

MORIKAWA MANIA | ALIGN TO BE FINE | FIELD OF DREAMS

NCGA GOLF

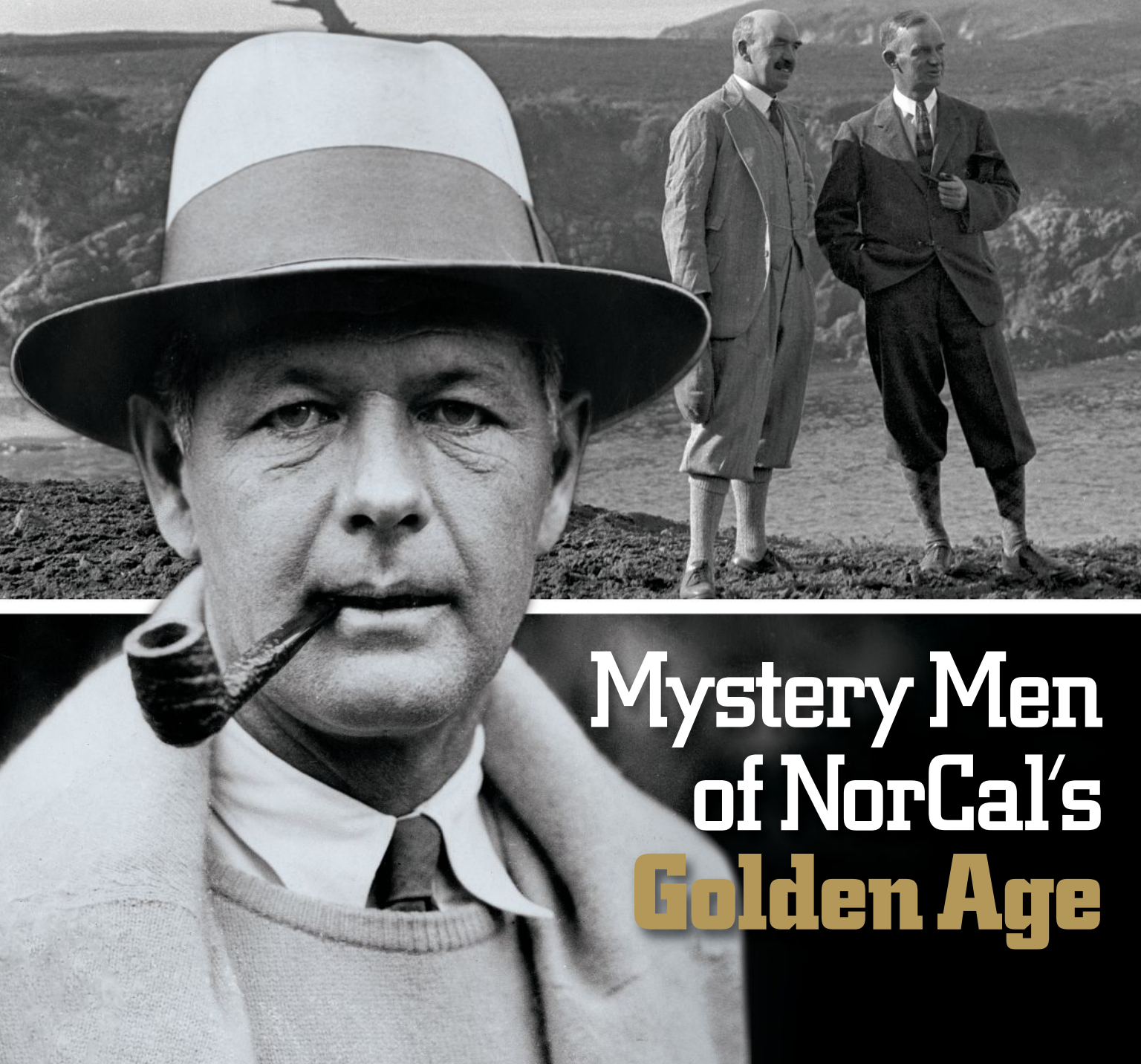


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ARCHITECTURE ISSUE



Mystery Men of NorCal's Golden Age

NEW COURSE DEVELOPMENT

Famed designers
Coore-Crenshaw,
Tom Doak,
Tiger Woods and
unheralded Aussie
Marc Logan are
adding new
(and improved)
layouts to the
area golf scene.

