

ESLICE

Shanghai

Issue 1 October–December 2005

THE CITY'S
FINEST GOLF
COURSES
Listed and
REVIEWED!

MIND GAMES A golf pro's secrets revealed
STREET CRED Urban golf – hot in the city
NO FAKES PLEASE The real thing rocks
FIRST PLACE Golf invented in China?

LATEST GEAR put through its paces
SHORT BREAKS you'll brag about for years
BOOKS you must read before you die
FASHION look sharp on the range

The 19th kick back in
Shanghai's hottest bars, clubs and
restaurants once the game is won!

The golfer's essential lifestyle guide to China's most dynamic city

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TEE TIME In Shanghai of old
DPRK, OK! Go North Korea!
BAD SCIENCE Hi-tech on trial
SWING MECHANIC Tune up, chill out

The 19th

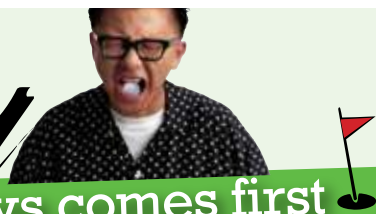
The city's golfer-friendly
bars, cafes and restaurants

ON TOUR in Ireland and beyond
BOOKS to wile away winter
GROOMING splash out in a spa
FASHION & GEAR the cool stuff

The golfer's essential lifestyle guide to China's most dynamic city

Foreplay

It always comes first



Pearls of wisdom ... from "a good walk spoiled"

"Golf is the cruellest game. Eventually it will drag you out in front of the whole school, take your lunch money and slap you around" - Sports Illustrated writer Rick Reilly

"Through years of experience I have found that air offers less resistance than dirt" - Jack Nicklaus, arguably the greatest golfer of all time, on why he tees his ball high

"You're looking up. That's your problem" - Graffiti on the underside of golf cart 47's roof at Seascape Golf Course in North Carolina

"Talking to a golf ball won't do you any good. Unless you do it while your opponent is teeing off" - American author Bruce Lansky

"Golf is a game whose aim is to hit a very small ball into an even smaller hole, with weapons singularly ill-designed for the purpose" - Britain's World War II Prime Minister Winston Churchill

"As you walk down the fairway of life you must smell the roses, for you only get to play one round" - Legendary 1940s golfer Ben "The Hawk" Hogan

"To be truthful, I think golfers are overpaid. It's unreal, and I have trouble dealing with the guilt sometimes" - Scottish golfing genius Colin Montgomerie

"Golf is very much like a love affair, if you don't take it seriously, it's no fun, if you do, it breaks your heart. Don't break your heart, but flirt with the possibility" - Mae Louise Suggs, a founder of modern women's golf

ONLY THE LONELY: Lu Ming was playing as a single at Tianma. He was teamed with a twosome.

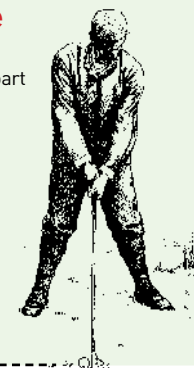
After a few holes, his opponents asked why he was playing such a beautiful course alone. Lu Ming replied that he and his wife had played together there for years, but she had recently passed away. He kept the tee time in her memory.

The twosome, touched by Lu Ming's tale, said they were surprised none of his friends or relatives had been willing to take his wife's place.

"So am I," Lu Ming said, "but they all wanted to attend her funeral."

Unbreakable rules at the SLICE school of golfing etiquette

1. Back straight, knees bent, feet a shoulder width apart
2. Form a loose grip
3. Keep your head down
4. Avoid a quick back swing
5. Stay out of the water
6. Try not to hit anyone
7. Don't stand directly in front of others
8. Remain quiet while others are preparing to go
9. No extra strokes
10. Now flush the urinal, go outside and tee off





So now you know

Why are golf courses 18 Holes in length?

Like many developments in the sport, the choice of 18 holes as the norm can be credited to the Royal & Ancient Saint Andrews Golf Club in Scotland. Standardization did not come about overnight. In fact, it took over a century.

In 1764, St. Andrews converted from 22 holes to 18 holes simply because a reduced number of holes was easier to maintain. However, other golf courses continued to have 12, 17, or 23, or 15, or any other number of holes. There was no standard, though some courses gradually began to copy the St. Andrews model.

Then, in 1858, the R&A (golf's world rules and development body that takes its name from the Scottish club) issued new guidelines for its members. Rule one stated that "one round of the links or 18 holes is reckoned a match unless otherwise stipulated". By the 1870s, most courses had adopted the trend, and a round of golf was accepted as consisting of exactly 18 holes.

Foreplay

WISE GUY: Young golfer Wang was about to tee off when an old gent shuffled up and asked if he could accompany him in his game. Feeling sorry for the pensioner, Wang agreed, and was pleasantly surprised to discover he had found a worthy opponent - though the old timer didn't hit the ball far, his aim was true.

At the 18th, Wang found himself with a tough shot. There was a large tree immediately in front of his ball, and between him and the green. "When I was your age, I'd hit the ball right over that tree," the old fellow boasted.

With that challenge before him, Wang rolled up his sleeves. The youngster swung hard, hit the ball high and ... into the top of the tree. The ball thudded to the ground close to its original spot.

"Of course," the old timer added, "when I was your age that tree was only three feet tall."



A Shanghai Golfers' Club member, fussy about his caddies, called one and said, "I need a quality caddie who can count and keep score. Quickly, what's three plus four, plus five?"

"Eleven, sir," the caddie replied with authority.

"Excellent, you'll do perfectly."

Greens on the Screen

Sideways (2005)

The **SLICE** cinematic pick of the year sees struggling novelist Miles (Paul Giamatti - *The Cinderella Man*) and his best friend, failed actor Jack (Thomas Haden Church - *Wings*), set off on a whirlwind golf and wine-tasting tour of California as a last-ditch, male-bonding exercise before Jack settles into marriage. From the moment Miles' bashed-up convertible Saab turns north onto sun-drenched Route 101, testosterone-fueled Jack is determined to sow his oats with the ladies they meet along the way. *Sideways* is a modest, compassionate and ultimately feel-good comedy exploring the bitter-sweet struggles and lowered expectations of middle age.

Most memorable golf scene: *On the fairway, and Jack is pouring two small paper cups of wine as Miles prepares to take his shot.*

JACK: What about your agent? Hear anything yet?

MILES: Nope.

JACK: What do you think's going on?

MILES: Could be anything.

JACK: Been checking your messages?

MILES: Obsessively. They probably think my book is such a piece of **** that it's not even worthy of a response. I guess I'll just have to learn how to kiss off three years of my life.

JACK: But you don't know yet, so your negativity's a bit premature, wouldn't you say?



Miles ignores Jack and says nothing.

JACK: Or **** those New York publishers. Publish it yourself. I'll chip in. Just get it out there, get it reviewed, get it in libraries. Let the public decide.

Miles looks at Jack in disbelief. He takes a stance over the ball and tries to concentrate.

JACK: Don't come over the top. Stay still.

MILES: Shut up.

JACK: Just trying to be helpful.

A second or two of silence and ...

JACK: It's all about stillness, Miles. Inner quiet.

Miles drops his club and turns to Jack, screaming.

MILES: Shut up! Shut up! Shut up! What's the matter with you, man? SHUT UP!



Books

NICE JUMPER

By Tom Cox

... and another six - no, seven - of the best golf books you must read before you die.
Sam Wainwright puts his feet up.

Poignant and amusing, *Nice Jumper* has been described as "Catcher in the Rye meets Caddyshack", and as "a book about one teenager's obsessive search for sporting nirvana in the wrong-coloured socks". Best-selling novelist William Boyd insists it "does for golf what [Nick Hornby's] *Fever Pitch* did for football ... Funny, clever and all-too-horribly true". It's **SLICE's** must-read of the moment.

Cox's autobiographic confessional tees off in the long, hot summer of 1988, when short-trousered Tom became a teenager. A disorienting enough time for most young men, but our unlikely hero appears to relish and embrace alienation. When he could be sharing cheap cigarettes and hanging out on street corners with his spotty, malcontent chums; when he might be chasing skirt or bouncing around his bedroom to the Stone Roses' *Fool's Gold*; when he should be rebelling - as his groovy, liberal-minded parents genuinely wish he would - Tom is inexorably drawn to, of all things, the sedate and mannered lifestyle surrounding golf.

Having thrown himself into a curious, middle-class world of male-bonding rituals and dodgy fashions, Tom then denies himself all childish distractions, taking five years out of normal adolescent existence to live, breathe, walk and talk nothing but the sport he adores.

Guaranteed you won't put this fast-paced, coming-of-age tale down until it's done. Cox is a genuine talent with a fine, sometimes sarcastic but always self-deprecating voice. Wonderful and uplifting stuff!

List Price: US\$12.95



Who's Your Caddy? Looping for the Great, Near Great, and Reprobates of Golf

By Rick Reilly

List Price: \$24.95

Sports Illustrated columnist Rick Reilly had the type of brilliant, simple idea we all wish we could have had: the only way to get under the skin of the greats who play the game, he decided, would be to lug their gear around, watch and record everything that happens, and then write it all down with verve and elan. In short, Reilly became a caddy, and his readers' meticulously observant spy on golf's great and good. Be prepared for sidesplitting misadventures, many embarrassing moments and all the gob-smacking gossip you can handle. Hilarious!

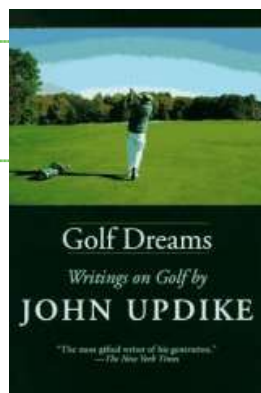


Newton on the Tee: A Good Walk Through the Science of Golf

By John Zumerchik

List price: US\$23.00

So, you never paid attention in class. And who's suffering on the fairways now? Golfers at every level agree on one universal truth - golf is a tricky and blood-boiling game to master. In his readable and lively tract, Zumerchik tells us exactly why - it's basic mathematics and physics, dummy. You'll discover why dimpled balls fly twice as far as the non-dimpled variety. And Zumerchik explains that the angle of lateral error (pushing the ball left or right) allowable for a 160-yard shot "can be measured in the one one-thousandth of a degree range", compared with a forgiving 1.5 degrees for a free throw in basketball. Be prepared to emit an "oh-so-that's-why" sigh with every simple scientific revelation.



