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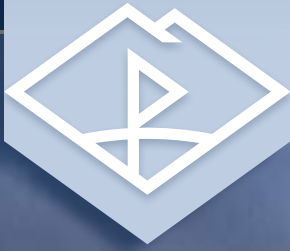
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AND THE WINNERS ARE...

CAGGYS 2025

THE BEST OF COLORADO GOLF

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PHOTO: ADOBE STOCK

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PHOTO BY LOGAN WHITTON/USGA CONTENT HUB

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WARMING UP TO THE GAME

Well, so much for Colorado being a 12-month golf state.

If there is a just God, by the time this Spring issue is in your hands there will be just the faint remnants of snow tucked into the shadowy protection of bushes and outbuildings and golf courses on the eastern part of the state will be hosting players. Our mountain courses may still be underneath a blanket of snow, but Spring is coming there soon too.

Spring golf cannot come soon enough. This winter was legit. And this edition is for those of us who have tramped through the ice for several months, as well as those lucky enough to be able to travel to warmer climes the game never really stops.

First and foremost, this edition allows us to celebrate the best courses, clubs and people of Colorado golf. Our annual CAGGY awards – with public votes as well as staff picks – this year showed our readers are really paying attention. There are several new courses at the tops of some lists – hello Boulder’s Flatiron Golf Course and welcome to the ranks of the “Best to Walk” rankings – and several old lions who clearly are still providing an excellent experience.

Thanks to our several thousands of voters, and look out for additional coverage throughout the year on our social media platforms for content exploring what some of the winners are doing well.

In addition, subscribers are receiving for the second year in a row a special edition of Dream Golf magazine. Dream is building Rodeo Dunes 45 minutes from Denver, and their magazine has a deep dive on course architect Bill Coors.

Our popular Spring Training guide is ready for players who are making their annual pilgrimage to Phoenix. As part of that package we have an up-close look at one of Scottsdale’s most popular golf courses, TPC Scottsdale. The famous stadium on

the No. 16 hole par 3 was fully framed when we visited in November. It requires more than three months to build each fall, then it comes down soon after the WM Phoenix Open is complete. No. 16 is nothing out of the ordinary without it; with the stadium, however, that par 3 feels iconic, even when the only observers are construction crews installing seats.

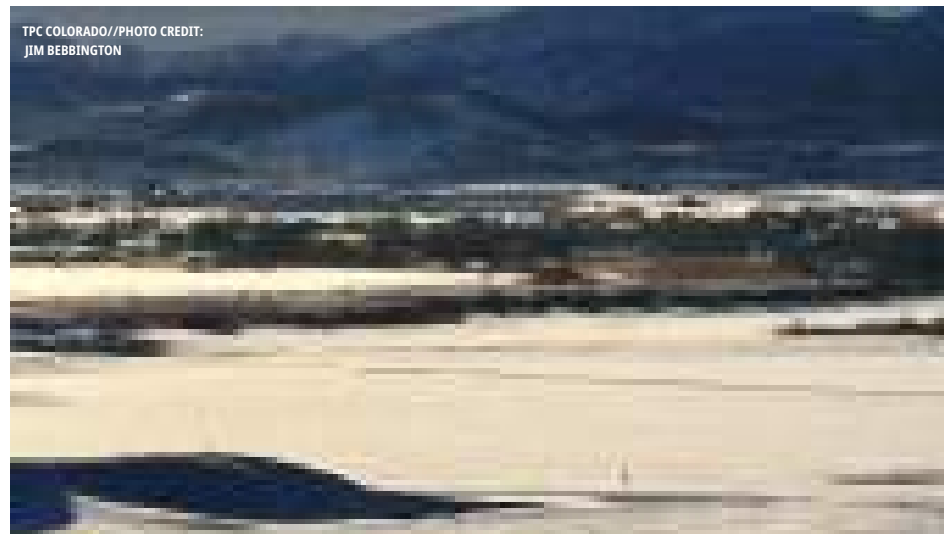
Writer Jay McKinney visited with the college golf powerhouse at Colorado Christian University in Lakewood. His article lays out how head coach Mark Hull sustains his Division II national championship team.

And Ravenna Country Club in Littleton has been on a roll for several years, which is a just reward for owner Kevin Collins. Jon Rizzi, the founding editor of Colorado AvidGolfer, spent time with Collins to help tell the story of how he pulled the club back from Chapter 11 bankruptcy to one that has sold out its entire development portfolio of home lots and just earned a prestigious national award.

