Mirabel Golf Club takes shape on former Norman course site

By DAVID HUBBARD

SCOTTSDALE, Ariz. — When Mirabel Golf Club opens here in December, the story of what might have been will have faded to vague memory. Like the legend of the Phoenix rising from its ashes to grow anew, what was nearly the area’s most difficult daily-fee facility was ultimately destroyed to make way for the present 720-acre private golf community.

The project is being developed by the high-end, San Francisco-based Discovery Land Co. for the owner, a Dallas-based investment firm called Terahbrook.

Considering that the former Greg Norman target-style design — called Stonehaven — featured a mere 45 acres of turfgrass, Mike Meldman of Discovery Land decided that the original concept would prove far too challenging for high handicappers. He wanted a tame track for the exclusive club he had in mind.

Without much debate, Discovery officials called in the bulldozers and prevailed upon their long-time associate, golf architect Tom Fazio, to come up with a totally new and considerably more ample layout.

EXPENSIVE PROPOSITION

At $65 million for the land, plus an additional $7 million to dig up the Norman course and then redesign and rebuild a new one, Mirabel stands as Discovery Land’s most expensive undertaking to date.

It joins a sparkling company portfolio that includes the nearby Estancia Golf Club, along with The Santa Lucia Preserve in Monterey, Calif.; Kukio Golf Club in Kona, Hawaii; Ironhorse Golf Club, in Whitefish, Mont.; CordValle Golf Club, in San Martin, Calif., and its five Jack Nicklaus signature courses in Westlake, Texas.

Working from a new western regional office in Scottsdale, the Fazio group concocted in an altogether fresh configuration.

At an elevation nearly 2,000 feet higher than the Phoenix megalopolis to the south and west, Mirabel offers sweeping panoramic views from the golf course, clubhouse, and verandas ofclusive Mirabel residences. The high desert vista takes in all prominent landmarks and mountain ranges for as far as 90 miles and looks down on city lights at night.

STATE-MANDATED TURFGRASS

Mirabel will play through a secluded desert pocket in far north Scottsdale, in the rolling chaparral, across the street from the massive Desert Mountain complex and its five Jack Nicklaus signature courses (with a sixth one in the works).

Utilizing every square foot of the state-mandated 90-acre turfgrass allotment, and borrowing only minimally from the former layout — namely, irrigation hardware and the original holding ponds — Fazio’s solution is much more conducive to golf course living. He completely repositioned the ninth and 18th fairways to allow views of the action from the clubhouse.

Stretching as long as 7,200 yards from the back tees at par 71, Fazio’s graceful fairway contours and swales play in sharp contrast to the dry desert washes and granite outcroppings. Arizona’s land usage laws basically mandate forced carries over natural terrain.

The design may encroach on only 10 percent of the total area of the washes and arroyos, making the designers very selective in the compromises they must concede to Mother Nature.

WHITE SHARK ERODING

In this open setting, Mirabel offers 310 homesites, from half-acre lots to three-acre parcels, ranging in price from $250,000 to over $600,000. Forty-five golf villas will also be available. Fazio’s redesign

Continued on next page

First Nicklaus course in New Zealand to be built near Auckland

NORTH PALM BEACH, Fla. — Jack Nicklaus will enter a new corner of the globe after signing an agreement to design his first signature course in New Zealand. The country’s first Nicklaus course will be the Kinloch Golf Resort, located just south of Auckland in the Lake Taupo district.

The design contract was signed with Kinloch Golf Resort Limited, which owns the land in this North Island destination and was formed to develop the 630-acre project. The property also will feature 80 estate sites.

The presence of an 18-hole Nicklaus signature course will only add fuel to the fast, growing tourism and golf markets in New Zealand. According to a McNair survey, there are more than 460,000 golfers in New Zealand and more than 350 golf courses spread throughout the islands, the more preferred of which is North Island.

Lake Taupo is accessible from the New Zealand capital of Wellington and is a three-hour drive south of Auckland, the country’s largest city.

“The land on which we will design the golf course offers a mixture of rolling terrain, and is framed by hills that slope toward Lake Taupo,” Nicklaus said.

Continued on next page

Palmer Design brings affordable golf to Vail Valley

A NORMAN ROCKWELL SCENE

Palmer’s design, shepherded by site project architects Vicki Martz and Eric Larson, stretches to 7,500 yards from the tips and down to 5,500 yards from the tee boxes.

Developed by East West Partners, a big player in the Vail Valley, and built by Niebur Golf, of Colorado Springs, the new complex is being managed by Western Golf Properties, based in Scottsdale, Ariz.