Golf Dreams: Writings on Golf

By John Updike

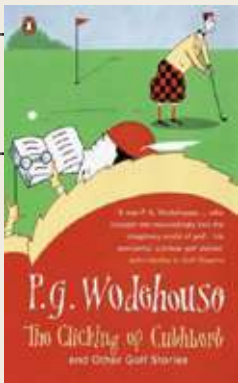
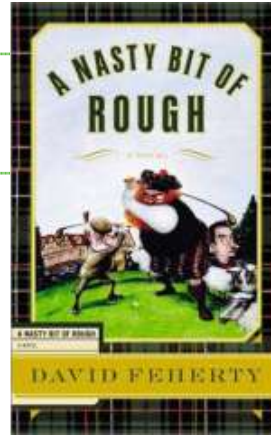
List Price: US\$12.95

"Stolen my life away," groans devoted golfer John Updike (*Brazil*, *Rabbit at Rest*) of his iron-grip addiction to our enigmatic game. Written between 1959 and 1995, this eclectic and insightful compilation of essays, poems, observances and ruminations displays intelligence and vitality on every page. Updike addresses everything from the golfer's public humiliations and "the trouble with caddies" to the "soaring grandeur" of the game, always served up with lashings of dry wit and hard-found wisdom. Lighthearted philosophical musings from one of America's most venerable men of letters.

Books

Nasty Bit of Rough
By David Feherty
List Price: US\$14

This totally daft and off-beat first novel by *Golf* magazine columnist David Feherty is an unexpected joy for the young at heart. Synopsis: the planet's most ancient golf course is Scrougt's Wood. It is presided over by Major General (retired) Sir Richard "Little Dicky" Gussett. Membership, unfortunately, has plummeted to a pathetic nine devotees. To swing its fortunes around, Dicky and gang travel to Scotland. There they clash with the rival MacGregor clan of the Tay Club, who hold the most valued prize in golf - the petrified middle finger of St. Andrew, otherwise known as "The Digit". Excellent reading for the beach, or for a hidden corner of the clubhouse where nobody will see you chuckling like a cheeky schoolboy.



The Clicking of Cuthbert
By PG Wodehouse
List price: US\$16.95

Though many find him a bit of a clever dick, the ever-droll Mr. Wodehouse has long been adored by **SLICE**, and his *The Clicking* had us grinning for days. It's a simple comic tale, told in 10 vignettes to demoralized younger golfers by the country club's most pompous old windbag, who hopes to boost their flagging morale and keep them from wrapping their clubs around trees. In *The Salvation of George Mackintosh*, Wodehouse cruelly dissects that most irritating of species - the boring, know-all golfer who just can't stop talking. Deliciously funny.

Scratch: An Eddie Caminetti Novel
By Troon McAllister
List Price: US\$13.95

Golf goes noir ... with a comedic twist. Well, kind of. The third in McAllister's series featuring to-cool-for-school hustler Eddie Caminetti (*The Green*, *The Foursome*), *Scratch* sees our world-weary hero - owner of the Swithen Bairn golf course on a paradisiacal "island in some ocean" - go head to head with the monomaniacal main man of a voracious multinational corporation. The rights to the ultimate, miracle golf ball are up for grabs. Only one can survive the no-holds-barred battle. Who will it be? A wonderful send-up of the professional golfing industry.

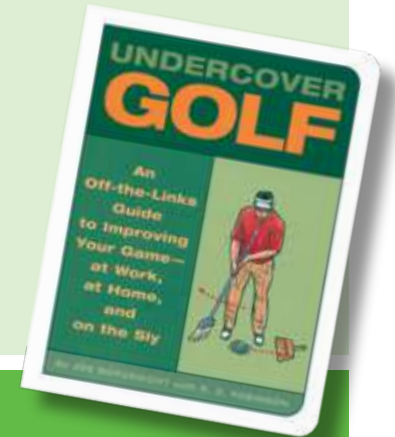
You're unlikely to lay your hands on the above tomes at the Foreign Languages Bookstore. But all are up for grabs via amazon.com



UNDERCOVER GOLF

Was the *aiyi* away for the National Day holidays? Nightmare! And you can bet she'll disappear again come Lunar New Year? But don't fret. Now you can practise the most venerable of sporting arts while mopping your own floor, while vacuuming your cheesy Tibetan-rug collection, or when picking up your own kids from their overpriced Shanghai kindergarten.

You simply need **UNDERCOVER GOLF**.



LESSON: TRAINING YOUR RIGHT-HAND GRIP WHILE HANGING SHIRTS

The Cover: You are hanging freshly laundered shirts in your closet.

The Objective: To correctly set your right hand. Do not attempt to train your right-hand grip using unbendable plastic hangers or while hanging pants [trousers].

The Gear: six or seven wire hangers; an equal number of button-style shirts.

The Technique:

Step 1: Prepare one of the hangers.

Press the centre of the horizontal hanger's horizontal bar up towards the base of the hook. This will form two wings about 3.8-5cm wide, one of which will serve as your club. (Additionally, the newly rounded corners of the hanger will eliminate visible hanger points on the shoulders of shirts that are not worn frequently.)

Step 2: Place the lower bar of the hanger across your open right palm.

With your palm facing up and your hand flat, place the hanger so that it runs diagonally across your fingers - from the base of your pinkie to the top of the middle joint of your index finger.

Step 3: Squeeze your right thumb and forefinger together.

Prepare your right hand by pressing from the base of your thumb and align your thumb and index finger so that the middle joint of your thumb touches the side of your index knuckle. Notice the small "V" formed between the pad of your thumb and your forefinger, with the base of the "V" at the point where the two come together (at the joints).

Step 4: Grip the hanger.

Curl your fingers up and fold your thumb over the top of the hanger so that the top wire runs directly up to the middle of the "V" described above. The top wire of the hanger should be running into the "V" formed in the palm of your hand - between the meaty pads at the bases of your thumb and pinkie. Use your left hand to shake out the shirt you are going to hang.

Step 5: Adjust your grip pressure points and insert the left arm of the hanger into a shirt sleeve.

Press up on the bottom wire using your ring and middle fingers, while simultaneously pressing down from the base of the "V". Note that there are three pressure points with which

you will hold your golf club with your right hand.

Step 6: Release your grip and complete hanging the shirt.

Step 7: Repeat steps 1 through 6 until all your shirts are hung or your right-hand grip is instinctive.



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Fantasy Island

Boss getting you down? Or perhaps you're the boss. And perhaps you're down? Whatever. Just pack your clubs and wave cheerio to the dark, work-a-day coalface. Come join us as we say "nay" to the 9-5, and indulge in the planet's finest golfing breaks. No stress; no worries; no hassles. We'll show you where. We'll show you how. Trust in SLICE. It makes sense.

Fantasy
It's got 18 holes. It's par 72; 7,028 yards. But honestly, take a good, long and lazy look at that picture and tell us you really give a damn.

Opened in late 2003 as part of a US\$32 million revamp of the One&Only Le Trouessrook resort, the mind-blowing Fantasy Island golf course - designed by European Ryder Captain Bernhard Langer - is nestled on the picture-postcard island of Ile aux Cerfs, just a wind-in-the-hair skip by water-taxi from the sun-drenched east coast of Mauritius. It's straight out of a Bond movie, and it's more fun than Pussy Galore.

You'll experience water from every hole, but that water will always be turquoise, inviting and just over your shoulder. The course winds between rocky outcrops, lakes, mangrove swamps and ravines, and they say the 562-yard, par-five dog-leg 9th hole could turn your dream holiday into a nightmare. We don't believe that. That's plain ridiculous.

When the sun is setting over the Indian Ocean, make for the chic and elegant 68-seat restaurant and bar in the clubhouse to celebrate or commiserate over a margarita or three. Or indulge yourself in the restorative charms of the resort's Givenchy Spa. Or pick up some putting tips at the David Leadbetter Golf Academy. Or enjoy a sensuous massage. Or relax in the Jacuzzi or ... come on, you get the pretty picture. You won't be rushing home when the gods are smiling.☑

Trou d'Eau Douce, Mauritius. Tel: (203) 402 7400. Course only open to hotel guests.



Q&A

Shanghai-based landscape architect Neil Haworth has carved out a fascinating career as one of Asia's most respected and sought-after designers. We strapped him into the SLICE Q&A hot seat. Al Campbell fired off the questions.

SLICE: Is there a trademark style to your designs? (Venerated American course architect) Pete Dye has the island hole. Jack Nicklaus designs are heavily bunkered ... What characterizes the designs of your company Nelson & Haworth Golf Course Architects?

NEIL HAWORTH: We try and make all our courses different, while ensuring playability remains challenging and enjoyable for all of them. If a course can be dramatic and very playable at the same time, then I think that is our signature characteristic. "Dramatic", however, can differ from course to course - from the classic, hilly style we incorporated at Sheshan Golf Club to the Irish links course we did at Suzhou Sun Island, which features 40-metre-high "dunes". These local courses are considered two of the best by Shanghai golfers.

SLICE: Chinese golf has only aimed at high-end golfers, leaving the game inaccessible to the masses. Is this damaging the sport's potential for future growth in China?

HAWORTH: For golf to succeed in China in the long term it will need more golfers. But developing

golf courses is a business, and developers must turn a profit. Local governments are not, after all, in the business of building and managing golf courses for public use. The potential for developing future golfers from all walks of life lies with corporations and the sponsorship of junior golf programmes or golf tours in China. Forward Golf Management from Shenzhen is organizing a very successful nationwide tour for golfers, while we are designing a 36-hole course in Shenzhen for OCT Group that will include 18 public holes. This way the developer balances business needs with a responsibility to make golf available to the general public.

SLICE: You designed Sheshan, the course that will host Tiger Woods and the HSBC Champions Tournament in November? Do you consider that an honour, or is it just another job in a stream of projects? What are the challenges Sheshan presents?

