



from the designer's desk

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golf in the ruins

dans les ruines

I met a traveler from an antique land... Shelley's famous poem "Ozymandias" began. Recently I attended a golf conference on Brijuni, a beautiful Adriatic island off the Istria Peninsula of Croatia. The guests played a Pro Am on the recently restored golf course there which had been abandoned in 1939. This was not a modern design. It was an antique. There were un-irrigated fairways flowing as nature had provided, simple tee markers on uneven but raised tee boxes, and most interestingly, small sand greens. Browns or sand greens have been used in hot desert locations wherever the British Empire laid out a course to amuse its colonists or provide sport for its soldiers and in oil countries of the Middle and Far East and Texas.

At Brijuni, the players included young European professionals who were charmed by this unusual game of golf. It was a step back in time before OPEC was founded in a Brijuni conference hall by third-world oil producers, before communism, before World War II, when barons and princesses played with the social elite. There are Roman ruins on the island nearby and the deer and other animal graze the fairways - they are the mowers of the grass.

There are other simple charming venues in distant lands from the rubber plantations in Malaysia to the geyser-filled lava flows of Iceland. These natural layouts simply follow the land to holes with flagsticks and invitation for a beautiful walk. Today when modern courses are too long, too expensive and too hard and take too much time, try an antique course where nature simply charms and stirs the golfer's imagination of why the game of golf, in all its forms, has given enjoyment for half a millennium.

The more modern golf course variation at Penha Longa Golf Club in Portugal includes a hole played under an antique Roman aqueduct. At Cancun (Mexico), a Mayan Chacmool statue oversees your putts on a green. These are golf courses in the ruins. Will they withstand the test of time? Only time will tell. ■

Récemment, je me suis rendu sur l'île de Brijuni en Croatie pour une séminaire de golf. Les invités y jouaient un pro am sur un parcours abandonné depuis 1939 et à peine restauré. Un dessin à l'ancienne avec des fairways irrigués par la

nature, des zones de départ approximatives, mais surélevées, et surtout des "browns", ces greens faits de sable mélangé à de l'huile de vidange qu'on retrouve plus souvent au Moyen-Orient, en Afrique et même au Texas près des champs de pétrole.

A Brijuni, de jeunes pros européens ont découvert cette forme de jeu avec plaisir, leur faisant faire un retour à l'époque de la 2e guerre mondiale ou à celle des barons et des princesses d'avant le communisme. Ici, des ruines romaines.

Là, des biches faisant office de tondeuses. On trouve encore de nombreux parcours qui jouent avec les vestiges d'une autre époque, comme cet aqueduc à Penha Longa, Portugal, ou à Cancun. Ces parcours dans les ruines résisteront-ils encore au temps?

