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THE GOOD LIFE MAGAZINE FOR MEN

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**MERCEDES
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MAGGIE SIFF
STAR OF SHOWTIME'S
"BILLIONS"



Bring your wedge when you visit Nekoosa, Wisconsin's Sand Valley, which has no shortage of bunkers. The Lake Leopold cottages (below) contain spacious great rooms.



SAND VALLEY

For new golf courses, 2017 is a very special year.

While course development in the United States was shanked out of bounds by the economic downturn of 2008 and new construction is still rare, gems are emerging that are defining a new era of golf architecture.

This year courses are opening across the land, from Pennsylvania to Oregon, from Florida to Wisconsin, from New Orleans to Alameda, California. Many are privately owned resorts, some are publicly owned municipal courses. Some are built on sand located far from the ocean. A couple are designed to be played forward and back. Some are forgiving layouts. One even has a place to smoke surrounded by green. What they have in common are creative, driven developers with a passion for the game and communities that see golf as a centerpiece of their redevelopment.

At the forefront of this renaissance is Mike Keiser, the Pied Piper of remote golf course development, the man who goes out of his way to go out of his way. The first of his two-course Sand Valley Resort complex in central Wisconsin opened this year. The raves were reminiscent of his seminal Bandon Dunes project, where 20 years ago in Oregon he proved if you find exceptional ground, seek out the right architect and make golf, and only golf, the centerpiece of your passion, the players will come.

"Golf courses are again being built for golf reasons," says Josh Lesnik of KemperSports in Chicago, the managing firm for Keiser's Bandon Dunes. "In the '80s, '90s, some of the 2000s, people wanted golf not necessarily for a great course but to sell homes or be close to a good demographic area. They weren't as concerned with building a great golf course as they were with some other business idea."

Keiser has shown the way, and it's been a long, long way, with remote



courses like Sand Valley, which is three hours from the closest major airport, Milwaukee. Jon Scott, whose family-owned Gull View Lake Resort in western Michigan is adding a sixth course this year, sees Keiser as the model for special golf. "Mike is an obvious example if you do it right, even in a declining market, you can be wildly successful."

Golf has also become a tool for economic stimulus. The family-owned Retreat at Silvies Valley Ranch in far-eastern Oregon was developed as way to spark the tourism industry in a part of the state which has virtually no tourism.

"The only reason to build anything anymore is if you are doing something that is really special, and have people that want to do that," says Tom Doak, who designed Keiser's second course at Bandon Dunes and a second course at Barnbougle Dunes. "There's no question Mike has

TOP & OPPOSITE: RYAN FARROW

had a huge impact. First of all, he built quite a few places and keeps doing it, and second of all, that's what gives somebody in the middle of nowhere the idea that he can be successful doing the same thing."

Countering the era of the 1990s and early 2000s when courses seemed to be designed to challenge the likes of Tiger Woods, Keiser has also ushered in an age of courses built for everyone: easy enough from the forward tees for the high handicapper, challenging enough from the back for the accomplished golfer. "The architects, the developers, the media, we all bought into the lie that the harder the golf course was, the better it was," says Doak. "The upshot of that was that everyone, including me, built a bunch of really difficult courses. The public voted with their pocketbook—they would play these courses once or twice and not come back. Mike wants courses for the regular guy, and they are voting with their pocketbook by coming back."

We won't detail all the projects here, but those we feel have a special story.

Sand Valley Resort

Nekoosa, Wisconsin

When Mike Keiser found out there was a massive sand basin in central Wisconsin, he sent Josh Lesnik to see it.

"I told him to tell me why I don't want to go look at it," says Keiser. "He said you've got to see it to believe it. And it was unbelievable." He found an incredible landscape hidden under more than a thousand acres

of commercially planted pine forest, masking its potential for great golf. On close examination, and fairly physical trekking ("burrowing" as Keiser describes it), this massive remnant of the American Ice Age was just the place for some very special golf.