HAWORTH: Whenever the world's best play a course we designed, it's a great honour, especially if they enjoy the challenge. It's also an opportunity for us to get up close to learn how these guys play. Believe

me, their game is completely different to the one you and I enjoy. The course was specifically designed to have some long, tough par 4s and short gambling par 4s, some of which the pros will drive in one. I remember being at the Ryder Cup last year, standing on the 6th tee and watching the guys try and drive a short uphill par 4. It is exciting for players and spectators, and hopefully the European tour will set up a couple of holes like this to add excitement.

If the greens can be kept firm and fast, I think [Sheshan] will prove a fair test for all players. I also believe the club will put on a great show as General Manager David Townend has much experience managing competitions of this magnitude.

SLICE: Sheshan is so new and already being used to stage a tournament. Will those competing gain a true understanding of the course you envisaged? After all, the newly planted trees will not be fully grown, and therefore will not be a factor in the play.

HAWORTH: The purpose of the forest effect was to extend the natural character of the surrounding Sheshan National Park into the

course. As a result, most of the planted trees are outside the line of play and should not be a factor. But I think the golfers will understand very quickly the main strategic concepts we tried to create, but the subtleties of the greens should keep them guessing.

SLICE: You redesigned Shenzhen Golf Club - originally an Isao Aoki course - that is being used to stage the Volvo China Open, also in November. What did you try to achieve down there?

HAWORTH: It is quite interesting that the 2006 European Tour is starting with two Nelson & Haworth golf courses, and we are very excited about that fact. The difference between the two is in the greens. At Shenzhen, the greens are much more undulating and severe. And the trees have been around for 20 years, so when we redesigned the course, we ensured they took a role much more integral to the playability of the course. Once again, I think the pros will be fairly challenged, and should find it a good test of golf. I think.

SLICE: You are originally from Montreal, Canada, so how did you end up designing courses in Asia? Canada is a big country with lots of space for courses, but I get the impression it has a limited season because of the weather. Is that accurate?

HAWORTH: I graduated in landscape architecture from the University of Guelph outside Toronto in 1986. Four years later a fellow classmate visited to persuade me to come and work for the Belt Collins group of companies, of which he was director, in Hawaii and Singapore. Nelson &

Haworth, as we are now known, was the golf course architecture division for Belt Collins, and I worked on projects in Thailand, Bali and Malaysia. From there our company grew to one of the most successful working in the Pacific Rim.

As for Canada, we are still doing some work there but, unlike in China, economic conditions and environmental regulations limit the number of golf courses. Golfers in Canada love the game, which is accessible to all. During summertime, courses are full and golfers can play in daylight until 10pm in July.

SLICE: What other courses do you have on the go? Any favourites among those recently completed? Where should we be heading on our next golfing break?

HAWORTH: We currently have five projects under construction in China (Shanghai, Beijing, Shenzhen, Jiang Yin, Tianjin) with two more about to start (Sanya, Hong Kong). We also have work in Korea, Vietnam and an important 36-hole remodel job at the Royal Selangor Golf Club in Kuala Lumpur.

As for golfing trips ... for families, I think the best opportunity to combine golf with scuba diving or eco-tourism is Sabah, Malaysia. You can play our Shan Shui Golf Club, which was voted "Best Golf Course in Asia" (ahead of Spring City) a few years back, as well as dive on Sipadan Island, or see the orangutans up close and personal. For a high-end trip I would recommend Dubai, where there are some spectacular desert courses and the best hotels in the world. For a golfing trip with the guys, it is tough to

beat Thailand for its courses, prices and après-golf options. Vietnam is the up-and-coming destination, but it is still a couple of years behind the rest.

SLICE: The big designer names can charge possibly over US\$1 million for a design, and they usually only visit the site once or twice. Are they good value for the client and the golfer, who ultimately pays the price via higher green fees?

HAWORTH: The "big designer names", as you call them, can bring a marketing element to certain projects, especially to resorts or real-estate developments targeting golfers overseas.

Spring City in Kunming is a good example. While its Lake Course and Mountain Course were designed by signature-name companies, the actual project designers were Don Knott and Lee Schmidt respectively, who few golfers will have heard of. Here in China, the market has matured very quickly and golfers know the best courses, but not their architects. But a client can market Nelson & Haworth, for instance, as the designer of Sheshan Golf Club, Shenzhen Golf Club and [Yunnan's] Jade Dragon Snow Mountain, among others. This provides better marketing value for developers here than if I had won the British Open 15 years ago.

As for the cost of signature designers, someone has to pay it, and that will be either the golfers or homeowners if the project is financially successful, or the developer if they got the market wrong. It is critical for developers to understand the market and the real value of golf memberships and green fees. ■



Back-street drivers

Tired of the stuffy elitism pervading golf clubs in the countryside, a group of innovators has adapted the game to an urban environment. **Tim Bryan** reports from London. Pictures by **Linda Nyland**

A player stoops to analyse the lie. He must chip the overflowing rubbish, clear the construction site to his left and avoid the printing factory on the right. "Tricky," he muses, stroking his chin. "I think this calls for a sand wedge."

With the traditional swoosh of the backswing and the not-so-customary thwack of a golf club hitting a dumpster, the crowd greets the shot with mock "oooohs" and "aaahs" as the ball bounces and rests by a concrete bollard. There is a ripple of applause - the ball is playable, at least, unlike that of another golfer, whose ball is stuck under a Mercedes. He elects to drop, and it lands next to a scooter lying in the gutter. "Godammit," he exclaims. "Who parks a car on a golf course?"

Welcome to the whacky world of "Urban Golf", the anarchic new sport that's booming in popularity on grimy city streets worldwide. Taking the traditionally rural pastime of golf and dropping it into a city setting, Urban is turning the game's stuffy image on its head, before whacking it with a nine iron. It amuses and confuses in equal measure.

The cobbled, graffiti-decorated streets of Shoreditch, in London's gritty East End, host one of a growing number of Urban tournaments being held everywhere from California's San Francisco and Sienna in Italy to Cape Town in South Africa. Streets take the place of fairways, and a circular carpet doubles as a green, with flags protruding from holes crafted from open storm drains.

At the annual Shoreditch Open, organized by the local "golf club" (motto: "Never play in a thunderstorm. Take cover in the nearest pub or minicab [taxi] office"), caddies carry a tile of green carpet from which to tee off, though no tee is required. The ball is a strengthened Hacky Sack minus the beans, which skewer the shot. Only the clubs are unchanged, though you might not want to risk your best Callaways when playing on concrete.

A light-hearted sense of fun dominates - players sport quirky names like Karl Heinz Frostenigge (replete with fake mullet haircut and sun visor), Iron Giant, Puff Caddy and Davis Duffer Junior. The streetwise and distinctly leftfield dandies - mainly young city professionals who prefer to be handicapped by alcohol for events - are also decidedly tongue-in-cheek in their dress sense, opting for a garish 1970s look of bright-yellow plaid and diamond-patterned Pringle V-neck sweaters, or plus-fours and striped socks.

Dismissed as a fad by purists, Urban is winning plaudits for its sense of good old-fashioned fun - former European No. 1 Ronan Rafferty played in the inaugural tournament, and even though he shot a plus-30, "he loved it", says 33-year-old Jez Feakes, an architect by day, and organiser of the Shoreditch Open by night. "I'd love to do Tokyo, New York and Hong Kong: really urban places," says Feakes. But what could he make of Shanghai? Read on ...



With the not-so-customary thwack of a golf club hitting a dumpster, the crowd greets the shot with mock "oooohs" and "aaahs" as the ball bounces to rest by a concrete bollard



SLICE Salutes:

Jez Feakes - the brains behind the Shoreditch Urban Open

Slick in the city: Feakes leads the Urban charge through the centre of Sienna, Italy. Opposite: the Shoreditch "Fore!"

Urban taps into what architect and Shoreditch Open organizer Jez Feakes calls "a growing democratisation" of the golf across the world, a new philosophy rejecting the old-fashioned image that, he says, excludes popular culture and people from inner cities.

"I played a lot of golf between the ages of 14 and 18, but I gave it up when I came to London to study," says Feakes. "One day, I organised a game, but while I was on the fairway this woman just popped out of the bushes in front of me with some clubs and started playing. I was shocked. I asked her what she was doing and if she was a member. I got hauled over the coals by the club captain later on. He said she was the women's captain and she could do whatever she wanted. What a load of rubbish. There is too much of that at golf clubs. It's archaic."

Other incidents sparked the 33-year-old's imagination. While on a visit to Ireland, Feakes says he felt like a misfit carrying his golf clubs around. Later, he found himself in London with his clubs in tow. People were smirking, so he started asking passers by if anyone had seen his ball. "It got a laugh, but it also got me thinking. Why couldn't you play golf in the city? I left it in the incubator for a few years and now, here we are with the Shoreditch Open."

SLICE: The simplest of questions: what exactly is the attraction of Urban Golf?

FEAKES: Why are you talking to us? Because [Urban Golf] is hilarious. I suppose it's a bit like when some fool turned up on a ski slope with a surfboard, and everyone applauded his idiocy. And so snowboarding was born.

There is sheer exhilaration in driving a ball down a city street. Maybe I'm sad, but it makes me grin from ear to ear. For many, I think the attraction is the initial novelty, which soon wears off when you realize it takes a hell of a lot more skill to win than you might think. But I like golf. And every player selected [for the Shoreditch Open] gets to be a superstar on television for one day.

SLICE: Could Urban Golf ever replace the traditional "good walk spoiled" in verdant surroundings?

FEAKES: No, it'll never take over the verdant, brother. But it's much more accessible for spectators. We don't restrict to playing ability, and we definitely don't have outdated, archaic club rules (other than R&A). Any rules we

implement are there for the entertainment of others, and we make use of underutilized city areas during public holidays.

The [Urban] concept is steeped in design history, particularly architecture and architectural juxtaposition. It's an inherently destructive idea made reality. The truth is that there are so many people who once played traditional golf, and then moved to cities to study, etc, and who then discovered beer, girls, etc. That's us.

SLICE: Would you be interested if fellow golfers organized a similar event in Shanghai? How could they achieve that?

FEAKES: Of course! The only way to hold a Shanghai event would be through sponsorship, as we have done in London and elsewhere.

