

KIA KAHA STAYING STRONG

In a land of mud pools and geysers, Maori golf gains ground

BY CRAIG R. CAREY

Generally speaking, the up-and-coming athletically gifted of New Zealand are destined for careers in rugby, but there comes a time in every land's history when things change. Enter Michael Campbell—the most famous professional athlete in this nation of four million *and* its number one golfer.

In the wake of Campbell's victory at the U.S. Open this past June, golf interest in his native New Zealand—and worldwide interest in his Maori heritage—has increased a great deal. "I think I'm a great vehicle to expose the culture of New Zealand to the world," Campbell said at a recent function honoring New Zealand's other golf great, Sir Bob Charles (winner of the 1963 British Open and the only other Kiwi to win a major).

Known simply as *Cambo* by fans and friends, Campbell was born in Hawera, on New Zealand's North Island. He is predominantly of Maori heritage (descended from the tribes, or *iwi*: Ngati Ruanui on

his father's side and Nga Rauru on his mother's), though his surname makes plain his Scottish roots. *Cambo's* great-great-grandfather, Sir Logan Campbell, emigrated from the birthplace of golf to New Zealand in 1840. Campbell's heritage has been something of both interest and confusion to American golf audiences since his first appearances in the States. Shortly after the 1996 Honda Classic Michael commented, "It's quite funny. On the first tee when they say, 'Michael Campbell from New Zealand,' everyone expects a European, and then I turn up. They think I must be the wrong guy. It's because I'm so different. People look at me and think, 'What is he?' They're intrigued. At Doral I went to the spa, and people just stared at me. They asked, 'What are you? Are you Mexican?' I said, 'I'm a Maori.'" Often the response was "What's a Maori?" Campbell's reply that "a Maori is a member of New Zealand's native population from a centuries-old Polynesian migration" was met with fascination.



The art of harakeke is passed down through the generations.



The sound of the putatara announces the arrival of visitors.



One of New Zealand's fabulous courses.



Maori children perform traditional dances.

It seems appropriate a nation populated by numerous folk of Scottish descent ultimately gave rise to such idyllic golf courses and that the original inhabitants of New Zealand have embraced the game as well. An estimated 25,000 Maoris play recreational golf, and the game is catching on fast among Maori adults and *rangatahi* (juniors) alike. For nearly seven decades now, various organizations have hosted Maori golfing events, the most notable being the Tairāwhiti Maori Golf Association's 68th Annual NZ Maori Golf Championships held earlier this year on New Zealand's North Island. The tournament "is one where young and old fulfill their dreams and aspirations of taking part in a national championship," says Iritana Tawhihirangi, renowned educator, former civil servant with the Department of Maori Affairs, and Ladies' President of the NZ Maori Golf Association.

The courses of New Zealand are the stuff of legend, though few receive the press or funding of Pebble Beach or St. Andrews. Kauri Cliffs, Whitford Park Country Club, and Gulf Harbour Country Club provide stunning backgrounds and often difficult conditions, as do the Paraparaumu Beach Golf Club (a classic Scottish links course) and Millbrook Resort and Country Club (designed by Sir Bob). And, New Zealand is well-stocked with spectacular golfing, even on the municipal level. New Zealand's weather, though well-regarded, can be temperamental—which is to say nothing of the mud pools. Courses such as Rotorua Golf Club in the Bay of Plenty region may feature the standard hazards one expects on any course, but steam lakes, geysers, and hot mud pools are also regular perils on nine of the 27 holes. Proud Maori tour guides at nearby historical sites are known to boast that it's those difficult conditions that forged Michael Campbell into a U.S. Open champion.

"I worked hard for it. I think winning a major championship is going to be the greatest thing for golf back home, especially for the Maori people, because they are very talented in other sports like rugby, but golf hasn't been one of their top priorities."

Adding to the fuel is Maori Television, an independently-owned network in New Zealand, which recently launched *Tē Hau Paoro*, set to feature weekly tips, profiles of golf clubs around Aotearoa (New Zealand) and interviews with golfing Maori celebrities including Campbell and Quinton Hita (a highly regarded actor, DJ, writer, and activist).

