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ENGADINE GOLF CLUB

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125 Larches for the Golf Courses

In 2016, the ENGADINE GOLF CLUB decided to celebrate its 125th anniversary by launching a new sustainability project that would see a total of 125 larch trees being planted on its two golf courses in Samedan and Zuoz-Madulain in the weeks leading up to the special occasion.

by Eveline Fasser Testa

The ENGADINE GOLF CLUB is not only the oldest golf club in Switzerland, looking forward to celebrating 125 years of existence in 2018. It is also the club with the oldest golf course in Switzerland and its collection of larch trees dates back even further. The trees are particularly prominent on the 18-hole championship course in the town of Samedan, where the special visual and swing axes required to avoid the larches occasionally force golfers to have to make an unwanted "chip" or "roll ball". Depending on the position of the golf ball, the trees may mean that a player is unable to reach the green or even the fairway with a clean swing.

Alongside its larches, the golf course in Samedan is also characterised by the Maloja wind, which starts to blow balls in all directions the moment the clock strikes mid-day. The larch project launched in 2016 set the target of planting one larch tree for every year of the club's existence by 2018 in order to secure the collection of trees and the unique landscape of both of the club's golf courses: namely a total of 125 trees.

Club members and guests were offered the chance to purchase a larch tree and have it planted in their name. The project received an overwhelming response, with all 125 trees sold and ready to plant within one single golfing season.



The club's junior golfers helped to plant the first small larch trees, working hard to put them in the ground at their new home: the golf course in Zuoz-Madulain.



The 125th larch tree was planted in spring 2017. The ENGADINE GOLF CLUB's Club Champion of 2016, Andy Ruch, made the most of the opportunity to attend the event in person and plant 'his' larch on the golf course in Samedan.

The planting of all of the larch trees was completed more than one year before the club's 125th anniversary and golfers on both of our championship courses can now look forward to watching them grow big and strong – or less so if they get in the way of their shot! The ENGADINE GOLF CLUB would like to take this opportunity to thank all larch sponsors for their generous support.

Two Larches at Hole 4



The larch sponsors can not only celebrate the fact that the collection of trees on the Samedan and Zuoz-Madulain golf courses is now safely secured for the years to come and the Engadine courses will continue to be characterised by the trees in the future. They have also been presented with a special reminder of the 125th anniversary of the ENGADINE GOLF CLUB in the form of a framed picture by the famous artist Rolf Sachs from St. Moritz, who just so happens to also be a member of the ENGADINE GOLF CLUB. The picture entitled "Two Larches at Hole 4" is an exclusive photograph taken on the golf course in Samedan as part of the larch project with the aim of serving as a lasting reminder of the club's anniversary year.

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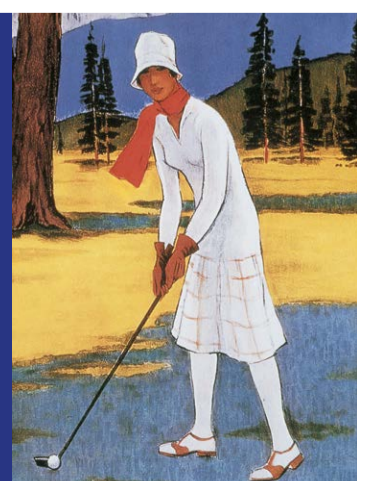


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Watch out for cows!

In 2018, we will look back on 125 years of the ENGADINE GOLF CLUB. No other golf club is as steeped in history as ours.



by Tomas Niederbergerhaus

Imagine you arrive on the course in the morning to play a tournament. Perhaps you watched the James Bond classic “Goldfinger” the night before, in which Sean Connery plays a match with Gert Fröbe. At the first tee, you face a man wearing the same red glove as the Bond actor who greets you with the same words from the film: “How do you do?” And then it dawns on you that, in this tournament foursome, you really are playing alongside the famous Scottish actor Sean Connery.

Adriano Testa grins mischievously as he recalls the encounter on 25 July 1981. Checking the list of participants in Samedan that day, you actually find, in ninth position, Team Sean Connery and Adriano Testa. Testa remembers Connery’s sense of humour being bigger than all of the course’s 18 holes put together.

When the ENGADINE GOLF CLUB looks back on its 125-year history in 2018, one thing will be sure: the course in Samedan is not only the oldest golf course in Switzerland, it has also been the setting for events that could never happen anywhere else – and this remains the case today. It was first mentioned on 14 June 1893 in “The Alpine Post”. The reporter, who visited shortly after the opening, enthused about the “curly, meagre grass” and the broad bed of a nearly dried-up stream. Back then, it was customary to wash down one’s sandwiches at breakfast time with a Lanson Extra Dry.