And spend a little bit of time reading our back-page article. Denver-native and PGA Tour member Mark Hubbard took to Instagram recently to give his fans insight into how he has been trying to wrestle with his internal negativity on the golf course. Hubbard is always down-to-earth, and his insight into why he’s tried to be more supportive of himself has good insight for all our golf games as well as life in general.

So Spring is near and, thankfully. The Colorado Golf Expo - the unofficial kickoff to the season - is March 7 to 9 at the Colorado Convention Center. Stop by the Colorado AvidGolfer booth and say hello and get ready for what should be a fantastic season ahead.

Jim Bebbington//
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PEOPLE OF THE CGA : SARA MONTGOMERY

MEET THE NEW BOARD PRESIDENT OF THE CGA

By Kayla Kerns



PHOTO COURTESY OF SARA MONTGOMERY/
THE COLORADO GOLF ASSOCIATION

Sara Montgomery, the Colorado Golf Association's new board president, brings a remarkable blend of leadership, expertise, and passion to the role.

A Colorado native, Sara began playing golf in high school on the boys' team in Fort Morgan before excelling as a Division I athlete and team captain at the University of Denver. A three-time Student Athlete of the Year and two-time NCAA Academic All-American, she wrote her honors thesis on the connection between golf and business. Professionally, Sara is a partner at Plante Moran, where she leads the family legacy practice, specializing in succession planning and philanthropic strategy. She coaches her daughter's basketball team and volunteers for causes she values.

KK: What do you do on the CGA Board?

SM: When I joined the board, I started on the audit and finance committee. It was invaluable to understand the organization's finances and the interplay with CommonGround, which is a significant part of the CGA. In recent years, we've updated our IPS, evaluated the purpose, goals, and investment strategy for near-term and long-term needs, and collaborated with the staff to budget for ongoing and one-time expenses. The group includes smart, experienced people from across the state, which I really enjoy. A couple of years in, I was asked to join the executive committee, and I also sit in on the CCGO and CCRC board meetings, though I'm not formally on those boards.

KK: What is a CGA project that you have worked on that you take pride in?

SM: While I haven't worked directly on it, I'm really proud of the caddie program and its impact on the

kids. It's rewarding to take caddies out and get to know them. I also serve on the ACE (Alliance for Choice in Education) advisory board, and many ACE scholars are Solich caddies, which aligns with causes I support. I enjoy helping showcase our work and encouraging participation. A personal accomplishment I'm proud of is completing the 100 Hole Hike. It was great to spend an entire day on the golf course, something I haven't had the chance to do in years. In college, I often played 36 holes, but now I'm lucky if I can get out once a week. It was wonderful to be back out there, with my husband caddying for part of it and my kids joining me for the last 9 holes.

KK: You wrote your college thesis on golf and its interplay with business. How do you connect golf with your job?

SM: I've always argued that golf is the international language of business. When you play a round of golf with someone, you learn a lot about their character. Even if you don't have a personal relationship with someone, you can gauge whether you'd want to do business with them based on their behavior. Did they get upset over a missed putt? Did they throw a club? Were they supportive of others? Did they cheat? Golf is about integrity, honor, and personal accountability, and those qualities are telling within the context of the business world. Sometimes, even when golf is meant for business, you don't talk about business at all. It's just an opportunity to spend time together and get to know people. Golf is a great way to understand someone's character and how they handle challenges. I've never seen anyone perform better after getting upset on the course.

KK: What is your favorite golf memory?

SM: When I was in college, we were playing in New Mexico, and it was a 36-hole day. My dad had been in Texas for work, and he said, 'I'll drive over and watch you play; it's on the way home.' It was 750 miles out of the way, but my parents always went above and beyond to support me. I was going through a swing change and I wasn't playing great. On the 35th hole of the day, I made a hole-in-one, and I was so glad my dad was there to see it. He had made a lot of effort to watch me play some less than stellar golf so the hole-in-one helped! Fast forward to the next day: on the same hole, I took a six. I was grateful that my dad saw the hole-in-one and not the six. I think this experience perfectly captures the nature of golf. It's amazing how much joy and suffering you can experience in

such a condensed time, in the same place, doing the same thing. Just when you think you've figured it out, this game of golf humbles you, just like life!

KK: If you were talking to women, who probably wouldn't otherwise get into the game, what would your advice to them be to get into golf?

