, and the owners here are really great.

"And I think as GMs or even golf industry professionals, we go around our career through these different countries kind of looking for the trifecta, which is the club itself to be reputable; the people you work for, you get on well with and number three, is the location where you can actually have a life outside of work.

"I've pretty much got it here with Bangkok and Thai Country Club, so I'm really excited. This is a long-term thing for me here." **END**



JUAN MANUEL FUENTES PEREZ

GENERAL MANAGER, ROYAL GOLF CLUB



The saying goes, that there's no place like home. And for Juan Manuel Fuentes Perez, an affable Spaniard who now lives and works in the Kingdom of Bahrain, home is now firmly in the Middle East, despite growing up in the south of Spain.

Fuentes Perez learnt to play golf at La Cañada Golf Club on the Costa del Sol and was surrounded by the sport. His family, including his mother, father, and uncle, were all avid golfers, and he quickly developed a love for the game.

"I played golf since I can remember," he says, "and my first job was as a Caddie at Valderrama. I was probably 15 and recall caddying for Colin Montgomerie at the Volvo Masters."

Fuentes Perez first break in the industry came at San Roque when he started out in golf operations, but on the course – not off it – was where his focus was, as he harboured ambitions of making it on Tour.

"I really wanted to play golf, so I tried the qualifying school three times for the European Tour. I won lots of tournaments and I really wanted to be a European Tour player."

Conscious of the high failure rate with young pros attempting to make a name for themselves on Tour, Fuentes Perez remains grateful to his parents for some wise words of advice.

"My father and mother always kept me in line," he remarks fondly, suggesting that his parents always encouraged a Plan B just in case their son never quite made the grade.

"My father used to say, that golf lies to you because one day you beat Álvaro Quirós and you shoot 65, and you think you've got it

now, and this is the time I'm going to make it and be the next Seve Ballesteros," he smiles, "and the next day, golf puts you in your place – it takes something very special to be a superstar in golf."

It was around the age of 25 that Fuentes Perez finally gave up on a career on-course, to focus initially on coaching, although it was clear from the outset that his ambition was in management, and not teaching.

"I was studying for my PGA in Spain, and I remember from very early on telling the guys that I wanted to be a GM one day, and not a coach. I still have messages from 15 years ago with offers of coaching roles which I turned down as I knew that my career path would be in management."

Fuentes Perez took roles working in the golf section in Decathlon, as well as running a retail outlet in Sotogrande called Golf US whilst searching for his first full-time role in golf management. But with positions on the Costa del Sol at a premium, and with his desire to broaden his experience by working internationally ahead of a potential return to Spain in the future, he thought that his career would be best served by looking east.

"Where I come from in Spain is a very special place – it's not just a place, it's like *the* place for golf. A lot of the good positions there are taken for life, so I wanted to explore ways in which I could make myself more valuable to the industry.

"I was lucky enough to meet Peter Holland [current director of golf at the Centurion Club] who offered me a job in Russia where I was going to be involved in golf operations and teaching.



"IF I HADN'T WORKED HERE PREVIOUSLY, I WOULDN'T HAVE APPLIED AS I WAS REALLY HAPPY IN SPAIN, BUT I KNOW THE COUNTRY AND THE VISION THAT THIS CLUB HAS MOVING FORWARD"

"But then he called me and asked if I wanted to teach at Royal Golf Club in Bahrain, as it was an all-year round destination, whereas Russia was seasonal."

The only downside was that the role in Bahrain was coaching, with no involvement in golf ops. However, Fuentes Perez took a gamble as he was certain that through his tenacity, an opening would present itself on the management side, a move which proved merited.

Soon after his move to Bahrain in March 2015, his duties, besides coaching, included sales, marketing and membership although he retained his passion for teaching.

"I love teaching – I just love helping golfers because I'm a golfer and I love playing golf. So, whenever I see somebody who I appreciate, it's almost like a responsibility to share my knowledge."

