

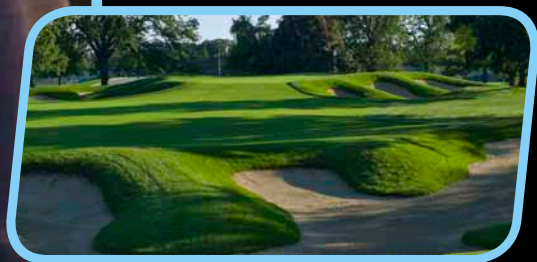
# SPECIAL REPORT I

AN INTERVIEW WITH REES JONES



"My father was one of the first people to realize that he could better design and run a golf course. At Baltusrol Golf Club, I was a man pulling the ropes" during a major tournament.

## REE BRINGS TOUCH TO



The golf course design firm of Rees Jones has a strong presence in Asia – a region that it continues to see development and growth of golf going forward. Rees Jones, a design firm, headed up by the legendary architect, one of the greatest golf architects of all time, Rees Jones, has completed projects in the region. Rees Jones' firm has completed the Yunling Golf & Spa located in the interior of China. The 27-hole club is situated on the outskirts of the "Eternal Spring" for its mild year-round climate, 7,000 feet above sea level.



Rees Jones, Inc.  
GOLF COURSE DESIGNERS

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# REES JONES

## HIS SPECIAL MAGICAL

### TO ASIA ...



Jones, Inc. founded in 1974 is beefing up its  
considers to hold out the most promise for the  
g forward. The New Jersey headquartered  
ary Rees Jones, son of the one of the  
Robert Trent Jones Sr. is already busy with  
st Asian course is the spectacular 27-hole  
rior of southwest China in Yunnan Province.  
utskirts of Kunming, known as the "City of  
d temperatures despite its location at nearly



Rees Jones and his dad – Robert Trent Jones Sr.

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Cog Hill Golf & Country Club

**Rees Jones, Inc.** customize's design and supervises the construction of new layouts for in the U.S. and worldwide. It also renovates and updates existing courses. The company's earning for company founder Rees Jones the nickname, "The Open Doctor." As a well- solutions and tailors its timeless, traditional designs to each client's needs. It is noted to continuing interest for golfers at all skill levels.

**Asian Golf Business** recently caught up with the globe-trotting Rees Jones for a wide-ranging chat a

### What draws Rees Jones, Inc. to Asia?

Personally, I'm excited about designing golf courses in this region. There are so many beautiful parcels of land in interesting, diverse environments, from temperate to tropical. Golf is just being introduced to so many people in this part of the world, and it's great to see the enthusiasm and the immediate acceptance of the game. There's another factor: my firm is a fresh face in Asia. All the major names in golf design have already worked throughout this region. The fact that we're not overexposed in the Asian market is a plus for us.

### Your dad, the legendary Robert Trent Jones Sr., left a great legacy of golf courses in the region, didn't he? What was it like growing up?

My dad was a globetrotting pioneer who really showed the way for everyone who followed in his footsteps. He laid out several exceptional courses in Japan and the Philippines in the late 1960s and early 1970s. These courses are highly regarded to this day. As a youngster, I tagged along on many of my dad's trips and was exposed at a young age to the game and to golf course architecture. I quickly developed a passion for both.



From Left: Hogan, Fazio and Mangrum



Rees Jones, Inc.  
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private clubs, resorts, real estate communities and public facilities  
s redesigned venues have hosted numerous major championships,  
established golf course architecture company, it provides innovative  
build strategic options into its courses to ensure flexibility and



about the company, its business and its plans for the future. **Here are excerpts from that interview:**

### Can you share with us some of your fondest memories?

One of my favorite memories was at the 1950 U.S. Open at Merion Golf Club. Growing up, I went to many of the major golf championships. This was the first U.S. Open Championship I attended. I was 8 years old. It was the year that Ben Hogan won after his accident when it was doubtful he would return to competitive golf. Hogan won after defeating Lloyd Mangrum and George Fazio in a playoff. There is a picture of Hogan, Fazio and Mangrum with the U.S. Open trophy before the playoff and I was also in the photograph right above George Fazio. Just recently, we discovered a copy of that photo and it hangs in my office today.

