

CrossCreek adds to Southern California's public golf supply

By JAY FINEGAN

TEMECULA, Calif. — The semi-private CrossCreek Golf Club, set amid rolling hills here in the "wine country" of Southern California, will open in May, providing more daily-fee golf for an area badly in need of it. According to club officials, it will combine the access of a public course with the refinements of a private golf club.

The 6,833-yard layout, designed by Arthur Hills/Steve Forrest and Associates, occupies 180 acres of picturesque countryside. "CrossCreek is an absolutely beautiful site with every component needed for a great golf course," said Hills, who has more than 150 courses to his credit. "There is plenty of variety and challenge for golfers of every ability, and the aesthetics will provide enjoyment for all. Changes in topography and beautiful views will create great drama and an overall memorable golfing experience."

This is the first golf course for developer Imprimus, based in Palm Desert, Calif. "It's a pretty small outfit, just a couple of guys," said senior design associate Chris Wilczynski, the on-site project manager for the Hills team. "We're doing a second course for them in Gypsum, Colorado." Ranger Golf handled the construction out of its western division office, in Chandler, Ariz.

HILLS ON ALL SIDES

Temecula is a small but growing town northeast of San Diego and due east of San Juan Capistrano, not far from the Camp Pendleton Marine base. "Temecula is becoming a big place for people to move to from San Diego and Los Angeles," Wilczynski said. "There are hills and mountains and kind of a rural flavor."

According to Wilczynski, CrossCreek is a high-end course that will compete well in the area. "The whole property sits down in this big basin they call Walker Basin," he said. "There are high hills on all sides, so it's completely enclosed. But you do get some decent views of tall mountains to the west."

The first five holes play along a corridor of stately oaks and sycamores, with a creek that criss-crosses the fairways at various angles, demanding well-place drives. Holes six through nine come out into the open, across a rolling meadow, and the back nine plays up into the hills and returns through the woody section. Each hole features at least four tee boxes.

DANGER LURKS ON 13

"There are big hills on the back nine, with a lot of drama



The fifth hole at Cross Creek GC in the wine country northeast of San Diego

there," Wilczynski said. "On the 13th, a cape hole, the fairway sits on this high shelf and a big ravine runs the length of it, at an angle. It sets up a risk/reward situation for your tee shot. You want to carry as much of the ravine as possible. But the thing is 50 feet deep, so if you knock it in there, you'll be dropping or hitting another ball."

The course tests players early. The second hole, for example, a 420-yard par-4, plays straight over the creek to an elevated green that drops off sharply on the left. "The green is completely convex, so anything on the sides will roll off," said Wilczynski. "It's quite tricky."

STAFF WEARING KNICKERS

Aiming to capture the ambience of golf's "golden age," all CrossCreek employees will sport traditional uniforms, including knickers, white shirts and bow ties. On-course "player assistants" will advise golfers through their round.

Green fees are expected to be in the \$80 to \$100 range, according to Jim Decker of the Hills design group, but membership entitles players to unlimited play as well as exclusive rights and privileges.

Golf and club facilities are being managed by Links Management, based in Farmington, Utah.

Nicklaus and Bonita Bay planning new Florida course

BONITA SPRINGS, Fla. — Jack Nicklaus has teamed up with the Bonita Bay Group to build the Retreat, a Nicklaus signature golf course set to be constructed under Audubon Cooperative Signature Sanctuary guidelines.

A private club, the Retreat will be situated on a secluded, 275-acre site here in southwest Florida. It's being created as a free-standing facility, with no residential development and membership limited to 275. The site offers outstanding natural assets, including mature oak, pine and cypress trees, and a natural flow way through the center of the property.

Ground will be broken once 100 membership reservations have been received. It is anticipated that the course and its support services will open in fall 2002, with the clubhouse to open in fall 2003.

PRECISION OVER RAW POWER

Nicklaus said the 18-hole course will reward accuracy, not brute strength.

"There are several constants to my approach," he said. "I design layouts that challenge golfers to play intelligently rather than ones that test their strength—golf is a game of precision more than power. And I avoid disrupting the natural setting as much as possible. The golf holes should fit the terrain."

The clubhouse design is by Richard Diedrich of Diedrich NBA in Atlanta, a leading firm in the field. Diedrich NBA also designed The Club at Mediterra's clubhouse and the Bonita Bay Club East clubhouse. "We are designing the clubhouse to complement the site's outstanding natural assets. It will have the character of an estate-house retreat with a Florida ranch theme," said Diedrich.

