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SPEEDED KILLS

BY JAMES PRUSA

TECHNOLOGY:
GOLF COURSE MAINTENANCE GOES HI-TECH

UP CLOSE WITH TOP HONCHOS:
JASON STRAKA

ASIAN GOLF SURVEY:
NEW COURSE DEVELOPMENT ...
A LOOK BACK AND A LOOK FORWARD

CALL TO DOCTOR GOLF'S D.N.A.

APGS 2014
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GENERAL NEWS // MNC LAND GOES WITH "THE BIG EASY" // CLUBCORP BULKS UP BIG TIME!
ASIAN GOLF SURVEY // THE ASIAN GOLF INDUSTRY FINALLY GET'S MAPPED!



ASIAN GOLF SURVEY

The Asian Golf Industry Finally Gets Mapped! Pg16

The launch of this innovative project marks the coming of age for the Asian golf industry and more significantly, it heralds the dawn of a new era where finally the golf industry will have credible market intelligence on the size and nature of the golf industry in Asia.

New Course Development – A Look Back And A Look Forward Pg18

Golf development in South East Asia is not without its challenges. Early responses to the Asian Golf Architects Survey indicate that dealing with unreliable contractor/s, environmental pressures and opposition, overall project logistics, and securing project finance are currently the challenges impacting the development of new course projects. Jeff Blunden reports.



Pg16



Pg18

UP-CLOSE WITH TOP HONCHOS

Fry/Straka – On The Move Upwards! Pg20

Award winning golf course architects, Dana Fry and Jason Straka are powering on and maintaining a high profile in the challenged world of golf architecture. Just after two years in business, this pair has charted an impressive track record of projects all over the world. Asian Club Business had a sit-down session with Jason Straka recently to get a thorough insight to the two-year old operation.



Jason Straka

Dana Fry



UP-CLOSE WITH TOP HONCHOS

AN INTERVIEW WITH JASON STRAKA - FRY/STRAKA GLOBAL GOLF COURSE DESIGN

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Jason Straka

Dana Fry



FRY STRAKA

GLOBAL GOLF COURSE DESIGN

ON THE MOVE UPWARD

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Just after two years in business, this pair have charted an impressive track record of projects all over the world. Fry/Straka is not really a new partnership in the truest sense of the word because both had worked together for nearly 20 years at Hurdzan / Fry Environmental Golf Course Design.

Although Fry and Straka collaborate on all projects, it is not uncommon for the partners to be traveling on opposite sides of the world so they can serve their global clients with ease, efficiency, and the utmost in professional dedication.

Every golf-course design project undertaken by Fry/Straka Global Golf Course Design assumes a position of great importance, as evidenced by the level of attention bestowed on each one. "With a noticeably hands-on approach, especially in such critical phases as environmental planning and construction-field observation during the shaping phase, Fry/Straka sets the standard for diligence and mindful adherence to the highest professional standards," said Fry.



2013

Golf Course Design Firm of the Year
— BOARDROOM Magazine

WARDS!

UP-CLOSE WITH TOP HONCHOS

AN INTERVIEW WITH JASON STRAKA – FRY/STRAKA GLOBAL GOLF COURSE DESIGN

Asian Club Business had a sit-down session with Jason Straka recently to get a thorough insight to the two-year old operation and the following are highlights of that discussion:



ASIAN CLUB BUSINESS: *The firm is picking up some prestigious awards, which gives it both national and international validation and recognition. You folks must be doing something right to get selected for these big industry awards. What is it that makes things happen for the firm?*

JASON STRAKA: Dana and I are extremely involved in every project we take on. We have a very hands-on approach and spend a lot of time on site. This has a tremendous positive impact on the quality of our design work. While working on a recent project for Marriott, we made more than forty site visits during the construction phase alone.

Also, we have been fortunate to have clients like Marriott, who are like-minded in their golf principles, such as environmental stewardship. Partnerships like this have allowed us to create some truly special courses, which gives our talented PR team something unique to talk about.

