

By FRANK POLLARD

PGA Tour star Fred Couples and golf course architect Gene Bates have designed the 18-hole San Juan Oaks public golf course scheduled to open in early summer, tucked into a lush rural valley surrounded by the rolling foothills of California's Central Coast. Sitting on a 2,000-acre property between San Juan Bautista and Hollister, the \$16 million project is a collaborative effort of the Lee Brandenburg Group of San Jose and the Nikko Group of Newport Beach.

Built by Paul Clute & Associates, San Juan Oaks is a "hills and valley" style layout. The front nine covers a relatively flat piece of land surrounded by rolling foothills, while the back nine meanders through scenic hills with stands of live oaks framing the holes and providing dramatic views of the valley. The par 72 track will feature five sets of tees, playing from more than 7,000 to 5,300 yards. Golfers will be treated to large 7,000- to 8,000-square-foot greens, small waterfalls or weirs along the streams and stone bridge crossings. Five lakes — interconnected by rock creeks and streams that will provide recirculated irrigation water — will provide a challenge.

Perennial ryegrass is planned for tees and fairways with bentgrass on greens. Huge steep bunkers in the Alister Mackenzie style of those at Cypress Point Club and Pasatiempo Golf Club are sand-flashed using "Stabilizer" to not only keep the sand on the bunker faces but keep balls from plugging and allowing them to roll back into the bunkers. A combination of Oly 1 and Pebble Beach white sand will be used.

Twenty acres of natural non-irrigated areas within and adjacent to the tees, fairways and greens have been incorporated into the design both as for water management and aesthetics. This blend of native drought-resistant grasses will also be used on the outer roughs, providing a vivid contrast of colors. More than 110 live oaks are being transplanted on the front nine to give a decades-old look to the land.

Couples is excited about course design and, although he isn't involved in routing, he is deeply involved in hole layout and playability and brings 15 years PGA Tour and international competition.

"The idea is to build a course that's challenging, yet not the penal or target-type venue," Couples said. "We want a playable course for the everyday golfer, have them love playing it — and have a lot of fun doing it. I'll be aiding in making every hole different with regard to both aesthetics and playability... You don't want players leaving and saying it's the hardest course they've ever played. I'm a traditionalist and like the old-style courses that, like this, were designed and constructed using the

Couples-Bates track opens to the public

natural beauty of the terrain as it was without moving tons of dirt and reshaping the land to accommodate peripheral real-estate developments. This is a beautiful piece of property we are working with and I love its quiet rural atmosphere."

Environmental measures taken in project include integrated pest management to reduce the use of pesticides and fertilizers, water enhancement and conservation, and wildlife cover and food.

To manage and conserve wa-

ter, a computer-operated weather station will be used. It will designate, on a daily basis, specific areas needing irrigation and the specific amounts for each area so that no over-watering occurs. To also conserve water, the 9,000-square-foot maintenance facility will employ a closed system to continually recycle and clean equipment wash water with solid wastes from recycling used on-course.

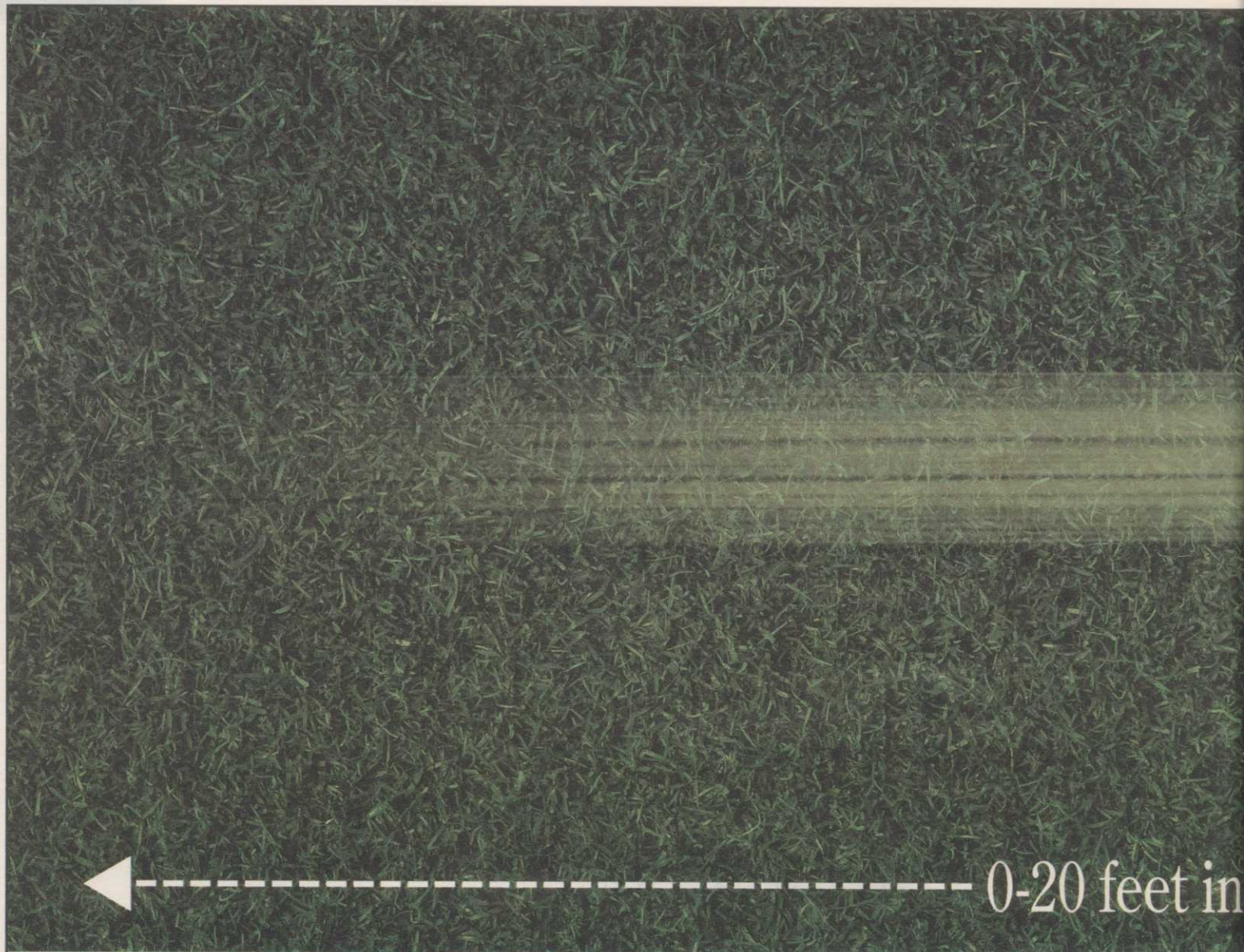
The irrigation system, the Rainbird Maxi 5, features hand-

held remote controls to activate various satellites throughout the course. Although there is currently more than enough water available on site for course operations, the entire system has been designed and being installed to meet possible future use of reclaimed water.

Scott Fuller, vice president and project manager, said he expects to open for play to open in June or July. Couples will make a number of working visits prior to and including the grand opening. He

will also host and play in the Fred Couples Invitational Charity Golf Tournament to be scheduled soon after the course opens.

Although it's a public venue, it has a private club feel when you drive up to the plaza adjacent to the clubhouse. The clubhouse will feature a dining/banquet room with a capacity of 300 people, a pro shop, locker rooms, lounge and a Fred Couples memorabilia room which will also serve as a conference center. A practice facility will offer a 350-yard driving range with 50 stalls as well as a large chipping and short game practice area.



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