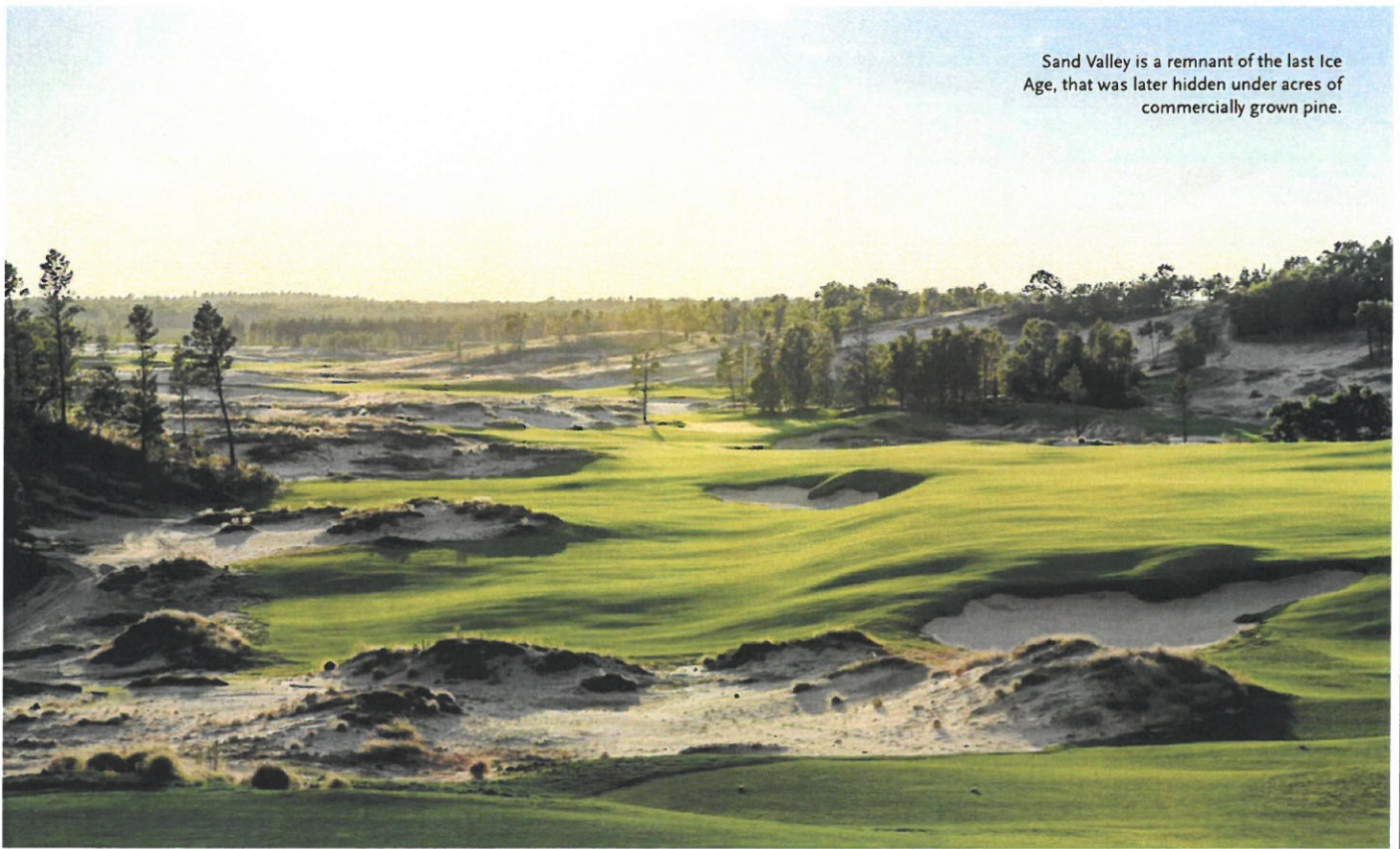
So he brought in his regulars, Bill Coore and Ben Crenshaw and Kidd to create the two courses. The Coore & Crenshaw course, known as Sand Valley, opens this year. Kidd's course, Mammoth Dunes, will have preview play later in the year and full play next year. This is heathland golf at its best.

"We've had fun with Mike at Sand Valley because for years he said he would only go to a site with sand and an ocean," says Coore. "Well, Sand Valley has a tremendous amount of sand but it's quite removed from the ocean." While the site has the earmarks—sand, fescue and rugged looking bunkers—of courses that Keiser and he have created, the designer adds that "this is very different in terms of the land forms. It's not what I would call dunes, it's ridges and valleys."