We're off to Edinburgh and Cape Town soon, where other [Urban Golfers] have followed our tournament plan to the letter and all has been approved. Shanghai could follow the same plan. It looks simple, but it took us three years to get the [Open] format right. We have the support of the golf development boards in Edinburgh and Cape Town, so we are by no means anti-golf. I'll see if we can get a few pros playing, too.

Intro: Tim Bryan. Pics: courtesy Jez Feakes



'Shabash' Kabul!

What a strange world we live in. In need of an adventure, **Gary Jones** stuck a pin in a map and panicked when it prodded Afghanistan. But he flew over the Hindu Kush from Urumqi to lend a hand at the Kabul Weekly newspaper, to become bored with lamb kebabs and to marvel at the battered but unbowed nation's fascinating golf course. Silly sod!

Crude facilities: putting on a black "green", made from a mixture of sand and oil, is just one of many outlandish experiences at Kabul Golf Club.

Think you've conquered extreme hazards while playing the world's most challenging golf courses? Slice or hook at this facility and your ball might land beyond the white-painted boulders that mark the limits of recent de-mining operations. Just over a year ago, the layout was littered with burned-out tanks, rocket launchers and the amassed detritus of decades of war. Security guards carry AK-47s and scan the surrounding hills for unfriendly spectators.

The battered clubhouse is pockmarked with bullet holes. The greens aren't green. They're black, and consist of a raked mixture of sand and oil. As for the rough ... well, everything here is rough. Water features have long since dried up, the only bunkers are of the military type, and there is little grass. Just rocks, hastily dug trenches, thistles and discarded cigarette packets.

Welcome to the nine-hole Kabul Golf Club, Afghanistan's only golf facility, which last year hosted the Kabul Desert Open, the first such tournament to be held in Afghanistan since Soviet Red Army tanks rumbled over the border in 1979 to kick off over two

In 1996, the hardline fundamentalist Taliban swept into power, and all hope of playing golf was lost. The killjoy Talibs also banned singing, dancing, TV and the flying of kites.

decades of conflict, continuing with a blood-soaked civil war, resulting in misery under the hardline fundamentalist Taliban regime, and culminating with their violent ousting courtesy of the US military's post-9/11 "Operation Enduring Freedom" in 2001-2002.

Originally constructed in 1967, during the reign of King Mohammad Zahir Shah, but moved to its present site after he was overthrown by his cousin in 1973, this otherworldly club is set among craggy foothills on the outskirts of the fabled Afghan capital. In its 1970s heyday, the lush, tree-lined facility, surrounded by mesmerizing and

towering snow-dusted peaks, was a huge hit with the diplomatic corp and the oasis city's liberal, Western-influenced middle classes. At the end of play, they would compare scores over imported beers and single-malt whiskies while listening to Abba and the Rolling Stones.

ACCORDING TO THE club's 48-year-old English-speaking pro Mohammad Afzal Abdul, however, the occupying Soviets were anything but keen golfers. The club was immediately closed with their invasion, and Abdul – a scratch player who has worked at the facility on and off for 30 years

– was accused of spying and locked up for six months. Unsurprisingly, he has no interest in welcoming Russian visitors to the club today. "Afghans can play, and foreigners from every country," insists Abdul, his world-weary face made tough and leathery by constant exposure to the fierce high-altitude sun. "But not Russians."

Things looked brighter when mujahideen fighters finally snatched back Kabul in 1988, and the club reopened – only to be shut down almost immediately with the outbreak of civil war, when mortar shells regularly whistled overhead and rival guerilla factions settled old scores.

In 1996, the medieval, black-turbaned Taliban swept into power, and all hope of playing golf was lost. The killjoy Talibs also banned singing, dancing, TV and the flying of kites. Once again, Abdul was arrested, to

be held for two months and tortured. "They said golf would keep us from our prayers," he groans painfully. "They flogged my feet with a cable, and took away all my clubs, trophies and pictures."

After his beating, despondent Abdul went into self-imposed exile in neighbouring Pakistan, returning in 2003 to find his beloved golf course littered with unexploded ordnance and shrapnel, the once-majestic trees felled for firewood by long-suffering Kabulis, and the clubhouse all but falling down. "It was a terrible sight," Abdul recalls.

UNDETERRED, ABDUL and a small clique of like-minded golf fanatics reopened the club in 2004. Today it

acts as a perfect metaphor for Afghanistan's recent woes, the club's troubled existence directly reflecting the bloodied nation's contemporary history, and perhaps its revitalization. While Kabulis struggle to get their capital back on its feet, to rebuild its schools and universities, hospitals and roads, to restore electricity and water, and to revive their prosperous pre-war society, Abdul and company are doing the same with their beloved golf course.

Though rumour says Ezatullah Atef, a former

of balls & bullets ...

First, this article *does not* encourage travel to Afghanistan. The country is still a very dangerous place to visit, and readers are urged to consult the travel advisories of their countries' diplomatic missions, and to heed such advice.

Okay, with that disclaimer out of the way (we don't want to be sued by any golfer coming back legless) ... Ariana Afghan Airlines flies to Kabul direct from Urumqi in China's Xinjiang province. Return fare is US\$380 (also payable in RMB). See www.flyariana.com for further details. Visas can be obtained from the Afghanistan Embassy in Beijing.

The comfortable Mustafa Hotel (tel: (070) 276 021) is located in the centre of Kabul. Rooms US\$35-60 a night. The Intercontinental Hotel (tel: (873 761) 469690 satellite phone, or 0202 2201 320 locally) offers the closest accommodation to the golf course, is the city's plushest residence and offers magnificent views. Rooms US\$80-130.

Green fee for two rounds of the nine-hole Kabul Golf Club course is 500 Afghanis or US\$10. Hire of a caddy is an additional 250 Afghanis.



Above: though rusting tanks and rocket launchers have been removed from the golf course, Kabul is still littered with reminders of two decades of war. Right: a caddy, out for a practice during downtime, clears rocks away from his ball.





Atten ... shun!
Caddies line up like
soldiers before the
start of the first
Kabul Desert Open.

warlord who once controlled 1,500 holy warriors in the hills around the course, is to inject funding to build an entire town – complete with a marina, luxury hotel, Mediterranean-style villas and ski complex – close to the club, rebirth has, so far, been modest. But progress is underway.

A senior United Nations' employee has donated second-hand clubs and balls. Though there is no 19th hole (Afghans are forbidden to buy alcohol under the current constitution), the club already has 300 members, and more than 100 of them are female. Under the Taliban, women were forbidden from playing sports or entering a sporting club, as well as from working outside the home, to study or to wear colourful clothes.

AND THE KABUL DESERT Open, played in September 2005 in aid of a local orphanage, can also be seen as a genuine step in the right direction.

The event attracted 20 teams – mostly consisting of diplomats, aid workers, security personnel and businessmen. An advisory sheet of "special techniques" for completing the nine holes counselled players to "attack the course" and to "play aggressively", and players teed off from portable squares of fake grass to heartfelt cries of "Shabash" – meaning "Bravo", or "Well played" – from club staff, journalists and assorted well-wishers.

The tournament's eventual winners were Americans Sam Hendricks, 35, and Jiffer Bourguignon, 28, who also work with the UN. And though entrants had been warned they would be playing "at their own risk"; though many players brought along their own caddies armed with machine guns; and despite a distant burst of gunfire heard during play, event organizers were delighted to report only one casualty. Hendricks' drive off the fourth tee struck a stray goat. ☐



"A magical experience"

John Barton, Editor-in-Chief of Golf Digest UK, and winner of the Pyongyang Open 2004



2006년 평양골프원정경기

British-run KORYO TOURS has organized trips to the DPRK since 1993, and has held the groundbreaking Pyongyang Golf Open since 2004.

NOW, GOLFERS of all levels are invited to enter this year's tournament, which will be held June 3-6 (return date may be extended).

As well as rounds on the secretive nation's two golf courses, this magical tour includes visits to the DMZ, the captured USS Pueblo, The Fatherland Liberation War Museum and a world-class circus. Visitors are accommodated at the Yanggakdo Hotel in Pyongyang, which boasts its own casino and is nestled next to the only course and driving range in the capital.

For the FIRST TIME ever ... US CITIZENS will be issued travel permits to take part in the event

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PUTT PROPER

In this issue of SLICE, tuition guru Michael Dickie will have you putting like a pro. You'll receive his top tips loud and clear on pages 64-69. But before we get down to business, let's ponder some innovative putters. They look mighty weird but they sure are wonderful. And they do the job right!



FRANKLY GOLF Frog

This oddball putter's lightweight machined-aluminium head features two tungsten weights positioned low and behind the face for great balance, and a high MOI for improved forgiveness and a positive roll to the ball immediately after impact. Features bold sight lines for easy alignment. Available in frog green, mother's day pink and sensible black. US\$169 from www.franklygolf.com.



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Designed by Bobby Grace, the V-Foil GT series offers a high moment of inertia (MOI) to eliminate twisting of the head, even on extreme toe and heel shots. The result: forgiveness and straighter putts. Call (86 20) 8297-4288 or email macnaid@pub.guangzhou.gd.cn for stockists. Find more details at www.macgregorgolf.com.



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GOOLIE BGS-33 and BGS-Ex

Goolie's Balanced Gravity System aims for minimized twisting during take away, stroke motion and after impact to provide forgiveness during miss hits. Not that we ever suffer those, of course. The BGS-EX head is 20 percent larger than that of the BGS-33, and while the BGS-33 comes with a choice of either single-bend heel shaft or straight centre shaft, the BGS-Ex features a uniquely designed double-bend heel shaft. From US\$199 to US\$239. Order online via www.gooliegolf.com.



MASTERS MC-Z700

Use the two heavy tungsten inserts to add weight to your putter for slower greens, or change to the two lighter aluminium weights for faster conditions. It's so easy! Visit www.mastersgolf.co.uk for facts and figures and confusing science.

OGIO, OGIO, OGIO!

Oi, Oi Oi!

With a background in skiing, skateboarding, biking and other action sports, Utah-based manufacturer OGIO is battling hard to reinvent the golf bag for the noughties. Apparently, they even designed and built their own "pimped-out golf cart", known as the BRV or "Battle-Ready Vehicle", from which to lead the charge. Order online via www.ogio.com. Prices vary.