And that passion four years later led Fuentes Perez to a truly unique location... the idyllic Velaa Private Island in the Maldives, where he mixed it up with the rich and famous at this world-famous island, known for its short course designed by José María Olazábal.

He spent two years in the Maldives, living in the on-site hotel and learning about hospitality, which he admits, is a passion of his.

"Golf operations was in my blood, but I wanted to learn more about high-end management and working with owners directly," he said. "So that is the exposure that the island gave me, and I really learnt a lot about F&B."

However, hospitality has always been in his blood, as his grandfather and mother own a hotel back 'home' in Spain – plus cinemas and restaurants – so he already had a head start.

"From my mother's side, I have been in the F&B industry forever. But then I wanted to see it from another angle, and being involved on the island gave me an insight to some of the best restaurants in the world.

"Plus, I got to meet some very influential people and got to play golf with the likes of Will Smith and his wife for a week. I was only planning on staying for one-year, but I ended up staying for two because I just loved it, and the owner was the best owner you can ever imagine."

A pending marriage to his now wife, shifted focus, and in September 2021 he moved back 'home' to Spain where he was briefly involved with the transformation at La Hacienda near Gibraltar working with architect Kurtis Bowman.

But a little after a year in his role as director of golf, the opportunity to return to Bahrain, and his adopted home, was too great to pass up after seeing the GM role advertised on LinkedIn.

Talking from his office at the Royal Golf Club in Bahrain, he said: "When I left here [in 2019] I told a few people that one day I would return as a GM, because I like the place and the country so much," he said.

"And the way the Bahrainis and the Saudis adopted me here – and honestly, that is the word adopted – you cannot believe. To be frank, they made me feel more at home than in my own home. If they see that you are a good person, and have a good heart, they really make the effort to make you stay and make you feel appreciated.

"If I hadn't worked here previously, I wouldn't have applied as I was really happy in Spain, but I know the country and the vision that this club has moving forward."

In February, Royal Golf Club hosted a DP World Tour event and together with a Formula 1 race, Bahrain is hoping to promote itself as a tourist destination.

But with only one course in the country at present, Fuentes Perez is aware that one course does not make a golf destination and is hopeful that the quality of the Colin Montgomerie-designed layout, coupled with other cultural attractions in Bahrain will attract enough visitors.

And with the club ideally located just 20 minutes from the capital Manama and the same distance from the Bahrain-Saudi Causeway, the club could benefit from the golf boom in neighbouring Saudi Arabia.

As for Fuentes Perez, one gets the impression that having just become a father for the second time, his young family will reap the benefits of a life in their adopted home, rather than one back in Spain.

As the saying goes, home is where the heart is, and there certainly appears to be a lot of love for the ambitious and determined 38-year-old. **END**

STONEHILL

STONEHILL.CO.TH

Words Michael Lenihan
Location Bangkok, Thailand

Kyle Phillips is widely regarded as one of the world's foremost golf course architects, who has worked his magic at world-famous courses such as Kingsbarns in Scotland, and Yas Links in Abu Dhabi.

Yet his creation at Stonehill in Pathum Thani, just an hour north of Bangkok, Thailand must surely rank as one his proudest, given what Phillips has managed to create out of the barren landscape he inherited.

The brainchild of Thai businessman Sarath Ratanavadi, Stonehill took five years to complete, and was opened for play in the summer of 2022.

And in October 2022, just a few months after opening, Stonehill hosted the LIV Golf Invitational Bangkok with Spaniard Eugenio Chacarra – finishing on 19 under, three shots clear of Patrick Reed – winning the event, pocketing a cool \$4 million in prize money.

However, it was the condition of the course which won widespread acclaim, with Indian golfer, Anirban Lahiri saying: "I think in terms of the conditions, it's pristine. It's literally the holy ground as it's so pure, and I would say that this is the closest you'd come to maybe comparing conditions to Augusta, just in terms of the pure turf conditions."