Further solidifying the growing Maori role in international golf is Michael Campbell's apparel line, *Cambo Clothing*. The line is manufactured by Wellington-based *Kia Kaha Clothing Limited*, New Zealand's leading Maori-owned clothing company. (*Kia kaha* is an expression in the Maori tongue meaning "stay strong," that is used as encouragement when the going gets tough). The garments are based on traditional designs of the Maori, and Campbell wears them at all events. Though a largely commercial venture, the designs do provide an opportunity for



The spectacular No. 6 at Formosa.



Great ocean views at Kauri Cliffs.

traditional Maori artisanship to reach a broader audience.

Speaking in August to a gathering at a Maori ceremony honoring his victory in North Carolina, Campbell was clear that his heritage had a profound impact on his mindset. "When I holed that final putt, the image that has gone around the world, I looked towards the heavens and I thanked my ancestors for giving me the strength to pull through. We are one together, Ngati Ruanui and Ngati Rauru. I felt so proud to be Maori. I'm out there, millions watching me, with the best player in the world [Tiger Woods] breathing down my neck, and I said to myself: 'You're a Maori warrior Michael, you can do it.'"

THE TREATY OF WAITANGI (TE TIRITI O WAITANGI)

The Treaty, as most New Zealanders refer to it, was signed on February 6, 1840 at Waitangi (in the Bay of Islands) and is the cornerstone for modern New Zealand's political existence. It was signed by representatives of the British Crown, the chiefs of the Confederation of the United Tribes of New Zealand, and other Maori tribal leaders. After the collection of hundreds more signatures, New Zealand was constituted as a colony of the British Empire separate from New South Wales (now Australia) on November 16, 1840.

The signing of the Treaty notably prevented the sale or transfer by other means of any Maori lands to anyone other

than the Crown. Though its translation into Maori is even today the subject of debate and political maneuvering (the nationally-recognized holiday marking the signing is often the focus of protest by Maori and has frequently attracted controversy), the lasting effect has been resounding, and Captain William Hobson's oft-repeated (and, to some, naïve) declaration that "Now we are one people" often provides the impetus for Kiwis on both sides to work toward a common goal.

The Treaty is regarded by historians as an extraordinary document when viewed in context of the time. The contrast between the tenets of the Treaty and the treatment accorded indigenous people by European colonizers in most other parts of the world is considerable; though racism and class struggles do exist in New Zealand, many Kiwis—*pakeha* (of European descent) and Maori alike—tend to agree that interracial relations are stronger than in other nations.

SUPPORTING THE NEXT GENERATION

Michael Campbell has long been a champion for New Zealand golf. In 2000, he was named Maori sportsperson of the year and Maori athlete of the decade. In June 2001 Cambo was inducted as an Officer of the New Zealand Order of Merit in a ceremony in Wellington. There he announced his policy of donating all prize money won in New Zealand to New Zealand Junior Golf and the Ronald McDonald House in Wellington. Cambo is the Ambassador for New Zealand Junior Golf's Junior Plus program, which works to help golf clubs develop quality junior golf programs.

His advocacy for the development of young golfers doesn't stop with the promise of a check. Last January, Michael participated in the Michael Campbell Junior Classic at Manor Park Golf Club near Wellington. More than 80 budding junior golfers participated in the event, which has been held annually since 1999. Young golfers ranging in age from 6 to 16 braved cold, windy conditions to take part in this tournament and for an opportunity to meet Cambo, who has been supporting the event since its birth in 1988.

In August, Campbell took a \$10,000 bonus he received from his insurance carrier for winning the U.S. Open and immediately forwarded it to New Zealand Golf to ensure the next generation of Kiwi golfers not be "cast adrift." Such contributions by Campbell and other individuals and organizations, such as the Tainui Golf Association, which works for the development of Maori golf, go a long way to ensuring essential funding. Winning pays for itself.

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Rock carving at Mine Bay.



Fireside relaxation on Blanket Bay.