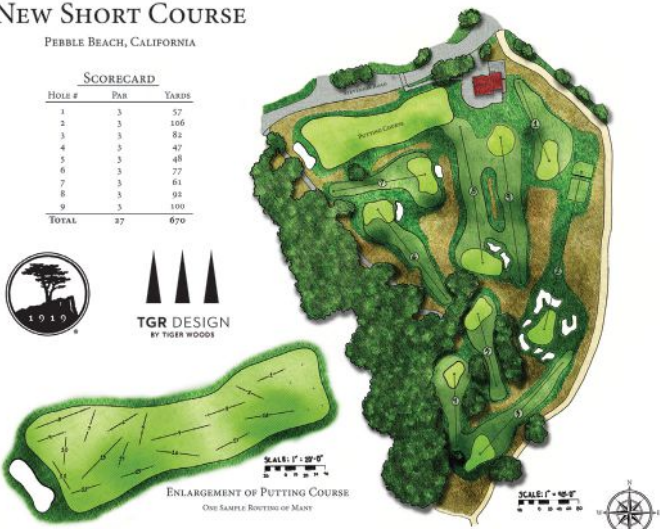
Peter Hay



NEW SHORT COURSE

PEBBLE BEACH, CALIFORNIA

SCORECARD		
HOLE #	PAR	YARDS
1	3	57
2	3	106
3	3	82
4	3	47
5	3	48
6	3	77
7	3	61
8	3	91
9	3	100
TOTAL	27	670



North Course at Corica Park





SHERMAN CHOW



NOR CAL GOLF EXPANSION

BY AL BARKOW



The Brambles

This year's PGA Championship at TPC Harding Park served as a reminder of the outstanding golf legacy Northern California presents to our game. In that light, the contributions should continue in the next few years as courses designed by highly regarded names in golf course design are in various states of creation. They include the team of Bill Coore and Ben Crenshaw, Tom Doak, and, on a smaller scale but expected to be impressive, Tiger Woods. For all that, a less-heralded name in golf course architecture, Marc Logan, is creating one of the new arrivals that, while it is in fact a renovation of something old, might also be considered deliverance. That is, the **North Course at Corica Park**, in Alameda, which Logan is transforming into a very handsome layout. This is the second act in the two-act production that began with the revamping of the South Course at Corica Park by yet another widely known architect, Poppy Ridge designer Rees Jones, and which is now very much in play and getting rave notices.

A central feature of the upcoming North Course (the first nine will be open for play in 2021, the second nine a year later) is the contouring of the ground. It is interesting how a basically flat, dull terrain can be turned into something resembling a rolling seascape with subtle reshaping of the ground –

Tiger Woods (*above*) is bringing some fun and exciting changes to the par-3 Peter Hay Course (*upper left*) at Pebble Beach Golf Links; Aussie designer Marc Logan of Greenway Golf is bringing his Dunescape concept to the North Course at Corica Park (*far left*); The Brambles (*left*) is yet another highly anticipated Coore-Crenshaw design.

a slope here, a small valley there, greens angled and given a nice degree of undulation. Logan described the overall concept as Dunescape, a recall of his Australian heritage. The greens will be nearly twice the size of the previous ones, and in bent grass that promises to be as fast as those now in play on the South Course.

Overall the course will make sturdy

James Duncan, the driving force behind this project, means it to be classic, old school Scottish golf. The land is in a broad valley with gentle contours, and will remain so. Bill Coore says very little dirt will be moved in the building of the layout, and no trees will be added. In this respect, and by its relative isolation, Brambles will replicate the acclaimed Sand Hills course

emerge from a nearby high school. Some tee times may be available to local, non-member golfers on a ballot basis.

So, a comfortable but, given the architects, certainly not uninteresting golf course that may reach 7,000 yards from the tips but is not meant to stage national championships. It is scheduled to open in 2022.

