

Interview with Nick Faldo

The Hong Kong Golf Club, 19th January 2006



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FALDO SERIES

JS: Perhaps you could tell us a little bit about the development of Faldo Series in Asia.

Faldo: The last two years has been kind of an intro. It got the seeds growing, and this year we'll play more events across Asia, in different countries and it will all come together as a Grand Final at Mission Hills at the end of the year. We are looking at ways to expand it all the time. The main thrust at the moment is obviously to give them a competition to play, the incentive of having an Asian Championship. And then I am sure we'll find a way for them to play against the European lads and lassies.

JS: Any development you've spotted in the Asian players during your involvement over the last couple of years?

Faldo: They are very talented. Over the next few years, we will present them with a bigger picture of golf, how you got to be physically prepared, mentally prepared. They are going to take it to a new level. That's really the goal of the event, to have the opportunity to access this knowledge and then they can move up and keep climbing levels. So they don't get stuck just being talented. You come up against a wall, and you try to go through it against other players who are creatively prepared. Talent-wise and commitment-wise, they've got it in Asia; it's just the understanding of other aspects.



2006 Faldo Series International Trophy winner, John Parry *©James Spence 2006*

COURSE ARCHITECTURE

JS: In your involvement in projects in Mainland China, do you notice any differences in the ways in which the projects shape up? In terms of the way you were brought in, the relationship with the developers, the terrain that you have to cover? Are there obvious differences between a project in China versus a project elsewhere?

Faldo: Not really, every project is different, that's what I really enjoy about it. Every one is a new challenge, whether it's a surface that is dead flat or really hilly, you got to adapt and find a way to get the best possible golf course onto that piece of property and that's the challenge, I really enjoy it.

JS: Perhaps your courses have more focus on bunkering than most modern courses, how do you approach setting hazards?

Faldo: Quite often we are given a briefing sometimes the developer wants a resort course, a club course and to play tournament ! So they have to be tough enough for the professionals, because of their standards obviously. But then it's got to be playable the other 51 weeks of the year, so we have to balance that. The trick with bunkering is to put them in a place to annoy the good players and to give plenty of options for the not so good players. Obviously we can do that with different lengthed tees but we have this power factor now, where some players can hit it miles and they make what you deem as a good hole a laughing stock. You have just got to put the hazards in the right places. I enjoy doing the walk throughs to try to come up with the best possible plan.

JS: To my mind, many new developments in Asia are blighted by having the housing too close to the fairways, do you get into conversation with developers about that?

Faldo: Yes, especially at Mission Hills. They reminded me that they can build another 500 units but I argued that you have to try keep this golf course [the Faldo Course at Mission Hills] clean. If you want this one to be a tournament golf course, then keep it clean. You just can't just keep doing the same everywhere. Obviously we fully understand that real estate is an important part of the whole project, but there are ways to design property on a golf course, so it's not just corridor golf; corridor golf is not very pretty. So if we can get the housing on one side, on in the middle or whatever, at least you can get a bit of freedom.



Re-design underway of Wadi Course at Emirates GC, Dubai by Faldo Design

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GOLF GAME

Q: And on your own golf game, what's your schedule like for professional golf this year?

A: I am going to start playing in March in the Florida Swing, I have a series of tournaments in March, April and May, I am going to be try to be a golfer as much as possible with very little business if I can. I think I am going to play nine events in three months, which is pretty good, so that would be solid golf and I'm looking forward to that. I have to gear myself up physically to cope with that and things have been going well enough in the last couple of months.

JS: You scored 6 under last year at The Open, just outside the top 10 with a spectacular 3-2 finish on The Old Course, which got everybody excited. How do you assess how you performed that week?

Faldo: That was a great week. I just came off from about six weeks of ABC work [US TV channel] and I'd hardly practiced. I came over to Britain and it just proved what the word motivation is all about. My whole goal all year was to play well at The Open. That is one golf course I can play well on, find a way to get round. I battled with my game a bit and as I said I didn't start practicing until the week before. I had a couple of afternoon practices there with my son and I was ready to go. In my second round I shot a 69 to make the cut. And then the weekend was a bit like old times. You know darn well if you knuckle down and have a good weekend you'll move up at British Open and that's what happened.



Night Session in Hong Kong, 2005

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JS: Is there any particular tournament venue you fancy this year?

Faldo: Same thing, I think. The Open is at Hoylake I am looking forward to my little swing through Florida and there will be the Players' Championship which is a good course to me, not a monstrously long golf course. However with the Masters, they've lengthened Augusta again, so we see if we can find a way to get around that one. Wentworth has been lengthened now too. The problem is now that the golf courses are getting longer and longer so you got to try to hit it out with some of these guys.

ON COMMENTATING

JS: On Commentating, you received plaudits for your showing within your ABC team but their contract runs out in 2007 do you plan to follow up with some more commentating?

Faldo: I've got this year with them and I'm looking forward to this season. I enjoyed working with the team and we have a good time. My number one goal is to be in there and enjoy myself and as you get more confidence at speaking and letting things go and throwing out your observations. So I'll finish this year and who knows what next year will bring. I turn 50 in the summer so there's the Senior Tour to think about.

JS: Finally, what would be the good and bad things about living with Nick Faldo?

Faldo: The good this is that things are always changing, nothing is the same, that's probably the bad thing as well. My wife always complains "you are always changing your mind". And I say we are fortunate we have a choice, we have a very good lifestyle, we are fortunate to enjoy some of the luxuries in life. I think the number one thing in life is to have a choice, isn't it? But sometimes she says "When were you going to tell me about this ?" and I reply "Well, I was going to tell you."

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