

## KING CHARL IS THE MASTER

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MAY 2011



## REEF-FRONT GOLF

**B**EACH-FRONT GOLF COURSES are about as fashionable as it gets when it comes to identifying new sites upon which to develop upmarket layouts. But how about a reef-front course? This seemingly fanciful idea is on its way to becoming a reality, as part of an incredible project that will give the idyllic archipelago of the Maldives its first ever golf course. A favourite holiday destination among well-heeled residents of the Middle East, The Maldives, situated in the Indian Ocean about 700km south-west of Sri Lanka, boasts one of the highest concentrations of five-star beach resorts in the world, but no island with the required land mass to build a golf course among its chain of 26 atolls.

This may seem like an insurmountable problem, but not for specialist aquatic developers, the Dutch Docklands Company, and Troon Golf – the world leaders in high-end golf course management. In

an exclusive partnership with the government of The Maldives, plans have been finalised to build a series of artificial floating islands, interconnected with revolutionary underwater tunnels and featuring resorts,

residences and a championship golf course, just minutes from the Malé airport by boat.

*Golf Digest Middle East* met with Paul van de Camp, the CEO of Dutch Docklands, at last month's KPMG Golf Business forum at Dubai

Creek, who explained: "As a leader in floating technology, a project in the Maldives was always top of our list, because it's the biggest marine protected environment in the world, but the land itself is under threat from rising

sea levels. Land reclamation was impossible, because the delicate reefs could not support it. We create floating islands that to the naked eye look real, anchored by technology sourced from top oil companies.

Troon Golf will act as technical advisers on this \$500m project, scheduled for completion in 2015. "They have

a reputation for managing the best daily fee golf courses in the world, and they will help guide us and manage the golf side of the project, selecting a designer and company who are the right match for something this unique and environmentally sensitive," added Van de Camp. "When completed this golf course will be quite incredible.

Most seaside courses are fortunate to have one or two beachfront holes – here all 18 will be overlooking the reef."

There will be several islands connecting the holes, linked not by a bridge but by an underwater tunnel. Golfers will be able to experience the marine environment of The Maldives as they travel between tee boxes.

"We are thrilled to be involved in such a truly groundbreaking project in The Maldives. Dutch Docklands are a hugely successful and innovative company," commented Bruce Glasco, Managing Director, Troon Golf Europe, Middle East & Africa.

Below: Underwater tunnels connecting the islands will give golfers a unique experience as they move between holes.

