Lost Canyons, a public ‘crown jewel,’ opens near L.A.

By Jay Finegan

SIMI VALLEY, Calif. — The new crown jewel of daily-fee golf in Southern California is hitting its stride. Set in rugged mountain terrain where the TV show “Gunsmoke” was once shot, both Pete Dye courses at Lost Canyons have opened to popular acclaim and heavy play.

“It’s the best new course in Los Angeles in 30 years,” said Mike Finnell, club manager at Lakeside Golf Club in Toluca Lake.

Developed by Landmark National – its first L.A. venture – and built by Landscapes Unlimited, the 36-hole complex is only 30 minutes from downtown. Yet, there’s a peaceful serenity at this spectacular layout in the Santa Susana Mountains that belies its location. “You feel you could be in Montana or Wyoming,” said head professional John McCook.

NO BAD HOLES

The two tracks here – the Sky Course and the Shadow Course – cruise through 300 acres of the 8,000-acre site, part of the historic Big Sky Ranch. So much land is left that residential building lots, part of the master plan, will range up to 100 acres.

For Dye, the design work wasn’t so much in taming the environment as gen-

The seventh hole at Lohmann’s Merit Club in Gurnee, Ill., designed as a personal course

Lohmann designing ‘estate’ course

MARSHALL, Ill. — Lohmann Golf Designs has developed a nice little niche for itself: golf course architects to the anti-NIMBY crowd.

Whereas NIMBYs say “not in my back yard,” certain LGD clients say, “By all means, build a golf course in my back yard!”

That’s the case here in Marshall, just across the border from Terre Haute, Ind., where Lohmann Golf Designs (LGD) is building a personal course on the estate of energy magnate Gerald Forsythe. Initial clearing has been completed for nine holes, and course feature work begins this spring.

Bob Lohmann isn’t new to this sort of project. He designed The Merit Club in Gurnee, Ill., as a personal layout for wealthy investor Bert Getz. This project eventually morphed into a more traditional private club which played host to the U.S. Women’s Open last July.

Lohmann was featured in the Sept. 11, 2000 issue of Fortune, which published a story on the proliferation of these personal, or estate, golf courses. “You have to be kind of a rebel to do this sort of project,” Lohmann told the magazine. “Sometimes it’s a lifelong dream, sometimes it’s ego. Sometimes it’s just someone who has a piece of land he doesn’t know what else to do with.”

MOVING LOTS OF DIRT

That wasn’t the case with Gerald Forsythe. He knew exactly what he wanted to do with his 290 acres: build 18 holes of primo golf for his personal use.

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The 17th hole at the Sky Course, which stretches to 7,250 yards, with a slope rating of 79

a single bad hole. “I don’t know anyone who could come up here and not be enthralled by the place,” said the 1992 Masters champion.