EDGE

With style, attitude and functionality, the Edge sits somewhere between a tricked-out stand bag and a lightweight cart bag. This sleek, external-frame bag includes the zip-less ball pocket and an anti-twist strap. Nice! Available in red/black, dark blue/black, graphite/black and in a bizarre pattern they call "punk rock" (right), for some strange reason.



FEATHERLITE

Designed by a woman for women, the Featherlite delivers powerful features in its 8.4kg. Full-length three-weight dividers protect shafts, while OGIO's proprietary Crossbow Lite shoulder strap system facilitates comfortable transport between holes. In white/green, pink/white, cream/chocolate and pale blue/silver.

GROM

The company's top-selling bag of 2005. The eight-pocket Grom is outfitted with OGIO's patented anti-twist Torq strap, a walking-accessible water-bottle holster and a zip-less ball pocket. In camouflage/brown, yellow/black, blue/black and just plain honest-to-goodness black.



EXO

OGIO claims it brings "sex appeal" to the golf bag. SLICE asks, how on earth can a golf bag be sexy? Oh well. It takes all sorts, we guess. This external-frame bag, re-engineered for 2006, delivers the necessary with nine pockets (including an internal cell-phone pocket). In orange/black, lime/black/blue/black, scarlet/black and black.



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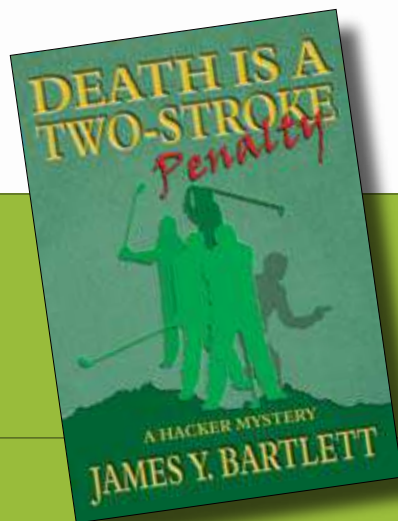


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RATTLING READS

Summer's here and the beaches of Southeast Asia will be calling soon. With no decent airport bookshop to speak of at Pudong, best load up via the net before any jaunt, we venture.

We're raving about the words and wisdom of James Y. Bartlett, one of the most productive of golf scribes whose pithy takes on the game have graced *Forbes*, *Esquire*, *Hemispheres* and dozens of other quality rags. Fact or fiction, Bartlett has all your page-turning needs covered.

MATTER OF FACT

Back Swings:

A Golf Omnibus

Long considered one of the best travel writers in the business, and author of more than a million words on golf in his jammy career, Bartlett's finest non-fiction work is crammed into this single pick-up-put-down-pick-up-again tome. The smashing essays on golf's great and good, on tournaments and events, will delight even the most grumbling holiday golfer. US\$19.99 from www.amazon.com.



WHODUNNIT

Death is a Two-Stroke Penalty

The novel that started the *Hacker Golf Mystery* series. You haven't read one yet? That you'd better fix. From the first tee to the last putt, this tale offers a surreal golf trip with twists aplenty.

Behind the scenes of the Carolina Open, and golf hack Pete Hacker is confronted with the death of an up-and-coming young star. An accident? Or was it murder? Was it his smart financial-analyst wife Becky, long-time rival Bert Lewis, golf groupie Jean MacGarrity, drug-dealing caddy Jocko "Drugstore" Moore, or fundamentalist PGA preacher Brother Ed Durkee? Find out for US\$11.99 from www.amazon.com.



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Left to right, the Apex, the Vortex and the Equinox. At www.cross.com



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They won't see you coming. www.oakley.com





So many people say today's players are the best. It is not true!

Now in his eighth decade, Gary Player has never been afraid to voice an opinion. **Al Campbell** cornered the South African giant on his recent visit to Shanghai, with Player holding court on everything from how Tiger would fare against the greats of yesteryear to staying fighting fit and shaking it with Elvis.

SLICE: You're 70 years old, look great and have done just about everything in golf. Do you still have game?

PLAYER: I have broken my age 30 times already this year, and it is only June. I can still play. I am still very confident. I still believe I could win on the Seniors Tour, though I would have to have everything going extremely well.

SLICE: Being fit has always been instrumental to your success. What is your exercise regime?

PLAYER: Extremely stringent. I got this [Gary slaps his flat stomach, making SLICE feel extremely inferior]. Like a plank. I am doing 1,000 crunches, the majority with an 80-pound [36.2-kilogramme] weight. I am working on my whole body. I am leg squatting 400 pounds. I am doing it about five times a week due to my travel schedule.

SLICE: How long do you think you can keep playing competitively?

PLAYER: I will play in the Masters two more years because I want to beat Arnold Palmer's record. I will tie him next year, and then break it the following year with 51 appearances. I have also played in the British Open 48 times consecutively.

SLICE: What are you reading now? Anything we should know about?

PLAYER: I am reading a book called *The China Study*, and it is the best book I have ever read on nutrition. I am trying to eat ... not like the city Chinese people, who are eating poorly ... but like rural people. Their cholesterol level is 117, whereas in America it is 227. The biggest problem facing the Western world is obesity. And it is going to happen [in China]. The tragedy is that we in the West are trying to eat like the old Chinese, and now the Chinese are starting to eat like people in the West. To me, the greatest problem facing the West is not all the wars, but obesity. ☐

Gary Player's answers have been edited for length and clarity. Picture: Reuters.



A lot of young guys, in today's massive industry, are playing for first prize of US\$1 million a week, which is more money than Ben Hogan or Sam Snead won in their lives.

Left: Player celebrates victory at the British Open Golf Championship in 1959. The South African great has won 163 tournaments in an incomparable career. Insert: getting to grips with the King in Los Angeles, 1961.

SLICE: You're very into design these days, with 35 projects under construction or in the planning stage. You have also designed 8.5 courses in China, and have new projects in the Suzhou Jinji Lake International and Nanjing Zhongshan facilities. Is China going the right way in golf development?

PLAYER: That's the most projects we have had on the go at one time, by the way. The big thing in China – and this is where the government has to be careful – is that when permission is given for a golf course, they need to know who is going to manage it and look after conditions.

I have a genuine interest in seeing Chinese golf move ahead, as I do in all countries. I was in Japan when the golf-course boom started. I am not just here to make money and run. [Authorities] need to be wise and not just allow any architect into China. The person needs to have qualifications and be scrutinized to some degree.

Golf could be a big thing [for China]. Golf courses create demand in manufacturing, exportation and tourism. All these create employment, but it is so easy to go the wrong way.

SLICE: Tell us about Suzhou Jinji Lake. It has 54 holes in wetland, parkland and links-style layouts. Is it difficult to build three types of course in one venue?

PLAYER: All sites present challenges. If I think of the 225-plus golf courses that I have created around the world, nine of the holes at Suzhou are top five. We have done something that old Scots will really appreciate. We have come up with a new system of bunkering with five different styles, so it's going to be fascinating. The site was below land level so we moved, I would estimate, 14 million cubic metres of soil. The other two courses are wide, with big greens, and beautiful.

SLICE: How would Tiger have fared in the 1960s and 1970s, when Jack Nicklaus, Arnold Palmer and yourself dominated golf?

PLAYER: Tiger stands alone at the moment, [though] he is driving the ball poorly. But despite having two or three years of bad driving, he still remains number one, which shows how great he is. Tiger would have been a champion in any era, and I would love to play with him today with [modern] equipment. Yesterday I was hitting it 280 yards. For a 70 year old, how is that possible? I never did that when I was younger.

SLICE: So is Tiger the best there has ever been?

PLAYER: So many people say that today's players are the best. It is not true. Ben Hogan, Sam Snead and Byron Nelson ... if you took those three, they were better than whoever the big three are today. Also, you had more players capable of winning majors then than now. But now, to win a regular tournament event is way tougher. We had 65 guys who could win, now they have 100 guys who can win. A lot of young guys have never even heard of [South African] Bobby Locke, who was the best putter who ever lived. But that's life. We progress.

SLICE: Speaking of a different era, you met Elvis after winning the 1961 Masters. What golfing celebrities have you played with over the years?

PLAYER: It was in Los Angeles and Elvis was filming the movie *Blue Hawaii*. He wanted to meet me having just won the Masters, and I wanted to meet him having loved his music so much. It was a great experience just watching him. I gave him a golf lesson but I don't think he ever took up the game. I have played with lots of celebrities. Bing Crosby was a good player. Bob Hope was a 12 or 14 handicap. James Garner was a two.

SLICE: You always dress well. Have clothes always been a big part of the Gary Player image?

PLAYER: Very much so, because I couldn't afford to dress properly as a young man. People forget my

humble beginnings when I had nothing. My father was poor and I had a very tough upbringing. I suffered and struggled and today I am very thankful. A hallmark of my life is appreciation, being thankful.

SLICE: Is there too much golf today, with so many new tournaments and no break in the schedule? Many faceless middle-of-the pack golfers are earning over a US\$1 million a year without ever winning.

PLAYER: A lot of young guys, in today's massive industry, are playing for first prize of US\$1 million a week, which is more money than Ben Hogan or Sam Snead won in their lives. Guys today win in three years what I won in my entire life, with me having won 163 golf tournaments, which I may say is a world record. But money was never the criteria for me. I never actually teed it up for money. I wanted to be the best. That's why I went to Australia and won seven Australian Opens. I shot a 264 [a 72-hole aggregate, 28-under score in 1965 at Kooyongal] that's never been beaten. What an experience. What a life.

SLICE: You have been a big champion of your native South Africa during your career. It looks beautiful. Why should golfers go there at least once in their lives? The safety factor is obviously a bit of a concern.

PLAYER: South Africa today is probably the best tourism destination. Safety is improving. [Visitors need] to go to the right places. The price is another factor. Most currencies are stronger than ours. The climate is wonderful. We have the best game reserves in the world, beautiful wineries ...

SLICE: You are going to captain the Rest Of The World team, for the third consecutive time, at next year's President's Cup in Montreal. You led the team to a draw in 2003 and narrowly lost last year. Is the role important to you?

