

# Gary Player:

## The Travel. The Projects. The Man.

Golf Course Architect Kristine Kerr worked with Gary Player Design on the design and construction of courses in multiple locations across Europe and Asia. Kristine's maiden 'own design' course, Pegasus in Canterbury New Zealand, hosted the 2010 and 2011 New Zealand Ladies Open. She is currently involved in a number of projects in Asia Pacific.



**Kristine Kerr**

Arzaga, Lake Garda), and the Czech Republic (Cihelny Golf Course near Prague).

Working with GPD, everyday elements of the job included travel to dazzling locations, creating beautiful golf courses as part of prestigious projects, and of course working with Gary!

GPD would not accept a project unless it would create a truly first class outcome, which afforded fabulous opportunities from a designer's perspective to work on high profile projects with Gary Player. Often these were associated with 'big budgets' that particularly characterised the 90s. This did not mean that projects were approached with excess, such as massive earthworks that may have been inappropriate, but rather it meant the opportunity to create beautiful courses that blend seamlessly with nature - even if that 'nature' were created.

**G**olf Industry Central asked Kristine to reflect on the highlights of working with the legendary Gary Player.

I first worked for Gary Player Design (GPD) in London. It was the late 90's and the design offices in Florida and South Africa were overflowing with success, and the GPD (Europe) office was newly set up in London to service the growing European market where projects had been secured in Italy (Palazzo

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Many would expect that this means exclusively headline championship courses. This is certainly not the case with The Palazzo Arzaga course in Italy being just nine holes, however, it was recently voted the 6<sup>th</sup> most beautiful golf course in the world by New Zealand's Luxury magazine (and incidentally, GPD's Indonesian 'Ria Bintan' was rated 4<sup>th</sup>).

Gary's projects are perhaps a mirror of the man himself. Quality is never compromised and anything other than perfection is not optional. Gary really does have a way of exacting perfection from the people around him whilst still being a genuinely nice guy, an absolute delight to work with. One of the most travelled sportsmen in the world - his encyclopaedic knowledge of the game, combined with his unique ability and genuine desire to impart his knowledge, made working with him a wonderful experience.

Gary was involved with all aspects of the project design. Design meetings with Gary were intense, as well as fun. For European projects we sometimes met at Wentworth, and pour over drawings, discuss design details and intent, features of the site to be enhanced and other goals for the design. Naturally the insight he offered into golfing strategy, for example the way a professional approaches a hole, was just remarkable.

Along with Gary Player, we would undertake site visits,





reviewing construction progress and again design intent, combining these with course openings, client functions, and informal design team dinners.

A particularly memorable experience was a site visit - arriving by private jet - to the Cascades at Soma Bay on the Western Red Sea in Egypt, to celebrate the opening of the first 9 holes and a construction site visit of the remaining 9 holes. Gary was straight onto the stunningly beautiful location, walking up and down the course, media entourage in tow, captivating everyone from the client himself, to labourers on site, with his energy and enthusiasm. Gary will treat everyone, regardless of their role and position, with respect and dignity.

In 2003 I joined Gary Player Design again, this time in China to work on the Nanjing Zhongshan International Golf Club project. It was the only course being 'legally' constructed in China at the time, as upon opening it was due to host the National China Games in 2005 (which it did). My role was 'on-site design co-ordinator', creating another first for GPD: the first time anywhere a female was engaged in such a role, being full time on site during construction, overseeing the quality of construction and that the design intent was being met to GPD's exacting standards.

During site visits, Gary would be drawing on his vast reservoir of players and courses from around the world, allowing him to make novel suggestions, as well as practical ones, as to the location and placement of hazards. For example he would often bring up how far particular players were hitting the ball at that time, so say when standing on the black championship tee, looking at the 'target bunker' placement for example, the 14<sup>th</sup> at Nanjing Zhongshan, the 'target bunker' is a feature of the hole, giving line of play. Gary walked the hole and said 'Ernie can reach that, let's move it'.

Whilst there are many great golfing legends, I cannot imagine in my lifetime another truly global golf ambassador who will have the reach and charm of the legendary Gary Player.

## KURA GOLF COURSE DESIGN



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**GARY PLAYER QUIZ ANSWERS FROM PAGE 4: Q1: 7** – an all time record, **Q2-Q3: 1958 Kooyonga GC, 1962 Royal Adelaide, 1963 Royal Melbourne, 1965 Kooyonga GC, 1969 Royal Sydney, 1970 Kingston Heath, 1974 Lake Karringup**