"It's phenomenal, and it's ridiculous how good it is," Lahiri enthused who finished with a score of four under for the tournament.

Such a ringing endorsement must be music to the ears of Australian-born director of agronomy, Darren Moore, who joined Stonehill at the beginning of 2020 just before the pandemic and has overseen the grow-in process.

"Every step of the way, from design to construction, we have selected the most high-quality options and ensured adherence to internationally accepted standards," said Moore.

"Course maintenance is a never-ending battle that has many routines, and we expect the highest standards of turf maintenance machines and suppliers. It gives me great peace of mind knowing we can expect that level of excellence from our partners."

Stonehill was imagined as a private members club, and built to elevate the golf experience in Thailand. The clubhouse was designed by American architect Timothy Slattery of Hart Howerton, with Phillips charged with crafting a 'world-class' golf course out of a landscape bereft of character.



"MY FATHER GAVE ME A CHANCE TO DEVELOP STONEHILL AND IT WAS CHALLENGING TO FIGURE OUT HOW TO MAKE IT MORE THAN JUST A GOLF COURSE"

"My father gave me a chance to develop Stonehill and it was challenging to figure out how to make it more than just a golf course," said Ing, son of Sarath, who is the executive director of Stonehill.

"As a result, our club offers hospitality services that are up to par with worldwide standards and fully functional golf course facilities. I selected the best at every level for the Stonehill project, from design and construction to the choice of every individual involved.

"To bring our golf course up to pace with, if not better than, the rest of the world, I only used systems that adhered to internationally accepted standards.

"We painstakingly built this piece of land up, step by careful step, from bare ground," added Ing, and it shows.

Built on what was once flat, uninspiring mud land, Phillips has crafted an incredible golf experience on the 375-acre site incorporating native fauna as well as planting over 4,000 trees and over 40 varying species from the surrounding areas.

These specimen 'rain trees' are dotted around the course providing shade and adding to the overall aesthetics of the landscape.

The 7,861-yard, par 72 course features beautiful rolling terrain and a man-made stream that comes into play on seven holes, including the spectacular par four, 5th hole which plays to a well-guarded green surrounded by water.

The stream next comes into play on what could arguably be defined as the signature hole – the par three, 7th – which plays from an elevated position looking down onto the green with the stream meandering its way just in front of the green.

The credentials for the signature hole however are challenged on the next hole – the par four, 8th – which is the toughest on the course at stroke index one. Playing downhill, the aforementioned stream needs to be crossed once again in order to find the green which is accessed by two stoned bridges adding to the overall appeal and playability of the hole.

To Phillip's credit, there really isn't a weak hole on the course, and for those fortunate enough to be able to play Stonehill – either as a member, or as a guest – the opportunity really should not be passed up.

The visitor journey, as you would expect, is seamless, with mandatory caddies on-hand to add to the overall experience once golfers pass through the small, but functional golf shop in the clubhouse which leads to the buggy park.

The first tee is adjacent to the first of many hospitality buildings dotted around the course, with the 1,270m² putting green and practice facilities close by also.

The clubhouse, which forms the backdrop to the course, was built using imported Italian limestone and Thai teak woodwork and was influenced by the Neo-Classic era to symbolise the co-existence of the old and the new.

Food is a large part of Thai culture, and Stonehill has created two eateries – Ubuntu and Rock Creek – together with Firefly Bar.

Built at the exact point of first and last light, the Firefly Bar was named after the eponymous creatures that are native to the site.

By day, Firefly has the relaxed, continental atmosphere of a Parisian café, serving coffee, tea and light bites. By night, the venue transforms into a chandelier-lit cocktail bar, where guests gather like the fireflies beyond.

In contrast, the main restaurant, Ubuntu is named after an African philosophy that views community as central to humanity, that celebrates sharing, bonding and giving through food.