As for Kidd's course, Keiser had a plan. "Mike took me to Pine Valley twice in a year, so I'm guessing he wants it to be heavily influenced by it," says Kidd. "I love Pine Valley. It's absolutely unique, there's nothing like it in the world I can think of. I'm not trying to copy it in any way, but I'm certainly influenced by it. The scrubby vegetation combined with the sand and forested edges make for a really natural look."

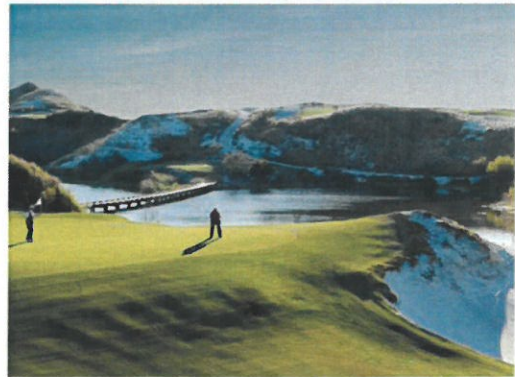
Sand Valley will have a small lodge to begin with, and though it is remote in golf terms it's not far from the Wisconsin Dells vacation mecca, with its many accommodations. It's also an hour and change from Herb Kohler's courses at Blackwolf Run and Whistling Straits.

Sand Valley is a remnant of the last Ice Age, that was later hidden under acres of commercially grown pine.





STREAMSONG



Florida's Streamsong, seen at the clubhouse (top), is opening a third (Black) course designed by Gil Hanse. The Blue course (lower left) is the work of Tom Doak, and the Red (lower right) is a Bill Coore and Ben Crenshaw design. The latter two courses are comingled, wrapping around each other.

Streamsong Bowling Green, Florida

Five years ago, when Streamsong opened just over an hour east of the Tampa International Airport, its Coore & Crenshaw and Doak courses (Red and Blue) were instantly acclaimed as among the best public courses in the U.S. Pretty good for a mining company project.

And now Mosaic, that Minnesota phosphate mining corporation that owns around 300,000 acres in Florida, is opening up a third course by Gil Hanse (the Black).

"It's the first opportunity we've had to put our work alongside the...guys we respect the most in the business: Tom Doak and Bill Coore and Ben Crenshaw," says Hanse. "Whenever an owner like Mosaic is willing to give you your pick of around 800 acres and it's all sand, that's incredible. What is great about Red and Blue is that they routed them at the same time and they are comingled and wrap around each other and cross over each other. With the Black Course we are off on our own in a big landscape. Our land is not as dramatic as Red and Blue, but we have interesting land forms that the

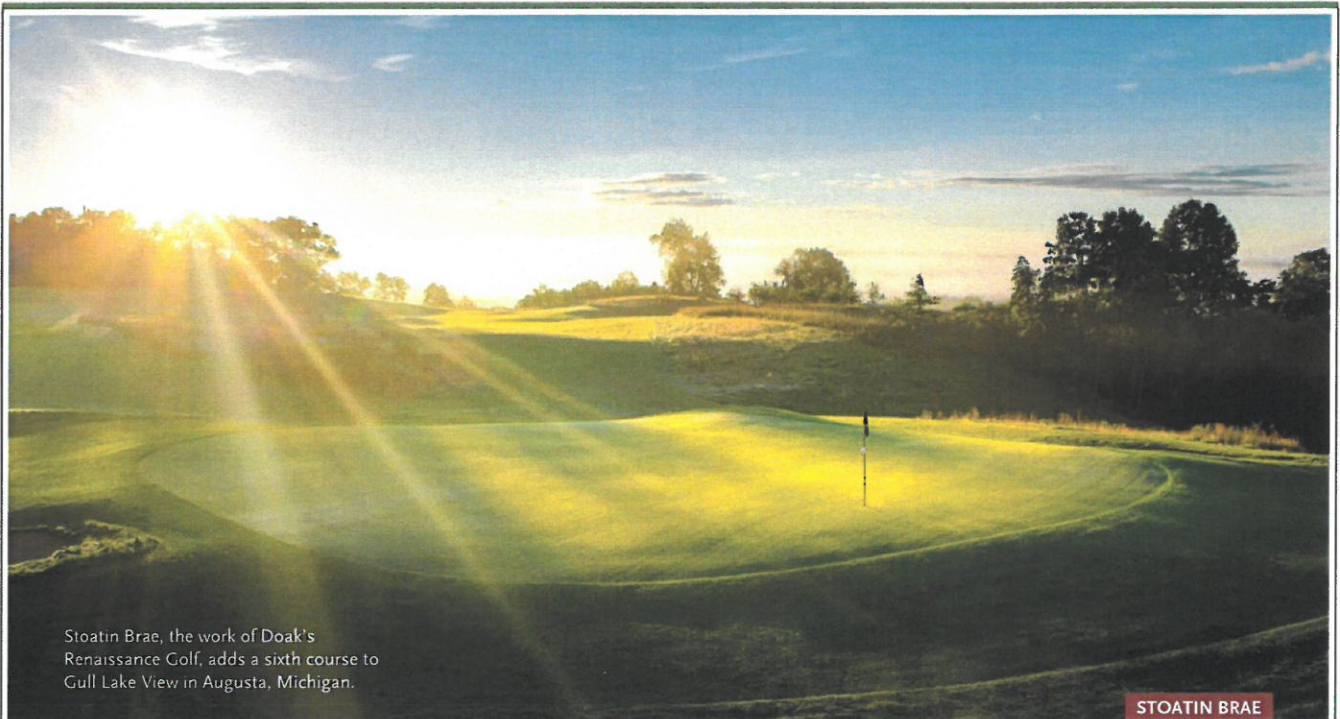
course runs through. Visually there is a lot of similarities between the courses, lots of sand, rough bunkers, but scale-wise is the big difference for Black."