### Any others?

My father was one of the first people in golf course architecture to measure the distance the pros drove the ball so that he could better design and redesign U.S. Open courses that would properly test their skills. At the 1954 U.S. Open at Baltusrol Golf Club, I was a marker on one of the measuring holes on the back nine. It was a big thrill to get "inside the ropes" during a major tournament and see the pros up close.

### When did you start playing golf?

I started playing when I was 6. I was hooked! I later competed as a junior golfer, in high school, in college and while in the army.

### Many of the finest golf course architects apprenticed under some of the great designers of the game, wasn't that true in your case?

Yes, I got the best one imaginable. After graduating from college, I joined my father's firm in 1964 and was involved in the design and supervision of over 50 golf courses before I formed my own company in 1974. Certainly the family heritage of excellence helps, but in the end, a client hires Rees Jones, Inc. based on the standard of excellence and attention to detail we bring to each project.

### Rees, since forming your own company, you have built over 100 golf courses, many of which have been recognized as among the best in the world. In addition, you have remodeled

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many of the finest courses in preparation for a major championship or Ryder Cup, giving you the nickname of the "Open Doctor." You have also received numerous awards over the years. What is the secret to your success?

I have been very fortunate. I have been blessed with many outstanding clients and have had the opportunity to work on some truly great sites. I never tried to take on too much work. By limiting the number of courses I will design in a given year, I am able to spend more time on each project. The people and golf clubs I have worked with over the years have been wonderful. Many of my clients are still my friends, and that is what is so great about my work. Golf has brought so many terrific people into my life.

Two of your courses will be hosting major championships this year, is that right?

Yes, the Blue Course at Congressional Country Club will host the U.S. Open Championship this June, and Atlanta Athletic Club's Highlands Course will host the PGA Championship in August.

What is your approach when remodeling a classic course?

My approach to remodeling a classic existing course is not unlike an art restorer with an old painting. After careful study, I strip away the accumulated effects of years of wear and tear ... it's bringing the course back to prominence.

Is there one country in Asia that you would single out as holding tremendous promise for the development of golf courses and the growth of the game?

It is interesting to note that almost half the world's golfers are located outside the U.S. The half beyond America's shores offers the greatest potential for growth. If I had to pick one Asian nation with the most potential, it would have to be China, both in terms of land mass and population. The Japanese fascination with golf may one day be matched by the Chinese, only in far greater numbers. The Chinese are just starting to discover golf and what a great game it is. That's one of the reasons why I am so thrilled to be part of it.