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Graves & Pascuzzo opens five courses in Calif., heads overseas

EL DORADO HILLS, Calif. — The golf course design firm of Graves & Pascuzzo Ltd. has been on a hot streak recently. It opened five courses in California, moved on the East Coast, ventured into Japan and made its first design sojourn into Europe with a project in Italy.

"It's been hectic," said managing partner Damian Pascuzzo. "We strive on every project to give the attention to detail that is needed in designing a golf course that is memorable, challenging, and fun to play. That attention to detail takes time. Our philosophy is to take on fewer projects and do them well."

One example is Maderas Golf Club, which sits in the picturesque foothills of San Diego. It opened last fall to rave reviews from golfers and golf writers alike.

"The course was designed to reflect the parkland style," said Pascuzzo. Tees were strategically placed on cliffs and rock outcroppings, creating dramatic drives to fairways framed by stands of oaks and sycamores. With elevation changes running about 200 feet, the course offers superb vistas, challenging options and plenty of thrilling shots. According to *The Southern California Golfer's Guide*, "Maderas promises to deliver golf



The Graves & Pascuzzo-renovated La Quinta Country Club in California

memories of a lifetime."

SCOTTISH FLAVOR

The Bridges, another Graves & Pascuzzo design, opened late last year and created quite a buzz among golf enthusiasts. Inspired by a trip to Scotland's Royal Dornoch, Pascuzzo was committed to bringing a unique style of golf to Northern California.

Located 30 miles east of San Francisco in the foothills of San Ramon, The Bridges is part of a master-planned community developed by Shapell Industries. This par-73 layout sweeps through an expansive valley and can play to over 7,200 yards.

While The Bridges does not claim to be a true links course, it can definitely feel

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GOLF COURSE NEWS

Mysterious donor keeps Smoke Rise G&CC private

STONE MOUNTAIN, Ga. — Smoke Rise Golf & Country Club here has completed its conversion to equity-club status, thanks in part to a \$1-million gift from an "angel" member.

The club, managed by Billy Casper Golf Management (BCGM) of Vienna, Va., had to come up with an additional \$2 million from members to secure the gift, which was intended to keep the club exclusively private.

Dean Robertson, general manager of

Smoke Rise, spearheaded the membership's matching \$2-million contribution. He had 90 days to raise the money before the gift offer was revoked.

Named BCGM's general manager of the year for his efforts, Robertson oversaw \$1.4 million in equity conversions and \$600,000 in member assessments to meet the mandate.

ANGEL REMAINS ANONYMOUS

To further enhance the financial stability of the club, Smoke Rise Properties

Inc., the guarantor group, added \$500,000 to the effort by converting \$500,000 in debt to equity memberships at the club.

"The management team at Billy Casper Golf demonstrated the operational means and expertise necessary to ensure that Smoke Rise thrives financially going forward," said the "angel" member, who declined to be identified. "The company's proficiency and proven track record managing properties successfully persuaded me that the money would help make Smoke



Smoke Rise Golf & Country Club

Rise a premier facility, of which the members and the community can be proud."

TOTAL EQUITY CONVERSION

The operational change capped a vigorous one-year period during which BCGM guided the club to a 180-degree financial turnaround.

Hallmarks of the effort, which began in February 2000, include the firm's management of a member-driven \$3.5-million recapitalization, including the equity conversion of all membership classes and the \$1 million gift.

"This member's tremendous show of support for our firm's capabilities is extremely gratifying," said Peter Hill, Billy Casper Golf's CEO. "We routinely steer clubs to financial prosperity, but we've never before received this type of feedback to our efforts."

CLUB ON FIRM FINANCIAL FOOTING

Prior to the equity-club conversion, Smoke Rise, located 15 minutes from downtown Atlanta, was a refund-type property. Members received a specified refund upon resignation.

"Converting to an equity club places Smoke Rise in a great position, both from financial and marketing standpoints," said club president Gary Sekulow. "Smoke Rise's financial stability is ensured for years to come."

A full-service club, Smoke Rise boasts such amenities as an Olympic-sized pool and a 28,000-square-foot clubhouse.

Membership sales accelerated once word spread of Smoke Rise becoming an equity club. Fewer than 200 full golf memberships remain to be sold.

