

Joneses join forces in Las Vegas

LAS VEGAS — Robert Trent Jones Sr. and son Robert Jr. are jointly designing the new Southern Highlands Golf Club here.

Southern Highlands Golf Club, which broke ground in January, is the centerpiece to a 2,300-acre master-planned community under development by Southern Highlands Development Corp. The golf

course is expected to open to members in December.

"We are extremely fortunate to have both Joneses designing this golf course," said Garry Goett, president of Southern Highlands Golf Club, L.L.C. "Jones Sr. is one of the true legends of the game, and his son, Robert Jr. (Bobby), is an extraordinarily

gifted architect in his own right. They have both been very active in the project. Senior has reviewed all of the routing and grading plans and has had input in every aspect of the design.

"Bobby also has been very hands-on, and has visited the site numerous times to ensure that the course is everything we have envisioned."

The Joneses' design features

a 7,240-yard, par-72 layout built on 220 acres of rolling desert foothills and rocky ridges 12 minutes south of the Las Vegas Strip.

"What's most striking about this golf course is the tremendous variety the golf experience provides," said Jones Jr. "Although it is a very traditional design in some respects, with lush landscaping and plenty of

turf, we've used the elevation changes, water features and bunker patterns to give each hole a personality all its own."

Southern Highlands' construction and early golf operations are being supervised by Raven Golf, an Arizona-based golf course development and management company that operates courses in Phoenix and Tucson, as well as in Florida.

Doak's Apache

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good, in fact, that the Apache builders moved just 25,000 to 35,000 cubic yards of dirt, enough to build an irrigation lake.

The "great stuff" this property consists of, he said, is "valleys between hills 50 feet high and just wide enough for one golf hole," a big wash meandering down through it, a number of smaller washes all around, and desert vegetation minus saguaro cacti.

"The puzzle in the desert," Doak said, "has always been how to keep the golf course playable. While it's going to be challenging from the back tees, it's a casino resort and has to be playable for the average golfer. The key in the desert is to get it wide enough to make it playable. And we have no big carries.

"In Phoenix and Tucson they take the washes out of play. But we wanted to do as little of that as possible. We used the washes as much as we could. But 'wide' was the key. We have 200 feet of grassing on most holes. Instead of instantly going from manicured to desert, we have rough on the edges."

The dwarf bluegrass fairways and bluegrass-fescue blend in the roughs was seeded the first of November "We're high enough and it gets cold long enough that consultants thought Bermudagrass would die," Doak said. "And they wanted something they wouldn't have to oversee. We're trying varieties of bluegrass that you can cut to a half-inch."

The local contractor, Apache West, "did a fine job shaping the lake," Doak said, and a 50-man crew of Apache laborers did the majority of the construction, led by project manager Neil Iverson (who helped install the \$1.3 million irrigation system) and shaper Jim Urbina.

The intention of the San Carlos Apache Nation, Doak said, "is to get casino visitors and others to drive up for the day from Tucson or Phoenix where it is 15 degrees hotter in the summer."

Once those golfers are there, Doak thinks he will have them hooked. Among his designs, he said, Apache Stronghold ranks "way high. It looks different from anything else in the desert and certainly than anything we've done. It has great topography and the best set of par-3s in Arizona."

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