For the Mosaic CFO Rich Mack, who oversaw land management when the project began, demand drove the need for a third course.

"We are in the business in Florida of mining, we own a lot of land," says Mack. "Rather than do the same thing we had been doing essentially for almost a century, we decided to do something different, something more progressive, something that would have more of a long-lasting impact in the context of it employed people. That's a very powerful story for a company that is in the mining business."

As for the Black Course, "It's a very powerful golf course," says Mack. "We have a very compelling feature, a two-acre putting green we are calling The Gauntlet. Inside the green we have a peninsula that will have a spacious fire pit, Adirondack chairs, a perfect area to sit back and enjoy a good cigar. We will have a world-class practice facility, something we are calling the Roundabout—a short course with six green complexes on a free-flowing basis."

BOTTOM LEFT: LARRY LAMBRECHT



Stoatin Brae, the work of Doak's Renaissance Golf, adds a sixth course to Gull Lake View in Augusta, Michigan.

STOATIN BRAE

Stoatin Brae, Gull Lake View Resort Augusta, Michigan

Gull Lake View is the biggest, least-known golf resort in the United States. But hey, it's in Augusta...Michigan.

And this year it adds a sixth course, Stoatin Brae, designed by Tom Doak's crew at Renaissance Golf. This is a family-owned-and-operated business, which has designed and built four of the courses and sells more than 120,000 tee times a year, with consistent repeat business from Detroit, Chicago and Indianapolis areas.

"I'm a little embarrassed about it and not a little surprised," says Jon Scott, when asked about Gull View's lack of national visibility. "It's a family business, fourth generation, my grandfather started the business in 1962. We've grown it from nine holes to 108. We've always been this small family business that over time we've grown big enough to now, we're a fairly big resort. We're dirt guys. We designed and built four out of the six courses ourselves. We've always been word-of-mouth, under the radar."

Stoatin Brae will likely expand Gull View's blip on the golf radar. It's quite different from the other Gull View parkland offerings, a big piece of land high on a hill with expansive views.

"This course is so different from the others," says Scott. "There are like five trees, pretty windy up on top of the hill there. Huge long views. It's different from what we have which is why we built it. We got Doak's group to help us out. We did a lot of the work ourselves. There were a lot of things making this economically viable in a market that is otherwise losing share."

Doak, who was busy on other projects, had his associates do the job and reports, "I think it turned out really good. It's an understated thing, but it's a pretty piece of ground with good views off the top, there are some really good golf holes on it."

On weekends, it will be about 100 bucks to play it. Now that is something new and refreshing and decidedly under the radar.

The Loop at Forest Dunes Roscommon, Michigan

Tom Doak had this idea for a long time, itching to do it—a reversible golf course, 18 greens with tees that allow it to be played in both directions.