A lot has changed since, of course – too much to mention here. But there are a few characters and moments in the history of the ENGADINE GOLF CLUB that simply cannot be left out, foremost among them the many famous faces that have come to play in Samedan, including Prince Max of Baden and the Aga Khan, who founded a tournament followed by many prominent championships. After the start in 1893 of Switzerland’s first amateur golf tournament, which is still played each year as “The Engadine Amateur Championship”, the Swiss Open followed in 1923. All tournaments were put on hold during the Second World War as the lack of guests resulted in financial difficulties for the ENGADINE GOLF CLUB. Luckily, the

Badrutt’s Palace Hotel stepped in to advance some funds. Its owner, Hans Badrutt, was a great supporter of the Club and served as its President for many years, as did his son Andrea later on.

Looking at old photos, it is possible to spot the odd famous player turning up on the course with their dog. Lord Tyrrell, for example, the British Ambassador in Paris, always strolled across the fairways with Mike, his British bulldog. Dogs were banned from the course in the 1980s, when the cows also disappeared thanks to a deal with the local farmers. They had traditionally brought their animals onto the course for a few weeks each year after the snow melted, as it was officially common land. The greens had to be protected by electric fences to avoid them being trampled, and the fairways had to be cleared of cowpats on a daily basis, since the grass would burn beneath them. “This was so expensive that it was actually cheaper to pay the farmers in return for taking their cattle to graze somewhere else. They were offered three and a half francs a year per animal”, says Mario Verdieri, who negotiated the deal with the farmers. Verdieri is the architect who redesigned the course in the 1970s and drew up the plans for the new clubhouse, which was built in 1983.

The golf course in Zuoz also owes its existence to a deal with a local farmer. With no children to take over his farm, he closed it down and offered his land to the other farmers to lease, so that they could release their own land for the golfing business which became today’s course. When the course was opened on 7 June 2003, the “Engadiner Post” wrote about “many visitors, who came despite the rain” and the great number of balls that got lost on the first day of play “in the high rough”. Even then, however, it was obvious that the second course had made Engadine a premier golf destination. Three years later, the Samedan Golf Club, founded in 1950, and the Zuoz Golf Club merged into the ENGADINE GOLF CLUB, giving it one of the largest membership of any club in the country. There are about 1,250 members today, roughly 800 of them actively playing.

The number of junior members is unusually high at 150 boys and girls. Talented young

players receive financial support and training regarding rules and etiquette – and they enjoy it just as much as their forebears. On 28 July 1908, “The Alpine Post” mentioned the “thrill” without which golf would be as boring as croquet.

Dumeng Clavuot, current President of the EGC, has known the course in Samedan since he was a child. He vividly remembers the smell of the wooden staircase in the old clubhouse, the secretary Anni Grass, who sat, all done up with glasses and pearls, “behind a

little screen, rubbing out scores from the used score cards to hand them out a second time”. Most of all, though, he remembers a man who became a legend at the ENGADINE GOLF CLUB: John Plant, an Englishman who came to St. Moritz for three months each year to stay at the Badrutt’s Palace Hotel. He supported the club over many years with his knowledge. Clavuot often joined him as his caddie. “John”, he says, “was something of a grand seigneur of golf. He was tall and handsome and had a handicap of five even at the age of 70.”

Crooked thinking, straight hitting!

Promoting youth is of particular concern to the ENGADINE GOLF CLUB. There are roughly 150 juniors amongst its members right now. Two of them are Alessandro Visinoni and Killian Hagen. We asked the 10-year-olds how they ended up playing golf and if they could imagine becoming professionals one day. “We think playing golf is totally cool”, they said. And though they have only been playing for two years, they have had some amazing experiences – not only a sign of precise play but also of great imagination.

What does it take to become a good golfer?

Alessandro: Fighting spirit!

Killian: Hm, the most important thing is actually your concentration. When you’re putting, for example, you must never take a swing. You have to watch what you’re doing very closely.

What do the other kids at school think about your hobby?

Killian: Some say, golf is lame. Most boys our age prefer other sports. At a football camp I once persuaded the others to try golf. And suddenly they all said that it was totally cool!

Does that mean, there aren’t that many kids playing golf at your club yet?

Killian: Well, quite a few. But most of them are a bit older. Taking into account that we’re only ten, we are actually quite good

players. We got our course permission this season. We also had to take a test for that. Alessandro: Yip. The good thing is: your spelling doesn’t count in the test!

Which club is your favorite anyway?

Killian: 7 iron.

Alessandro: I love 3 wood, though it’s a bit heavier. I can hit a 3 roughly 80 metres – and very straight.

Not bad. Did that work so well right from the beginning?

Alessandro: At my fifth training session I suddenly got it how to play well... I have to think crooked and hit straight!

Cool slogan. I have to remember that.

Killian: But sometimes we miss the ball, Alessandro! That’s really bad then (laughing).