Serving international fare on locally crafted ceramic stoneware, Ubuntu's skylit space brings cuisines and epicureans together beneath an ever-changing skyscape.

By contrast, Rock Creek is an upscale dining concept centred around the restaurant's Jospo oven offering a modern European grill with Asian accents. The impressive dining room provides a 360-degree view of the golf course, allowing members and visitors the option to reminisce about their round over their meal.

Stonehill is exceptional – there really is no other word to define it – and the condition and playability of the course really are, as Lahiri alluded to, on par with Augusta.

The only drawback is given its exclusivity, sadly not many golfers will ever get the opportunity to play one of Kyle Phillip's best creations.

I'm just glad that thankfully, I won't be one of them. **END**





Words Christopher Stratford

Online troocost.com

PAUL DAVIDSON ACCOUNT EXECUTIVE, TROO

troo.

As account executive for energy broker Troo, Paul Davidson spends his days drilling down into a wealth of experience and knowledge to obtain the most beneficial utilities deals for his clients in terms of both suitability and cost.

What he also does for the golf clubs with whom he is involved is draw from a well of passion for the game that – unlike electricity, gas or water supplies – appears inexhaustible.

The 38-year-old's love for golf springs from his days when his maternal grandfather first introduced him to the sport on driving ranges in Abu Dhabi where Eddie Batty contributed so much to the development of the Al Ghazal club that the first hole is named for him – Batty's Burn.

He also has an uncle, Eddie's son Kevin, who runs a golf holiday company, and his stepfather was a greenkeeper at Dundonald, Turnberry and Loch Lomond.

Davidson joining Troo last year, to continue working in the energy sector while combining it with golf, appeared to be a move mapped out by family synergy.

"I've got a number of clients outside of golf that I've worked with for many years, but predominantly the majority of my new customers are golf clubs," says Davidson.

"I developed a skill set within the energy sector to understand it in as fine a detail as I can. Then I thought, 'let's utilise these skills on something I love,' and that's how I'm where I am today."

Troo offers a refined and forensic service that provides customers with a bespoke recommendation, enabling them to make an

informed decision about which suppliers and contracts are best for them.

"We're a consultancy or a broker, so that's the foundations of where it's at," explains Aberdeen-born and Newcastle-bred Davidson, "but what is built on top of that is that everything is negotiated individually, managed correctly, and then obviously we advise on when to purchase, because you can buy your energy, if you wanted to, two years in advance.

"What I do is provide a bespoke budget review for the golf courses.

"Every club's completely different. They're not going to get options from all suppliers because of credit. A lot of clubs are sole traders, shall I say, rather than limited entities. It all depends on how much energy they use, which supplier is more favourable for the larger consumers, geography comes into it too, so there's a lot of spinning wheels to get to a price.

"What I make sure I do is look at each supplier and then give the clubs all the information that they need. That will take me about a week to go through, where I know a club manager will not have that time," emphasises Davidson.

"The majority of them acquire a substantial saving because a lot of the clubs will have just purchased the energy when they thought the time was right. They could have missed out if the purchase could have been made when (the price) was possibly better.

"Bi-monthly I will give them an update, refresh the pricing, send it to them and ask if they would be happy at this rate and this cost or do they want to gamble and try and



"FOR ME, YOU CAN EMAIL AS MUCH AS YOU WANT, BUT I THINK UNDERSTANDING THE CHARACTER AND THE PERSON BEHIND THE PHONE IS KEY. ESPECIALLY IN GOLF"

play the market and see what they can get out of it. The decision essentially comes down to them. I'm just there to give them guidance.

"Even if they haven't purchased any energy through us we're still here to be account managers. If they've got any billing issues or any concerns, rather than staying on hold for 40 minutes or an hour, or what have you, they'll just send it over to us with a couple of questions and we go and get the answers and come back and pop it in an email and we know it's resolved. I'd say it's another employee for the club."

