



Best of the Best

Golf Course News
proudly presents its
design, construction
and maintenance
awards for 1992.

Best Maintained Course
on the Senior PGA Tour

The pros go with Cochise

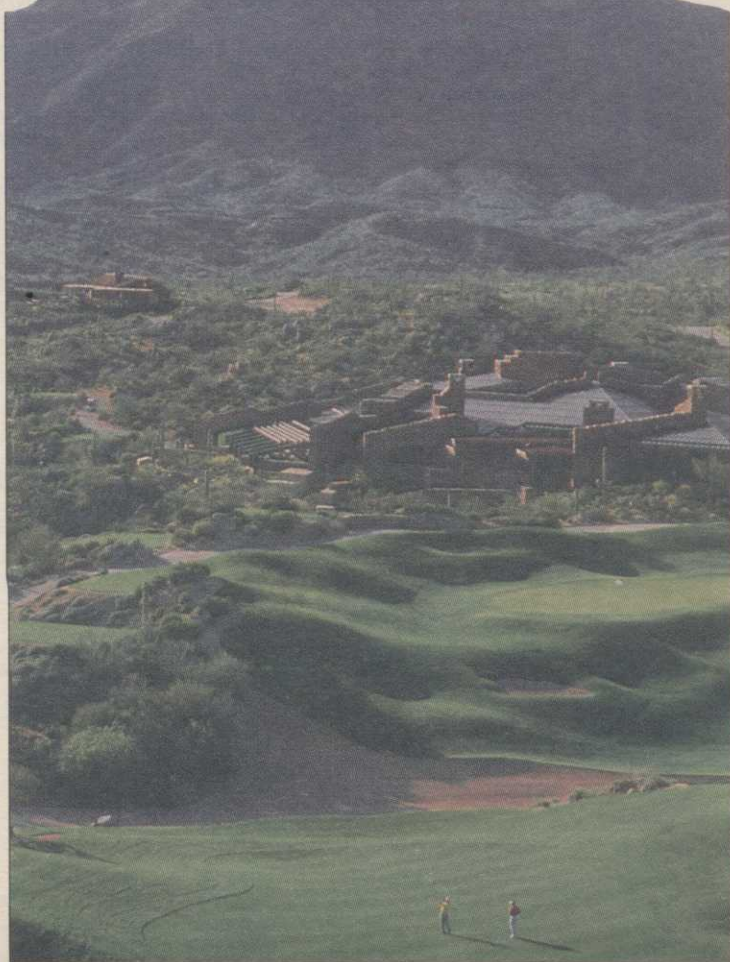
By HAL PHILLIPS

SCOTTSDALE, Ariz. — Virgil Robinson knows a little something about preparing a golf course for finicky players.

He's currently director of agronomy and maintenance at Desert Mountain, whose Cochise Course annually plays host to the Senior PGA Tour event, The Tradition. In a poll conducted by *Golf Course News*, Cochise was chosen by Tour players as the best maintained course on the senior circuit.

However, Robinson came to Desert Mountain from the Burning Tree Club, known around the Washington, D.C. as the Golf Course of Presidents. He matriculated to Burning Tree from the 36-hole facility at Andrews Air Force Base, where military types walked the course as they might conduct

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No. 9 at Desert Mountain's Cochise Course.

Best Developer of Golf Communities

Nation's architects and builders choose Arvida

By KENT R. DAVIES

Industry leadership was key in determining the nation's Best Developer of Communities, as voted by architects and builders in an exclusive *Golf Course News* poll.

Competition was fierce, but Arvida of Boca Raton, Fla. came out on top of the 24 developers which received votes. Multiple votes were also garnered by Branigar Organization; J.H. Chaffin & Jim Light; Greenwood Development Corporation; Don Nicewonder; Bob Hardy and Crescent Resources.

Arvida garnered peer commendation for being a "great benefactor of golf," according to Gary Linn — vice president at Robert Trent Jones II International — who worked on Arvida's Weston Hills Country Club project in Fort Lauderdale. Linn stressed Arvida's industry leadership in making "golf always an integral part of their communities. They've allowed their golf courses to start becoming golf courses again.