Graves & Pascuzzo

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like Scotland when the winds blow off San Francisco Bay and the shot before you calls for a bump-and-run over a tightly cropped fairway to an undulating green.

The planting scheme at The Bridges was also patterned after Royal Dornoch's gorse-lined hills. Not a single tree was planted on the course. Instead, over 100,000 native shrubs cover the hillsides and rough areas.

The firm's three other new California projects involve The Institute in Morgan Hill, Westbridge in La Habra, and Sterling Hills in Camarillo. They also completed the 18-hole renovation of La Quinta Country Club, a private course near Palm Desert, on the edge of the Santa Rosa Mountains National Scenic Area. Opened

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GOLF COURSE NEWS



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Two builders

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said Vince Barraco, senior project manager at Medterra. "Two full golf construction crews are working simultaneously, and as a result, we have doubled our progress on the North Course.

"An added benefit of the dual team approach," continued Barraco, "is that we are able to be more efficient while developing the course. For example, we can sod the bunkers and mounded areas because they take minimal irrigation. And because we will finish the course six months prior to our grand opening, we can delay planting fairways and ornamentals until the water conditions improve." Florida is in the midst of a crisis-level drought.

A TREND IN THE MAKING?

Tom Marzolf, senior design associate for Fazio Golf Course Designers, feels this method of golf course construction will be the trend of the future, due to increased demand to build more expensive courses faster.

"Developers today want to build \$8-million courses and have them completed within a year," he said. "Using two contractors simultaneously is a way to meet these deadlines while ensuring the highest quality. There is no other course that I know of, nationwide, that has employed two separate contractors on the same project."

GIVING MEMBERS A CHOICE

Since construction began on the North

Course, 11 lakes have been constructed, 16 holes have been cleared, six holes are roughly shaped and irrigation is scheduled to begin this spring.

The North Course, designed as a companion layout to the South Course, will also be distinctly different. Greens will be tiered instead of layered, and there will be more green and grade changes. The North Course will also feature naturalized edges to blend with the adjoining wetland areas.

"We want our membership to have the flexibility to choose between two different styles of golf," said Susan Hebel Watts,

vice president of the Bonita Bay Group and general manager at Medterra. "We feel that they'll appreciate having two courses and two different golfing experiences available to them in the same community."

Like the South Course, the North Course is designed to meet Audubon Signature Cooperative Sanctuary requirements. Both courses are Fazio designs.

MUCHO MOOLA REQUIRED

The Bonita Bay Group is developing Medterra in the classical style of Europe's Mediterranean region. The master plan for the 1,697-acre community includes

some 950 residences and more than 1,000 acres of open space. Membership in each golf club is limited to 275.

Medterra Realty is now offering home sites from \$450,000, coach homes from \$450,000, villas from \$600,000 and single-family homes from \$1.85 million to more than \$5 million.

The Club at Medterra's 25,000-square-foot clubhouse, which opened in February, is the focal point of the Piazza, which will also include tennis courts, swimming pools and a fitness center. A private beach club with pool on the Gulf of Mexico will be available for resident members. ■

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Graves & Pascuzzo

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in 1959, the La Quinta course is a PGA Tour stop for the Bob Hope Chrysler Classic.

NEW MARKETS IN EAST AND ABROAD

While most of their courses reside in the western states, the start of a new century has taken Graves & Pascuzzo into new markets. This year their designs have reached the East Coast, along with Italy and Japan.

Graves & Pascuzzo recently unveiled two new courses in Massachusetts – Indian Pond in Kingston, and The Ranch Golf Club in Southwick. Indian Pond, a private club, is part of a master-planned residential community owned by Massachusetts developer Fred Tonsberg. This course features holes that wind through heavily wooded foothills.

The Ranch Golf Club, a daily-fee layout, occupied a one-time dairy farm that dated back to the Colonial era. The course's charm and feel reflects the history of the area. The layout, which plays through heavily wooded areas as well as open fields, provides variety and visual appeal.

Also under construction is a new course in Torino, Italy, scheduled to debut this year. The firm is working as well in Japan on the renovation of an exclusive private club in Sapporo called Otaru Golf Club, which will host the Japan Open in 2006.

Graves & Pascuzzo was founded in 1959 by Robert Muir Graves, who was joined by Pascuzzo in 1980. Based here in Northern California, with additional design offices in Oregon and Utah, the firm has designed more than 80 new courses throughout the world and collaborated on the remodeling of some 720 more. ■