Golf has famously been described as "a good walk spoiled," but few players would agree with Mark Twain's view assessment of the game. Even in the days when things didn't go according to plan, most players count a round of golf as "a good walk made more interesting."

Though club golfers generally play the same course every week, each round is a new adventure. The path walked, the shoes worn, the character of the covey, the cut of the greens and fairways, the nature of the breeze and, most of all, the intangible brew of mind and matter that determines a player's "form"—these elements all conspire to make the escapade.

When a golfer plays a course for the first time, his sense of adventure is heightened.

The Harbour Plaza Golf Club Denggang offers great golf and an idyllic lakeside lifestyle.

By Mark Caldwell.
THE GOLF ACADEMY

Conveniently close to the main clubhouse, the Harbour Plaza Golf Academy has a 300-yard open driving range, 18 covered Matador bays, natural grass tee, a generous practice putting green, uneven lie, bunkers and target greens. With sight lighting and a food and beverage service, it caters to a golfer's every need.

Under the direction of veteran Golf Professional Martin Le, beginners and experienced players alike are guided towards playing better, more enjoyable golf. The Academy incorporates dedicated teaching bays with full-length mirrors, an air-conditioned classroom, instruction videos, teaching aids and video technology which enables students to see footage of their progress.

The Academy offers free introductory classes to Members and their spouses while non-members are also welcome to participate for a fee.

With dedicated clinics for children, women and men, there is no better way to learn and develop your game.

This young Golf Club is already building a noble tradition. On the wall, the hole-in-one list contains a full dozen Members' names. The first one was scored on November 7, 1999, the most recent in January. A small piece of Club history was made on that November day when a shot from the 24th tee sent the ball rolling into the cup. As the list grows longer, that milestone will take on a deeper significance.

In tune, perhaps the son or daughter of one of these first Members will also achieve a hole-in-one, thereby adding another stitch to the Harbour Plaza's proud tapestry.

Like the young saplings that ring the course, the Harbour Plaza Golf Club Dongguan has the pedigree and resources to grow strong. The time has been set, the foundation laid with care. Devotees of the game appreciate the importance of club selection, and Members of the Harbour Plaza unite in their opinion that this is indeed the right club.

Location: Midway between Shenzhen and Guangzhou, near the town of Huizhou.
Getting there from Hong Kong: The Turbo Cat Ferry (travel time: one hour) departs from the China Hong Kong City Ferry Terminal (Kowloon) to Fuyong Ferry Terminal (PRC) from where there is a courtesy bus (travel time: 30 minutes).
By shuttle bus: There are several pickup points in Hong Kong as well as from Fuyong Ferry Terminal. Players can book the shuttle bus up to two weeks in advance.
Bookings and information: The booking office is open seven days per week except for PRC holidays. Members are booked by telephone (85 767) 581-8080 (Club) or (812) 2121-8999 (Hong Kong office), or over the Internet at harpoonpla.net.com. There is also an online weather information service.
create holes that are in balance with the environment and which will contribute to the overall community."

The Lakeside development comprises 198 individual reinforced steel-framed houses with spacious gardens and uninterrupted views across the Water. As the community evolves, decisions will be made on the need to add more houses, golf holes or other facilities residents may require. The Company has thus far utilized only 26% of its 9,200 acre holding. In the future, Members and their guests may be able to take advantage of conference amenities, while the shops, family recreational facilities and schools may also be developed.

"Our long-term view is to promote a quality residential development and facilities, and to promote the game of golf in the way it should be played — in more stylish surroundings rather than in a factoryparadise environment as many golf clubs have tended to do," says Kien. "We want our Members to have a real golfing experience, we want them to know each other, be involved and feel part of the community."

EXTRAORDINARY SERVICE

In a fast-paced world in which many clubs maximise their operational revenue through cut rates and shorter playing times, it’s a luxury for players to be able to walk the course. While Members can opt to use golf carts, at the Harbour Plaza Golf Club they are not mandatory. Little touches like this make a huge difference to the overall experience.

"Exceptional Personalised Service is our operating philosophy," says Kien. "We try to be very attentive in catering for every Member’s need. It’s something we continually try to improve, so the team is vitally important."

To this end the Facility employs highly-trained staff, including a Member Relations Team that provides personalised attention to every detail for its Members. When a dark cloud threatens during our round, course marshals come to offer umbrellas or a ride back to the clubhouse. At the end of our game we are handed refreshing chilled towels by smiling staff. Our caddies ensure our clubs are in good order. Golf shoes are taken away for cleaning while we sip our coffee and change. There’s the option of taking a steam bath, Jacuzzi or sauna.

Back in the Gallery Restaurant we enjoy cold refreshments, order from the extensive lunch menu and, through the windows, observe players finishing their rounds. For me, the experience has been a very ‘good walk’ indeed, and I look forward to the next one.

TEAM SPIRIT

On day two I play a round with Golf Operations Director Tim Shaw. The American has a wealth of golfing experience and he curates the "Deluxe Course" with the authority and finesse of a hardened campaigner. The dramatic par 3,930-yard, named Double Delight, is a great example of the "easily bogey, tough par" concept of golf design and is one of the Harbour Plaza’s "signature" holes. It plays twice over ocean when the golfer takes the conservative course, but Tim opts for the "high risk, high reward" approach and hits the green in two. He tells me through the motion of each hole how and it is an education to observe how this remarkable course can reward or punish an expert player.