Davidson is very hands-on with his approach – well, hands, feet, arms. He visits clients to play the course, support events and get to know the membership.

"For me, you can email as much as you want, but I think understanding the character and the person behind the phone is key, especially in golf, as what I've learned since I was a young kid is it's a community.

"Regardless of where you play, there is a community out there within golf where, I think, if you're a golf person you talk business about five per cent of the time and the rest is talking about the club, and that's what I'm keen on.

"The energy, I know where I am with that. I'm more interested in what's the club like, what's the membership numbers, what's your plans for the future of the club, are you just going to be consistent at where you're at?"

Because of his intense love for both golf and the supportive community environment it fosters, he gets dismayed when fellow golfers tell him rising annual subscriptions have created doubt about them renewing their membership.

This spurs him on to further efforts for his clients to ensure they make savings on their utility bills, helping provide more money both to keep down membership costs and invest in a club's course and its facilities.

"If I had to decide that I was going to lose my membership because the cost of living's increased, that would take us away from a community or a club that I'm part of," he reflects. "If I can make one slight impact at any club so that members don't feel they're in that position, I think that's a big win for me."

"When I was growing up my grandad was always golf mad," recalls Davidson fondly. "You would find golf balls and tees all over the place.

"We'd see him once or twice a year when we'd travel over to Abu Dhabi as kids and first thing I remember, going into the club was if I had my cap on, straight away he'd say, 'Take your hat off. If you don't take your hat off, it will get nailed to the bar.'

"And from then onwards it was 'don't walk over the putting lines' etc... just course etiquette, you know?"

A par on only his second hole as a child prompted grandfather Eddie to make the quick assessment that Davidson was 'a natural', although two lost balls at the par-3 next led grandad to hasten him to the fourth hole 'because I haven't got enough golf balls in me bag'.

"I think me grandad and grandma, Kath, took the wrong brother out first," he laughs while revealing brother Gary, a year younger, is a two-handicapper as opposed to his own level of 13. Both Paul's fanaticism for and fascination with golf are, however, at tour level.

"There's nothing I like better than shaking hands after you've played a round of golf. I remember that as a young kid," he says, adding: "And it's the community; you're walking up one hole and there's people walking down the other and you give them a wave, and it's the jokes you have in the pro shop.

"You're looking at clubs you know you shouldn't be buying – how can you pay a few hundred for a driver that you can't hit straight? – but you still do it, he laughs.

"Do you need blade irons if you've got a handicap of 24? No, you don't, but it makes your bag look great."

He has already introduced two-year-old daughter Rosie to his club, Bedlingtonshire ("it's Bedlington, but the 'shire' makes it a bit more snazzy"), where all the lady members made a fuss of her.

"Every single one of them came up and asked her name and she was speaking to them. When we left she shouted, 'Bye, ladies' and they all shouted 'Bye, Rosie'," he enthuses. "That's why we go... the clubhouse is a home away from home, it's just so welcoming." **END**

ZEN'S MOVING STORY

AND WHY ADJUSTABLE FLOORS ARE TAKING OVER INDOOR GOLF



First it was the Tour players, who bought them for their homes. Then it was the Tour coaches, particularly the putting specialists. Then the Major venues cottoned on. The high-end golf & country clubs and PGA coaches followed, and soon also the technology firms who supplied them.

Zen, the British golf brand with the Eastern name, is now setting the pace as golf indoors transitions from flat, unrepresentative playing surfaces into ground conditions which more accurately mirror a real golf course.

Zen moving floors are already in 24 countries, and although this growing British firm still has much of the world left to conquer, analysts predict that the endgame will be seismic for golf.

With Zen customers now wide-ranging including diverse organisations including the Los Angeles Country Club, Emirates Golf Club, Jumeirah Golf Estates, Baltusrol Golf Club, Harvard University, Sky Sports TV and LIV Golf as well as Tour superstars such as Adam Scott and Justin Rose, and equipment brands such as PING and TaylorMade, the blue-chip evidence is everywhere, giving new converts the security of knowing that others have been there first.