In striking contrast to Brambles, even as it is in the same geographic area, Tom Doak will build an 18-hole course to be accompanied by three “boutique” hotels on different parts of a 29,000-acre property. It will be called **Maha**.

Doak says the topography is unlike any he has ever worked on. “It starts on a rocky plateau with 20-mile views. The opening holes play along the edge of a bluff and through small vineyards and oak trees. Then, the par-3 10th and par-4 11th drop down some 300 feet to a valley. The last few holes play up a stream valley to finish at a different clubhouse two miles from the first tee. And 500 feet lower!”

And yet, Doak continues, “it is meant to be a walkable course.” Except for the trip from the tenth tee to its green. A funicular takes golfers down the slope.

As a kind of frappe, there will also be a par-3 course.

The Pebble Beach Company has contracted with Tiger Woods’ design firm, TGR, to do a completely new nine-hole layout on the grounds of the former short **Peter Hay Course**. In its place, Woods will create nine par-3 holes ranging in length from 47 to 106 yards. The distinguishing overall feature will be a view of the ocean at every hole, and short-cut grass around the greens so golfers can learn to play the classic bump-and-run shot.

There will also be a 20,000-square-foot putting course and a 5,000-square-foot food-and-beverage venue. Here again this complex will be situated so there are fine views of Carmel Bay and Point Lobos. The new Peter Hay will be open to all comers in 2021.

With the promise of these new courses on the horizon, the bounty of golfing riches in our neck of the woods only should grow richer. 🍷



Tiger Woods surveys plans for the new Peter Hay Course at Pebble Beach.

SHERMAN CHIU

shot-making demands. It will whelm, but not overwhelm, as it will play some 600 yards shorter than its brother. The total length from the tips will be approximately 6,400 yards. Furthermore, to make it more accommodating for the average golfer, there will be only 20 bunkers – 10 in fairways, 10 around the greens, with those in the fairway mainly reachable by the long bombers. A few of the bunkers will be revetted; they will have the distinctive high, layered front walls customary at Scottish links courses.

Gone is the sticky, unforgiving kikuyu grass that gave up little roll and was difficult to penetrate with an iron (at least for senior golfers). A hybrid Bermuda grass with some fescue mixed in will make up the fairways, and there will be no first-cut rough; meaning the fairways will be comfortably wide.

As was done on the South, the overall terrain on the North has been raised by some 3 1/2 feet and with a sand cap that will improve drainage during the rainy season.

The Coore-Crenshaw contribution to the scene is entirely new. It is in Lake County, near the town of Middletown, and called **The Brambles**.

Coore and Crenshaw built in the middle of wheat-growing Nebraska some 25 years ago and gave birth to the current minimalist movement of course design.

Brambles will not designate as a links course, but will stand for the “along the ground kind of game links trigger,” Coore says. To that end the course will be grassed in a new species of zoysia that can handle the areas heavy summer heat and long rainless periods, but still play much faster than traditional, thick-bladed zoysia. Coore notes that this grass has shown “it will run like Scottish fescue.”

The Brambles will be a private club, members largely from Northern California but also attracting national members. San Francisco and Oakland airports will serve most distant traveling members, and there is a small airport only a few yards from the first tee for those with private planes. The clubhouse will be modest – a place to change shoes, have a small lunch – and there are expected to be some cottages and cabins for the out-of-towners to bunk up for a few days. In further keeping with minimalism, this low-key club will not have golf carts; golfers can pull a handcart, carry their bag or take a caddie. A caddie corps is expected to