Sally J. Sportsman, who heads up our public relations efforts, has certainly helped us to gain notoriety. In addition to her efforts, we have also been fortunate to partner with some of our other well-respected industry clients like Eagle Golf and CTS Tycoon in the promotion of our courses.

Fry/Straka Global Golf Course Design was established at a point in time when the golf industry was not in

the best of health, although both of you had the right breeding, pedigree and track record in terms of golf course architecture. Today, the industry is still not out the woods. How have you cut it into what is effectively a very tough marketplace, especially in the United States?

We are a hands-on firm and we insist on keeping our company very detail oriented and client driven. Dana and I both got to a point in our careers and our lives that we wanted to work only on a handful of projects at any given time and not be over-extended. We also have a highly skilled and diversified team who are strategically located around the world. This allows us to capitalize on each others' strengths and cover a large geographical area in our projects.

What would you describe as your major milestones since launching the firm?

Some of our proudest moments were certainly when we signed our first new projects under the new Fry/Straka banner. We were thrilled to be selected as the golf architects for the LA Quail Ranch project in California and the Qizhong Garden Golf Club in Shanghai, among others.

Another big accomplishment for us was being recognized as the 2013 Golf Course Design Firm of the Year by The Boardroom Magazine, which is endorsed by the Club Managers Association of America.

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Camelback Golf Club in Scottsdale, Arizona, USA

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Your firm is international in its coverage of the industry. How would you assess each marketplace that you are in, in terms of the state of the overall business mood vis-à-vis golf course construction and in importance to your firm?

Since we are American, a significant amount of our work will always be in North America. The economy here is improving and we are fielding more phone calls from potential clients, both large-scale renovation and new courses, in the United States and Mexico. While the market has recently slowed in China, we are still dedicated to servicing that market and we have recently signed new work there. South America is a smaller market for us, but we still have a handful of significant projects, particularly in Brazil. In Western Europe, the economy remains slow, but we are beginning to see some rebound and have been fielding some phone calls for potential projects there as well.

There is talk on and off in the developed markets of new golf courses being built and many put this down to just blips on the radar, as opposed to real surges in the business. Do you see trends in some areas where a pick-up in development is possible and, if so, will this be sustainable in the long run?

We believe that some of the real surges in the market will be in renovations. Many golf courses have been neglected for years under the recession. New courses may still be blips on the radar, as you suggest, but there do seem to be more of them, which is certainly a positive sign. A lot of these projects were likely in some stage of planning before the recession came and now they are being re-imagined to fit new criteria in the current marketplace.

China was the one-time darling of golf course architects, but things have tanked in recent times in that country. What is your read on China? Is it a market where golf can look forward to growth or is it a market driven by hungry land-grabbers focused on making a killing on real estate built on golf landscapes?

We believe in the potential for growth in the Chinese market. But first, the government needs to come to terms on how to handle the permitting of golf courses. Once there are definitive parameters put in place, the development of these facilities can happen legally. We still have confidence in the Chinese market, but we also think that developers there would be wise to learn from mistakes made by many North American developers prior to the recession, who were building only high-end expensive golf courses. For golf to be successful, we believe there need to be affordable and accessible golf courses to serve the larger majority of the population, in addition to those courses that cater to the financially elite.

Besides the so-called moratorium on golf development and the current regime's concerns on social changes in China,



Dana Fry (middle) with counterparts in China

there are also problems with regard to water and land scarcity, to name a few. Are the challenges too severe for golf development to make a come-back? Your thoughts?

Golf needs to be developed in a truly environmentally sustainable manner. Marketing environmental sustainability is popular, but truly creating environmentally sustainable golf facilities is another matter. There is a lot of science and technology that goes into creating sustainable golf facilities.

But it is also those types of facilities that can overcome challenges in regard to resource scarcity and social antagonism.

Another point that sometimes gets overlooked is that golf, in its birthplace of Scotland and the British Isles, is a game of the masses. Golf has that possibility in China and elsewhere in Asia, but it is going to take some foresight by creative developers and government to make that happen.

Your firm has demonstrated that there is life for a lot of old courses. Your awards for renovation projects are proof positive that renovation is an area that offers scope for business growth. That aside, don't you think that renovation

Qizhong Garden Golf Club in Shenzhen China.