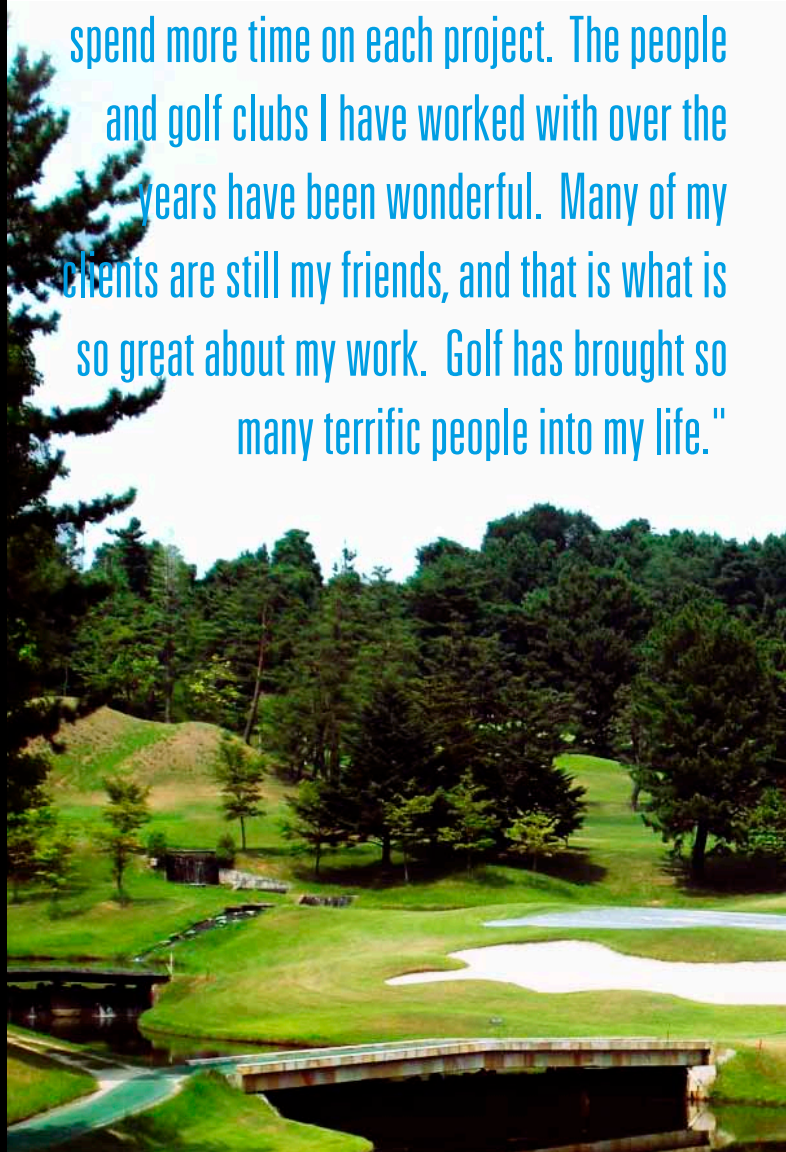
Give us a sense of some of the projects that you are working on in Asia?

We're very excited about Yunling Golf & Spa Resort in China, our first new-build course in Asia. This 27-hole club is located in Yunnan Province

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GOLF COURSE DESIGNERS



on the outskirts of Kunming, a region known for its mild year-round temperatures. The resort's first 18 is now seeded, with a soft opening slated for this summer, after which the third nine will be built. The layout will feature open and wooded holes plus an elevation change of nearly 600 feet, so the views are spectacular. In Japan, we're remodeling the West Course at Ibaraki Country Club in Osaka. The members wanted a full-blown renovation. Because the West Course was built with dual greens, it has struggled to find a fixed identity. Rather than choose one green over another, we're devising new green locations and reworking the entire strategic framework of the layout. That includes landing areas for the tee shot, optimal angles to the greens, and strategic bunker placement. Construction began in January 2011; the club expects to reopen the course this September. We feel confident Ibaraki's revamped West Course will rank even higher among Japan's top layouts.

**Now that golf is back in the Olympics, do you feel that the game should be made more affordable and accessible so that new talent can be developed in Asia?**

I'm a strong believer in affordable, accessible golf. In the U.S., numerous municipalities have built new courses or refurbished existing ones. A good example is the Black Course at Bethpage State Park on Long Island, N.Y., which I renovated in the late 1990's in advance of the 2002 U.S. Open. The "People's Open," it was called. The event was so successful the U.S. Open returned to Bethpage in 2009. I try to give back to the game. I was contacted by the head of the New York State Parks & Recreation Department and asked to renovate a classic layout that had eroded badly over time. The work was done pro bono. Bethpage Black is a good example of a public-access facility that's as well-conditioned as any private club and offers a world-class test. I think

public golfers really enjoy the opportunity to play a course designed to test the best players in the world. Of course, it also helps that Bethpage has four other courses. I believe that these types of facilities will be just as popular in Asia as they are in the U.S.

