

GARL, MARRIOTT UNVEIL LEARNING CENTER IN ORLANDO

ORLANDO, Fla. — Lake-land-based golf course architect Ron Garl has introduced his mega teaching/learning complex here at Marriott's Grande Vista, the newest Marriott Vacation Club Resort.

Serving as home to the Faldo Golf Institute, the learning center is open to the public and

Faldo Institute students. It features Garl's "Scoring" — a muscle-memory practice area designed for shots of 100 yards or less, a nine-hole, 2,400-yard course, a teaching/learning complex with five practice tees and more than 200 hitting stations, and a \$1 million 27-hole lighted putting course.

Costa Rica

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years. Cariari International Country Club, designed by George Fazio in 1973, has long been the country's only 18-hole golf course, and there are three nine-holers, according to Garl.

RTJ II lead architect Gary Linn said there has been "a lot of talk about new golf projects — all on the west coast."

Costa Rica, Garl enthused, "is definitely an emerging market.

"It truly is a tropical paradise. It's one of the places that delivers more than it promises. It is like Hawaii but one-third the cost," climatic and financial attributes that draw tourists from North America and Europe.

Citing "a number of courses on the drawing board," Garl said developers are excited about having a golfing neighbor in the

Spanish Melia Hotel Group. "The Jones team will do a wonderful job and we'll have a one-two punch," he said.

"From November to June it's like California in the summer," said Linn. "It won't rain a drop and it's 85 degrees."

Traveler magazine has deemed Costa Rica's central valley the best climate in the world in which to live. *Sports Illustrated* rated its fishing the world's best. And the makers of the movie *Endless Summer* declared they had found the No. 1 surfing spot on the globe at Tamarindo. Indeed, it was the surfing, in fact, that attracted superintendent Jay Miller from Daytona Beach to a job at Rancho Las Colinas.

Melia Conchal Golf Resort has completed its first phase, opening 300 rooms. Rancho Las Colinas contains a small-scale, 20-room hotel and a number of single-family residences.

Rancho Las Colinas is being developed by Americans David Girsks of West Palm Beach and Mike and Jack Osborne of Miami and Costa Rica. The Osbornes' father had owned the property for many years.

Garl called it "simply the prettiest place I've ever seen. The mountains go right into the sea. It has coves with white sand beaches."

The golf course site combines ranchland, intersected by creeks, and hills, from which golfers can look across an estuary to the Pacific Ocean. A river borders part of the layout. And elevation changes about 120 feet.

Garl brought some of his Florida-style design to the track, he said, "because it has the same kind of climate and similar vegetation, although it is true tropical whereas Florida is subtropical."

The 13th is the signature hole, climbing up the side of a mountain. When construction crews started cutting out the green, they uncovered a reddish solid rock. So Garl took advantage of it, creating a natural wall in front of the green. It is a par-4 that plays about 365 yards.

"We tried to shape the holes like the mountains in the nearby background," Garl said, "so the golf course is an extension of those mountains."

Having a 30-year presence in Costa Rica, the developers "had a sense the timing was right to bring golf to this part of the world," Garl said. "They have done very well in land sales and golf so far. They are very pleased."

Meanwhile, RTJ II is building nine holes on either side of the Melia Conchal Resort's hotel complex, which sits on a pure shell beach. Each nine is a self-contained entity sitting in a valley and stretching into the hills, Linn said.

The 18 holes will play to par 72 and stretch over 7,020 yards.

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