

Bay Creek shoots for Audubon's 'silver signature'

By JAY FINEGAN

CAPE CHARLES, Va. — The new Bay Creek Golf Club here takes a back seat to nobody in the realm of environmental protection.

Right from the start of construction, Audubon International has been close to the action, making sure this 1,700-acre complex treads lightly on the waterfront ecology of an area where the Chesapeake Bay meets the Atlantic Ocean.

Bay Creek, a visually stunning property, will feature an Arnold Palmer-designed course, slated to open June 1. A Jack Nicklaus signature layout will come next, along with a 224-slip deep-water marina and an upscale residential community.

GOING BY THE RECIPE

The Palmer course, stretching to 7,244 yards, has set the pace as Bay Creek guns for "silver signature" status in the Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary Program (ACSP).

The silver designation is reserved for landowners for whom Audubon International develops a natural resource management plan, geared mainly to water and wildlife issues.

Bay Creek project manager Tom Saunders said that going for the silver designation isn't that tough, once you make the commitment. "You just go by the recipe they give you," he said. "Audubon works with you pretty well. It's expensive, but we felt this was the right way to go."

BUILDING SPECIFICATIONS

"You start the process with Audubon as early as possible," said Saunders, who joined with owner and developer Baymark Construction almost three years ago. "For the gold signature program, they would have to be involved in the course design, but we didn't get started early enough. Baymark had the plans from the Palmer Course Design Company before I even came on board.

"In the silver program," he said, "Audubon gets involved in the construction. They've got a lot of specs for how you do things and build things. We took their information and added it to the specs for the building contractors. So Palmer Design was involved primarily in changes to the grassing plan. Landscapes Unlimited,

water quality," Saunders said. "You do a lot of additional planning and take additional measures with drainage from greens and bunkers to make sure everything gets filtered as many times as possible. So it kind of complicated part of the construction process, and it complicated the grassing process."



Bay Creek Golf Club, opening June 1, sits at the intersection of Chesapeake Bay and the Atlantic Ocean.

the general contractor, had to pull off the actual design modifications to accommodate Audubon."

CART PATHS OF CRUSHED SHELLS

For starters, Bay Creek planted more than 2,500 large trees and installed nesting boxes for waterfowl. In keeping with Audubon's criteria, Landscapes Unlimited used natural materials, such as crushed shells, as permeable paving for cart paths that go near the water.

"Most of the requirements deal with

Instead of running turfgrass right to the water's edge, for example, the builders planted different kinds of vegetation to create filter strips along the lakes and ponds. Also, the layout was altered to maintain wildlife habitat zones—not isolated pockets but continuous zones that run around the perimeter of the property.

"We haven't been 100 percent successful in that," Saunders said. "But we've certainly done a better job because of the Audubon program. It's good not just for the

golf courses, but for the whole Bay Creek development."

POLLUTION-PROOF MAINTENANCE BUILDING

One big difference between the regular ACSP and the silver signature program deals with maintenance buildings. Audubon weighed in heavily on requirements for Bay Creek's 8,000-square-foot facility.

"They were very involved in how it was designed, particularly how you catch clippings when you wash vehicles, how you recycle that water, how you handle the fueling station, how you handle your chemical and fertilizer storage," Saunders said. "They had a lot of input in the location, design and construction of that facility."

Fueling stations, for instance, have to be covered to prevent rainwater from washing spills into the soil. Water falling off vehicles on an outdoor "wash pad" is treated, cleaned and recycled by a special machine to make sure there's no runoff. Chemicals must be mixed indoors, so nothing is spilled on the ground. "The whole thing is very tight," Saunders said.

12 HOLES ON THE WATER

The Palmer course is more than halfway to silver signature certification, and Saunders has few doubts about winning the designation. "When our course opens in June," he said, "it will offer an extraordinary golf experience, including 18 challenging and exciting holes of golf and an unparalleled environment in which to play them."

Number three is the signature hole, a 439-yard par-4 with three fairway bunkers and a 100-yard carry over water to a rock-walled green. A backdrop of tall, slender trees looms behind the green and separates the hole from the beach on the Chesapeake.

All told, four holes are on the Chesapeake, eight are on Old Plantation Creek, and several are framed by giant sand dunes.

Both the Palmer and the Nicklaus courses will be semi-private, offering daily-fee play.

Pebble Beach unseats Pine Valley as #1

PEBBLE BEACH, Calif. — Pebble Beach Golf Links has taken the top spot in *Golf Digest's* ranking of the 100 best golf courses in the country. This represents the first time that Pebble Beach has achieved the number-one ranking.

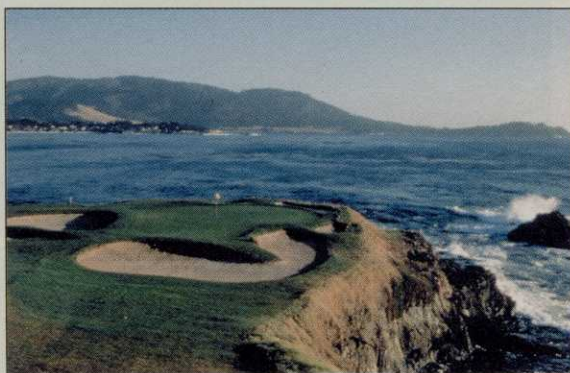
In this year's rankings, *Golf Digest* noted that the recent addition of a new par-3 fifth hole (expanding the golf course to nine holes on the Pacific Ocean), improved course conditioning, and high scores in the area of tradition helped Pebble Beach surpass Pine Valley, which had held the top spot since 1985.

The top four awards in *Golf Digest's* rankings for 2001 were, in order of ranking: Pebble Beach, Pine Valley, Augusta National and Cypress Point.

