Engh’s Redlands Mesa on track for public play

By JAY FINEGAN

GRAND JUNCTION, Colo. — Here on the western slope of the Rockies, where the Gunnison River meets the mighty Colorado, the Golf Club at Redlands Mesa is on track for public play this summer.

Designed by Jim Engh of Engh Golf Design Group, the 18-hole course will stretch to some 7,050 yards. The site is visually spectacular, featuring serpentine canyons, enormous boulders and dramatic views.

Rising majestically to the west are the 800-foot sandstone cliffs of the Colorado National Monument. To the east and across the valley looms the Grand Mesa, the world’s highest flat-topped mountain. The red-rocked landscape is breathtaking.

The layout is testament to Engh’s ability to work with difficult sites. The routing takes advantage of the natural surroundings, resulting in a course that blends well with the land. Typical of Engh’s work here is the 17th hole, a 240-yard par-3. Lying more than 130 feet below the tees, the large green is snugged into a natural rock amphitheater.

Another striking green complex can be found at the 4th hole. This par-4 plays slightly downhill and bends gently to the right. The green hangs precariously on the edge of a 100-foot cliff. Any ball to the right, Engh says with understatement, “will not be recovered.”

Newport National finally ready to break ground

By JAY FINEGAN

MIDDLETOWN, R.I. — Construction is finally underway at the long-awaited Newport National Golf Club, a 36-hole complex about five minutes from Newport’s famous historic waterfront.

The first 18-hole course, an Arthur Hills design, is expected to be completed by next September, with a grand opening in spring 2002. The second course will most likely open in spring 2003. The architect for the second layout has not yet been named.

Construction financing was secured through Rhode Island-based Clubhouse Capital, which is also serving as the project’s golf and financial advisor. Clubhouse president George Marderosian said the total price tag on the project will be in the neighborhood of $25 million, and that market demographics bode well for the club’s financial success.

Wadsworth Golf Construction, of Plainfield, Ill., one of the world’s largest golf course builders, is doing the heavy lifting, with Rainmaker Golf Development, of Columbia, Md., acting as construction manager.

Newport National’s two courses — one private and one public — are widely considered to be in the front ranks of golf projects in the Northeast. The Aquidneck Island facility will sprawl over 400 acres of pristine farmland, affording views of the Sakonnet River and nearby farms and vineyards.

Both courses will be links-style layouts. “It’s gently rolling land,” said Marderosian, “but as with most Arthur Hills courses, there will be a moderate
Roddy Ranch to herd golfers

Continued from page 1

The economics of raising livestock and staying ahead of the tax collector reached the point that Roddy had to come up with a new plan to maintain his lifestyle. Through a close associate he was introduced to the world of golf as a way to preserve his passions and beloved ranch.

Roddy had the primary raw material for golf—lots of land. But more than that, his property featured the kind of varied terrain and wide vistas that practically guarantee a great golf course.

"When I brought out Bob Moore, the lead designer, I asked him what kind of a golf course 1 could have here," Roddy said. "Bob said that it would be one of the best in the state. I had never played golf in my life, so I left the job of building the course to the professionals."

REMINISCENT OF IRELAND

Moore is a design partner with J. Michael Poellot Golf Group, and what he created is a memorable golf course that hugs the grasslands as it uses all the advantages of elevation change and natural green sites.

The course plays from 5,400 yards to 6,945 from the back tees over 235 acres that just two years ago the owner would move cattle across. Moore worked diligently to let the landscape dictate the routing of the course, and careful shaping helped to set a graceful flow to the first five holes as they climb towards the highest part of the layout.

"The site reminded me of Ireland when the hills are green in the early spring months," Moore said. "The cascading hills really helped to frame the holes, so I wanted to make a links-style course that was similar to the ones found there. The owner let us do what was necessary to make a good course. The landscape certainly made that easier."

