



Cook Island pines and volunteer pineapple plants along the edges of the Plantation Course remind golfers of the course's rich heritage.

Kapalua's Plantation Course Embraces The Sea

The Plantation Course at Kapalua is the third star in Kapalua's crown of three resort courses. It will receive its official baptism as it hosts the Kapalua International in mid-November 1991.

In Hawaiian, Kapalua means "arms embracing the sea." Golf course designers Bill Coore and Ben Crenshaw built The Plantation Course at Kapalua to do just that. Steep fairways roll down to wide greens that lap at the ocean cliffs.

The 18-hole, par-73, 7,263-yard course is located amidst a pineapple plantation in West Maui, Hawaii. It is the third star in Kapalua's crown of three resort courses. Although the course opened in May 1991, it will receive its official baptism as it hosts the Kapalua International in mid-November 1991.

Few golf courses offer a view more breathtaking than the panorama from the 17th tee, the highest point on The Plantation Course. Looking down across the fairways, greens and tees, whitecaps rise and fall on the azure ocean. The islands of Molokai and Lanai rise from the distance blue water like jagged emeralds.

The trade winds brush a golf cap from your head on their way to the sea. A few leaves caught in their grasp could float in the Pacific Ocean for miles. Suddenly, you realize this spectacular island environment is also fragile.

Preserving and complementing the natural environment was the goal behind The Plantation Course. The land had changed little since the Baldwin family settled on Maui in 1836. In 1914, the first crop of pineapples was harvested on the Kapalua plantation. The land contributed substantially to the Maui Land & Pineapple Company's designation as the largest private-label pineapple and pineapple juice producer in the nation.

In 1969, the company's chairman and fifth generation Baldwin descendant Colin Cameron, decided to turn part of the 23,000 acres into a world-class resort, complete with three championship golf courses. Arnold Palmer designed the Bay Course and the Village Course.

When the time came to develop The Plantation Course, Kapalua selected Coore & Crenshaw. Although they have only been together as designers since 1986, the duo quickly earned a reputation for their hands-on approach to sculpting courses.

They were drawn together by a mutual love for classic course designs. Crenshaw enjoys studying golf history and architecture. On the PGA Tour, he has an opportunity to play the world's classic golf courses. These courses offer open, fair play to the average golfer but the challenge of choice to the better player.

Nature gave Coore and Crenshaw a tremendous canvas to work on. The lava flows that formed West Maui left sweeping slopes and dramatic peninsulas. Creeks making their way down the mountain carved ravines and valleys.

"Here we have the rarest combination you can find in golf; a strikingly beautiful location that is also a natural for play. Our design didn't really have to create new holes as much as take the existing land and natural characteristics and adapt them to make for the most exciting, challenging play possible. Nature gave us a tremendous head start," said Ben Crenshaw.

Coore and Crenshaw take on only a few courses each year so they can give them personal attention. The two designers became fixtures at Kapalua as they spent countless hours studying the site and making plans. When Coore and Crenshaw were in town, it was not unusual to see the Kapalua golf contingent gather for a wide-ranging discussion of golf, architecture and Hawaii.

The Plantation Course marked the Hawaiian debut of Coore and Crenshaw, so the designers listened to input from the local experts, such as Gary Planos who is

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Director of Golf for Kapalua. They wanted to take full advantage of all the site had to offer. "Golf at The Plantation Course is golf on a grand scale. The design features within the course are large because the land on which they were created is open, windswept and immense. We've made every effort to apply time-honored architectural principles to a site so naturally spectacular and so expansive as to be rarely found in golf," said Bill Coore.

Golf course superintendents also can appreciate the classic style. Unlike the undulating terrain and sharply dropping bunkers that were popular in the 70s and early 80s, classic courses are less costly and time consuming to maintain. Superintendents have a friend in Coore who was a superintendent himself before beginning a golf course design career in 1972. He appreciates the hard work superintendents put into maintaining an opening-day look even after a year of constant play.

Jim Lyles was the golf course construction superintendent, representing Coore and Crenshaw, Inc. It was his job to work with the golf course construction company,

Goodfellow Bros. Inc., to make the designers' plans reality.

The goal was to move as little soil as possible and still maintain the sweeping look. A former superintendent, Lyles knew the importance of giving the new superintendent, Kent Nishijima, a course he could maintain with as little handwork as possible. Drainage would also be critical on the steep course. Sudden (but brief) rain showers are not unusual during the winter season. Resort golfers don't want to wait for the course to dry out. They want to play immediately following, if not through, the shower. Construction started at the top of the hill and worked down, almost backing through the course. As Lyles and the construction crew completed a few holes, Nishijima would establish the turf to help prevent erosion. The fairways are Tifgreen, greens are Tifdwarf and tees are Tifgreen. The roughs are a mixture of native Hawaiian grasses and Bermudagrass. Many persistent pineapple plants continue to grow in the roughs, a tribute to the course's past. Although the course has many sloping

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Whenever possible, designers Ben Crenshaw (L) and Bill Coore use existing plant and site features to offer golfing challenges.

The Plantation Course

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fairways, crews can mow them safely with their Jacobsen LF100s. Lyles said the designers benefitted from the experience Nishijima and Head Superintendent Short Honma received through the years on the other two Kapalua courses. Whenever possible, The Plantation Course was made maintenance-friendly.

Just because the course doesn't require extensive hand-maintenance doesn't mean it is not challenging. Coore and Crenshaw made good use of the site's natural features. The 532-yard, par-5 fifth hole is an example of classic "cape" concept of golf architecture. Tournament players challenge a ravine hugging the fairway. A successful tee shot rewards the player with a chance to hit a second shot over a corner of the ravine onto the green for an eagle or birdie try. More human golfers can follow a more conservative approach down the fairway, taking several drives to reach the green perched on a high peninsula jutting towards the ravine.

The sixth hole offers a challenge in a different sense. The 398-yard, par-4 hole asks players to do battle with strong tradewinds blowing from the right. Many players find themselves making blind approaches to the green.

"This hole brings smiles to a lot of faces," Lyles said. The green is bowl-shaped, causing many mishit balls to roll onto the green.

This theme follows throughout the course. Coore and Crenshaw want players to both enjoy the natural environment and be challenged by it.

"Where a lot of architects may use trees and bunkers, [Coore and Crenshaw] tried to use what already grows on the course," said Lyles.

Protecting the environment and keeping the course in good shape is now the responsibility of Nishijima and Honma. Honma said they will continually monitor the Honokahua Bay water where the creeks drain. They want to make sure the course doesn't cause any problems.

Crews will aerify the greens three times a year and the fairways twice. The fertilizer program will vary, depending on need. Pesticides will be applied on an as-needed basis. The birds help tell Honma when sod webworms are a problem.

The trade winds can present spraying difficulties. Honma has begun using a Windfoil sprayer made by Innovative Equipment Company. This sprayer is shielded, helping to prevent drift. Honma said he can now apply pesticides on-target.

Greens maintenance is also a challenge. In keeping with the expansive scale of The Plantation Course, the greens are also large, averaging approximately 9,500 square feet. The largest green is more than 13,000 square feet. Crews use Jacobsen walk-behind greensmowers to mow the smaller greens and riding greensmowers on the larger greens.

The result provides resort golfers from around the world with a top-quality golf course that looks as if it were meant to be part of the landscape.



White sand bunkers on the 11th green were designed to match the white caps on the ocean.