SM: I think for a lot of people, especially women, golf can feel very intimidating when you're not familiar with the rules. For instance, someone might unknowingly walk through another player's line, and then they're told, 'You can't do that.' But how would they know unless someone explained it?

For those new to the game, it's less about being excellent right away and more about learning the basics of etiquette and rules so you can navigate the golf course confidently. If you want to get into golf, I think it's important to find someone kind who plays—not necessarily a great golfer, but someone patient and supportive. You also need to be open to feedback while you're learning.

That's why it's so helpful to play with someone who's willing to guide you and teach you in a gracious way. Nobody starts out knowing everything about golf etiquette, so it's important to have a supportive environment. For example, if someone reminds you not to talk while another player is hitting, it's not meant to intimidate—it's part of learning the game. At the end of the day, golf should be about having fun. Don't feel intimidated. It's a process, and everyone starts somewhere.

KK: If you could give your younger self one piece of advice, what would it be?

SM: Looking back, I probably could have achieved everything I did but had a lot more fun along the way. I would tell my younger self to enjoy the process more, to have a little more fun, and to not be so focused on the outcome, the grade, or the score. 🧡



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MOUNTAIN COURSE#2

Troon Adds to its Colorado Portfolio

The golf management company Troon purchased The Club at Cordillera in December, the Vail-area private club that it has managed since 2013.

Troon bought the club from Wind Rose Holdings LLC; the deal closed Dec. 10 and Troon said it intends to continue operations and retain the staff. “The Club at Cordillera is an amazing property with a wonderful membership, many of whom we’ve had the pleasure of serving for a dozen years,” said Troon President and CEO Tim Schantz. “We’re excited about the future of The Club, its long-term sustainability and for the opportunity to continue to provide an outstanding membership experience.”

Wind Rose is a California-based investment group which bought the property in 2012 in a bankruptcy auction for \$14.2 million.

The club has three 18-hole courses, one each designed by Jack Nicklaus, Hale Irwin and Tom Fazio. The club has undergone extensive renovations in recent years, with a new pool, pavilion, tennis and pickleball courts and a fitness center. The club is planning a bunker renovation this summer on the Fazio-designed Valley Course. “This is an exciting announcement for everyone involved with The Club at Cordillera, including

members, employees and community partners,” said Mike Henritze, who has served as The Club at Cordillera’s general manager since the beginning. “From the day Troon set foot on property, the company has brought stability and a pursuit of excellence to The Club. Now as sole owners, Troon’s unwavering commitment to quality and passion for service will seamlessly continue.”

Troon manages operations at 10 Colorado clubs and courses, including Valley Country Club in Denver, RainDance National and Pelican Lakes Resort and Golf near Windsor, The Ridge at Castle Pines, and The Country Club of Colorado at Cheyenne Mountain in Colorado Springs. Company officials said the purchase of another club outright was part of a strategy to add quality clubs to the portfolio when it makes sense.

“It is certainly rare for a club the quality of The Club at Cordillera to become available,” said Troon’s Chief Legal Officer Jay McGrath. “When the opportunity arose, given our relationship with ownership, the quality of the membership, and the uniqueness of the club, we pursued it wholeheartedly.


The Club at Cordillera is a perfect fit to our portfolio and we are honored to be stewards of such an exclusive club in one of the most beautiful parts of

the world. Moving forward, the club will continue to participate in the Troon Prive Privileges program, which allows for reciprocal play opportunities for full members of other Troon Prive-managed clubs across the country, providing those members a chance to experience Cordillera and the Vail Valley.”

With the acquisition of The Club at Cordillera, Troon owns and operates six properties and provides management and hospitality services at more than 900 locations in 45 states and 35 countries.

Properties owned by Troon include Troon North Golf Club in Scottsdale, Arizona; Eagle Mountain Golf Club in Fountain Hills, Arizona; NorthRiver Yacht Club in Tuscaloosa, Alabama; The Clubs at St. James in South Port, North Carolina; St. Johns Golf and Country Club in St. Augustine, Florida; and The Club at Cordillera.

The purchase includes the three courses, three clubhouses and other club amenities. The purchase price was not released.

Cordillera has more than 850 members and the grounds encompass more than 7,000 acres in the Vail Valley. 



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Ascending to New Heights

Organizers of the Ascendant presented by Blue Korn Ferry Tour event held each summer at TPC Colorado have hired a new management company to run the tournament and the new operators say they are working to keep the tournament strong.