"For golf to be successful, we believe there need to be affordable and accessible golf courses to serve the larger majority of the population, in addition to those courses that cater to the financially elite." – Jason Straka

can also help to kick-start a languid golf industry? Golfers love to play on new and exciting courses as opposed to tired, old and boring courses. Renovated courses can be a definite boon to growing the game of golf – you agree?

In today's marketplace, there are a lot of reasons to renovate golf courses. In some instances, golf courses built several decades ago were done so with large maintenance budgets, which are no longer financially sustainable.

Current renovations can make golf courses easier and less costly to maintain. Renovations can also assist in altering the maintenance practices to use less water, pesticides, fertilizer and fossil fuels. To do that, we have to implement new technologies and remove manicured turf in non-play areas.

Renovations can also broaden the appeal of a course by altering the design to cater to a wider diversity of skill sets. Many of the older golf courses were built too difficult for the people who ultimately pay the bills. Renovated designs can encourage them to play these golf courses, whereas perhaps they wouldn't have in the past.

Plus, you mentioned tired, old and boring ... breathing new life into the beauty of a course cannot be overlooked, either.

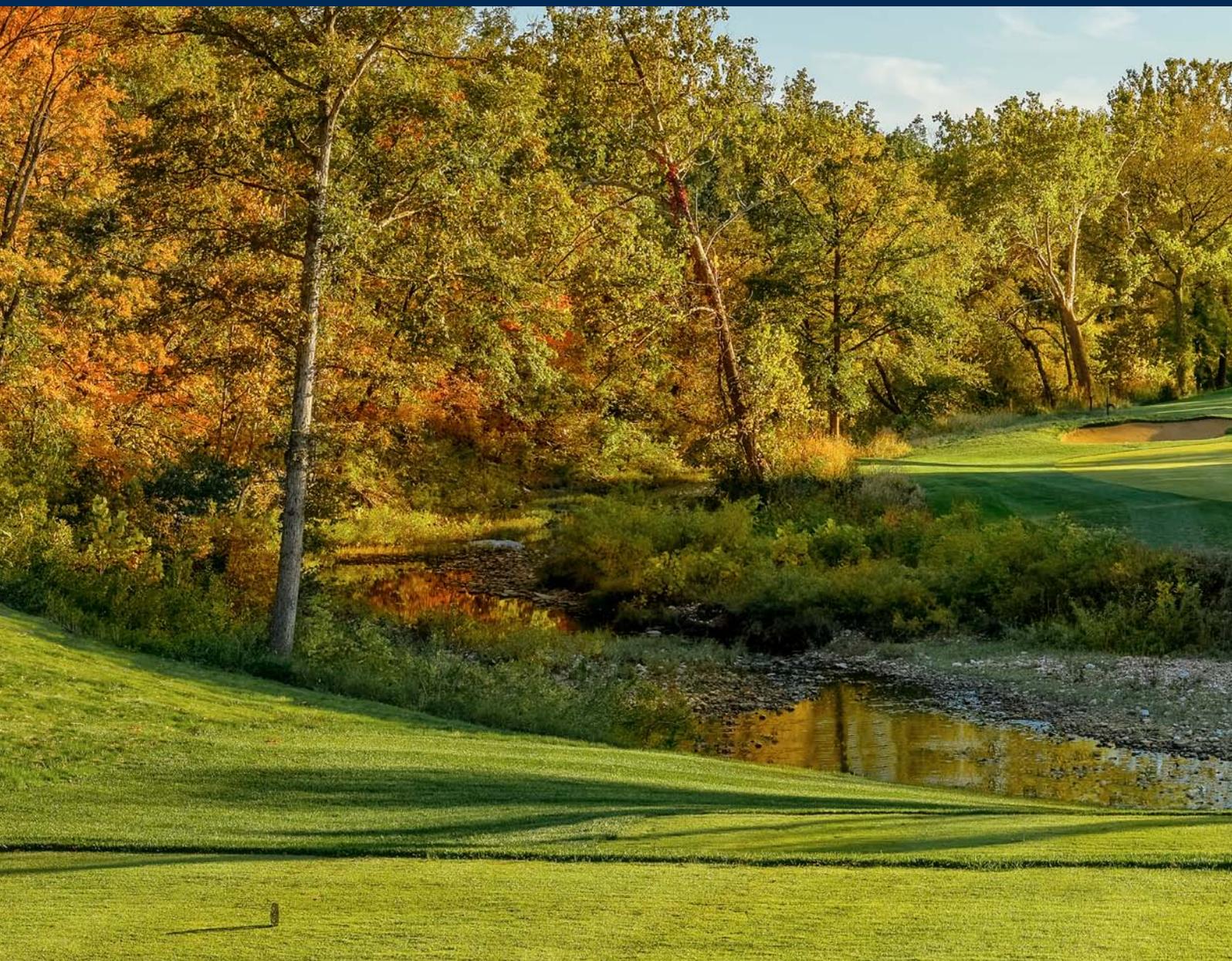
Let's change the focus and look at Asia – the continent is due for a make-over with a high percentage of golf courses that have already gone past the 20-year mark. Wouldn't you think that Asia is ready for some big-time course renovation projects?

