

NZ club refuses to fall through CRACKS

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By David Newbery

In some sports, it's three strikes and you're out, but New Zealand's Waimairi Beach Golf Club in Christchurch has had three strikes (read earthquakes) and they are still in there fighting the good fight.

The club endured three earthquakes in less than 12 months, which destroyed the clubhouse and rendered nine holes unplayable. Despite the setback, the club's management and members refused to let Mother Nature win.



They are getting on with the job of rebuilding the clubhouse and work has already started on a remodelled golf course.

General manager John Herdman said the club would spend \$2.5m on a new clubhouse and \$1.5m on the golf course redesign.

"After three quakes, we had to rebuild the damaged areas three times and finally got to a stage where it was so badly damaged we decided enough was enough," he said.

"So we said 'let's have a major revamp of the golf course while it is out of action'."

The members voted unanimously to approve the new plans at a special general meeting.

One long-time member, an 86-year-old club stalwart, said it was the most exciting thing to happen to the club in 50 years and "something worth living for".

The club commissioned Kristine Kerr of Kura Golf Course Design and Adam Jones of Golf Renovations and Shaping Specialists (GRASS) to start work on the new-look course.

Kerr – whose design philosophy is strategy, playability, aesthetics and maintainability – had a brief to design a course for the members

and not a difficult championship course.

Kerr said the remodelled course would incorporate earthquake remediation-type measures.

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"We are trying to make it earthquake proof because most of the damage was caused by liquefaction that rendered the course unplayable," said Kerr, who previously worked with Gary Player's design company.

"We've had a report commissioned by hydrologists, who suggested lowering some areas in between golf holes, creating some sandy waste areas and using some of that fill to build up the fairways.

"It's been quite straightforward because the site is so sandy it's beautiful to work with."



Kerr said the repositioned clubhouse meant a number of holes would be re-routed.

“We will have 13 new holes and the remaining five holes will be resurfaced and will incorporate a little bit of the dunes. With the addition of a few bunkers, that will make it a more strategic course,” she said.

“We are keeping the look on those five holes the same as the new holes, but leaving the layout the same on those five holes.”

“It will be a fair course, but there will be more strategy involved in playing the golf course,” said Kerr, who designed Pegasus golf course, now rated number eight in the country.

“Initially Waimairi Beach was very narrow and lined with pine trees, but the club has removed a lot of the pines which has exposed some sand dune formations.

“So we are incorporating those and widening the fairways.” Herdman said many of the pines had been there for 80 years and were due for removal.

“Over the last three years we have pretty much removed all the plantation-type pine trees that covered the course.

“We still have a few left, but we are far more of a links-style course than we were before.”

As expected, the earthquakes have had an effect on the club’s membership.

“We had 822 before earthquakes and we are down to 592,” Herdman said. “A lot of members have moved out of the area or stopped playing golf in the short term.

“That’s another reason to rebuild. We want to provide some fresh enthusiasm for past members and the new members we hope to attract.”

While the disruptions have affected the bottom line, the club is in a fortunate position after the sale of a tract of land four years ago.

Unfortunately, the club has had to draw on some of the invested money to fund the project.

Herdman said the annual fees would remain at \$750 for the time being.

“At this stage we haven’t increased the fees, however, you can’t afford to lose that amount of investment income,” he said. “The only way to replace that income is to increase the fees at some stage, but we haven’t as yet.”

Waimairi Beach Golf Club’s new clubhouse and redesigned golf course is scheduled to open on April 1, 2013 – April Fools’ Day.



What Is Liquefaction?

Liquefaction is a phenomenon in which the strength and stiffness of a soil is reduced by earthquake shaking or other rapid loading. Liquefaction and related phenomena have been responsible for tremendous amounts of damage in historical earthquakes around the world.

Liquefaction occurs in saturated soils, that is, soils in which the space between individual particles is completely filled with water. This water exerts a pressure on the soil particles that influences how tightly the particles themselves are pressed

together. Prior to an earthquake, the water pressure is relatively low.

However, earthquake shaking can cause the water pressure to increase to the point where the soil particles can readily move with respect to each other. Earthquake shaking often triggers this increase in water pressure, but construction related activities such as blasting can also cause an increase in water pressure.