The popular tournament, which began six years ago, has been named 'Tournament of the Year' twice by Korn Ferry Tour players. It stands apart from most Korn Ferry events by attracting big crowds on the weekends to watch a tournament played beneath a stunning backdrop of lakes and Rocky Mountain views.

Members of the new tournament management group, Outlyr, have met with local tournament backers and long-time volunteer chairmen and women at TPC Colorado in Berthoud.

Lenny Francouer, a senior vice president with Outlyr, told a gathering that the group intends to "make a good thing better."

He said they will be looking into the food, music and entertainment experience that patrons get now and seeking to make sure it is best-in-class. Outlyr is an international event management company based in Connecticut. It manages PGA, Champions and LPGA tour events including the LPGA's Meijer Classic and the ShopRite Classic. The company operated since 2010 as the Eiger Marketing Group, and rebranded in 2021 to Outlyr as it grew into new ventures beyond golf. The Ascendant's new tournament director,

Cory Brougham, began work in January as snows still blanketed the TPC Colorado course.

"There seems to be a lot of excitement for something fresh and new," he said. "The idea of having more people involved is something that people are telling us is appealing."

"What we're able to provide is outstanding by Korn Ferry standards," he said. "This tournament has roots and a great foundation and we want to explore ways to make the fan experience even better."

The Ascendant presented by Blue has been held each July and past participants included Scottie Scheffler and 2021 winner Will Zalatoris. 2024 winner Cristobal del Solar won with a four-day score of 22-under par.

The tournament has long drawn strong crowds. The TPC Colorado clubhouse and course design bring the 15th, 16th and 18th greens close to the club's back patios and create a popular gathering space for patrons and event tents. When the weather cooperates - summer late afternoon storms are not uncommon - the Sunday crowds can be similar to some PGA Tour stops.

When: July 7th to 13th

Where: TPC Colorado, 2375 TPC Parkway, Berthoud. For more information go to TheAscendant.Com. ©



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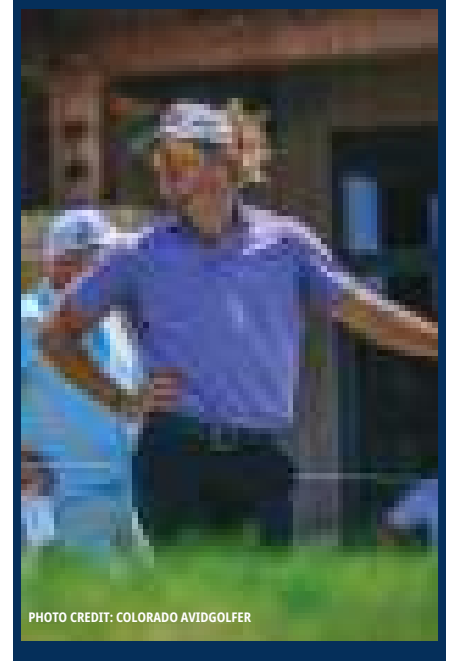


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Heritage Golf Group Adds 4th Colorado Course



The Heritage Golf Group bought its fourth Colorado location this past winter, adding Ptarmigan Country Club in Fort Collins to its portfolio of public and private courses it operates.

Ptarmigan is the first private club in Colorado that Heritage Group has acquired. Larimer County sales records show it was transferred Dec. 4 for \$7.8 million.

The Heritage Golf Group operates three daily-fee Colorado courses already – the Golf Club at Bear Dance in Larkspur, Colorado National Golf Club in Erie and Plum Creek Golf Club in Castle Rock. The club boasts a Jack Nicklaus-designed course has been owned by Ron Flack and was managed by his son Ryan Flack up until the sale to Heritage Group.

“We’re excited to expand our presence in the Greater Denver area with the addition of Ptarmigan Country Club,” said Scott McMartin, Chief Acquisitions Officer at Heritage Golf Group. “The Flack family has built an outstanding legacy over the past 20+ years, and we are honored to carry it forward and build upon their foundation.”

Heritage Golf Group is the Fastest Growing Country Club Lifestyle company in the United States fueled by an abundance of industry leadership experience and strong relationships. In over 4 years, Heritage has grown in size from 6 owned clubs to now 41. Prior to the Ptarmigan Country Club purchase, The Heritage Golf Group acquired two properties in Wilmington, NC. McMartin, one of Heritage Golf top executives, holds a BS in economics and political science from the University of Colorado. ©

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The spring season is around the corner and golf apparel is ready to help you get the most out of the game. Many players are seeking comfortable and fashionable items that help them play well, but also work off the course. Also, sun protection is always key to Colorado golf, and Vail Golf Club head pro Trey Johnson, the 2024 public course merchandiser of the year for the Colorado PGA, sees steady demand for tops that provide full coverage. "Our best sellers for ladies is sun protection type materials," he said. "A lot of that has to do is ladies are wearing that not just for golf but they're wearing it for pickleball or to hike."

