

# Unveiling Skins preparation with La Quinta CC's Glenn Martin

LA QUINTA, Calif. — Rancho La Quinta Country Club superintendent Glenn Martin will have a worldwide television audience inspecting his handiwork on Thanksgiving weekend, when the 1996 Skins Game comes here.

It is the first year the Skins Game has been at this par-71 course designed by Robert Trent Jones Jr. But it is not Martin's first exposure to professional tournaments. He began early. At age 18, as a college student, he worked on a crew at Southern Hills Country Club in Tulsa, Okla., where he attended Oklahoma State, earning a bachelor's degree in business administration and a master's degree in agriculture.

In 1988 and 1990, he was the assistant superintendent at the Jack Nicklaus Resort Course at PGA West, when it hosted the PGA Tour qualifying school finals; and while Martin was at Mission Hills North, it hosted the first stage of the LPGA Tour qualifying in 1994.

But the 1996 Skins Game, which will be televised on ABC-TV on Nov. 30 and Dec. 1, will be the first time Martin is in charge of the course. He spoke about that role in a candid question-and-answer session:

**GCN:** Compare the 1996 Skins Game with your previous experience preparing for the hosting tournaments?

**GM:** It reminds me a lot of when I was at PGA West during the Skins Games of the late 1980s and early '90s. Now, we are trying to recapture the excitement among the gallery that characterized those events, when they were held at the Stadium Course at PGA West.

I think all the tournament experience helps because we have some people who have done it before. The event coordinator, Gene McCauliff, is the same person who did the Skins for PGA West. Bob Barrett, director of golf operations for the Drummond Corp., which is the owner of Rancho La Quinta, has been involved in several Masters and the PGA Championship. And I am fairly well versed on some of the special needs of the Skins, such as the accommodations that are required for TV.

When I was at the PGA West Nicklaus Course, we had a chance to see a Skins Game right next door at the Stadium Course, and it's completely different from any Tour event. In some ways, it's probably one of the easiest events to prepare for during the event because there are not four rounds with a full field. But there is a lot of prep work going into the Skins, because of the unique nature of the event.

**GCN:** Will you toughen the Rancho La Quinta course for the Skins Game?

**GM:** We aren't going to push the course beyond a reasonable limit or trick it up. This particular design doesn't lend itself to that anyway. The rough might be just a little longer. We have been keeping it at a 1-1/4 inches, and I think we might raise that to 2 inches for the Skins. We'll also mow the tees and fairways a little closer, say, at about three-eighths of an inch rather than one-half inch. And the greens will be rolling faster, but not radically so. They may be just a couple of feet faster, say between 10 and 11 feet, not 12 and 13. We want good

shots to be rewarded, and we want to allow the opportunity for a lot of birdies and eagles.

**GCN:** How has the timing of the Skins Game affected the amount and type of seeding for the course?

**GM:** We threw seed at

the optimum time, the first part of October, and seed rates stayed the same. We will do a lot as far as vehicular traffic control, which will be routed far outside the playing area.

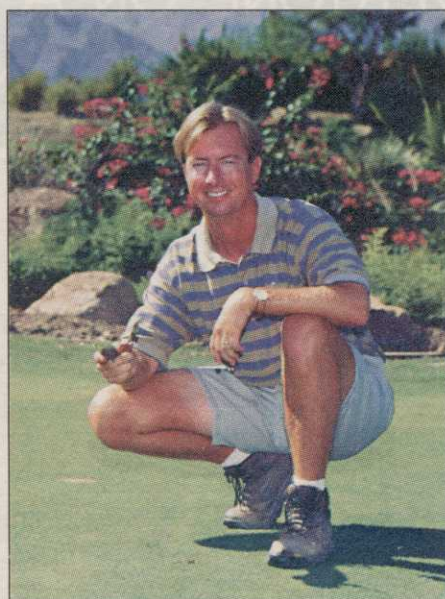
**GCN:** Will there be any changes in your preparation of the bunkers?

**GM:** This past summer, we expanded the bunkers out to their original shape, but the bunkers will basically stay the same. We will hand-rake them for the event, but that's the only change we anticipate.

**GCN:** One difference in the Skins Game this year is that Rancho La Quinta is known for its spectator-friendly layout



SUPER FOCUS



Rancho La Quinta superintendent Glenn Martin



Tiger Woods (left) and John Daly will make this the longest Skins Game in history.

and will be able to accommodate larger galleries for the two-day event. How has the prospect of larger galleries affected course preparation and maintenance?

**GM:** It all really is a part of traffic control. Obviously, we're going to have some cleaning up to do after the event, but with nine holes a day, and only one four-some over two days, it is manageable.

**GCN:** What holes do you see as presenting specific challenges for the pros, and what modifications have you made in recognition of the pro game?

**GM:** At first glance, you would think it would be some of the longer par-4s that would be the pivotal holes. But if you think of a Skins-type format, then it seems the biggest challenges will be the par-5s, where the players will have to make eagle to win the skin. Par-5 holes 5, 9, 12, and 17 all will be reachable in two. Players will feel as if they have to make three to get a skin. We also have two reachable par-4s,

so the challenge will be whether they want to risk the water on, say, the 330-yard 15th hole and try to drive the green. Or, the other opportunity would be par-4 No. 4, which is about 350 yards.

**GCN:** There are plans to have the Skins Game at Rancho La Quinta again in 1997. Does the knowledge that this is a multiyear commitment affect preparation and maintenance of the course?

**GM:** I think we're always going to have growing pains and glitches, being the first time, but I think everybody is ready for that, and ready to make a good first impression. We'll learn from the experience and make adjustments for the next two years because we have a minimum three-year commitment.

**GCN:** When the Skins Game is over, what kind of legacy do you see it having on Rancho La Quinta, yourself and your staff?

**GM:** To me, I look at this as an opportunity to gauge the level of all of our efforts.

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