"We are very proud of the customer service initiatives we've introduced, especially our pace of play initiative where we have seen the average time for a round of golf drop from approximately five hours and 15 minutes to almost four hours and 35 minutes," said Peter

Ueberroth, co-chairman of the new ownership group that acquired Pebble Beach Company in 1999.

Pebble Beach Resorts is comprised of three hotels: The Lodge at Pebble Beach, The Inn at Spanish Bay, and



Seventh hole at Pebble Beach

the newest addition, Casa Palmero; and four golf courses: Pebble Beach Golf Links, Spyglass Hill Golf Course, The Links at Spanish Bay, and Del Monte Golf Course; and the recently opened Spa at Pebble Beach.

Located 120 miles south of San Francisco, Pebble Beach is part of the famed Monterey Peninsula.

Nelson & Haworth crafting 700-yard holes on the edge of the Himalayas

By ANDREW OVERBECK

LJIANG, China — Size does matter. To compensate for the extreme altitude, Robin Nelson and Neil Haworth's latest project in China, Jade Mountain Snow Dragon International Golf Course, will be 8,500 yards long. The course is situated at 10,000 feet elevation in the bottom of the valley of Shangri-La in Yunnan Province.

"The altitude has some interesting effects on the golf ball," said Haworth. "It spins less—both side spin and back spin—and because the air is much thinner it travels much further."

Nelson and Haworth designed the course in conjunction with China's top pro golfer, Zhang Lian Wei. "During design and development we spent a couple of days on site with him hitting balls. He was flying the ball about 20 percent further on all shots, maybe slightly more on drives," Haworth said.

As a result, Haworth designed the course longer. The longest par-5 is 735

yards, the longest par-4 is 525 yards and the longest par-3 is 270 yards.

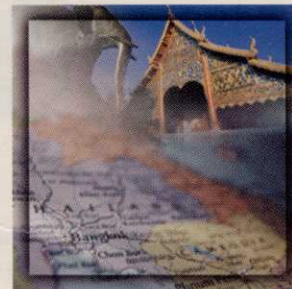
BEGINNERS CAN PLAY, TOO

"However, we also realize that the average golfer does not get the same advantage as the pro, especially the beginning golfer who rolls the ball on the ground," said Haworth. "Therefore the middle and forward tees play to the typical yardage that you would find at sea level."

The gently rolling site has great views of the surrounding mountains and several holes play through a former "Tibetan Village" area and 100-year-old pine forests. "The course takes advantage of the spectacular views as much as possible," he said. "Since the scale of the site is huge, the scale of the features are also big and strong. The lines of the course are definite without any busy shaping."

CONSTRUCTION CHALLENGES

Fifteen holes at the course are shaped, and seeding recently began. The main



Nelson, Haworth

Continued from page 3

challenge, according to Haworth, has been scheduling around the wet and dry seasons. "We have to follow a tight schedule because if we miss the seeding season for any of the holes, then the whole project will be delayed one year."

The course is being constructed mainly with local labor and some local shapers. Haworth has Glen Nadal, their top shaper, on site to keep the course true to the design.

The course will have Penn A-1 bentgrass on the greens and Penncross on the tees

with a Kentucky bluegrass blend on the fairways. Out of play areas will be re-established with native wildflowers.

UNESCO SITE

Lijiang has been recognized by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization as a heritage site. The city, which is a 30-minute flight from Kunming, features architecture from another era with cobblestone streets and houses dating back several centuries. It is also the center for the Naxi Chinese minority, who number less than 250,000 and are the only remaining culture in the world still using pictograms as their form

of writing.

The town has long been a popular tourist destination for the Chinese and more flights are being added. It is also becoming a destination for Asian tour groups and backpackers, and the developers hope to attract the golfing tourist. In addition to the five-star resort hotel and villas planned for the development, there are several four-star hotels in the area. ■



Future site of the 10th hole for the 8,500-yard layout

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Sea Marsh

Continued from page 4

the ball rolling for their own courses."

600 ACRES PRESERVED

The resort puts nature first.

"We have 600 acres of wildlife preserve here," the superintendent said. "I've put together an environmental resource committee that includes environmental activists who have also jumped on board. We're trying to get as many people involved as possible and have received more positive feedback than we ever imagined possible when we first began with our Ocean Course five years ago."

The golf course abuts some private backyards, and Cregan has spruced up the borders. "The out of bound stakes were the only things that separated the two," he said. "Flower beds have now been added and native grasses also line the lagoons to provide natural corridors for birds."

"We've tried to increase the aesthetics of the course. Our flowers have attracted a lot of butterflies that have always held a fascination with our members and guest. We see a number of people that visit from places like Pennsylvania that have never seen a herring or an egret before in their life, let alone an alligator," said Cregan. ■

Booth, Faxon

Continued from page 4

courses across the world and has a good sense and feeling for design."

GOLF IN THE VINEYARD

The West Course at Newport National will be set on mildly rolling farmland with hedge breaks.

"The course has been given the moniker of the 'vineyards' because it is right next to Newport Vineyards," said Booth. "It will be an upscale resort-style course and will have open spaces. I will work within the topography of the site."

The course will feature wall-to-wall bentgrass. Construction is scheduled to start in 2002.

BOOTH STAYING BUSY

In addition to the work at Newport National, Booth is staying busy with projects across the United States and Canada. He is continuing renovation work at Samoset Resort Golf Course in Rockport, Maine; expanding and renovating a course for Orange County Parks and Recreation Department in New York; and work on a par-3 course at Apple Hill Golf Club in East Kingston, N.H.

Construction work is also due to start this year on a Booth design at Deep Brook Golf Club in Saco, Maine, and renovation should also begin soon at Intervale Country Club in Manchester, N.H. ■