Casper & Nash flex their design versatility

PHOENIX, Ariz. — After winning 51 PGA victories, including two U.S. Opens and a Masters Championship, and Vardon Trophies with the PGA Tour's best scoring average for five years, Billy Casper took his playing credentials to the design table. In 1986 he joined forces with Greg Nash, who had already designed 27 golf courses, to create Casper/Nash & Associates. Since then, they have designed 50 golf courses worldwide. They have worked extensively for Del E. Webb Corp., Continental Homes, Greensill Builders, Southwest Forest Industries and others. Managing Editor Mark Leslie caught them in a rare moment when they were both indoors and not out on the course.

Golf Course News: Billy, you'd accomplished enough in golf. Why did you decide to get involved in course design?

Billy Casper: I felt many of the architects were designing golf courses that were too difficult. Many courses were being designed for less than one percent of the golfers. I've always felt golf courses should be playable and enjoyable. Loven't tell people if their golf game gives them a headache or an ulcer they might as well turn professional. At many of the courses, it not only cost a substantial amount of money to play, but you'd better take three dozen golf balls with you.... Consequently, your round would not take 3-1/2 to four hours, as it should take, but five and sometimes six hours.

GCN: What drew you to Greg as a partner?

BC: I searched for somebody who had a reputation as a good designer. I didn't have the tools of an architect. But I had a lot of ideas as a golfer. I've played since I was 4-1/2 and I've played in 36 countries. I have a lot of likes and dislikes, and I felt I could add something as an architect. I was drawn to Greg because of his work with a large corporation headquartered in Arizona [Del Webb]. They told me he was pretty good. And, by golly, he was.

We've had a wonderful time together. Greg Nash: We had that conversation before we got together: Basically, we found out that we had the same goals. We're not into mass production, doing 30 courses a year, but we wanted quality and playability. I'm not a professional golfer, but I've played for over 30 years, and the average golfer wants to be challenged but not beat up.

BC: Another thing we like to bring to the table is flexibility in a golf course. By having a series of tees that are not in a straight line, but island tees, you get a different concept of each hole. With that flexibility, they can play the same course but get a different feeling each time out.

We love to point to Terravista in North Scottsdale as a course that is not only playable but very flexible.

GN: They held the U.S. Open qualifier there this May and the average score was 74.5. Yes, for members playing the different tees, it doesn't play that way. When we had the opening, the members told us: "You designed this for us." That continued on next page.

The 11th hole at Casper/Nash-designed Sun City Palm Springs.