RENOVATIONS

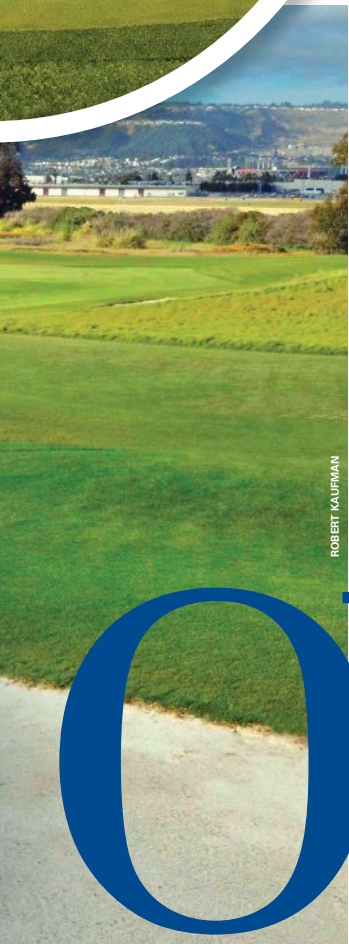
Diablo Country Club

Monterey Peninsula Country Club, Shore Course

Corica Park, South Course

Baylands
Golf Links

Memorable MAKE



JOANN DOST

Poppy Hills Golf Course

When remodeling a golf course, it isn't one size fits all. Typically, a club may choose a restoration, a renovation or a redesign. There's another category as well, of the hybrid variety. How to differentiate between remodel options? Architect Gil Hanse explains.

"Restoration is when the principles, style and objectives of the original architect are the overriding factors for decision-making on the project," says Hanse, who in January contracted to create master plans for the Olympic Club and Lake Merced Golf Club. "There's also sympathetic restoration, when those same elements are put into place as the overriding factors, but then you're accommodating the modern game and technology in placing and designing the features. Renovation is when you allow your own thoughts to creep into the equation, either because there's no significant architectural pedigree, or no desire to restore what was there, or perhaps there's something that just doesn't work based on the modern game. Redesign is when there's little of inherent value that we can identify."

Hanse has yet to leave his mark on a completed Northern California re-do, but a fistful of other acclaimed architects certainly have. Here is a sampling of the best of the best.

The first metamorphosis that rocked the region took place at

Monterey Peninsula Country Club's Shore Course in 2004.

The late Mike Strantz took a handsome, if bare-boned 1961 Bob Baldock/Jack Neville creation and fashioned a stunning, nearly new layout. Many holes featured newly realized ocean backdrops, now accented by native grasses, artfully sculpted bunkers, prominently placed cypress trees and rock-studded green and tee surrounds. "It's the best renovation I've ever seen, anywhere," says architecture aficionado and eight-time PGA Tour winner Brad Faxon.

MPCC's Shore Course has only one competitor in the shock-and-awe makeover department: the **California Golf Club of San**

Francisco. Better known as the "Cal Club," this 1926 A. Vernon Macon design was updated just two years later by the legendary Alister MacKenzie. To accommodate a road expansion in the 1960s, the club lost a chunk of property. Robert Trent Jones Sr. signed on to redesign the first five holes. Understandably, they were crammed in. Enter Kyle Phillips.

By 2007, Phillips restored 12 holes to their Golden Age greatness, including those magnificent, sprawling MacKenzie bunkers. He removed trees to restore long-lost vistas. He created two brand new holes and renovated the remaining four holes. Part restoration, part renovation, part brand new – Phillips put it simply: "It's a hybrid."

Architect Tom Doak, who tosses around compliments about competitors' work as often as he does pianos, called the renovation of the Cal Club, "one of the best transformations I've seen over the past 20 years." Few would disagree.

After it debuted in 1986, the NCGA's own **Poppy Hills Golf Course** was universally consid-

Brilliant course renovations have defined Northern California golf for two decades. Here are some of the standouts.

BY JOE PASSOV

OVERS



California Golf Club of San Francisco

ered an excellent course. In what was a renovation centered around water conservation (primarily by improving irrigation and drainage), the NCGA acknowledged some tweaks were in order – and acted. Original architect Robert Trent Jones II and colleagues Bruce Charlton and Mike Gorman undertook an inspired renovation that solved myriad issues. Upon completion in 2014, Poppy Hills instantly blossomed from “should-play” to “must-play.”

Jones sand-capped the entire course, and eliminated traditional rough, utilizing just one fairway-height cut of grass. Native sandy areas now link fairway to forest. Mounds were eliminated and the old roller coaster greens were softened and re-grassed. By-products included improved aesthetics, more shot options and faster play.

Among the design changes were the creation of a new par-5 18th hole, a par-3 2nd that now heads in the opposite direction and a transformation of No.3 (formerly a hard dogleg-right) to a straightaway par-4 that yields a stunning ocean view.