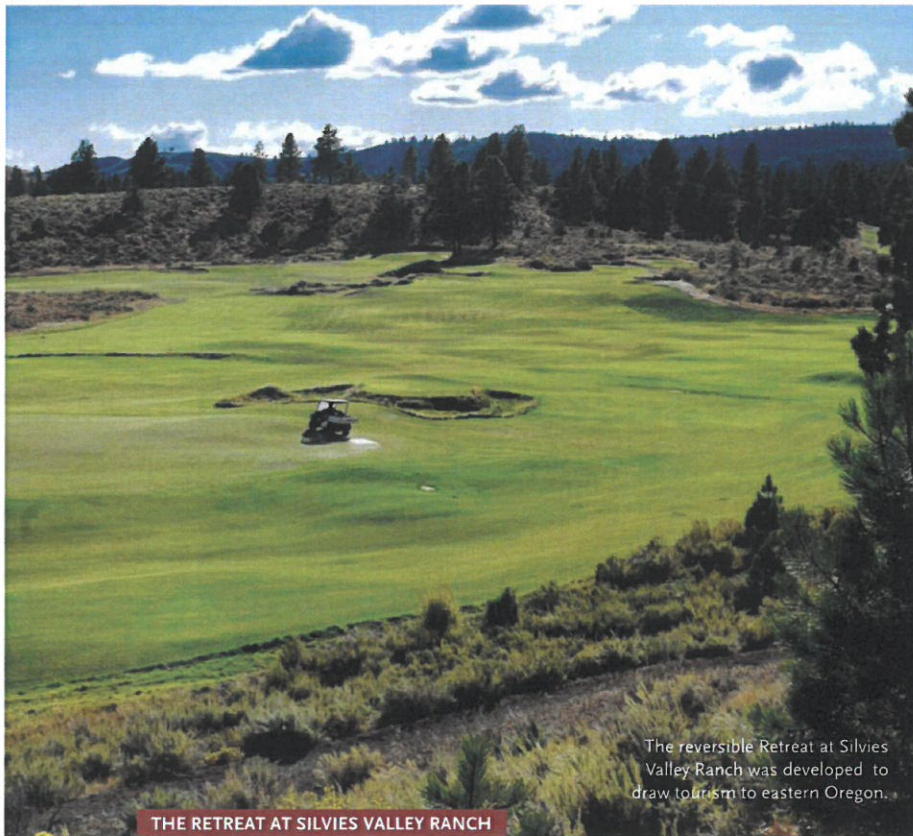
"There is a little bit about it in the appendix to Tom Simpson's book on golf course design written in the '20s," Doak says. "He used to build estate courses for wealthy people, three holes or six holes and to make them more interesting occasionally he would build one that you could play forwards and backwards. I looked at the drawing a long time ago and said what a cool idea, I'd love to do that if I found the right client."

Then Lew Thompson, the owner of the Forest Dunes Resort, called him about doing a second course at his facility. He wasn't thinking about a reversible golf course, but after Doak saw the property "it seemed perfect for the concept," says Doak. "It wasn't a dramatic piece of ground visually, relatively flat and sandy which would be conducive to making this concept work. Didn't have a lot of specimen trees on it, because if you have they are probably going to get in the way going one direction or the other."

This is the first full season for The Loop, its courses are named the Red and the Black and are played in one direction one day, the opposite direction the next. So, in a way, Forest Dunes now has three courses.

"A hilly property, you are going to have trouble," says Doak. "A big elevated tee, you can't play back up that slope to the previous green. If you play up to the top of a hill or over the hill and back down, it might work one direction, but probably a blind hole going the other way."

So instead, Doak took an average piece of ground and transformed it into an above-average experience.



The reversible Retreat at Silvie Valley Ranch was developed to draw tourism to eastern Oregon.

THE RETREAT AT SILVIE VALLEY RANCH

The Retreat at Silvie Valley Ranch

Burns, Oregon

Way out in eastern Oregon, as remote as it gets in the American West, is Silvie Valley Ranch. When veterinarian/entrepreneur Scott Campbell bought its 140,000 acres in 2007 the idea was to find a way to stimulate a regional economy that had hit bottom after the lumber industry abandoned the area.

"My wife and I grew up here. We were looking for something that could create jobs, the services you need," says Campbell. "The only thing that showed potential was tourism, since it's beautiful. We have done a lot of habitat restoration on the ranch."

