

## How Rio acquired a 21st century golf course

### The background to a new Olympic venue:

#### Barra Cluster



It was a process which was four and a half years in the planning, but the verdict on the new Olympic Golf Course at Reserva de Marapendi was overwhelmingly positive on March 7 this year when the Official Test Event provided the launch-pad for Rio's latest and most modern golfing facility.

Naturally, there had been challenges facing the Organising Committee for the Olympic Games in Rio de Janeiro, but those were met head-on and, as drawings on paper were transformed into glorious reality, the end result has been voted a huge success for Rio and Brazil as a whole.

The city required a fresh, new concept of golf course design to complement the existing older courses in the region around Rio. The Organising Committee decided, in October 2011, to announce the launch of an international contest to select a course design for the Rio Olympics. The list of demands would certainly challenge the world's most experienced course architects.

Participants with proven golf course design experience would be asked to design a project that met International Golf Federation (IGF) specifications; was capable of becoming an international centre of excellence for the sport of golf for professional and community use as a legacy to Rio's population; respected the environmental law in force and the local ecosystem and was capable of promoting Rio internationally and constituted an important tool for youth transformation through sport.

It was important that the project planned for all the stages of use of the golf course: before Rio Olympics through the Test Event, during the men's and women's competition at Games time and after the Games as a powerful, lasting legacy.

The 18-hole golf course would be built at Reserva de Marapendi, in Barra da Tijuca, located approximately five kilometres from the Athletes Village and approximately seven kilometres from the Main Press Centre and the International Broadcast Centre.

After the 2016 Olympic Games, the course would be used as a public facility with the chief purpose of promoting golf in Brazil and around the globe, representing one of the most important Olympic Games legacies for sport development in the country.

The Organising Committee for Rio2016 expressed the wish that, when golf returned to the Olympic fold, the competitors would be playing for a gold medal on a new course designed specifically for that purpose.

So began, the hunt for the designer who would deliver all those requirements for the 2016 Olympics and beyond.

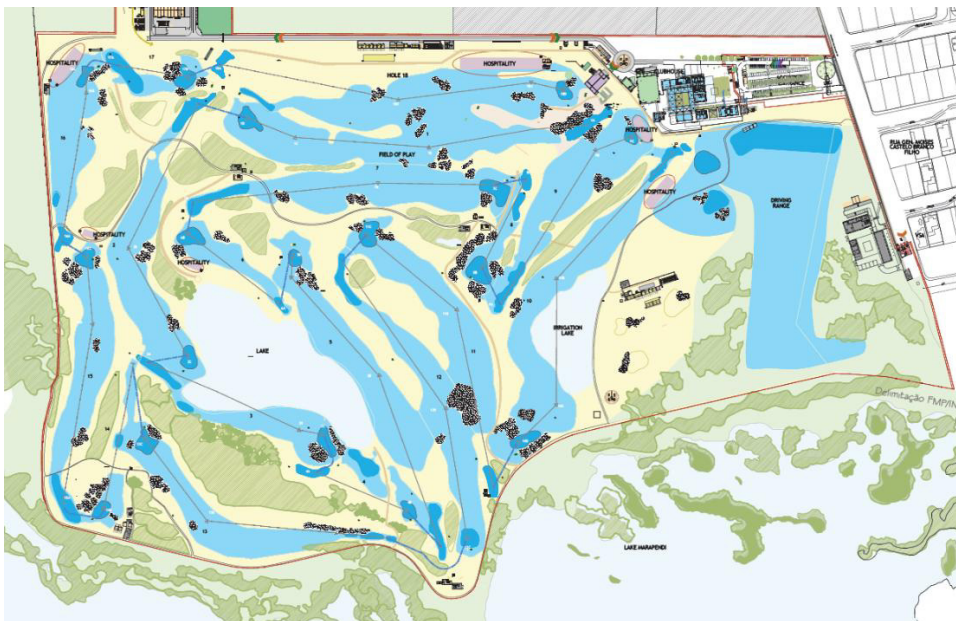
At the end of January 2012, the list of finalists for the design contest was announced by Rio2016. The eight finalists included: Gary Player Design, Greg Norman Golf Course Design, Hanse Golf Course Design, Hawtree Ltd., Nicklaus Design, Renaissance Golf Design, Robert Trent Jones II and Thomson Perrett.

