

## FireRock goes private ahead of schedule

By DEREK RICE

FOUNTAIN HILLS, Ariz. — Based on the progression of its membership drive and home sales, FireRock Country Club, which is a partnership between TerraBrook and MCO Properties, has converted to a completely private club a year ahead of schedule. The club closed to public play April 1.

"The partnership came together in January and saw that our development, our lot sales and our luxury-attached properties had progressed at such a rate that we could convert to the private country club option earlier," said Greg Bielli, project manager at FireRock. "We saw that the acceleration of the program was going to be a benefit both in the community and also externally for future sales."

One of the reasons behind allowing public play in the early stages of the project, Bielli said, was to be able to provide a high level of service from the outset by pumping the funds from that into the club.

"Many projects will delay a clubhouse construction, for example, which is a major investment, until they're further along in their memberships, but we wanted to bring on all of the facilities at the beginning of the project," he said. "We built our 29,000-square-foot clubhouse in the beginning. That gave everyone the use of the clubhouse and in the short term, public play exposed more people to the club."

"Quite frankly, that outside play also supplied financing to keep the operation levels at the service levels that we wanted to," he added.

Bielli stressed that the FireRock members were informed that there would be public play for a limited time from day one.

"That was something we let all our members know up front," he said. "Before they bought here, they understood that that was how we were going to provide a high level of service to them until the membership got to a level where we could go ahead and eliminate public usage. We kept it very open."

The club has also capped the number of golf memberships it will sell at 395 to ensure its members accessibility to the course.

"The issue in our business is accessibility," he said. "In the Phoenix market, we found that when you go over 400 golf memberships, there are some limits that are imposed on golf accessibility during the peak season."

An additional source of early funding was the sale of non-real-estate invitational memberships, which the company will recall at the end of the year, Bielli said. As with those who bought in to the community, anyone who bought an invitational membership was told up front that it would one day be recalled.



FireRock's 29,000-square-foot clubhouse.

## Valencia CC

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"If we were to do anything else, say mid-level clubs, we would probably do it under a different name because we want to keep that brand," he said.

Valencia recently hosted the Senior PGA Tour SBC Senior Classic, and Husband said he hopes to continue that tradition.

"We're negotiating right now,

but it looks as if we will continue to host the tournament," he said. "We'd love to do it because we'd like to

have a chance to show it off next year after we've had a year to work on it. It will be fun." ■



Bob Husband



**THERE'S ONLY ONE THING TO SAY ABOUT  
HERBICIDES THAT STAIN. AND**