But another possibility suggested itself. "Brought a bunch of my friends that were serious golf fanatics and showed them this property without saying what we were thinking about. Everyone of them said 'God, this would be a great place to have a golf course.'"

Not just a conventional one either. Architect Dan Hixson designed his own version of a reversible course, this one with 27 greens. He also created a par-3 course and is finishing up what he describes as a challenge course on some extreme terrain.

"We are all aware that Silvie Valley isn't truly a links course between the sea and farmland, but I do enjoy that style," says Hixson. "I technically would be called a minimalist, have worked on land that didn't require a lot of earth moving, so it's in the spirit of the links course, it's built that way. It really just lies on the land. If Mother Nature made a bump there and a ditch here, it's pretty much used whenever possible."

And golf is made possible again in the most remote of areas, five hours from Portland, maybe three and a half from Boise, Idaho. Silvie Valley Ranch awaits the adventurous.

Mossy Oak

West Point, Mississippi

George Bryan, the founder of the private Old Waverly Golf Club (host of the 1999 U.S. Women's Open), had wanted to add a public course in the area, but the economic downturn held him back. For a while.

When things improved, he partnered with the Haas family—owners of the Mossy Oak outdoor clothing brand—to acquire a piece of land virtually across the street from Old Waverly that looked just right for golf, and it had its share of old mossy oaks.

He called in Gil Hanse, who saw the property's potential. "George wanted to build something a little more rustic, a little more natural looking and feeling (than highly manicured Waverly)," says Hanse. "When you think of Mississippi, you think of dead flat, but this piece of ground has nice roll, contours, feels a little like Shinnecock."

It was a feel-good project for Hanse. "Part of what made Mossy Oak so terrific from our standpoint is that I've never been in a community or even a state where the people have such a passion

for their state, to do something good for the local community."

Shepherd's Rock, Nemacolin Woodlands Resort

Farmington, Pennsylvania

Nemacolin already had two courses. Its Mystic Rock, by the iconic and occasionally outrageous Pete Dye, had hosted a PGA Tour event. But the uninteresting second course wasn't driving golf revenue.

So why not call in Pete Dye again?

"The key point is, one Pete Dye golf course is great for a resort, but when you get two Dye golf courses, it becomes a destination," says Tim Liddy, Dye's on-site project architect for Shepherd's Rock. Liddy was given both the second course property and additional land, putting him on top of a mountain.

"For an inland golf course, it doesn't get any better," says Liddy. "Long views to other mountain ranges. Beautiful fall colors. You play through three or four environments. You start off playing through a wetland corridor along a stream, then you go out into pasture ground, you come back into the rocky mountain side and then the back side there is more pasture ground, great views of mountains, a spectacular view from the 18th green. A lot of texture to the course, the smooth fairways against fescue rough and the tree lines. The big rocks along the mountain and the mountain ranges in the background."

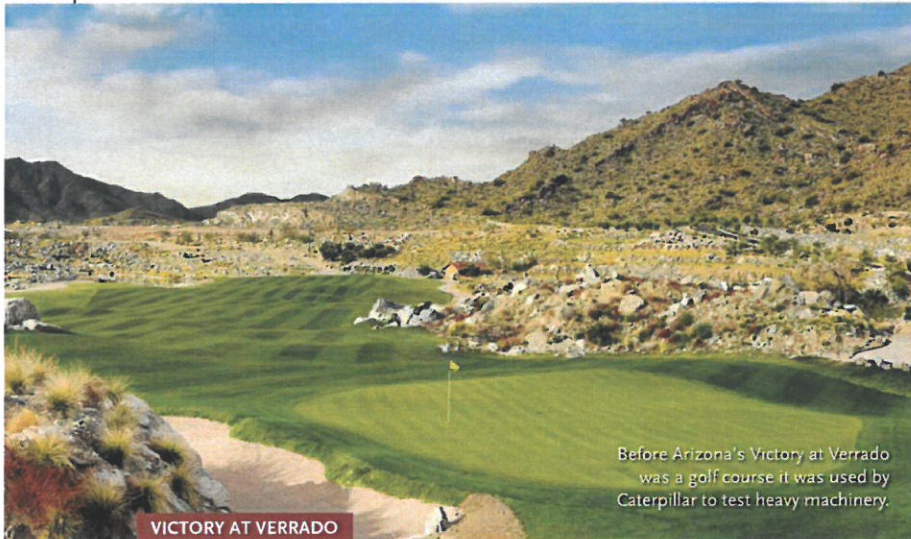
The Mystic Rock course is still the tough championship track. Shepherd's Rock is the friendlier version of classic mountain golf. "It will give players another course to talk about," says Jones.