When three-time major champion Nick Price returned, he remarked, “It’s a huge improvement on the old course. They deserve a pat on the back for the terrific job they did.”

Fresh breezes wafted over two revered but tired Bay Area munis in 2018, with invigorating results. Architect Forrest Richardson waved his redesign wand at the Palo Alto municipal layout, reconfiguring it into **Baylands Golf Links**. For its \$12 million investment, the city received a golf course that’s much more compelling than its predecessor. It features rippled fairways and imaginatively contoured greens, requires less water and incorporates new wetlands and grasslands. There are even a

few Scotland-esque pot bunkers. What’s more, said Richardson, is that he redesigned the layout in such a way that he gave back 10 acres of land (the city had only asked for seven) for use as soccer fields and other park uses.

Four miles from the Oakland International Airport, the city of Alameda is flying high with its redesign of the Jack Clark course at the Chuck Corica Golf Complex. **Now known as Corica Park (South)**, this 1957 William F. Bell design sports virtually a brand new layout, courtesy of Poppy Ridge designer Rees Jones, associate Steve Weisser and Greenway Golf’s George Kelley and **Marc Logan**.

Together, they crafted a fast-running, variety-filled spread that embraces an Australian Sandbelt identity. Skillfully sculpted bunkers, run-up ramps near the low-slung greens and wispy native fescue grasses enhance aesthetics and playability and the drought-tolerant Bermuda fairways use roughly half the water that other area courses require. **Recycled materials assisted in keeping costs down, notably in the synthetic turf bunker liners, salvaged from an Oakland Raiders practice field.**

Corica Park’s North course is currently undergoing its own makeover, but don’t look for regulars to get bored with the South course anytime soon. “It will play differently every day, depending on the wind, the season and the weather,” Rees Jones says.

For venerable **Diablo Country Club**, which dates to 1914, water issues prompted a course renovation. However, the devil was in the details. Restore or renovate? Architect Todd Eckenrode, with fellow Origins Golf Design team member Andy Frank, chose to do both.

Nine other **noteworthy** recent revisions

Bayonet/Black Horse Golf Course [Gene Bates, 2008]; Berkeley Country Club (formerly known as Mira Vista) [Forrest Richardson, 2012]; Menlo Country Club [Kyle Phillips, 2014]; Contra Costa Country Club [Robert Trent Jones II, 2015]; Monterey Peninsula Country Club (Dunes) [Tom Fazio/Jackson-Kahn, 2015]; Quail Lodge Resort and Golf Club [Origins/Todd Eckenrode, 2015]; Orinda Country Club [Origins/Todd Eckenrode, 2016]; North Ridge Country Club [Robert Trent Jones II, 2018].

Course most **deserving** to be restored

Sharp Park, Alister MacKenzie’s 1932 seaside municipal masterpiece in Pacifica.

To reduce water use and increase water efficiencies, Eckenrode installed a new irrigation system and different grasses, with the help of superintendent Ryan Nicholson. Diablo also sought to regain the attributes of the Golden Age design that had vanished over time.

Jack Neville carved out Diablo’s first nine holes in 1915. Three years later, Neville would design Pebble Beach Golf Links. In 1920, prolific architect William Watson added another nine. No other club features a Neville/Watson design. Eckenrode honored both men.

“We restored many lost features that were exemplary, such as the bunkering and the green contouring, but we didn’t restore everything,” Eckenrode says. “Most unique was the restoration of the system of braided waterways that Watson created. They had largely degraded. We restored them as natural, seasonal creeks, and as important strategic hazards.”

In a nod to Neville’s contributions, Eckenrode cited the par-3 16th as a favorite. “Jack Neville set this into a historic horse racetrack in his 1915 design,” Eckenrode says. “We restored much of the cross bunkering, and a wonderful ridge on the left side of the green.”

While acknowledging that the drainage, irrigation, grasses and green construction were pure modern renovations, credit Diablo Country Club for successfully turning back the clock in a forward-thinking way.

For that matter, here’s a golf clap for every club that has successfully revitalized through sensitive renovation. 🍀