PLAYER: Most of the players I have spoken to prefer the President's Cup to the Ryder Cup. On paper, the Rest Of The World has the better team than either Ryder Cup side. Day in and day out, playing either America or Europe, we would beat them. One of the great things about [the Cup] tournament is that presidents attend. It educates governments about the importance of golf. In South Africa, we needed that, and China needs that too. Of the matches last year, there were 1,031 holes, and we lost by one hole. And we played without Ernie Els. ■



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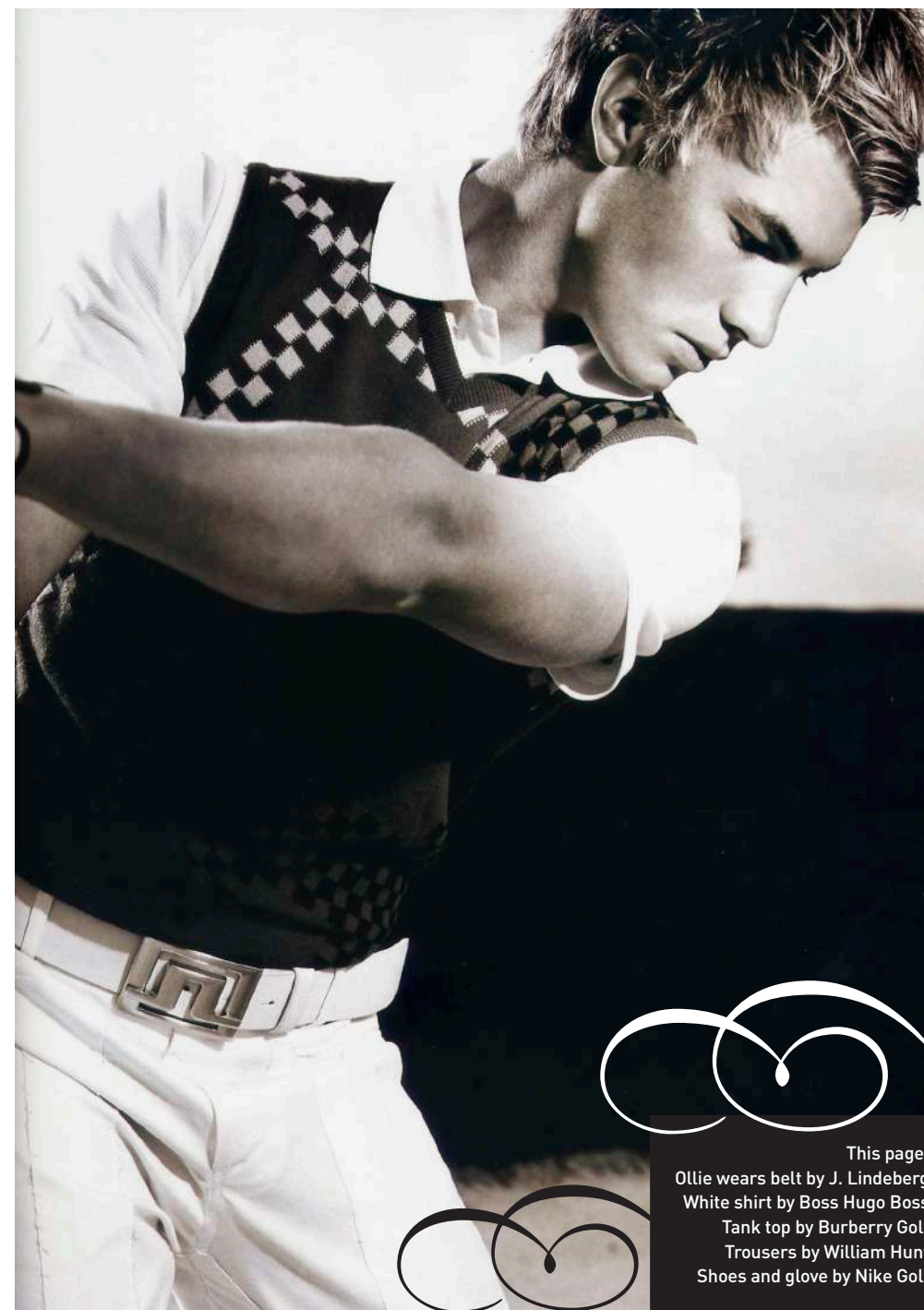
For details, please visit www.shanghaibyc.org.

Look sharp

SLICE checks out the future of fairway fashion at the venue for the 2010 Ryder Cup. Rising star Ollie Fisher does the modelling honours

All swinging, all dancing

Ollie wears jumper by J. Lindeberg
 Shirt by Bally Golf
 Trousers and belt by William Hunt
 Shoes by Nike Golf



This page:
 Ollie wears belt by J. Lindeberg
 White shirt by Boss Hugo Boss
 Tank top by Burberry Golf
 Trousers by William Hunt
 Shoes and glove by Nike Golf

Course listings

The rest for the wicked



Golf Clubs & Resorts

Grand Shanghai International Golf & Holiday Resort

Yangcheng Lake Holiday Zone, Kunshan, Jiangsu. CHINESE ADDRESS. Tel: (0512) 5789-1999. Web: www.grandshanghai.com.

Membership US\$40,000. Eighteen holes, par 72, 7,066 yards. Driving range, pro-shop, Chinese and Japanese restaurants, locker room, spa, sauna, dance hall, members' lounge and shuttle bus.

"This course is 60 kilometres from downtown Shanghai, but it's well worth braving the traffic and getting an early start. Designed by Ronald Fream, one of the most respected names in the business, Grand Shanghai boasts a rolling, resort-style layout with an abundance of water and sharp drop-offs. The resort claimed the China Golf Award for Most Characteristic Fairways in 1999 and 2000."

Kunshan SunIsland International Golf Club

First exit off Hu Ning highway, north of Shuang Yang Lake, Zhang Pu township, Kunshan City, Jiangsu. CHINESE ADDRESS. Tel: (0512) 5745-1688/87. Web: www.sunislandclub.com. E-mail: pro@sunislandclub.com.

Membership US\$32,000. Weekday specials for public on Tuesdays. Eighteen holes, par 72, 7,208. Driving range, pro-shop and locker room.

Al Campbell casts his discerning eye over the best of the rest. ALL of the courses and driving ranges in and around the city will be come under the SLICE spotlight via detailed, unbiased reviews in coming issues of Shanghai's most spot-on golf mag.

"The second golf club in the SunIsland series designed by Nelson & Haworth. Features elevation changes rarely seen amid Shanghai's generally pancake-flat topography. Wide berths off the tee are met with strategically placed bunkers and ample water. Motorised carts compulsory."

Sanyang Golf & Country Club

Luzhi Town, Wu Zhong District, Suzhou City, Jiangsu. CHINESE ADDRESS. Tel: (0512) 6501-0980. Web: www.sanyanggolf.com.

Membership US\$32,000. Public days Monday, Tuesday and Friday. Eighteen holes, par 73, 7,160 yards. Guest rooms, driving range, restaurant, pro-shop, function rooms, sauna and Jacuzzi, locker rooms and shuttle bus.

"Scenic layout on an old silkworm plantation (?) with several holes built on reclaimed land from Jin Chun Hoo (Gold Lake). The 225-yard third is among the best in Shanghai, while the 525-yard 16th features an ultra-slick bent-grass green that is arguably the most difficult in the area. The club hosted the 2002 Suzhou Classic on the fledgling Chinese PGA Tour."

Shanghai Binhai Golf

Binhai, Nanhui, Pudong. CHINESE ADDRESS. Tel: (021) 5805-8888.

Web: www.binhaigolf.com.

Membership (annual) 3,880rmb. Fairy Lakes Course: 18 holes Par 72, 7,069 yards. Forest Course: nine holes. Par 72, 7,000 yards. Driving range, CHINESE ADDRESS and Western restaurant, pro-shop, sauna and Jacuzzi, bar, locker room and shuttle bus.

"This course may be 70 minutes out of town but it is well worth the trek. Designed in a unique Scottish-links style by five-time British Open champion Peter Thomson, the course features heavy mounding and deep riveted pot bunkers. The ever-present winds blowing off the East China Sea mean you should keep your shots low to score well."

Shanghai Golf Club

12 Shuang Tang Cun, TangHang Town, Jiading District. CHINESE ADDRESS. Tel: (021) 5995-0111. No website.

Membership US\$58,000 (transferable). Eighteen holes, par 72, 7,131 yards. Driving range, pro-shop, Japanese Jacuzzi, locker rooms and restaurant.

"This hardcore Japanese-members' club designed by Designed by Kentarou Sato is located about 50 kilometres DIRECTION of town. Rolling layout features plenty of water with the wet stuff coming into play on 16 of

the 18 holes. Not to be confused with Shanghai's original course from the early 20th century which closed in 1949 and was converted into Shanghai Zoo in 1954."

Shanghai Grand City Golf Club

9988 Zhongchun Road, Qibao Town, Minhang District. CHINESE ADDRESS. Tel: (021) 6419-3676. No website.

Nine holes, par 54, 2,670 yards. Driving range, golf training centre, pro-shop, Japanese restaurant, sauna and massage, swimming pool and gym.

"If your short game is ailing, be sure to check out Shanghai Grand. The nine-hole executive course features par threes ranging from 85 to 240 yards. An abundance of water and tight fairways add to the challenge. Facility features a full training centre. No membership is required and nine holes with caddie is a steal at as low as 130rmb on weekdays."

Shanghai International Golf and Country Club

Zhu Jia Jiao, Qingpu County, PROVINCE. CHINESE ADDRESS. Tel: (021) 5972-8111. Web: www.scc.com.

Membership sold out. Public day Thursday. Eighteen holes, par 72, 7,025 yards. Driving range, three-hole mini course, accommodation, tennis, swimming, restaurant and a second club house.

"The return of golf to Shanghai in the modern era got off to a good start with the 1991 opening of this 18-hole Robert Trent Jones II-designed layout. Water is in abundance and many of the holes require accurate shots to carry the wet stuff, either to stay in the fairways or hit the greens."

Membership is long sold out and there is a lengthy waiting list."

Shanghai Links Golf & Country Club

1600 Ling Bai Road, Pudong. CHINESE ADDRESS. Tel: (021) 5897-5899. Web: www.thelinks.cm.cn. Email: marketing@thelinks.com.cn.

