
Capillary Bunkers launches major bunker project at Hong Kong's Clearwater Bay

Melbourne sandbelt style bunkers to be built at elite oceanside course by architect Harley Kruse.



"It's like the Pebble Beach of Asia, except that you have the ocean on every hole and a huge marina full of enormous yachts," says Capillary Bunkers CEO and inventor Martin Sternberg of the Clearwater Bay Golf Club in Hong Kong, which is about to start a major bunker renovation in conjunction with Australian architect Harley Kruse.

Given Clearwater Bay's oceanside location, and the tropical climate, which, in the monsoon season, can quite easily see 20 inches of rainfall in a day, creating sand bunkers which are resilient is obviously a top priority. And, as befits a Club of that status, General Manager Peter Downie was keen to ensure that the bunkers looked dramatic and attractive too.

Kruse's project at Killara Golf Club in Sydney provided the solution. At Killara, the architect worked with Capillary Bunkers and synthetic edging provider EcoBunker to build extremely striking bunkers that echo the iconic Melbourne sandbelt look created by Alistair MacKenzie and Alex Russell back in the 1920s.

"Killara is proving extremely influential," says Kruse. "Previously, no-one would ever have thought to build bunkers like that on clay soil – they would not have performed adequately. But now, because we have technology such as Capillary Bunkers we can be more artistic, even when the soils are not ideal, confident that the bunkers will still perform well. And for a Club of Clearwater Bay's status, both parts of that – performance and artistry – are really important."



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"When you see Killara, you can't help but be impressed," says Sternberg. "Using our technology and the synthetic edging, Harley has come up with a method of building bunkers that look great and are extremely low maintenance, even though the soils are bad. And when Peter saw those bunkers, he realized they were just right for Clearwater Bay."

Clearwater Bay looked all round the world for design input, methods and materials to solve its bunker issues. "In the planning stages of the project, we built a few different styles of bunkers, but all along I was saying to the Club 'Wait till you see

what Killara looks like. You'll see that it will be perfect for your site'," says Sternberg.

Even with his Killara experience behind him, Kruse is having to work hard to ensure the Clearwater Bay bunkers perform well in the extreme weather. "We're very closely focused on ensuring good flow of water around the bunkers," he says. "In this sort of climate, if surface water gets into them, you're in trouble. We're also moving some bunkers for strategic reasons, and filling in a few that aren't needed.

The project is ready to go as soon as the COVID-19 situation enables Kruse to visit the site. "We can do a lot with remote monitoring of construction," the architect says. "But for a job of this importance, it's vital that I am on site for at least part of the build. There are times when moving a sand line by just a few centimeters can make a huge difference, and realistically only the architect is going to notice the potential significance of such small changes." ❧