Next up is a round with another expert — Martin Lai, who is in charge of the Golf Academy. Martin started his career as a caddy. During our round he shows why he rose through the ranks to become one of the best teachers in Hong Kong Chinese to turn pro. Over the years, he has helped tailor the swings of countless players, and most Members at some stage

THE PRO SHOP STOCKS EQUIPMENT AND ACCESSORIES WHILE CLUB-TRAINED CADDIES CAN OFFER RECOMMENDATIONS AROUND THE COURSE.
My first view of the Harbour Plaza Golf Club Dunesum is from the window of the Club’s customer bus. Our half-hour journey from the Po Ying Ferry Terminal has taken us past the lush developments that line prosperity in this region, through the town of Hau Jee and on into the lush sixth China countryside. We drive through the Club gates to the reception area and ^are greeted by smart, uniformed staff. Our bags are whisked away while we are shown into the Gallery Restaurant for refreshments. The trip from Hong Kong has taken just 20 minutes.

**On Course**

To find out more about this golfing jewel, I’d been invited by General Manager Kurt Quade to experience the Club first-hand and, as most golfers would attest, there’s no better place to have a “fleeting” fling on the golf course itself. The format is well suited to conversation, demanding moments of intense concentration for each stroke interspersed with periods of relaxation — time to stroll, talk and enjoy the environment. (Who else but a golfer studies the slope of a hill or the cut of the grass so attentively? And where else is the air so fresh?)

In radiant sunshine, we approach the first tee of the Lake Course — named Lycée Stock — a part that is bisected by a stream. My swing is somewhat agricultural and results in an inexpressible fist shot. But the handicap system enables the very best practitioners to enjoy a round with ordinary mortals and still be competitive. Kurt has a thrilling drive. His ball travels some 250-plus metres away on the soft green fairway. Our caddies acknowledge his effort — “good shot” and off we go.

As with his game, so too with his job — Kurt has very high standards. It is his passion to see every aspect of this young Golf Club develop to superlative levels — to create and maintain a golf course of quality and service. After only two years in operation, the facility is a marvel. Designed by Robert Trent Jones II, the 27 holes, 10,672-yard master piece is bisected by clear lakes and silvery greens, and bordered with groves of Japanese trees. With the contours and character of a classic, it is already rated as one of southern China’s premier championship courses. We play a few holes then reach a high point on the course. As we line up our putting, we enjoy panoramic views in all directions. The clubhouse is a long way off, framed by undulating fairways, and a large pond whose contours is an animated five-acre-high fountain.

To one side is the great glistening expanse of Moon Lake. Across a fairway, beyond an explosion of wildflowers, is the Laguna Verona residential development.

**Quality Development**

Set on the shores of the lake, the 422-unit Laguna Verona Phase I Harbour Plaza Golfers’ Villas have been developed as an integral element of the Golf Club environment. The first phase has been fully sold out and a second phase, “The Lakeside”, will go on the market soon.

While individuals can join the Golf Club for a fee, the Carson Membership are Laguna Verona homeowners who have bought into a facility which, with its leafy lanes and lakefront vistas, offers them a refreshing antidote to the high-rise lifestyles of Hong Kong, Guangzhou and Shanghai.

Owners of these homes may enjoy membership of the Golf Club as well as access to the residents Club, which boasts a restaurant, indoor and outdoor swimming pools, gymnasium, solarium, table tennis, tennis, billiards, squash, basketball, badminton, a golf simulator, and a children’s playground.

In a highly competitive golf market, parent company Hutchison Whampoa has paid careful attention to developing and maintaining the right strategy. “The manufacturing boom in southern China has led to some 50 golf courses being built in this region in a relatively short time,” Kurt explains. “Unfortunately, many clubs cannot sustain full membership and so cannot afford to close their doors to non-members. They have gone away from the original intent, which was to be private and exclusive. As a result, some existing members feel short-changed.”

“Anyone wanting to join a golf club should weigh up the commitment of its management. Will this club continue to provide the same level of or enhance the level of service during the period of membership? Will the club be locked in for 25 years?”

“Hutchison is committed to ensuring that the value of memberships is maintained. That’s why we don’t allow one members to come in. We are totally committed to ensuring that when you make an investment with us you benefit not just in terms of enjoying the facility, but also that the investment doesn’t decline. There are very few clubs in southern China where the value of memberships has not declined. At Harbour Plaza Golf Club we’ve been very tough on maintaining our exclusivity and therefore the value of our membership.”

**Building A Community**

“Some housing developments can be described as a ‘slice of lake homes’,” Kurt adds, “but our development is modelled on those in North America. As we move into the next phase and into future phases, we’re determined to...”

Laguna Verona comprises 422 European-style villas and a residents’ clubhouse set in a lush, watercoast environment. The Phase Two development comprises 190 deluxe North American-style homes scheduled for completion in Phase Two 2002.