True to the old-style courses, Roddy Ranch plays as a continuous loop rather than two nine holes playing back to a clubhouse. From the highest point of the course the downhill 570-yard par-5 sixth hole falls off of a hillside to a dramatic expanse. This hole became a design challenge, as wetlands dedicated that part of the hole to be rerouted. But in the end the great tee view simply invites golfers to swing away.

SUPERINTENDENT ONBOARD FROM START

Head superintendent Ken Schwark came on board in the fall of 1998 to help supervise construction and to supervise the grow-in. The course uses a variety of grasses, including bluegrass and rye fairways, fescue roughs, wild grasses in the natural areas, and A4 bentgrass for the greens.

Schwark's presence from the start gave him input into such things as softening steep bunker faces to make for easier maintenance. He also was involved in creating the superlative greens at Roddy Ranch.

"During the construction phase I hired an Australian greenskeeper who used to work at Royal Melbourne Golf Club," Schwark said. "He presented to me a system for growing and maintaining bentgrass greens that will help to control the development of thatch and the proliferation of poa annua grass, which is a difficult challenge here in California. Right now the greens are firm, fast and true, and we intend to perfect them even more."

ROdeo champ now into golf

Roddy Ranch has been open only since November, but it has already drawn praise from players, not only for the beauty and challenge of the course but for the club's warm and friendly down-home attitude.

This is all a reflection of the owner, who has suddenly become a serious golfer himself. Although he has only played for two months, Roddy displays the natural athletic ability that helped to make him a two time world rodeo champion. In 1997, in fact, he was inducted into the Cowboy Hall of Fame.

"I never thought that golf would be a game I would like, but the simple economics of it was what first caught my eye," he said. "In a year these 235 acres might earn $10,000 to 20,000; now that much comes in a week. But more than that is exciting in experiencing the different people that play golf, and I give them a chance to enjoy the outdoors and feel the serenity and beauty of the open range. I am going to do all that I can to keep this place as a special tribute to the ideals of the American West so that it won't be lost to future generations."

A LIVING MUSEUM TO OLD WEST

To this end Roddy plans to make his course a living museum to the American West. He plans to build a hotel where families can stay while they play golf or ride through the 1,500 acres of land that he has managed to preserve, thanks to his golf revenues. He is a man with a vision as big as the sky his course lies under.

Jack Roddy's desire to do things right comes through in all aspects of the operation of the course, from the fact that he didn't open too early to the warm reception that each golfer receives. It is the greatest of ironies that this man, who is the embodiment of the cowboy and ranching, has turned to a game invented by shepherders to save his lifestyle.

He is proud to be a golfer today, and glad that golf can help to preserve one of the last stands of open space near a sprawling metropolis.

Pinelhills to open 18 holes in spring

Continued from page 21

terrain has provided us with an opportunity to utilize the native ridges and high points for a variety of different tee and green sites," he said. "The valleys and swales provide the course with containment and relief from errant golf shots, while natural hazard locations give each hole its own identity."

The Nicklaus Design course will offer a totally different experience. "This spectacular property with its stately white pines, native vegetation and exciting topography allows us to create an extraordinary championship golf course," the designer said.

Both courses were designed to accommodate all levels of golfers. Four sets of tees allow courses to play from 5,388 yards to 7,175 yards, accommodating for beginners, yet challenging enough for the most expert player.

THREE GOLF SCHOOLS ON SITE

Pinelhills' practice facilities include a double-ended driving range with both natural grass and artificial turf tees, bunkered target greens with traps, numerous putting greens and separate chipping areas. State of the art instruction allows players to work on any aspect of their game through Pinelhills Golf Academy, the Dave Pelz Short Game School and the Scottie Scheffel Golf Academy.

Opening this May, in conjunction with the Jones course, is the 12,000-square-foot clubhouse, designed by Childs, Bertman and Tseckares of Boston. Offering panoramic views of the facilities, the clubhouse will feature a pro shop, grille room, banquet pavilion, a Ryder Cup "function room," outdoor terrace dining and locker rooms. The building can accommodate groups from 20 to 288 for meeting and dining.

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