Membership US\$90,000. Private. Eighteen holes, par 72, 7,100 yards. Driving range, pro-shop, tennis courts, locker room, Asian and Western restaurant and shuttle bus.

"Shanghai's most expensive membership club is a fine example of a Jack Nicklaus-designed, links-style course. 'The Golden Bear', a prolific winner of Open championships, has drawn on his extensive knowledge of British courses to create a great test of golf. The layout is wide in places to let rip the 'big stick' while some excellent par-threes require accurate club selection. The club, which is connected to the American School of Shanghai, has recently started construction of its US\$20 million clubhouse."

Shanghai Qi Zhong Golf Club

Kunyang Road, Qi Zhong, Minhang District. CHINESE ADDRESS. Tel: (021) 6409-1256. No website.

Membership US\$32,000. Public days Monday and Thursday. Eighteen holes, par 72, 7,200 yards. Driving range, pro-shop, tennis, swimming pool, Chinese and Western restaurant, sauna and Jacuzzi and guest rooms.

"European-style course with wide fairways. An abundance of sand traps and undulating topography give this course bite. The Tif dwarf greens, if cut short, can often make

for tricky putts. Designed by TRC."

Shanghai Riviera Golf Resort

277 Yangtze Road, Nanxiang, Jiading. CHINESE ADDRESS. Tel: (0512) 5912-6888. No website. E-mail: Riviera@public7.sta.net.cn.

Membership US\$25,000. Eighteen holes, par 61, 3,507 yards. Driving range, pro-shop, restaurant and locker rooms.

"Executive-style course by the late Bob Martin, the same man who designed the excellent Shanghai Silport layout. The course is ideal for sharpening your short game as there are only par three and par four holes. The longest is 307 yards, while the shortest is 95. The fact that there is water on every hole adds drama."

Shanghai Silport Golf Club

Dian-Shan Lake, Kunshan. CHINESE ADDRESS. Tel: (0512) 5748-1111. Web: www.silportgolf.com. Email: silport@public1.sz.js.cn.

Membership US\$66,000 (transferable). Weekday specials for public on Wednesday and Thursday (call for details). Twenty-seven holes, par 108, 10,344 yards. Driving ranges at course and in town, function rooms, pro-shop, Asian and Western restaurant, sauna, bar, locker rooms, VIP rooms and shuttle bus.

"As host venue for the Volvo China Open the last xx years, Silport ranks among Shanghai's top courses. The 27-hole facility features an abundance of water and fantastic conditions throughout. It's a true test of golfing prowess. The club will expand to 36 holes by late 2004 with nine new holes by renowned US designer Roger Packard."

Shanghai Binhai Golf Club

Ocean's 18 ... and another 18, and 18 more to come

When Aussie great Peter Thomson set out to design Shanghai Binhai Golf Club's coastal Fairy Lakes course in the late 1990s, the five times British Open winner was presented with a dull plain of reclaimed land battered by vicious gales. Today, Binhai offers one of Shanghai's most varied and challenging days out. We call it "Links - China style". And it's arguably the best value-for-money deal in town.

Imagine a Scottish links course at which the mercury can soar well into the upper 30s. We know it's a tall order. But stretch your imagination, dear golfing daydreamer. Open wide that bleary mind's eye and ... there, can you see it? Yes? You can? You've conjured up the splendid, demanding and varied Shanghai Binhai Golf Club.

Located in the non-descript Nanhai area of Pudong, about 20 minutes from the international airport and an hour from downtown Puxi, Binhai doesn't quite stretch to being a 100 percent-faithful links course with giant sand

dunes and mounding created naturally by the sea. But fortunately, and most importantly for most of us, it is eminently affordable. No crippling US\$50,000 memberships here. Binhai only demands 3,880rmb from the wallet via its annual "Par Membership" deal.

Set on a chunk of reclaimed land that previously hosted scattered fish farms and unkempt fields, the original Binhai site was far from an ideal starting point for a magnificent golf course. "It was low-lying and wet, and a lot of thought had to go

towards uplifting it to safe heights," recalls designer Peter Thomson - arguably Australia's greatest golfer who carried away no fewer than five British Open championship trophies in the 1950s and '60s.

Clearly, Thomson of Australian outfit Thomson, Wolveridge & Perrett Golf Course Designers knows a thing or two about links, and his expertise shines through like a coastal beacon at the demanding Fairy Lakes layout, the first 18 holes completed at Binhai in 2000. The second 18 holes - making up the more-forgiving

Forest Course - soft opened at the end of 2004. Binhai has ambitious plans to eventually become a 54-hole resort featuring a hotel and private residences within the next few years. Its third 18-hole layout, the Wetlands Course designed by Malaysia-based Australian Ted Parslow of E&G Parslow and Associates, is currently under construction and promises a spectacular and dramatic seaside location.

"(The Fairy Lakes design) is faithful to our philosophy of emulating, in some ways, the





Signature hole ↓

Surprisingly, with all the magnificent holes on the Fairy Lakes course, the new upstart Forest Course boasts the club's signature hole. The par-five, 552-yard second hole is an excellent risk-reward hole. With the dogleg right fairway wrapping around a large lake, a good tee shot will set a player up with a shot at the green and a potential eagle. A large bailout area at the front of the green makes the opportunity even more inviting to go for it. There is also excellent potential for a regulation par as the fairway is wide and forgiving in many places.

Fairy Lakes Course:

18 holes

par 72, 6,894 yards

Forest Course:

18 holes

par 72, 7,000 yards



great courses of the world," says Thomson. "It is an international course that could stand its ground anywhere. It comprises a routing that uses the change of direction to advantage. It has enough length [7,069 yards], greens of serious undulation to make putting a challenge, and various hazards in the form of wetlands and bunkers of serious and friendly depth."

Sounds fabulous, right? But Fairy Lakes occasionally draws complaints - usually from grouchy, underachieving malcontents uninitiated to links golf - for what they call the "unfair" placement and abundance of bunkers. Indeed, this is a course not for the faint

of heart. It makes and tolerates no excuses, and features deep riveted bunkers that make accuracy essential, elevated greens with undulating putting surfaces, and strong, direction-changing winds blowing in from the East China Sea. Fairy Lakes can be a monster when the weather's rough. It's the closest thing Shanghai has to a cruel and heartbreaking British coastal layout.

The 18-hole Forest Course, which completed 18 holes last year, is another beast entirely that favours the higher handicapper. The name is misleading - there is a dearth of trees and the parkland-style course is wide open to the elements. The initial feel is of a layout designed on

a computer screen. All that should come to a welcome end when an extensive tree-planting programme breaks earth in coming years.

Designer Nick Song of Lanxing Golf has made extensive use of water in his Forest layout, notably on holes 13 and 14. As the course is located at the entrance to Binhai's extensive chunk of property, there are no ocean views.

The par-four 13th is a hard dogleg left that wraps around a lake from tee to green. The temptation is to go for the green in two, and change the hole into a par-three birdie attempt. Wind will play a major role in deciding whether to go for it or not. The 14th is an interesting par

five that again borders a lake for its entire length. Long hitters can cut off the edge of the lake and go for the green in two, but anything but a confident hit will likely end up wet.

Finally, a polite SLICE warning: though the 3,880rmb Par Membership deal includes unlimited golfing on weekdays with no green fees, the fine print reveals a cost of 200rmb each time you play to cover caddie and facilities. The total rises to 580rmb on weekends. The club shuttle bus costs 40rmb round trip.

That's not a complaint - while half of China's 200-plus golf clubs lost money in 2004, Binhai had the balance right between what

it charges, and what it offers the discerning golfer. It makes money by offering a decent product at a fair price, and so the club has recently overhauled its restaurant facilities, added a 340-player men's locker room and an expanded pro-shop. Check it out when you can. □

Shanghai Binhai Golf Club
Nanhui District, Pudong. CHINESE
ADDRESS HERE. Tel: (86 21)
5805-8888. Fax: (8621) 5805-8588.
Web: www.binhaigolf.com. Email:
marketing@binhaigolf.com.

It is an international course that could stand its ground anywhere



Sheshan Golf Club

Mountain low, expectations high

Here they are - Shanghai's most challenging and rewarding courses reviewed in detail. We'll feature half a dozen hotspots in every issue of **SLICE**. And the ball starts rolling with the exacting and (yes, life is never easy) the excruciatingly expensive Sheshan Golf Club. If you haven't yet heard of it ... trust us, you will. And soon! Read on and weep for all you've been missing.

Any day now, Sheshan will become a household name for golfers and golf fans across our green and pleasant planet. In November 2005, Tiger Woods will head up an impressive field of golfing giants at the HSBC Champions Tournament in Shanghai. With a purse of US\$5 million, it will be the richest and most prestigious tournament ever held in Asia, and it will be televised globally. The star-studded event will attract event winners from five different PGA-sanctioned tours. Naturally, the venue of choice is the magnificent Sheshan Golf Club.

Sheshan's opening in October 2004 massively raised the bar for the standard of courses in Shanghai. Sheshan is currently the polished yardstick by which others are judged.

With an emphasis on Tuscan aesthetics and unashamed luxury, the tranquil, suburban club's lifetime membership is by invitation only, and at a sky-high US\$90,000, placing Sheshan among the most expensive and elitist in China's commercial capital. No walk ons are permitted, naturally. Only the connected and the well-heeled get to savour this impressive and challenging 18-hole Nelson & Haworth layout.

Located 32 kilometres from the central business district, Sheshan is nestled at the base of the area's tallest 'mountain', which towers ... just 95 metres. A Catholic church, built in xxx and the most ancient in China, tops the humble peak and serves as the club logo. Sequestered within the already heavily forested Sheshan Natural Tourism Resort,



10,000 more trees, mainly pine and melaleuca, were planted during course construction. Shanghai course designers Nelson & Haworth expect a vastly different and wooded atmosphere come the trees' maturity.

Topography and attention to detail, however, ensure Sheshan stands head and shoulders above most of the 200-odd clubs in mainland China. Though Shanghai and its surroundings are situated on a flat, alluvial plain, the course has been built up to elevations as high as 20 metres to bring exciting shot variations to the bent-grass fairways, which can be wide and undulating.