**Yours is an organization that has built up an enviable track record in the remodeling of golf courses. We see this as a major growth area in the region, especially in Southeast Asia, where many courses were built in the 80's, 90's and earlier. What role do you see Rees Jones Inc. playing in course renovations in the region?**

We've been very successful over the years reconstructing, restoring and rehabilitating golf courses worldwide. To date, we have remodeled 80 golf courses throughout the U.S., Canada, the Bahamas and Japan. In many cases, our remodeling work results in an entirely new golf course, with rebuilt greens, tees and fairways. A few of the more extensively redesigned courses have altered routings and new holes designed to blend with the original design. Especially in Japan, where many of the courses built 40 or 50 years ago had two greens to accommodate seasonal grasses, agronomic advances have given us an opportunity to streamline these layouts by establishing a single target for each hole. As a marker, the oldest course in China opened in 1984. I would say every course that was built 15 years past that time will be in line for a makeover in the years ahead.



Ibaraki Country Club, Japan

## AN INTERVIEW WITH REES JONES

"Our firm approaches each project with a keen awareness of our responsibility as stewards of the land. We believe a properly designed and maintained golf course can protect wildlife habitat, preserve native vegetation, conserve water resources, buffer open green spaces from development, and create bio-filters that sequester carbon."

**Are strategic courses with built-in flexibility that are specifically designed to accommodate all styles of plays still the goal of your firm?**

Yes. Our goal is a versatile, sustainable course that is just as enjoyable for the weekend golfer as it is for the professional. The beauty of staggered tee boxes set at different yardages and angles is that a golf course with five sets of tees is really five courses in one. You simply choose the set that matches your ability level. The idea is to introduce "graduated penalties" and make better players contend with bigger and more daunting challenges.

**As a designer who builds classic, fair, aesthetically-pleasing courses, how have you adapted your methods and overall approach in Asia given the geography, personality of the land, prevailing weather, history, even the people who will play your courses in this part of the world?**

Golfer expectations are the same everywhere. Golfers want a beautiful, challenging, well-groomed layout. Aesthetically, Asia opens the door to exciting new terrains and settings for the game. China, for example, is amazingly diverse. At nearly 7,000 feet above sea level, Kunming, the location of our course at Yunling Golf & Spa Resort, has a spring-like climate. Regardless of the topography, for us the challenge remains the same. We must adapt our methods to build a seamless golf course on time and within a developer's budget. On the design side, we strive for clarity and playability. I'm a big believer in defining the field of play. I want the holes to indicate clearly to golfers how they should play them. I want the hazards in plain view, the bunkering strategic and directional, and the targets accessible.

**As one of the acknowledged greats in golf course design, what**

**advice can you offer golf course developers, owners and operators on the importance of maintaining sustainable facilities that conform to high standards?**