Victory at Verrado

Buckeye, Arizona

The occasional golf course built in conjunction with real estate development still occurs, and Champions Tour player Tom Lehman, an occasional but accomplished architect, has added a second course to this planned community just to the west of Phoenix. It's not a remote destination, but has an expansive landscape that impressed even Lehman. The course is called Victory and for Lehman, it's a winner.

"It's right at the base of the White Tank Mountains in an area that was used for years and years by Caterpillar as their proving grounds," says Lehman. "They created a whole bunch of interesting shapes proving their equipment."



VICTORY AT VERRADO

It gave Lehman and his team dramatic backdrops and framing, but he didn't let many of the rugged features get in the way of fun golf. It's wide open, and from most of the tees there aren't the forced carries associated with desert-style golf.

"There is lots of drama with rocks, with boulders and outcroppings," says Lehman. "Most of those areas are places where you don't hit it, so they mostly don't interfere with play." He describes it as fun a golf course to look at and a very fun course to play—and one that you can find your golf ball on.

Now that's a novel idea.

Bayou Oaks

New Orleans, Louisiana

Bayou Oaks, on the site of two courses destroyed by Hurricane Katrina flooding in 2005, has just opened, the handiwork of architect Rees Jones. The course, played through some of the great old oaks left standing, in the urban New Orleans City Park, is abiding, but its story is compelling.

After the storm's devastation, the Bayou District Foundation was formed to redevelop the ruined St. Bernard housing development area near City Park. The success of the East Lake (Atlanta) model with golf as a catalyst for the overall renewal of an impoverished area was brought to the

foundation's attention. "The point was made that golf could be a redevelopment tool in New Orleans post Katrina," says J.T. Hannan, director of governmental and public affairs for the foundation. "You won't just redevelop a few blocks of housing, you will have an enormous impact on a wide swath of the city." He adds that St. Bernard, which had been in complete disrepair, "has been transformed into a mixed-income project as they did at East Lake. Layer in retail and cradle-to-college pipeline within the neighborhood. The East Lake model of using golf as a fundraising mechanism is something that is going to be ubiquitous moving forward. It produces revenue they can leverage into larger grants."

"It's for the people of the city of New Orleans," says Jones. "It's got plenty of room because it took the envelope of two golf courses. Not overly long, it maxes out at 7,300 yards, 46 bunkers. It incorporates lagoons that were there from the previous golf courses. The major attribute are these beautiful oaks."

But the real major attribute is that golf at Bayou Oaks is helping a community recover and grow.

Jack Clark South Course

Alameda, California

Jones is also involved in another innovative municipal project in Alameda, California, at the Chuck Corica Golf Complex—right off the runways of Oakland's international airport. One of its two courses, the Jack Clark South Course, has undergone a total transformation, along with a brand new par-3 course and a completely redone practice range. This has all been done by Greenway Golf, which was granted a lease to the complex that required renovation of one of California's busiest facilities.

"At one point this was the second busiest golf course in California behind Torrey Pines," says Mark

Logan, head of Greenway Golf. "We knew the property had potential, the infrastructure was dilapidated and we had come up with a plan."

And what a plan. The entire golf course, which is at sea level, was raised several feet using sand and fill from the Trans Bay Tunnel. The artificial turf from the old driving range was used to line the new sand bunkers. The new parking lot is recycled asphalt and concrete. In water-challenged California a stormwater capturing system was installed to significantly reduce water purchase during the dry season and a hybrid Bermuda grass was used on the fairways that consumes 40 percent less water.

While Logan, an Australian, has been in the golf development and management business in the states for nearly 20 years, the new South Course still has a bit of an Australian feel, taken from the Sand Belt courses near Melbourne.

And guess what. Mike Keiser, the Pied Piper, showed up at the crack of dawn to take a look at what was going on. "He sent me an e-mail saying it was a very impressive project," says Logan "He was impressed with the design, the way it looked like an Australian course, the way we went about using recycled materials."

Coming from Mike Keiser, that's an exclamation point. Enough said. ❖

Jeff Williams is a contributing editor of CIGAR AFICIONADO.