The sport's progression towards a day where most golf facilities will offer adjustable playing surfaces is gathering speed.

Consider two truths about playing off-course golf. First, if you hit golf balls indoors, into a screen, or out onto a driving range, you are in a relatively stress-free world where the ball sits up beautifully on a perfectly flat surface.

But if real golf courses were all flat, nobody would want to play them. Despite this, almost all golf lessons are given, and buckets of golf balls hit, on flat surfaces.

And second, all golfers know that indoor putting is unsatisfactory, and putting in a golf simulator is even worse.

In the Asia Pacific region, Golfzon has offered a moving hitting platform for decades, but its customers' passion for the sport apparently does not extend to putting, which is perfunctory at best.

Elsewhere, other firms have tried to offer breaking putts indoors, but have been confounded by the technical challenges – reliability issues, putts which do not run true, and unrealistic gradients.

Zen's Green Stage product is, as we approach the mid-point of 2024, the only technology in golf which offers both Tour-quality hitting and putting on real-world slopes, into a screen, and the smaller Swing Stage which creates fairway-only gradients is predicted to revolutionise driving range bays and indoor golf studios worldwide.

Golf's premier moving floor company is experiencing unparalleled growth with new territories opening up at a record pace. Zen's vision is to bring the golf course indoors by providing real-world gradients to sim bays and driving ranges everywhere. And in doing so, teach the world to play better and enjoy golf more.

"We feel this is the game-changer which indoor golf has long needed" says Zen's managing director, Andy Hiseman. "It happened 20 years ago when launch monitors and indoor simulators really started to





"THE ZEN GREEN STAGE HAS JOINED LAUNCH MONITORS AS ONE OF THE ESSENTIALS FOR THE MODERN GOLF STUDIO"

take hold, and it is now happening again with moving floors. Very soon they will be everywhere in the sport, and we aim to be the brand which leads the way, but the Zen advantage goes well beyond merely having the best Adaptive Terrain Technology.

"We feel that we also have the deepest understanding of the coaching and psychological principles behind the question 'why move the floor?'"

"Behind the Zen project is a new teaching framework for the sport, which enables fully representative practice away from the golf course, and which can also produce colossal amounts of new data from hitting and putting on the accurately-adjustable slopes which we provide."

Zen's ability to produce almost limitless gradients precisely and repeatedly, with putting and hitting turf good enough for PGA Tour and DP World Tour golfers to use for home practice, has set the standard in this fast-growing new technology space.

All four corners of a Zen Green Stage are adjustable in 0.1 per cent increments, producing billions of different putting possibilities in a single compact area, from the most subtle of breaks to big, swinging double-breaking putts (the Zen can twist) and even compound breaks – where a putt starts flat, but breaks towards the end.

All on a true-rolling, 11.5 stimp organic putting turf only available on the Green Stage.

"We recognised that a coach and their pupil want a seamless experience, so we ensured that the Zens are robust enough for you to move the floor under your feet while you stand on them," said Hiseman. "Nobody forgets the first time they felt the Zen change gradients underfoot!"

And to reproduce extreme fairway slopes, Zen dispensed with putting turf with its Swing Stage to produce a moving floor which can create even steeper gradients. If you struggle with a slice, PGA coaches can now cure it more easily than ever before, simply by putting the ball above your feet – which changes your swing path, direction and plane, and your angle of attack.

Founded by Tour putting coach Nick Middleton well over a decade ago, the Zen family business now employs a highly motivated team in Sheffield, the 'Steel City' which was at the heart of England's industrial rev-

olution, but which is now a hotbed of British high-technology engineering development.