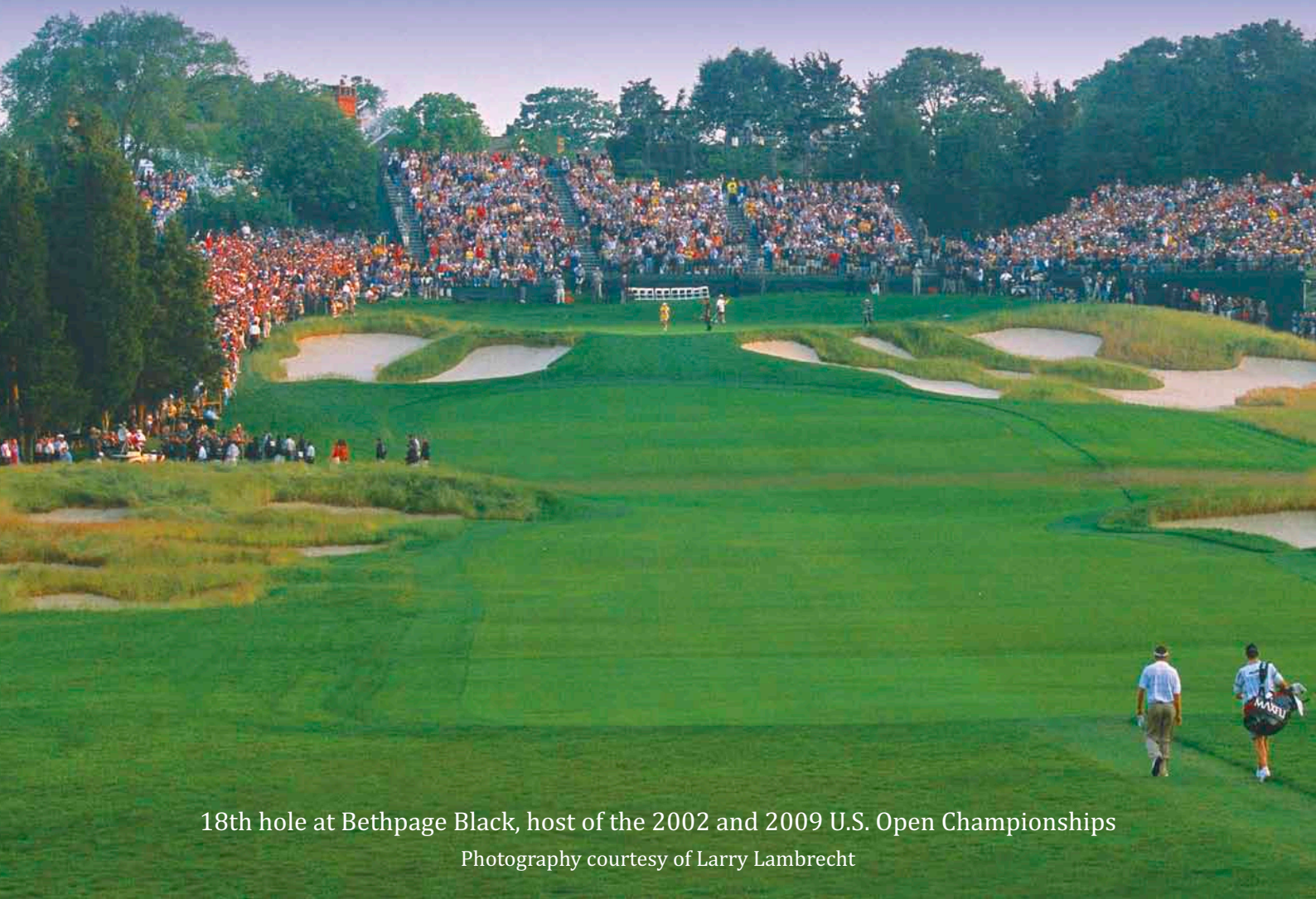
We work hard to build golf courses that blend with the land. As the only sport with a field of play that partakes of the environment on a grand scale, golf is in a unique position to maintain its fields of play in harmony with nature. Our firm approaches each project with a keen awareness of our responsibility as stewards of the land. We believe a properly designed and maintained golf course can protect wildlife habitat, preserve native vegetation, conserve water resources, buffer open green spaces from development, and create bio-filters that sequester carbon. In coming years, the ultimate goal will be a 'carbon-neutral' golf course, where the carbon dioxide taken out of the air and stored in the plants is greater than the carbon expended in maintaining it. In addition, the development of non-synthetic pesticides, coupled with more organic products and practices, will bring courses in closer harmony with nature.

**As someone who has been associated with the game of golf for a long stretch, let me ask you to look into your crystal ball and see if there will come a day when Asia will have the largest concentration of golf courses and players in the world?**

All indications are that China will be the world's largest golf nation in a matter of decades. Korea has fallen for the game in a big way—a large number of the players on the LPGA Tour are Korean. Japan is expected to regenerate its golf industry. Thailand and Malaysia are fairly well-established as golf destinations. Several Southeast Asian nations—Vietnam, Cambodia, the Philippines, Indonesia and others—are poised to develop golf as a way to boost tourism. By 2040, I believe Asia will indeed have the world's greatest concentration of courses and players. It is an exciting time for golf and I am just happy to be apart of it.

# Championships follow Rees Jones, Inc.'s designs

- 7 U.S. Opens
- 6 PGA Championships
- 4 Ryder Cups



18th hole at Bethpage Black, host of the 2002 and 2009 U.S. Open Championships

Photography courtesy of Larry Lambrecht



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