The 200-yard (black tee) par-three fourth hole would easily be the signature hole at most clubs, but, oh no, not here. Dawdling barges ply the canal lining the entire left flank of the fairway, and an ancient stone wall and giant trees bring olde-worldle

Only a 1,000-year-old ginkgo tree, which sits directly behind the green, reminds that, yes, we are still in 'the middle kingdom'



Europe to mind when standing on the tee box.

Only a 1,000-year-old ginkgo tree, which sits directly behind the green, reminds that, yes, we are still in 'the middle kingdom'. Visual treats abound at Sheshan.

The 16th and 17th signature holes wrap around an old quarry. Measuring 130 metres by about 30 metres, and with a drop of 80 metres into water, these holes, particularly the 16th, are likely to have players second-guessing as to club selection. Water comes into play on 10 holes, and is especially prominent on holes two, nine and 18, where the greens are all visible from the verandas of the splendid Tuscan-style clubhouse.

"We are also the only course in Shanghai using a management

consultant company; we are working with [sports management giant] IMG as our consultants," says Sheshan general manager David Townend, an ex-Australian touring pro who previously served in a similar capacity at Shanghai SunIsland and Taiwan's Ta Shee Taoyuan club. "The clubhouse is totally unique. We brought Tuscan style to Shanghai, a style that has since been heavily copied. The Italian-style Tuscan clubhouse, which is very homely, is not like a typical clubhouse, which can sometimes be a little commercial and cold. It is "like walking into something that you want to make your home."

Much like the 226 luxury residential properties at Sheshan, which, it should be well noted,

do not impose on the course, the practice facilities are first rate. Townend says club owner Cheung Youcai, a property developer from Zhejiang Province, is passionate about the game. Cheng's long-term plan calls for a youth programme to develop China's next generation of professional golfers.

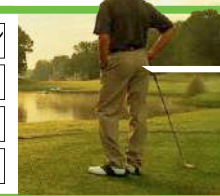
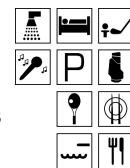
And the coming HSBC Champions Tournament at Sheshan is sure to spur them on. Though the iconic Woods appeared in an exhibition in China in 2001, this will be the big man's tournament debut on the mainland. Victors from the European, Asian, Japan GTO, Australasian and South African tours are also scheduled to thrill golfers across China at the much-anticipated event. 

Signature hole

The presence of an old quarry dominates Sheshan's two signature holes – the 16th and 17th. The 288-yard 16th is a reachable par four that is an ultimate risk-reward challenge. With the right side of the fairway and green wrapped around the quarry, anything right or short and you'll be teeing off again.

The presence of a two-metre deep pot-style bunker to the left of the green should have you jittery on the approach. The 191-yard 17th features five sets of tee boxes, and all shots have to fly directly back across the quarry to reach a large green that slopes left to right toward that menacing quarry.

Yardage: Par 72
Black tees 7,143 yards
Blue tees 6,779 yards
White tees 6,225 yards
Red tees 5,436 yards



Sheshan Golf Club, Linyin Avenue, Shanghai Sheshan National Holiday Zone, Shanghai. CHINESE ADDRESS HERE.

Tel: (86 21) 5779-6689. Fax: (86 21) 5779-6682. Web: www.sheshangolf.com. Email: marketing@sheshangolf.com.



Our man on the fairways

Our Spotlight course reviews are rushed to **SLICE** readers from the smoking keyboard of Al Campbell, former editor of Singapore-based Asian Golf Monthly magazine, and a veteran reporter on the rapid and thrilling growth of the Chinese and Asian golf scenes.

The 42-year-old Canadian has covered the region's most prestigious tournaments at professional and amateur levels for over a decade, getting up close and personal with the game's most accomplished players and its fledgling stars of tomorrow.

"Tiger Woods' first visit to China was a circus, attracting fans and the curious to a sport most had never played or knew little about," says Campbell of covering the superstar's historic inaugural visit to China in 2001. "It was only an exhibition but it really teed off - excuse the pun - the growth of golf in China."

A resident of Asia for over 11 years, Campbell's expertise and educated opinions have also enlivened the pages of Hong Kong's South China Morning Post and the Shanghai Daily newspapers, as well as Star Television's essential Sportslive programme, which he contributed to as a script writer. When not playing or writing about the game he loves, Campbell sleeps and dreams of slashing his 22 handicap down to a single figure.

Shanghai Silport Golf Club

SLICE humbly bows before the forward-thinking management of one of the most complete and unaffected golf experience in the country. Shanghai Silport Golf Club is the real deal just watch out for the lions and tigers and bears. They might just improve your game.

100% pure golf, with good luck added

It has taken just one decade for Shanghai Silport Golf Club to become synonymous with tournament golf at its highest level in China. And yet, even with six consecutive Volvo China Open tournaments from 1999 to 2004 under its belt, this peaceful, rural club - located in Jiangsu province just beyond the border of Shanghai municipality - refuses to rest on its bushy laurels. Club officials freely admit they want to do much more than manage an excellent golf club. They are determined to leave a legacy. They might just succeed.

The club's softly spoken owner is Beta Soong. Though the unassuming Taiwanese industrialist oversees more than 100 flourishing businesses, Silport is his labour of love. When Soong took his first tentative steps into the business in the early 1990s, he vowed to create an experience that was *pure golf*. His mission was not a real-estate venture poorly disguised as a golf club, like many in China. True to his words, Soong has created a wonderful escape from the concrete jungle - Silport is cheerfully free of a luxurious and expensive, tagged-



Spotlight

on residential development, no overhead power lines ... none of the unsightly distractions that spoil so many high-end clubs.

Getting down to business, the 27-HOLE? layout was designed by Bob J. Martin, a former US touring pro who worked as a site construction coordinator for Jack Nicklaus' nascent design company in the early 1980s. After years of working for the "Golden Bear" in Asia, Martin branched out on his own when Soong gave him the once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to design Silport.

The influence of his former employer's style is clear, however - the club exhibits the Nicklaus' trademark of huge waste bunkers scattered throughout the resort-

style course.

Water is another key factor in the layout, and the wet stuff comes into play in all 18 of the club's Championship Course, which is made up of West and Centre layouts. Fish farms and barges operating on the perimeter canals boost the tranquil, old-world ambiance.

While the prevalence of water proves a frustrating bane to most amateurs, so too do the greens, which are overseeded according to the seasons. A combination of different types of blues grasses and tif dwarf on tricky, sloping greens can make for a difficult read on the hard surfaces, and result in a three putt.

Cultured Soong, who also owns,

designed and built Tiger Beach Golf Links in Shandong province, also has a fiery passion for art, and 40 ancient Chinese statues decorate the Silport courses. The stone animals, mostly from the Ming (1368AD-1644AD) and Qing (1644AD-1911AD) dynasties, were collected over 25 years of schlepping across the middle kingdom. The most expensive pair set him back 1.5 million yuan (US\$181,200). "The old stone animals are said to have special powers that can bring the place where they sit good fortune, and the people around them good luck," Soong says. "Many have said Silport could never have reached this level, and earned such a good reputation, without them." 



Forty ancient stone sculptures from the Ming and Qing dynasties entice players with the promise of “good fortune”



Silport

Believing that golf course are living entities that evolve organically, that can be constantly upgraded and improved over years and decades, Soong is constantly “fine tuning” Silport. IN MID 2005, HE WILL EXPAND SILPORT TO 36 HOLES WITH THE NEW NINE-HOLE NORTH COURSE. THE COURSE IS CURRENTLY BEING CREATED BY AMERICAN DESIGNER ROGER PACKARD WHO REDESIGNED PARTS OF THE FAMED MEDINAH COURSE #3 LAYOUT IN CHICAGO FOR IT’S HOSTING OF THE 1990 US OPEN AS WELL AS BANGKOK’S LAM LUKA AMONG HIS MORE THAN 200 DESIGNS.

“This is something that we really

needed as it will eliminate the bottleneck we sometimes get when the two nine-hole layouts empty into the one nine hole layout,” Soong said.

“The new nine is faithful to the original design integrity of the existing 27 holes but it will create more interest overall for our members and guests. There are greater hole variations and more lateral options on the tees which will make things more interesting. When you run a golf course, the work is never over,” he said.

Soong believes in the future of Chinese golf so much that he boldly predicts the national Open is the only tournament in the world that has the

potential to become the “fifth Major.” While his dream may be some years away at present, Silport has played its part in promoting the event as its host venue from 1999 to 2004.

Myanmar’s Kyi Hla Han started the Silport era in 1999 when he won the US\$400,000 Volvo China Open in a year where he would win the Asian PGA Tour Order of Merit. The winners in successive years included England’s Simon Dyson (2000), Korean Charlie Wi (2001), Australian David Gleeson (2002) and a historic victory in 2003 when China No. 1 Zhang Lian-wei captured the title he had so coveted.

The following year, 2004, marked the first time the event was co-

sanctioned with the European Tour when Welshman Stephen Dodd overcame freezing conditions for his first win ahead of Denmark’s Thomas Bjorn.

The country’s national Open is scheduled to return to Silport in 2007 when the club will likely use the West Course and the new North Course layout as its Championship Course. □

Shanghai Silport Golf Club
Dian-shan Lake, Kunshan, Jiangsu province. CHINESE ADDRESS HERE.
Tel: (86 512) 5748-1111. Fax: (86 512) 5748-0067. Web: www.silport.com.cn. Email: xxxxxxxx.

Signature hole

The penultimate hole of Silport’s Championship Course, the No. 8 hole of the Centre Course, has provided many memorable moments during the club’s hosting of Volvo China Open events. The 185-yard hole requires a blast across water to reach the semi-island green that is heavily fortified by bunkers at the front right and left, as well as at the back right. While the putting surface is large, its severe slope makes running the ball up to the hole, or placing a shot with backspin beyond the flag, paramount for any chance of a birdie putt. Anything short, left, right or long is likely to be wet.

Yardage:	Par 108
West Course	Par 36
Pro tees	3,621 yards
Blue tees	3,369 yards
White tees	3,102 yards
Red tees	2,834 yards
Centre Course	Par 36
Pro tees	3,452 yards
Blue tees	3,231 yards
White tees	2,933 yards
Red tees	2,624 yards
East Course	Par 36
Pro tees	3,283 yards
Blue tees	3,067 yards
White tees	2,819 yards
Red tees	2,570 yards