Candidates' proposals were then examined by a selection panel formed by Peter Dawson, President of the International Golf Federation; Carlos Arthur Nuzman, President of Rio2016; Augusto Ivan, Adviser to the President of the Municipal Olympic Company; and Arminio Fraga, member of the Rio2016 Golf Advisory Committee.

On March 7, 2012, the panel had reached a verdict. The Rio Organising Committee announced that they had selected US-based Hanse Golf Course Design to develop and deliver the golf course that the Olympics, the city of Rio de Janeiro and the country of Brazil so badly needed and wanted.

Gil Hanse, the founder and President of the successful company, had already boasted a portfolio of internationally renowned golf courses recognised by elite and amateur golfers alike. Hanse Golf Course Design teamed up with LPGA and World Golf Hall of Fame member, Amy Alcott, for the project.

Alcott amassed 29 professional victories on the LPGA Tour including five major championship victories. The pair worked closely with environmental and sustainability engineering firms in the final design process and advocated the use of native vegetation and a minimum of land movement. Hanse also committed to relocating to Rio while the golf course is under construction.



In awarding the contract to Hanse, the Organising Committee acknowledged that his proposal had been selected for its design characteristics, including accentuation of the natural dune formations and retention of the natural contours of the land.



The design effectively addressed the planning of temporary overlay structures and internal flow systems for the venue and contained a strong legacy component with the prioritising of a golf academy as an essential tool for the development of golf in Brazil.

At the time, Carlos Arthur Nuzman, President of Rio2016, commented: "As it marks the return of golf to the Olympic Games after over a century of absence, this course represents the beginning of a new chapter in the history of the sport.

"It will enable Rio to host important events in the international calendar and it will be an example of sustainability and preservation of an environmentally protected area," said the President of Rio2016, Carlos Arthur Nuzman. "This course will be an excellent facility for the practice and development of golf and will inspire millions of youth across Brazil and the globe. We look forward to welcoming the athletes and spectators to the course in 2016."

Peter Dawson, President of the International Golf Federation, thanked all the architects whose presentations 'demonstrated great vision' and added: "The selection process adopted by Rio2016 was extremely thorough and reflected the importance of the project. I am delighted Hanse Golf Course Design has been appointed to design the Olympic golf course which promises to provide an outstanding venue for the Games and a tremendous legacy for our sport in Brazil."

Hanse Golf Course Design then tackled the challenge of designing a course for use by both elite and amateur athletes; one of the main legacy objectives. It addressed the environmental sustainability directives for the Games and efficiently conformed to the building restrictions on the land. Hanse Golf Course Design also effectively integrated native vegetation to the design, reducing the areas where frequent maintenance was required.

So it was that on March 7, 2016 – five months before the first Olympic tee shot in 112 years – that nine Brazilian professional golfers assembled at the new Olympic Golf Course for the eagerly awaited test event which marked the day that 21st century golf arrived in Rio.

The exhibition match appropriately – since the Olympic competition involves both sexes – incorporated four male pros and five women from the host country, some of whom will be directly involved in the Olympic golf which runs from August 11-14 and 17-20.

The feedback from the players and officials present at the Test Event was incredibly positive. Rio2016 President Nuzman said: "This course will leave an extraordinary legacy for Brazilian sport."

Alexandre Rocha, one of the country's leading male professionals, commented: "Before, we only had old courses in Brazil. This is a modern golf course."

Rocha's female compatriot, Victoria Lovelady, further endorsed the new Hanse design. She said: "My expectations were surpassed. It's a fantastic course. It will attract golf tourism. People will come here to get to know a nice place and play some golf. I played 18 holes and, if I could, I would play another 18 right now!"