

Fazio returns to soften one of his earliest creations: Golf Club of Oklahoma

By MARK LESLIE

BROKEN ARROW, Okla. — The Golf Club of Oklahoma, one of Tom Fazio's first solo designs after leaving uncle George's firm, is getting a facelift to sport softer, more mellow and forgiving lines.

"Our membership as far as playability has broadened immensely. Some are scratch golfers, some 35 handicap," said superintendent Dee Greninger. "They will soften the features and make the course more user-friendly."

When the 7,150-yard track opened in

1982, it was geared for 75 members, all men, and a mere 9,000 rounds a year. Its tiny, difficult greens and small bunkers were sufficient. But the club was sold to Southwestern Bell in 1989, the membership ballooned to 275 and the property now handles more than 20,000 rounds. Plus the company intends to position the facility, which sits some 20 miles south-east of Tulsa, as a business retreat.

All traffic areas need updating, Greninger said. "We need cart paths and new, bigger greens with more access, air movement sunlight, etc. to

handle increased traffic."

In many ways the project will be more of a restoration than renovation, he said, pointing to the Scottish-style bunkers with four- to 12-foot-high sod walls and high sand flashes. Wind erosion and soil infiltration have necessitated bunker restoration.

A fifth set of tees will also be added, and existing tees will be enlarged.

Otherwise, the layout will remain as it was — "nothing but golf, native, what everyone is [building] now — love grass, switchgrass, native vegetation areas,"

Greninger said. "It was built for that Pine Valley feel and look."

Under the eye of Fazio's lead architects Dennis Wise and Andy Banfield, the course will close down and construction begin Aug. 1, with an expected reopening between April 15 to May 1, 1996.

The project should cost around \$1 million, Greninger said.

While the fairways, sporting Midiron Bermudagrass, will remain untouched, the greens will be seeded Cato-Crenshaw bentgrass and the tees will be Tifway 2 Bermudagrass.

Nicklaus inks pact with mega-resort on Brazil's coast

NORTH PALM BEACH, Fla. — The developer of a mega-resort project on Brazil's northeast coast in the state of Bahia has selected Jack Nicklaus to design four golf courses, a Jack Nicklaus Academy of Golf and a replica of the Jack Nicklaus Museum. It is perhaps the most expensive single golf development of Nicklaus' more than 25-year design career.

Developer Odebrecht S.A.'s plans for the ocean resort includes hotels, an international marina, three theme parks, commercial villages, sports academy and a convention center.

Pointing to Nicklaus' "world appeal and marketability," Marcos Espinheira, project director for Porto Sauipe, said: "Brazil does not have the established golf course culture and popularity that the U.S. and Asia have developed over the years, but we have all the resources necessary. But Porto Sauipe's strategic location and the impressive natural resources will make it an attractive destination for the 60 million golfers from North America, Europe and Asia."

This is Nicklaus' first course design in South America, and he begins design and construction on the first two courses this year.

"This is possibly the most aggressive golf development project in the world right now," said Nicklaus. "The seaside property I'm working with is spectacular. With its resources in tourism, beaches and climate, Brazil is poised to be a great golf market of development."

Meanwhile, Golden Bear International has begun construction of the Golden Bear Golf Club at Hammock Creek in Palm City, Fla. The Golden Bear Golf Club will be the first semi-private/daily-fee golf course that will be owned and operated by Golden Bear International upon completion. The development features a course co-designed by Jack Nicklaus and Jack Nicklaus II.

The course will be completed by year's end, with a targeted opening in January 1996.

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