Set on a former working cattle ranch, the course and surrounding amenities lie on 1,575 acres in what’s called the Brush Creek Valley. “They’re building a really neat development,” said Boyer. “There’s going to be a commercial center with a main street, like a Norman Rockwell scene. The developers built a wonderful park with community centers, dedicated to the Town of Eagle to be used as the town sees fit. About 500 volunteers showed up to build a playground. Recreation paths go all the way through the property.”

FUTURE MUNICIPAL COURSE?

The course was constructed for about $10 million, including the clubhouse and all infrastructure.

“The developers have basically set it up as a municipal course,” Boyer said. “In a few years the Town of Eagle will probably take over the debt of the golf course and oversee the operation. But that’s down the road.”

Local players will enjoy a break on green fees. Eagle County residents have to shell out $55, but Town of Eagle residents pay only $30. Rates shoot up to $82 for outsiders. That’s a far cry from another valley
Six months into their partnership, Lehman and Fought have landed some high-profile projects. They've begun design work for WhiteStone (Phoenix), The Preserve (east of Scottsdale), WindSong Farm (Minneapolis), and Andreas Ranch (Indio, Calif.). They've also crafting a second course at The Gallery.

WINNING NOTORIETY
Lehman, for his part, is deeply involved in the new venture. This is not a deal where he simply lends his name and prestige, "We go look at sights together," Fought said. "We do planning together. He visited The Farms 12 times. This is a real business, and he's involved with the whole thing."

Eagle Ranch
Continued from previous page
course where locals can sometimes get on -- Beaver Creek -- where green fees run in the $140 range.
Unique to golf courses in the area, Eagle Ranch features the Uplink GPS system on each cart. The unit not only provides golfers with exact yardages, it also allows them to order food from the clubhouse.
Course construction and development were managed by superintendent John Martin, with his two assistants -- Derek Rose and Pat Nunn.
"The crew worked very hard here and I was extremely pleased with the grow-in," Martin said. "The contrast of the bluegrass tees and fairways and the bentgrass greens, the many native areas, the restoration of old wetlands and the overall beauty of this area will be very memorable to golfers."

Mirabel
Continued from previous page
places the larger home lots back away from the fairways.
The 25,000-square-foot clubhouse complex, complete with swimming pools and tennis courts, will provide the crowning touch to Mirabel's luxurious lifestyle. Construction on the other club amenities will begin once the golf course opens. Membership here is by invitation only, and the 375 members will fork over an $85,000 initiation fee.

Fought, Lehman
Continued from page 1
Diego.
Earlier this year, the two formalized their partnership, setting up shop here in Arizona. So far, it looks like a winning combination.

SEPARATE PATHS
Fought, the PGA Tour's Rookie of the Year in 1979, left the pro circuit in 1985. Sidelined by a vertebrae problem, he began designing courses and renovations with Bob Cupp.
Later, from 1995 through 2000, he designed a number of courses while working with OB Sports, including Washington National, in Seattle; Cimarron, near Palm Springs; and Langdon Farms, just outside Portland, Ore.
"I resigned from OB Sports last fall," Fought said. "Tom [Lehman] was doing projects with other architects. He came back to me a year and a half ago, and said he particularly enjoyed working with me."

TECHNICAL EXPERTISE
Lehman, winner of the 1996 British Open and multiple other PGA Tour events, had honed his design skills working with Arnold Palmer and the Hurdzan, Fry team.
"Maybe our biggest asset as a team is that John has all the technical expertise one needs as a designer," Lehman said. "I'm learning and steadily growing in that area."

Transport Flagsticks the Fast, Easy and Damage-Free Way.
When transporting flagsticks, either preparing for a special outing, bringing them in at night or rotating cup placement with the red, white and blue flag system, Standard Golf can make the task faster and easier than ever.
• Flagstick Caddie holds up to 18 flagsticks, and our Junior model holds up to six flagsticks
• Cushioned foam slots hold flagsticks firmly in place, keeping them free of nicks, dings and other damage when transporting
• Vertical arm of the Caddie slips easily into the stake hole pocket of most golf utility vehicles
• Alternative brackets (not shown) are available for mounting on the side of vehicle boxes without stake holes
• Simple design allows for quick removal when not in use

Use the Flagstick Caddie to increase the life of your flagsticks and decrease the time it takes to change them. Ask for Standard Golf.

Talk to your Standard Golf Distributor today. Or call 1-319-266-2638 for more information.

STANDARD GOLF COMPANY
6620 Nordic Drive • P.O. Box 68 • Cedar Falls, Iowa 50613-0668
319-266-2638 • www.standardgolf.com

Fought and Lehman rebuilt The Farms (above) in Rancho Santa Fe, Calif.