

STORY Heather Kidd



Positive changes

The new par-3 12th at Waimairi GC.

Designer Kristine Kerr has been hard at work putting right the damage caused to golf courses by the Christchurch earthquakes



Kristine Kerr

For golf course designer Kristine Kerr the earthquakes in Christchurch have been a double-edged sword. Based in the shaky city, Kerr experienced firsthand the traumatic quakes. The house she shares with her partner John Mulholland suffered damage that is still awaiting repair – the replacing of timber flooring and underfloor heating – but Kerr considers they were among the lucky ones as the house was habitable within a day of the February 22 2011 quake.

But Kerr admits the last two years have been particularly horrid. “We have been literally shaken up; it is as though we’ve been under attack.”

Yet despite the trauma, there has been an upside. The damage caused by the earthquakes has resulted in work for her company Kura Golf Course Design.

First up was the remodelling of the Waimairi Golf Club, situated to the north east of Christchurch, an area badly affected by the quakes. The course suffered a major problem with liquefaction and the actual course was also extensively damaged.

Kerr, working with construction company

GRASS, came up with a concept that was much more than just patching up the damage. The bold changes included building a new clubhouse in a more central location (the old one was destroyed in the quakes), near the new ninth and 18th greens, and the re-routing of the course.

“The course is relatively small by modern-day standards,” says Kerr, “although having said that it is eighteen holes and a par seventy-two. It was heavily tree-lined, pines along the dunes. A culling process was underway before we became involved but we got rid of even more of the trees and have been able to incorporate the dunes into the new shaping of the course.”

A bonus of the cull means the distance between holes has been increased and the fairways widened. The tree thinning also means adjacent housing now enjoys better views over the golf course.

Waimairi is located to the north-east of Christchurch, an area badly damaged in the quakes.

The earth ruined by liquefaction was dug out and buried. Low, sandy waste areas between holes were created and the fill from them used in the reshaping of the fairways. Kerr says the



Liquefaction overwhelmed the old 15th tee at Waimairi.

ground was wonderful to work with as the coastal site is sandy and no topsoil stripping was required.

Now, more than two years later, during which they’ve been able to play on only nine holes, club members are looking forward to playing their new-look course. Ten of the 13 new holes are now in operation, the other three expected to open by May.

The five remaining undamaged holes will be redesigned to tie in with the new layout.

Kerr is delighted by her involvement in the project. “It’s a positive thing to have been doing, constructing something when so much in our region has been pulled down or damaged and fallen down.

“Also, the course is providing a recreation resource for the local community. Club members are very enthusiastic about what is being done.”

Kerr is also involved with the designing of the Christchurch Golf Resort which will be constructed near Spencerville to the north of Christchurch. The brainchild of Thomas Na, the resort will feature a tournament course and an academy for international golf students, pros and managers.

The earthquakes set the project back, investors concerned about the viability of building the resort in Christchurch, but the parcel of land was settled upon recently and Kerr is working on the construction drawings for the course.

Kerr’s work can also be seen at the charming nine-hole Tai Tapu course situated

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and sand layers and then reshaped it to blend in better with the surroundings.

“The green is now a real feature of the hole and it’s created a lovely opening start to a round.”

Currently working on a master plan for the Kaiapoi Golf Club, Kerr has also found the time to submit proposals for several overseas projects.

She spent time away from Christchurch too, travelling to Waitangi for the official opening of the 11th hole. An honoured guest at the opening, the 11th had received something of an extreme

makeover by Kerr and what was a par-4 hole is now a par-5.

Kerr’s plan involved lengthening the hole by 80-90m and the green which was previously on a mound now sits literally half a metre above the high tide mark.

Now, if you are thinking Kerr’s life is all about golf courses... think again. She is currently working on a landscape project, and loving the challenge.

“The clients have a ten-acre block and they wanted someone who understood contouring on a bigger picture level.” ●

Best dressed

Norway’s Suzann Pettersen might have claimed the major prize at the Mission Hills World Ladies Championship in China but South Korea’s Ha-Neul Kim (pictured right) outvoted her and won more trophies.

Kim won the team event in partnership with Inbee Park and was voted the best dressed player by the public, receiving an incredible 1,016,191 votes.

“I like to dress pretty on the course and then I can focus on the game,” she said.

Kim played solid golf to finish in a tie for 25th at one over.

Last year’s best-dressed winner, Danielle Montgomery from England, finished second with 902,672 votes. Her golf didn’t match her fashion, and with rounds of 75 and 77 she missed the cut.

Pettersen’s win was her 16th worldwide and her sixth on the LET. She came from two behind with a final round 66 to edge out Park, who was coming off a victory in the Thailand Open.



Gulbis laid low

US golfer Natalie Gulbis was forced to withdraw from the recent RR Donnelley LPGA Founders Cup when it was found she had malaria. She took ill in Singapore and after receiving treatment there was allowed to fly back to the States.

Gulbis hopes to be recovered in time to play in the first major of 2013, the Kraft Nabisco Championship on April 1-7.

And check out the Kraft Nabisco Championship website and spot the Kiwi featuring on the home page. Yes, none other than our super teen Lydia Ko headlines the amateurs in the field.

Another familiar name among the amateur ranks is Lendl. The potted bio of 22-year-old Isabelle Lendl reveals her to be the daughter of former world No 1 tennis player Ivan Lendl. After he quit tennis in 1994 he became a professional golfer. He won a tournament on the Celebrity Tour and now plays mini-tour level.



Putting

Tilt over so you are looking down on the ball. Have the ball then both your eyeballs lined up in a row. Keep your head steady so that your eyes stay looking straight down after the stroke.

Chipping

If you are having trouble getting the ball up in the air try taking your right foot back slightly and lift your heel off the ground (for a right-handed player). This makes you nip down on the back of the ball and scuff the grass.

Slow play

Such a common complaint! You must be responsible for your own game. One practice swing is okay but two is boring for your playing partners. Plan your shot as you walk up the fairway. I get my beginners to have an eight-second routine when it is their turn to play. Try it and see how long you take.

Lower your score

Challenge yourself with this fun game. Count how many drives you hit down the fairway and next game try and beat that score. Do the same with how many times you hit the green on the par-3s. Try and get a home run by hitting them all. Add up your putts and try and get less than 30. But be aware of your overall best score, it will make you concentrate on your chipping, trying to get the ball close so you can get that one putt. The mind is a fickle machine and it loves a challenge!

Golf pro Kaye Maxwell

For more information visit www.maxwellsgolf.co.nz or ph 09 236 0911