"Zen came out of the blocks fast in 2024," says Middleton. "We were already carrying great momentum from 2023, but several factors have combined to make this our best year yet including opening up key new territories such as Canada, Thailand and South Korea – which we visited in April to help secure a foothold in that indoor golf-obsessed market."

"We are on a mission to make the Koreans care more about putting!"

"We are obsessed with quality, and creating an ecologically-dynamic environment which enables the golfer to become his or her own guru by practicing the infinite variety of golf shots which they will genuinely face out on the golf course. After many years of doing this we have already made – and learnt from – the mistakes that relative newcomers to this market have yet to make."

"The engineering, software and quality challenges in making a moving floor safe, reliable and fit-for-purpose are reassuringly demanding. Mechanically I think we are more or less there – our developments now are more on the digital side."

Having obtained two important rubber-stamps of quality – the UKCA mark (equivalent to CE) for its moving floor products and the ISO-9001 company certification of management standards – Zen is now beginning to integrate its moving floors with other key golf coaching technologies such as Quintic, Swing Catalyst, SAM PuttLab as well as other well-known indoor golf brands.

Becoming a Partner of The PGA in Great Britain & Ireland in 2023 showed that the firm places a high priority on its relationship with teaching professionals.

The PGAs of America, Germany and Australia now also have Zens at their national practice facilities for coach education, with many more national PGAs set to follow suit.

Phil Kenyon, among the world's best-known Tour putting coaches, is one of the brand's long-time advocates and has the final word here.

"The Zen Green Stage has joined launch monitors as one of the essentials for the modern golf studio," he says. "I now give better golf lessons because of it, and in that respect it is priceless." **END**

Perfect spread, every time.

WideSpin™ 1550 Broadcast Topdresser

Turfco redefines how maintenance equipment can save time while improving results. With edge-to-edge coverage, the WideSpin Topdresser could save up to 720 greens passes per year. Plus, the savable presets ensure your preferred application every time.



See the difference. Schedule your demo today at
www.turfco.com or call 800.679.8201

"MAYBE AS THE COMMUNICATOR, IT IS OUR JOB TO
BETTER COMMUNICATE OUR MESSAGE"



Words

John Aherne
CEO
ClubNet Systems

GUEST BOOK

JOHN AHERNE



The Irish playwright George Bernard Shaw famously once said: "The single biggest problem with communication is the illusion that it has taken place." Fourteen words is all that sentence has, but in those fourteen words I would imagine we could encapsulate the root cause to many a war, family argument and untold strife in the workplace.

As a parent to two young girls, I have lost count of the time I have had to say, "How many times do I have to tell you?" As a husband to a schoolteacher, I have also lost count of the times I have been asked: "Have we not had this conversation before?"

What can we learn from these two simple anecdotes, that I am sure we all can relate to? Maybe two things... one, we are not as good at communicating as we think we are, and two, we are not as good at listening or picking up on visual clues as we think we are.

So, the next time you are in a situation, whether it be in work or at home and you are having one of those days where you are thinking 'they just don't get it', take a moment and consider, maybe it is not their job to 'get it' and maybe as the communicator, it is our job to better communicate our message.

I know for sure the next time I am trouble for not taking out the bins, even though I have been asked a hundred times, I will be thinking about George Bernard Shaw. **END**

TURN OLD IRRIGATION INTO TORO INNOVATION.



Toro's Lynx® LAC turns legacy decoder systems into something brilliant, new and totally sustainable.

Whatever your existing technology, timescales and budgets, Lynx LAC empowers you to realise your vision for better golf.



Join the conversation
 **@ToroGolf**

Discover more at: www.toro.com



Go ahead and start early.
The neighbours won't mind.

Our all-electric products are so quiet, they are practically undetectable by residents. With our lithium-ion battery technology comes less maintenance, saving you time and labour costs while still achieving the results players demand.

Always solving. Always evolving.

toro.com/golf



Join the conversation
X@ToroGolf

©2024 The Toro Company. All rights reserved.