Panks developing a Native American niche

By DAVID HUBBARD

PHOENIX, Ariz. — More than a few sovereign Indian nations across America are building golf courses in their desire to direct the phenomena of Indian gaming into a major hospitality and entertainment industry. With two such projects behind him, Gary Panks would like nothing better than to be the golf course architect they call.

In Phoenix, Ariz., the tribal officials from the Gila River Indian Community liked what they saw in Panks’ work at the Raven Golf Club at South Mountain, and invited him to design the community’s 36-hole Whirlwind Golf Club as the feature amenity to the Sheraton Resort Hotel-Casino now under construction. Managed by Troon Golf, the first course, Devil’s Claw, opened in late 1999 to rave reviews.

“We have always envisioned a very high-end destination resort for this area, and find it very reassuring that Mr. Panks shares our enthusiasm for this venture and can work so easily with the community to make it happen,” stated Steven Hedly, deputy general council for the community.

For Panks, the commission has turned into far more than the next project on his to-do list.

“The opportunity to design on Reservation land, essentially free of state and federal intervention has opened a new world of possibility for our firm,” said Panks.

As the second course at Whirlwind, Cat-tail, moves closer to completion, Panks’ recently opened his second project on In-

Continued on page 19

Nicklaus’ Summit Course offers 360-degree views of the Rockies

By JOEL JOYNER

EDWARDS, Colo. — The Summit Course, a new Jack Nicklaus signature layout here, was challenging to build due to drastic elevation changes.

The effort, however, was worth it as the layout offers 360-degree views of the rugged Rocky Mountain terrain. Opened in August, the course is situated just 20 miles west of Vail. It is the newest addition for the Cordillera Group that now owns four upscale courses in the area.

The terrain at the Summit layout drops down to about 8,000 feet along the course, only to climb the side of the ridge again to reach up to 9,100 feet at the 18th fairway — its highest point.

PUNCHBOWL GREEN

There are some 70- to 80-foot drops from tee to green on the course, and par-3s that range from 40- to 50-feet in elevation changes. “There’s a lot of variety here,” said Glenn Samuelson, superintendent. “We’re very exposed on a few holes, and very protected on others. Everything from tall stands of fir 120 feet high to wide open sagebrush.”

For the first time at any of the Cordillera courses, flat drainage was used on the greens. “We didn’t pitch the greens or anything unusual to try to remove water,” said Samuelson. Jack’s pinable areas are quite flat, around one or two percent.” However, the 8th green, a par-5, sports a punchbowl design.

A fair amount of blasting was required to get the main line in for irrigation and drainage. “There’s a lot of rock,” said Samuelson. “It was a chore to get down four of five feet sometimes.”

The final cost for building the Summit course fell between $11 and $12 million.

Continued on page 18

Rulewich ‘stitched’ new Wild Turkey layout together

By JOHN TORSIELLO

HAMBURG, N.J. — Crystal Springs Resort has opened its second Roger Rulewich-designed layout, Wild Turkey, here in northwestern New Jersey.

Rulewich’s first layout at the five course resort, Ballyowen Golf Course, opened four years ago and was much easier to design and build according to the architect. At Wild Turkey, which opened in June, Rulewich had to piece together several distinct parcels of land into one seamless golf course.

“If Ballyowen was a piece of cloth, then Wild Turkey was like a closet full of clothes,” he said. “We were able to cut Ballyowen from one type of land, while we had several very different sections of property at Wild Turkey that we had to stitch together.”

The different sections Rulewich

Continued on page 19
Panks, Native Americans
Continued from page 16

dian land, the formidable Twin Warriors Golf Course for the Santa Ana Pueblo in Beranillo, N.M. As the centerpiece of the Hyatt Regency Hotel, Twin Warriors is the Pueblo community’s second course, which is adjacent to the older 27-hole municipal layout.

UNENCUMBERED DEVELOPMENT

As he actively pursues new opportunities to work with Native American communities, Panks is enthusiastic about developing a niche in the golf and hotel industries.

"In this day and age, it is a chance to get in on the ground floor and shape a piece of land without having to consider residential development," he says. "Usually, the ancillary construction around a golf course can control or impede upon the best planning effort. For all intents and purposes, what we put together on Indian land is largely unencumbered."

"Water, or at least water rights, is rarely a problem for Native American golf courses. And, there are no turf restrictions, such as Arizona's 90-acre allotment on new golf course development. The reservations are free from the usual zoning and permitting associated with preconstruction, not to mention the headaches of remaining compliant in myriad environmental issues. American Indian communities do not require any sort of permitting or approval from the state or federal government to proceed with development of any kind."

The only rules are those imposed by the tribal councils. If the state's historical preservation agency is involved, the final decision on how to handle a significant find lies with the community leaders, who usually quickly determine to build around it, soften the impact, or disregard it and move on with the project.

Panks finds the Indian communities respectful of their land to the point that any outside agency to direct environmental or historic processes is simply unnecessary.

"In fact, the people I have worked with in Arizona and New Mexico are to be congratulated for their foresight to hire only the most expert consultants to help them realize well-planned, well-built, well-designed developments with respect to the environment and surroundings," said Panks. "It is very fortunate to be involved with projects driven by that kind of thinking."

PROTECTING CULTURAL SITES

In the case of Twin Warriors, Panks recalled a dilemma concerning 20 or so cultural sites, and the sacred landmark, Snakehead Ridge.

At first, there was a little consternation about butting a golf course up to the consecrated area. However, to Panks' way of thinking, golfers are not the sorts of people to leave the course to hike up a hill. Panks suggested the three holes routed along the base of Snakehead Ridge would actually create a buffer zone to further protect the mountain from intruders. As it turned out, Panks preserved his preferred routing, and golfers can still appreciate the significance of Snakehead Ridge from a respectable distance.

At Whirlwind, with little cultural significance to the site itself, Panks worked with the vision of the community in what will ultimately be a scaled-down replication of the Gila River in its entirety from the headwaters in northern Arizona to its confluence with the Salt River. With significant landmarks noted, the water feature will welcome guests at the entrance and wind through the property and fill a featured lagoon linking the resort and the golf course.

Understanding the desires of both the developer and the golfer fuels the creative fire of most golf course architects. Panks' association with Native American developers takes it a few steps further, grasping the tribal histories and cultural nuances to inspire his course design. His goal now is to explore this evolving market niche on new sites outside the deserts of the Southwest.

TERMINATION NOT GERMINATION

Thousands of tiny weed seeds are just waiting to wreak havoc on your lush, green fairways—and your reputation. Fortunately, Pendulum preemergent herbicide eliminates more than 40 broadleaf and grassy weeds before they even get started.

Pendulum is a proven performer, offering well over a decade of unsurpassed, season-long control, unmatched value and the flexibility to fit into any seeding or reseeding program.

It's a combination that's earned Pendulum a higher satisfaction rating from superintendents than any other preemergent.*

To learn more about how Pendulum can make sure weeds never see the light of day, call 1-800-545-9525, ext. T3257 or visit www.turffacts.com.

Always read and follow label directions.

GOLF COURSE NEWS