Yes, and a couple of our most recent Asian projects are of the large-scale renovation variety. CTS Tycoon and Qizhong Garden Golf Club in Shenzhen and Shanghai, respectively, are two examples. Chances are potential upcoming governmental regulations may even trigger more renovation work.

Many owners that we speak to are concerned about the cost of renovations and the ROI on these investments. But things have changed drastically in the industry since their initial investment. We now have better and improved varieties of turf highlighted by less water consumption, pest resistant and robust under most weather conditions. Combined with IT-driven machines and cultural maintenance practices, operating a golf course is a whole new ball game with the

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— Jason Straka

Columbia Country Club (USA) – One of the recent projects by Jason Straka.



"There are literally dozens of other examples of emerging technology, some of which would include improved irrigation delivery systems, soil and salinity moisture sensors, drought and pest resistant turf, laser imaging detection and ranging (LIDAR), improved drainage materials, and improved soil erosion prevention materials and turf health monitoring equipment, sometimes referred to as precision turf technology. Once we begin to apply these technologies and build a portfolio of successful golf course projects, more existing golf courses can use those as precedents for their own facilities." – Jason Straka



Jason Straka discussing the Hurdzan/Fry/Whitten designed Erin Hills, site of 2017 US Open with Devoted Golfer.TV editor Biv Wadden – [WATCH VIDEO](#)



potential for lots of savings. What role can golf architects play in bringing about a paradigm mind-set shift to get owners to see matters in a different light?

One such method for architects is to use GPS technologies in highly analytical fashions to determine areas that could be naturalized. This technology also helps us identify bunkers that perhaps don't come into play that could be removed or perhaps raked only once per week.

This technology can also help us to analyze the efficiency of maintenance and golf cart traffic, allowing us to make adjustments to improve the speed of play, reduce wear patterns and even make golf courses safer.

This technology also can be used to help us identify the most efficient ways to move maintenance personnel throughout the course and even determine the most efficient mowing patterns to conserve fuel. A few years ago, this highly analytical process was not even possible.

Yet today, all of these factor into reducing maintenance costs, getting more people through the golf course and making the golf experience more enjoyable, which in the end all leads to a better ROI.

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Would you agree that there has never been a better time to either build a new golf course or undertake a renovation, given the sea-changes that have taken place in the industry vis-à-vis operational and maintenance costs?

There is a great opportunity to adapt older facilities to a changed customer base. More of today's golfers want a fun place to play where they can do so quickly, whereas in the past, much of the focus in the industry was about building long and difficult golf courses. As far as new courses go, we have the ability to build them less expensively, yet better for the environment and highly adapted to today's golfing population. Perhaps the bigger trick, though, is building new facilities and renovating older ones to attract newcomers to the game.

Given the potential for renovation projects in Asia, can we expect to see a heightened profile for the firm in the near future?

We sure hope so, yet we remain committed to building a few projects a year, so that we can maintain the high quality of our work and dedication to our clients.