SWANNIES – Founded in 2015 as originally a golf sandal company, Swannies is a growing company in the golf market that is continually evolving providing golfers with a variety of layering pieces for tackle even the most temperamental of spring days in Colorado on the golf course. Their outerwear can be worn day in and day out throughout the year. *Swannies.Co*

FOOTJOY – Founded in 1857 as a Golf Shoe Company, Footjoy has stood the test of time to provide golfers with not only a great shoe but also apparel for any conditions. The Thermoseries is Footjoy's most versatile apparel layering system and engineered to adapt as the weather changes so poor weather isn't an excuse for a bad round. *FootJoy.Com*

GREYSON CLOTHIERS – Greyson Clothiers was born out of founder Charlie Schaefer's deep desire to create a brand of clothing in which he would wear. This desire pertains to the company's men's line and its junior line. For any parent with a budding golfer, now there is no excuse to not have matching uniforms for their first Parent Junior Event. *GreysonClothiers.Com*

IBKÜL – Sun protection is something all golfers need to consider prior to their day on the course. IBKÜL features Icefil technology that not only provides a cooling sensation to the fabric but also UPF 50 protection from the sun. With a wide variety of patterns and colors, IBKÜL carries both men's and ladies' lines for sun conscious golfers. *Ibkul.Com*





ADIDAS – Adidas is a must have in every golfer's closet. With a wide variety of color stories, styles, and prints there is truly something for every golfer in the 25' Adidas Line. The Adizero ZG features Lightstrike technology in the sole to provide added stability and comfort for the player. Available in men's and ladies. [Adidas.Com](https://www.adidas.com)



LOHLA SPORT – Lohla Sport was founded in 2020 by Lisa O' Hurley and continues to bring European-designed sporting fashion to the Golf Industry and Beyond in the United States. Most of the Lohla Sport 2025 line has not only the ability to be used on the golf course but worn during their traveling experiences throughout the state of Colorado and Beyond. [LohlaSport.Com](https://www.lohla.com)



STRAIGHT DOWN – Founded in the Late 1980's as a company for water polo and volleyball enthusiasts creating beachwear with neon colors which was popular at the time. As the company matured and moved away from the neon colors, Straight Down became known for its golf apparel specifically in the outerwear space. Today, the company uses its history and design expertise to not only maintain their classic look, but introduce new patterns and colorways to a wide variety of golfers. [StraightDown.Com](https://www.straightdown.com)



BRANDED BILLS – Golfers love hats and most of us have way too many in the closet so what's another one? The Branded Bills performance line features four different styles and is made for sweat featuring a lightweight and easy-to-clean water repellent fabric, perforated panels and a moisture wicking flexfit sweatband. [BrandedBills.Com](https://www.brandedbills.com)

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THE TEX-MEX TASTES WE ALL LOVE
BY JOHN LEHNDORFF

We have grown accustomed to dining disappointment.

We take the plunge and try a new Denver restaurant, and fall in love with the food. A few weeks or months later, we drag friends to the same eatery only to find the menu, the décor, the owners and the staff have changed.

Hip bistros seem to open with a splash and then disappear, ghosting their regulars with only a note on the front door. Some Colorado chefs scramble their menu weekly while chasing Michelin stars.

But from the day it opened in 1973, La Loma Restaurant has been Denver families' steady, familiar food friend, a place resolutely devoted to remaining exactly the same.

If you last dined at La Loma in, say, 1990, you'll experience déjà vu when you stop at the restaurant in 2025. The traditional décor, spot-on service and food and drink menus will look very familiar. According to La Loma's co-owner Mark Brinkerhoff, not changing has been La Loma's real secret

sauce. "We're not reinventing ourselves every few years. We have the same menu items and service so people can have the experience they've come to expect and enjoy," Brinkerhoff says.

Green chile - the sauce that originally launched La Loma; is still made using the original recipe from Savina Mendoza. A large portrait of the matriarch of the eatery's founding family hangs next to the front door at the flagship location across Tremont Street from the Brown Palace Hotel.

Ask for the green chile recipe and Brinkerhoff will just laugh at you. What he will reveal is that La Loma serves only one kind of green chile.

