

New Harradine course in Russia has soft opening

AK Bars Golf Resort in Kazan, Russia, has held a soft opening of its new course, designed by Harradine Golf.

The project began in October 2020 when the Harradine team visited several sites in and near Kazan, ultimately choosing one that was mostly flat.

"The saving grace was that most of the perimeter is surrounded by trees and a long line of trees crosses the land," said Peter Harradine. "They were naturally kept and used in the design. The second great advantage was that it was adjacent to the 'mother of Russia', the Volga."

With most of the available Volga shoreline to be used for real estate, Michael Harradine – who led the project with help of his father Peter and colleague Matt Osborne – could only design two holes next to the river, the 163-yard downhill seventeenth and the 359-yard par-four eighteenth.

For the seventeenth, the Volga provides a backdrop to a green that has bunkers guarding the front and left side and a large bailout area to the right. Club selection will be an important factor with winds in this area being strong and changeable. The eighteenth doglegs to the left with the entire fairway running alongside the Volga.

"Our biggest problem was that most of the site was below the Volga's high water mark which meant that it had to be raised by an average of two metres," said Harradine. "Around 800,000 cubic metres was dredged from the Volga to

reach the required levels and improve the uninteresting topography, although more fill was taken from the three artificial lakes."

Enco Group, under the supervision of Arne van Amerongen, began construction in late April 2021. The project progressed despite snow and freezing conditions until the last hole was completed in late June 2022.

"We have created a mixture of open spaces, tree-bordered holes and water hazards," said Harradine. "There are also large grass and bailout areas where a golfer can play a more conservative game. Angles were used as much as possible, mainly due to the lack of elevation change. The angles apply to the holes themselves but also to the various hazards placed in strategic locations. If all the right 'Tiger' lines are chosen and played correctly, a low score will be on the cards. However, if a golfer bites off more than they can chew, bogeys and double bogeys can quickly ruin a scorecard."

Harradine describes the par-four sixth, which doglegs sharply to the left, as classic risk and reward. "The more golfers can chew off by playing over the trees and bunkers, the closer they will get to the green," he said. "Big hitters must beware of the lake on the right side; club selection and player strategy will be very important! The green is guarded by a bunker on the left and a lake on the right, which will require

precision even if the golfer has a short second shot into the green."

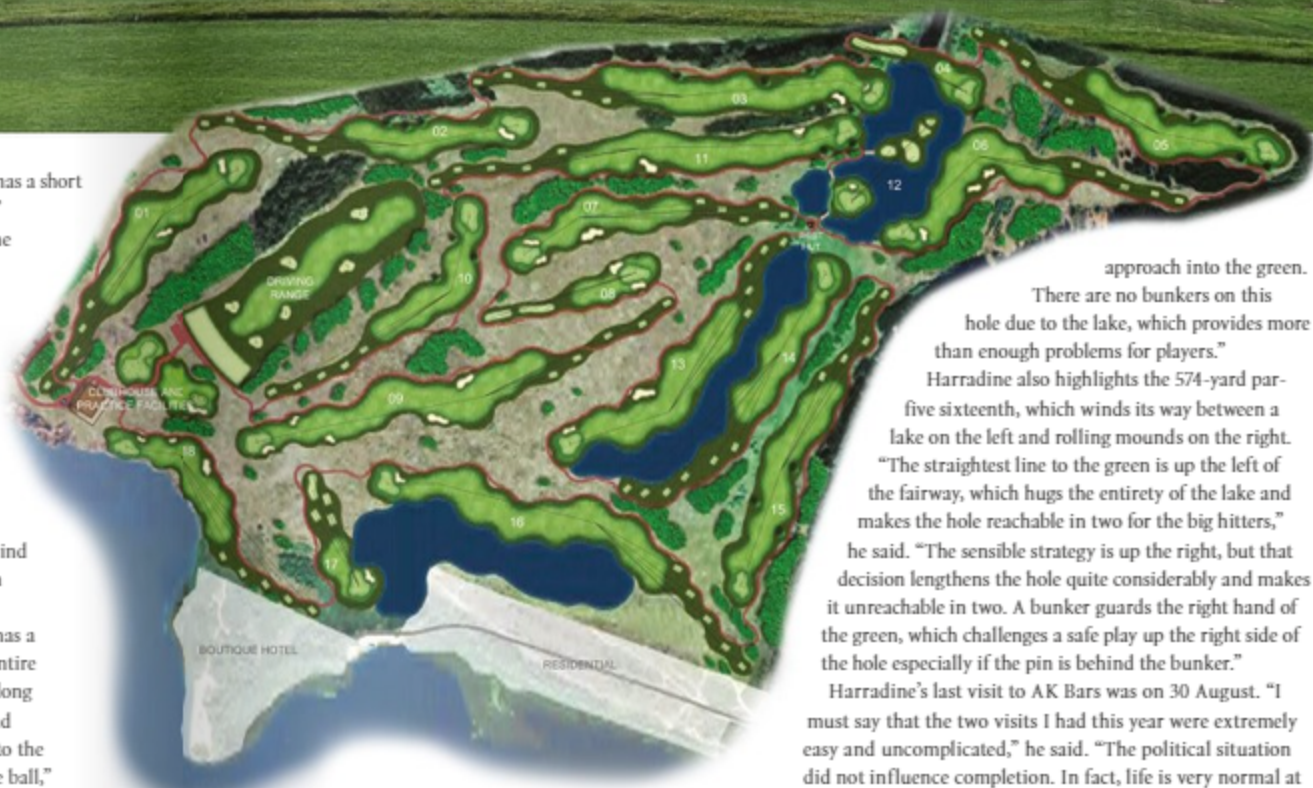
On the opposite side of the lake, the par-five third has been designed to meander between existing trees. "The integration of trees has turned the hole into a double dogleg instead of a simple and straight corridor," said Harradine. "Existing trees guard most of the green and a lake behind the putting surface adds an additional challenge."

The par-four fourteenth has a narrow lake flanking the entire left side. "The golfer has a long carry from the back tee, and they can decide how close to the water they want to land the ball," said Harradine. "The riskier shot will be rewarded with a shorter

The par-three seventeenth plays directly towards the Volga



Image: Harradine Golf



Fill dredged from the Volga and excavated from the three lakes at AK Bars was used to raise the site and add contour

approach into the green.

There are no bunkers on this hole due to the lake, which provides more than enough problems for players."

Harradine also highlights the 574-yard par-five sixteenth, which winds its way between a lake on the left and rolling mounds on the right. "The straightest line to the green is up the left of the fairway, which hugs the entirety of the lake and makes the hole reachable in two for the big hitters," he said. "The sensible strategy is up the right, but that decision lengthens the hole quite considerably and makes it unreachable in two. A bunker guards the right hand of the green, which challenges a safe play up the right side of the hole especially if the pin is behind the bunker."

Harradine's last visit to AK Bars was on 30 August. "I must say that the two visits I had this year were extremely easy and uncomplicated," he said. "The political situation did not influence completion. In fact, life is very normal at the airports and did not affect my travels to and through the country."