

Seminar One – ‘An Introduction to Golf Course Design’

A testimonial by Keith Phillips (Civil Engineer from UK)

As a civil engineer who has been involved in the construction industry for over 25 years and a keen golfer since the age of 6, I was interested to learn about the design and construction of golf courses, a subject that I knew very little about.

Following the economic downturn in early 2009 and expecting to be out of work by the end of the year, I applied to numerous international golf course design companies with the primary objective of seeking an employment opportunity on construction project in Asia, where I have been living for the past twenty years. I did not receive any positive responses and fortunately I remained employed, but in mid-2010 I received a suggestion from Mr Raymond Hearn, the President of Raymond Hearn Golf Designs, Inc. (one of the companies I had contacted in 2009). As I had no prior experience in golf course design or construction, he suggested that I considered enrolling in the twelve month seminar ‘An Introduction to Golf Course Design’ which is run as a distance learning course by his company.

Mr Hearn sent me a thorough synopsis of the Seminar which immediately appealed to me and I realized that this was exactly what I was looking for. It gave a thorough introduction to the early developments of the game and the beginnings of golf course design and construction and the people involved in it who were effectively the founders of the art and profession. It then moves on to lead the student month by month through the various stages of golf course design and the full process of the development of a golf course project.

What I particularly liked was the personal involvement of Mr Hearn in each and every month of the Seminar. As the President and Founder of Raymond Hearn Golf Course Designs, Inc. (RHGCD). Mr Hearn has immense experience and expertise in the fields of golf course design and construction and golf course reconstruction and renovation and utilizes this throughout the Seminar.

I decided to enrol in Seminar One in October 2010 and having successfully completed and thoroughly enjoyed this Seminar, I have now commenced Seminar Two.

Seminar One is divided into twelve monthly instalments, each requiring the student to produce and submit an Assignment for review and comment by Mr Hearn. Each assignment takes on a different subject and leads the student through the various elements of the design and development process. Each instalment provides the student with sufficient basic information to be able to understand the topic, together with references to four of the text books which form the essential reading part of the Seminar. Mr Hearn also encourages students to learn more about each topic by further reading of the text books and research using the Internet. For most of Seminar One, I did not find it necessary to carry out additional research in order to complete the monthly Assignments since the material provided by RHGCD Inc. together with the references to the text books is clear, concise and informative. However, as each Assignment opened up a new topic or stage in the design process, I was fascinated and felt compelled to read further and deeper into each topic.

Incidentally, these four text books do not just serve as points of reference for the Assignments; they are wonderfully produced works of art in their own right and provide the student with the beginnings of a personal library on this fascinating subject. In addition to purchasing these four books required for Seminar One, I have since purchased a further six books on similar subjects

related to the history and theory of golf course design and construction and this growing collection now takes pride of place in my study at home, alongside my Certificate of Completion for Seminar #1.

When I first considered enrolling for Seminar One, I feared that my inability to use CAD techniques would prevent me or hinder me from producing work of sufficient quality for each Assignment. Mr Hearn quickly assured me that this would not be the case and I am pleased to say that he was totally correct.

Looking back on Seminar One, I can honestly say that successfully completing this course has given me immense satisfaction. Not only has it introduced me to a completely new technical subject and art form, it has allowed me to make use of my existing knowledge gained from spending over 25 years in the design and construction of civil engineering and building projects and applying this in some way in the preparation of each Assignment. Furthermore, it has introduced me to the rich and fascinating history of the development of golf course design from the mid-1800s, through the Golden Era of the early 1900s and right up to the present day. Now, whenever I play golf, not only am I interested in trying to shoot a low score, I am interested and fascinated with the overall layout of the golf course and the layout, routing and shot strategy of the individual holes. Unfortunately, I cannot that since armed with this new knowledge and awareness of course design my golf game has improved (for that I need to invest much more time on the practise range), however I can say that it has significantly enhanced my enjoyment of the game and understanding and appreciation of what the golf course designer has achieved and it has made me eager to learn more. As a result of this and after successful completion of Seminar One, I had no hesitation to enrol in Seminar Two and I am delighted to say that I continue to be fascinated in this subject and with the teaching methods and personal involvement of Mr Hearn.

Fortunately, I continue to be employed on a full-time basis and have easily completed the Assignments for Seminar One in my spare time. Whilst I may never get the opportunity to move into this specialist field of golf course design and construction, I am extremely grateful to Mr Hearn and RHGCD Inc. for first introducing me to this subject and then continuously providing me with regular positive and constructive reviews of my submitted Assignments and for his continued encouragement. His passion and enthusiasm for his profession and his desire to share this with his students is admirable and enviable and I thoroughly recommend this seminar to anyone interested in learning about this fascinating subject, whether it be at the starting point of an intended career or as a means to better understand and appreciate this wonderful and multi-faceted game of golf.

Who knows, maybe one day it will lead me to both.

Keith Phillips