"Arvida's courses are a statement for the whole community aside from those lots fronting the golf course," Linn continued. "When you first drive into Weston Hills, for instance, there's a big, open landscape of golf and water with the houses set way back. You come up to and enter the club without seeing a house. The housing is around as you play the course, but it isn't like driving past garages and driveways like you see in many developments."

Weston was one of the first developments with double fairways,

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When it comes to covering a lot of ground, the competition isn't the only thing



Best of the Best

Landscapes

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are still under construction.

One of Landscapes Unlimited's clients was Woodbine Development of Dallas, for whom it built Hill Country Golf Club as part of a destination resort in San Antonio.

"We're a very demanding client and expect a 110-percent effort. They [Landscapes] provided that on every front. They were absolutely great in every respect," said Woodbine's Mike Koesling.

George Kirshbaum of East-West Partners in Chapel, N.C., for whom Landscapes Unlimited built a course for the Uwharrie Point development in Denton, N.C., said: "There are a few people you work with in business you know are a cut above in their approach to accomplish their work. I feel Landscapes Unlimited falls into that group. It's more than just 'getting it done' to them. In a corporate culture, you either have it or you don't. They were as much concerned about what ultimately happened on that golf course as we were."

"We have found that the fact we do good quality enables us to stay busy when others not doing that kind of work might not be," Kubly said. "We were low bidder on only two of the projects we're doing now."

Kubly said much golf course construction has "settled back down into the \$3.5 million range. For a time we had \$5 million and \$6 million jobs, but money has gotten a little tighter, and developers are wiser." Design, he said, "went from who could build the most difficult course — and that's what the clients wanted — back to the traditional, classic and playable courses." In his 23 years in the business, the major advance in golf course construction is the U.S. Golf Association's refinement of construction qualifications, Kubly said. "You're getting a lot better golf than 10 years ago."

While also pointing to major advances in irrigation systems, he said earth-moving equipment is nearly the same.

"We do use a lot of smaller, detail equipment today, all the way down to the sandtrap rakes for smoothing our greens," Kubly said. "And we're using backhoes and grade-alls to do the detail bunker work, especially on high-end designs with bigger budgets."

Although he would like to see controlled growth for his firm of five to 10 percent [in total dollars] every year, Kubly said: "We still want it to be fun. And when I get running ragged and my project managers feel run ragged, that's too much."

Robinson & Co. chosen by Seniors

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a barracks inspection.

"I'd say the general's were the hardest to please, much harder than the senior pros," said Robinson. "You wouldn't believe some of the stuff we had to do for those guys. They made us go out on Saturday mornings and wipe off the benches so they wouldn't get their pants wet."

Robinson would be gratified by the survey responses of Senior Tour players, who chose the Jack Nicklaus-designed Desert Mountain over the second-place winner, The Vintage Club. Bruce Crampton, for example, praised

Cochise by saying "It is a treat to be able to play a golf course as well conditioned as this." Jim Ferree added that Desert Mountain routinely sports "perfect greens and fairways."

Robinson oversees all the maintenance at Desert Mountain's three courses: Cochise, Geronimo and Renegade. Each track has its own superintendent, who answers to Robinson. Ron Ruppert was superintendent at Cochise for the 1992 tourney, but has since moved on to another Nicklaus project underway in Santa Fe, N.M. Scott Krout has taken his place.

"We are well blessed with a

great staff, 60 percent of which is Hispanic," said Robinson. "These people really take maintenance to heart. They take care of it like it was their own lawn."

The staff at Cochise gears the maintenance schedule around the tournament date, which falls annually near the end of March or early April. Unlike many Southwestern tour sites, which must jump-start the growing process to accommodate mid-January tournaments, Cochise is fortunate in the calendar department.

"We're coming out of the non-growth period after the 1st of March, which is good for our ryegrass overseeding," Robinson explained. "In the turf areas, bent and rye are the easiest to main-

tain during that time of year.

"Our basic concern — in fact, our biggest fear — is getting a heavy rainstorm because it can destroy the DC [decomposed granite] areas."

The DC areas at Cochise are essentially desert, waste/transition zones used for drainage. It's important to keep the drainage in prime condition all year around, said Robinson, because you never know when a heavy downpour might occur.

"We really rely on the DC areas for water run-off," he said. "Usually, at that time of the year, we have a pretty major rainstorm within two weeks of the tournament. Hopefully it happens early and you can recover."

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