



"When the sounds of the horns die down after the new football World Cup champion has been determined, consider watching the other World Cup—the World Cup of golf—when it shows off the talents of great players from all over the globe again next year."

Words By Bruce Charlton — President & Chief Design Officer, Robert Trent Jones II Golf Course Architects

THE WORLD'S GAME

As I write this column, teams from five different continents are still in contention for the 2010 football World Cup in South Africa. FIFA, the international association that governs the sport, estimates that cumulative viewership of all the games will be approximately 26 billion. Yes, I said 'billion.' That's a lot of vuvuzelas!



SPECIAL FOCUS REPORT

While golf is a quieter sport than football in terms of the behavior of its spectators, it's also a bit quieter in terms of overall popularity. It is my hunch that significantly fewer people will tune in when the World Cup of golf is played next in China in 2011. Possibly you didn't even know there is a World Cup of golf. This global event started back in 1953 as the Canada Cup, and became the World Cup in 1967. Although the name and format have changed as often as possession in a good football match, it's still played by two-man teams representing their countries. Over the years it's been won by such well-known champions as Ben Hogan, Peter Thompson, Seve Ballesteros, and Ian Woosnam. Victorious nations have included Sweden, South Africa, Japan, Germany, Scotland, Italy, the US, and others.

I'm also proud to tell you that eight Robert Trent Jones II courses have served as host venues for the event—including six in Asia: Pondok Indah, in Indonesia; Pine Lake, in Japan; The Mines, in Malaysia; Gulf Harbour, in New Zealand; Ta Shee, in Taiwan (host of the women's World Cup); and

For one thing, golf has the same kind of powerful worldwide influence, only on a smaller scale. I think its smaller appeal is due to the fact that golf is an individual sport. Even when players are representing their countries they are still almost exclusively competing singly, without actual help from teammates. Consider if a golfer could pass his ball off to a teammate to finish a scoring drive by putting it out?

Navatanee, in Thailand.

I find it interesting that among all the world's sports, golf is the rare one that's pursued on a wide variety of very different playing fields. Imagine playing football on fields of different sizes, with various features and surfaces and hazards—and no referees! Though I know in my heart that golf will never generate the kind of mass excitement that a fast-paced game like football does, and there are many other differences between them, still there are also a number of parallels between these two World Cup sports.

For one thing, golf has the same kind of powerful worldwide influence, only on a smaller scale. I think its smaller appeal is due to the fact that golf is an individual sport. Even when players are representing their countries they are still almost exclusively competing singly, without actual help from teammates. Consider if a golfer could pass his ball off to a teammate to finish a scoring drive by putting it out?

"Over the years it's been won by such well-known champions as Ben Hogan, Peter Thompson, Seve Ballesteros, and Ian Woosnam. Victorious nations have included Sweden, South Africa, Japan, Germany, Scotland, Italy, the US, and others."



World Cup of golf is played next in China in 2011



SPECIAL FOCUS REPORT

Like football, golf is also an international language. Many times I've been paired with players who didn't speak the same language as me, but they always knew enough to say "great birdie" or "nice putt". Or, in some cases—given my tendency to hit the occasional stray shot—"O.B." Much like football fans worldwide understand the passion and excitement generated by the word "GOOOOAAAAALLL!!!"

In addition, the ideals shared by these sports are the same: bring the diverse peoples of the world together through friendly competition. During the World Cup of football, mutual respect is represented by players on the field giving each other a hand up, and in the stands by fans from an eliminated team adopting a team still in competition to root for. In golf, consider the conceded putt, or the way a player might help an opponent look for his lost ball.

I'm guessing that most readers of this column are more likely to play golf than football, so the game presents not only the opportunity to

watch your favorite players and countries, but to participate yourself. Golf brings varied people together on a more human, personal scale and gives them a chance to spend four hours in the company of strangers who often become—at least for the time period of the game—friends. Perhaps more than any sport on the planet golf creates camaraderie even among competitors (and nearly anyone can compete), and as such is very important on the international scene. This pure, simple game crosses cultural, political, and socio-economic boundaries and even actual borders, and engenders opportunities for people—not just professional athletes—of very different backgrounds to come together. It's a holistic and virtuous activity that members of all cultures can understand and enjoy.

When the sounds of the horns die down after the new football World Cup champion has been determined, consider watching the other World Cup—the World Cup of golf—when it shows off the talents of great players from all over the globe again next year.



Mutual respect is represented by players and fans during the World Cup.

