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## Arjun Atwal partners with Hills/Forrest, forms India-specific course design firm

GURGAON, India (7 Oct. 2009) — Arjun Atwal, the finest golfer India has yet produced and the first to surpass US\$1 million in earnings on the Asian Tour, has partnered with international golf course architects Hills/Forrest and Associates to form Hills-Atwal, Golf Design India ([www.hills-atwal.com](http://www.hills-atwal.com)), a full-service golf course architecture firm created to serve the burgeoning Indian and Asia-Pacific development markets.

Atwal, who returns to his native country for this week's Hero Honda Indian Open in Gurgaon, brings to the new collaborative a competitor's insight, a wealth of worldwide course exposure and the most recognized name in Indian golf. A 7-time champion on the Asian Tour, he's a 3-time winner on the European PGA Tour and the only Indian player to achieve fully exempt status on the U.S. PGA Tour.

Hills/Forrest complements these qualities with one of the broadest, most respected course portfolios in world golf. Hills/Forrest is responsible for more than 200 original course designs on four continents, in addition to some 135 major course renovations.

“The Indian market is one of great potential, and it is near and dear to my heart, of course, but it's an immature market where promises of expertise often do not match actual capability,” said Atwal, whose business interests are managed by Blue Giraffe Sports (BGS), from offices in Atlanta, West Palm Beach, and Perth, Australia. “The course architects at Hills/Forrest aren't merely international in their outlook — they have designed and redesigned top quality layouts in 20 different countries, in every conceivable climate, employing the full spectrum of tried-and-tested agronomic and construction techniques.

“This experience is exactly what Indian golf development needs, and this is just what I have sought in a design partner. Having traveled so widely on tour, I have been fortunate to play many of the greatest courses on Earth.

I look forward to bringing this perspective to bear in the course design field, beside the skilled architects at Hills/Forrest.”

The formation of Hills-Atwal, Golf Design India is not without precedent. In 40 years of practice, U.S.-based Hills/Forrest ([www.arthurhills.com](http://www.arthurhills.com)) has distinguished itself by just this sort of collaboration — with golf’s most influential people, firms and organizations. These partners include the PGA Tour and USGA. In total, 38 different Hills/Forrest courses have held PGA Tour, USGA, Champions Tour, LPGA Tour, PGA of America, Asian Tour or European PGA Tour events. In 2009, the firm’s design at Oitavos Dunes — opened in 2001 and four-time host of the European Tour’s Open of Portugal — was named to GOLF Magazine’s Top 100 Courses in the World (#88).

What’s more, the formation of Hills-Atwal, Golf Design India is not without direct precedent: In July 2008, Hills/Forrest forged a similar regional partnership with Alejandro Ochoa, brother of World No. 1 Lorena Ochoa, to serve the Mexican and Latin American course development markets.

“It’s clear to us at Hills/Forrest that, in its 200 years of migration around the globe, golf has taken on the specifics of each culture where it lands,” says John Strawn, president of U.S.-based Arthur Hills/Steve Forrest and Associates. “In recognition of that reality, we have consistently partnered with local golf entities and individuals to make sure we understand and better serve that local golf culture.

“We are proud of our abilities to adapt and work around the world — it’s one reason why we have design projects underway in Sweden, Portugal, Norway, Morocco, Russia, the U.S., Belize, Costa Rica, Canada, the Caribbean and Mexico. What we bring to each, and what we will bring to India along with Arjun Atwal’s powerful brand, is a universal expertise in all phases of golf design.”

The sheer size and golfing potential of India’s growing middle class is well known. Domestic demand for the game is sure to grow, as it has grown in the region’s other hyper-populous nation, China. What’s more, the UN’s World Tourism Organization reports that India hosted 5 million foreign tourists in 2007, an increase of 12.4 percent over the previous year.

“It’s a given that India’s golf development market will grow with great rapidity in the years to come,” said Atwal. “We have formed Hills-Atwal to ensure that it grows on the firm foundation of international-standard, expertly designed and developed projects.”

— 30 —

[For more information on Hills-Atwal, Golf Design India, contact John Strawn at Hills/Forrest on +1.503.360.5644 or via [jstrawn@arthurhills.com](mailto:jstrawn@arthurhills.com); or Matt Judy with Blue Giraffe Sports on +1.404.541.9934 or via [mj@bluegiraffesports.com](mailto:mj@bluegiraffesports.com)]

## **ABOUT BLUE GIRAFFE SPORTS**

Blue Giraffe Sports ([www.bluegiraffesports.com](http://www.bluegiraffesports.com)) is a leading talent management and consulting agency. Blue Giraffe (BGS) both exclusively represents premier celebrity talent and provides corporate brand consulting in the worlds of sports, fashion and entertainment. In addition to Arjun Atwal, BGS counts among its clients Stuart Appleby, Mathew Goggin, Heath Slocum, and Paul Goydos, as well as the pre-eminent international teaching professionals, Steve Bann and Dale Lynch, tutors of such outstanding players as Appleby and Goggin, Robert Allenby, Geoff Ogilvy, and K.J. Choi.

## **ABOUT ARTHUR HILLS/STEVE FORREST AND ASSOCIATES**

Based in Toledo, Ohio, USA, Hills/ Forrest is one of golf's most prolific and respected golf course architecture firms, with projects underway in the United States, Canada, Mexico, Central America, Europe and the Caribbean. Three of the firm's designs were recently ranked among *Golf Digest's* Top 75 American resort courses: The Links at Half Moon Bay south of San Francisco; Bay Harbor in Northern Michigan; and the Camelback Inn Resort & Spa outside Phoenix. Sand Golf Club in Sweden has earned a spot on Golf Digest's list of Top 100 Courses outside the United States (#82), while The Journey at Pechanga in Temecula, California — opened for play last year as the central attraction at the Pechanga Resort & Casino — was named by the editors of *GOLF Magazine* among the "Top 10 New Courses You Can Play" for 2008.