



The  
golf  
courses  
of Javier  
Arana

Alfonso Erhardt Ybarra

I visited in Madrid two months later, Alfonso picked me up from my hotel early in the morning, and drove us to Valencia to play El Saler.

Having never seen a map of the course and few photos before we set out to play, I was prepared to learn about Javier Arana by observation; you can usually tell a lot about a man's personality and golf game by the types of holes he designs. The approach to the first green was quite tight, with a bunker just short and a long, narrow plateau green. The long second hole featured a narrow green bisected lengthwise into two tiers, higher on the right, lower on the left - a feature I had seldom seen before - and there were no less than three similar greens to follow on the front nine! There was no question by then that Sr. Arana was clearly a very skilled golfer. Only the very best players would ask the golfer to hit an approach shot to a hole location less than thirty feet across. Or to recover from an errant shot so precisely in order to save par.

The day was windy, my golf a bit rusty, and the round was over much too quickly. On the way back to Madrid we dissected the course and Alfonso shared his knowledge of Arana's life - I hadn't known of his partnership with the English designer Tom Simpson and I had only heard of two others among Arana's ten designs. Alfonso had grown up near Bilbao, like Arana before him, and suggested that Neguri was perhaps the architect's best other surviving work. We both lamented that there was not a book to document Arana's fine career - and at last, here it is!

I hoped that my potential project near Madrid would come to fruition so that I might have more opportunities of seeing Arana's surviving courses - but alas, that project like so many of Arana's never was built, a victim of the banking crisis. I did get to play Neguri while working on a new course in Bordeaux, and thought it was wonderful; but now here is Alfonso to pick us up and take us to Puigcerda and Aloha and the rest, in words and pictures, if not in his own car.

It is sad that Javier Arana saw so few courses of his own born into reality, but we architects know that it's a miracle when any of them do get built. Hopefully, this book will allow all the golfers in Spain to better appreciate the surviving designs of Arana, and to protect them as faithfully as he tried to protect the traditions of the game.

*Tom Doak*

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