

20 years in the desert

As Desert Mountain Community in Scottsdale, Ariz., celebrates its 20th anniversary, management says golf and the role of golf course communities look different than they did when Lyle Anderson first came up with idea to develop the site. But despite the changes, they're still finding ways to adapt.

Six Jack Nicklaus-designed courses – the most courses by him in one place – are sprawled out throughout 8,000 acres in northern Arizona. The 2,150 people who live in the golf course community comprise the membership.

The courses were built one by one until 2000, says Shawn Emerson, director of agronomy for all six courses. Each course has its own personality and theme, reflecting the different points in time each was built. But each course fits into the framework of the overall community.

"Nicklaus' theory on golf didn't change," he says. "The product changed a little bit, but just sort of the fluff parts. The quality of how he constructed it didn't change."



With each course, the staff became more familiar with Nicklaus' style, and this helped with the courses that came after, Emerson says.

"We had a lot of input on how the operation needs to fit in with the design from experience," he says. "That was key. He had confidence in us and knows what we can do."

Emerson is amazed to see how the industry evolves each time a new course is built and incorporates technology that has been updated since the preceding course was constructed.

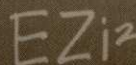
Bob Jones, senior vice president of Desert Mountain, agrees the industry has changed from a business perspective as well. Overall, the community of courses experienced a fairly healthy increase in rounds until Sept. 11. Rounds growth has been less than 1 percent since then.

Bringing *Intelligence* to the Smart Controller...

$$\frac{2870 \text{ kJ}}{6 \text{ mol H}_2\text{O}}$$

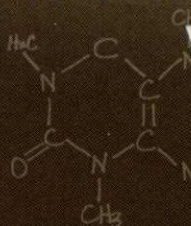


$$\text{SMART CONTROLLER} = (\text{EAGLE} + \text{ZIPET} + \text{INTERNET})$$



$$G = H - TS \quad \Delta S_{\text{vap}} = 886 \text{ J} \\ \Delta G = \Delta H - T\Delta S$$

$$\frac{1842 \text{ kJ}}{4 \text{ mol Fe}} = \frac{460 \text{ kJ}}{\text{mol Fe}}$$



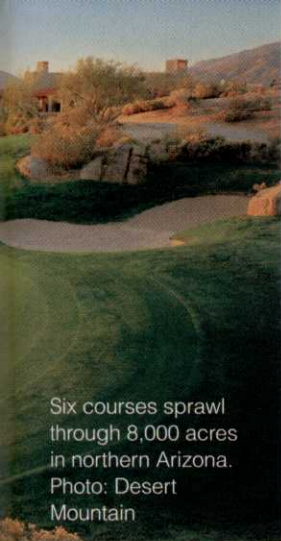
...because a Smart controller without Intelligence is like a sprinkler without water.



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Six courses sprawl through 8,000 acres in northern Arizona. Photo: Desert Mountain

The courses generated about 145,000 rounds last year.

Management has had to change its focus, and it puts more emphasis on the entire experience, not just a golf experience, Jones says. This approach seems to be taking hold, as more people are living at the community year-round, rather than treating the community as a second home or getaway, as

they did when Desert Mountain first opened. The members are using more of the community's other amenities, including the increasingly popular fitness and spa-related activities, and golfing less, Jones says.

The club also has faced other golf-related challenges and changes in its first 20 years. The biggest change is the method of irrigating the courses, Emerson says. Because of increasing consciousness of water conservation, the courses have switched to an irrigation system with effluent water. The courses now have irrigation systems that work more precisely, watering only as necessary to prevent waste.

Desert Mountain isn't immune to the skyrocketing costs other courses face. Management tries to stay on top of rising material costs

because of fuel costs and other factors and budget for it as much as possible. The business department provides frequent updates.

"We're operating in real-time," Emerson says. "That validated decisions we've made as managers about paths we need to go down. To run a club of this magnitude, you have to be able to pick up on trends."

Another key to running a club of this size is having a capable staff to run each aspect. Jones credits a solid training program for keeping everything running smoothly among the 700 employees. Comment cards and surveys are made available to members to rate their service and their interaction with the employees. A rating of 87 percent or higher must be maintained for employees to receive yearly incentives and bonuses.

Jones retains employees by making it a desirable place to work. Each year, he compares employees' pay with the standard acceptable rate in the industry to make sure all is fair.

Emerson left the course for employment elsewhere, only to return two years later. He has been at the club 11 straight years.

"People always want to look for something greener, but then you realize there's nothing better out there," he says. "What makes Desert Mountain exceptional is that it holds itself to high standards." – HW

Better coverage

In 2001, Tony Girardi, CGCS, knew he wanted to increase the irrigation system's coverage at Rockrimmon Country Club in Stamford, Conn. Course conditions weren't what he wanted, and improving coverage seemed to be the answer. But as nearby areas began to impose water restrictions, Girardi knew it wasn't just about water coverage, it was about efficiency, too.

Older than 25 years, the system was aging. The technology was outdated, and the sprinkler heads didn't water the course evenly, creating waste and less-than-desired conditions. So, after receiving the blessing of the green committee in 2001, Girardi chose a new and improved, wall-to-wall, multirow irrigation system.

The new system uses more sprinkler heads that are spaced closer together. The old system had 450 heads in single lines on the fairways. Now, there are 1,350 Rain Bird Eagle 700/750 heads with head-to-head spacing. The number of heads increased dramatically, partly because the coverage area was increased to include the roughs.

"Where we used to irrigate 30 acres, now we water 80 acres," Girardi says. "We're almost tripling the irrigation heads while putting out almost equal or just a little bit more water."

The irrigation system used to consume about 15 million gallons of water per year, and now, with 50 more acres of coverage, water usage increased to about 18 million gallons.



An aging irrigation system caused Rockrimmon Country Club to install a new one. Photo: Rockrimmon Country Club

"It's evident in the numbers that we've been more efficient with water," Girardi says. "I'm pretty confident what we installed is working pretty well for us."

Water efficiency is becoming more important in several areas of the U.S. as it becomes scarce and regions restrict usage. Girardi isn't