

GB

GOLF BUSINESS



SITDOWN WITH THE SIGNAL-CALLER

Former NFL star Ron Jaworski is now taking snaps in the golf industry

A STURDY FOUNDATION

Groundswell support for renovation has Canoe Brook Country Club poised for a robust future

BIG DATA, BIG MONEY

Dynamic Pricing is changing more than just rates—it's changing bottom lines, too

ON THE RIGHT PATH



Early last summer, Hillcrest Golf Club in Sun City West, Arizona, ripped out almost the entire length of its cart path, leaving asphalt only between greens and tee boxes. General manager John Jackson says that while the decision became clear given the numbers—around \$400,000 for full resurfacing versus just under \$200,000 to chop out most of the path and resurface what’s left—it was followed by significant research and plan-

ning to ensure the initiative served the course’s interests over the short term as well as the long term.

The process actually began two years ago, when facility staff began surveying players on their cart-driving habits, plus monitoring them firsthand across the holes visible from the clubhouse. “The course is set on 180 acres, so we found players got away from the paths pretty quickly and didn’t

return to them until near the green,” Jackson notes. “The only time they used paths for any length of time was during the few weeks after overseeding. But because we only overseed the fairways, players were using our paths sparingly and instead driving over the dormant bermuda rough.”

With that information in mind, Jackson then used the 10th hole as a testing ground for the removal project. “We saw it took nearly 18 months for the land to fully recover, so we knew what we were getting into,” he says. “Also, it reinforced that we needed to communicate well with players about the fact that parts of the course won’t look too pretty for a certain amount of time.”

To minimize the impact on business, Jackson began the project just after high season ended last April, with the goal

of having the affected ground settled, grown in and seamless with its surroundings by the start of high season in December 2017. At the present time, “most of the land is recovering really well,” he says. “We’ve had to bring in some dirt and sand to level out just a few spots that were not settling the way we anticipated.”

Looking at the big picture, Jackson concludes that “we did it the right way. The planning and timing of everything was so important. Two-thirds of our 45,000 annual rounds are played between December and April, and those folks had to know what was happening now and what to expect later.” Specifically, players will see a better course as well as improvements to other areas of the facility thanks to the money saved by choosing path removal versus refurbishment. —R.C.

Pace of Play, or Pace and Stay?

IT’S CERTAINLY UNDERSTANDABLE THAT MOST DESTINATION AND RESORT GOLF FACILITIES want players to get around the course in about four hours or less. Then again, some layouts might actually deliver a more fulfilling player experience through lengthening the round, by way of providing lounging spots in areas that offer great vistas, wildlife viewing and other memorable elements.

Take Quivira Golf Club in Cabo San Lucas, Mexico. A Jack Nicklaus layout that wraps around the midpoint of an oceanside mountain, the two-year-old layout was designed with “comfort stations” at panoramic viewpoints



before holes six, nine and 15. Each high-ceilinged, open-air station has a cook who makes egg burritos, quesadillas, tostadas, beef sliders and assorted sandwiches on the spot.

An accompanying waiter greets players, seats them at one of three tables and takes drink orders as players step to the counter to fill their plates. The green fee includes this on-course food and beverage.

Players are encouraged to spend about 10 minutes at each comfort station. With tee times 15 minutes apart at Quivira, most groups are

heading to the next tee as the group behind them arrives. But if players don’t want to leave just yet, the approaching group can come in and sit down as well or simply grab food and drink and play though.

“The comfort stations and generously spaced tee times are designed to create a once-in-a-lifetime experience on a fascinating piece of land for golf,” says Antonio Reynante, director of golf at Quivira. “We want to stimulate all five senses when players are at those stations, and have them savor the details. After all, that’s the joy of travel.”

Most importantly, Reynante has gotten a slew of compliments about the playing experience at Quivira, but no complaints about pace of play approaching five hours. —R.C.