"We use great roasted Hatch chilies and roasted pork. People have asked but we don't make a vegetarian green chile," he says. La Loma's famous sauce is also not gluten-free.

In 2010, Mark Brinkerhoff joined his father, William Brinkerhoff, in running the restaurant, but he can't recall a time when La Loma wasn't part of his life. "My first memory of La Loma is in the early 80s. I

was a kid hanging out there. I remember that tortilla-making machine, and taking a nap after lunch in one of those big booths we had in the original location."

A LITTLE HOUSE ON A DENVER HILL

The Mendoza family opened La Loma in a tiny brick house on 26th Avenue in Denver in 1973. "My granddad used to go eat there with his family, and got to know the Mendoza family," Brinkerhoff says. "Grandad" was Sonny Brinkerhoff, a businessman and Colorado golf icon who was elected to the Colorado Golf Hall of Fame in 2006 partly for his support of what is today the Evans Scholars house at the University of Colorado.

"He and my Dad partnered with the family and bought three old homes and combined them into a single restaurant with a downtown view."

La Loma became known for its authentic Tex-Mex fare including tortillas made fresh on the premises, a rarity on Denver-area menus in that era. "We also had big fishbowl Margaritas the size of your head," Brinkerhoff says. The Brinkerhoffs bought



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the business including the recipes and, in 2016, moved to a downtown location long occupied by a power lunch destination, The Trinity Grille. The restaurant features lots of exposed wood and brick with stained glass windows, a big patio, and a welcoming bar open for lunch, dinner and weekend brunch.

THE HOME OF FINE MEXICAN DINING

La Loma has always occupied a distinctive dining niche offering great service at tables set with cloth napkins. It was more upscale than your favorite neighborhood taqueria and less fancy than upscale Mexican restaurants like Larimer Square's Tamayo.

"We're not trying to change any of the food, or become sophisticated with it, but we believe in gracious hospitality and really consistent Tex-Mex dishes. I like our old tagline: 'Fine Mexican Dining,'" Brinkerhoff says.

Meals always commence with La Loma's complimentary basket of thin crisp tortilla chips and mild tomato salsa.

"Most of the menu is unchanged since the original except for a couple of dishes like the Mexico City soft tacos," Brinkerhoff says. Classic platters like sizzling fajitas come with the familiar rice, refried or black beans, and warm corn or flour tortillas.

The popular Anniversary Plate still includes a stuffed sopapilla, chile relleno and a chicken flauta with guacamole and sour cream. It can be ordered "Christmas-style" crisscrossed with both

green chile and red chile sauces. Other selections include chicken tortilla soup, brisket enchiladas and tequila shrimp with warm churros for dessert. One best-selling salad tops greens, grapefruit, avocado, jicama and carrots with mesquite-grilled jumbo shrimp and a citrus vinaigrette.

La Loma's beverage menu also remains largely unchanged except for a few tweaks like the barrel-aged Margarita. "We squeeze our own juice now, instead of using sweet and sour for everything," he says.

Despite its location in Colorado, the epicenter of American craft brewing, La Loma's bar only features a couple of craft beers, according to Brinkerhoff.

"We stick with those Mexican beer classics everybody loves," he says.

LA LOMA'S SECRET TO DENVER DINING LONGEVITY

In a city where the new restaurant mortality rate hovers around two years, La Loma Restaurant is a 48-year-old recession-and pandemic-proof anomaly. According to Mark Brinkerhoff, La Loma has thrived because of continuity with the same ownership, and multi-generational families of regulars and staff.

"We've had the same people work with us for years, including mothers and their daughters. Carmelo, who's in our kitchen in Castle Rock, he's been with us since 1981," he says. Another critical attribute is that La Loma has endeared itself



PHOTO CREDIT: LA LOMA

to families and other large groups of diners. “You can come in with one person or ask for a table for eight people. We’ve had a party of 20 walk in off the street and ask for a table. It’s always OK if we have room,” he says.

(That said, he does recommend reservations.) Mark Brinkerhoff readily admits he did his best to avoid going into the family business, not unlike the scion of many restaurant-owning families.

“I definitely did, but after going to school in California and pursuing some other endeavors, I was happy to come back and get involved.”

Mark Brinkerhoff credits his father, William, for La Loma’s core strengths.

“My dad got involved early on with his dad in the early 1980s. He carried the torch for that restaurant for many decades, driving the consistency and the experience and the attention to detail,” he

says. “It has really been enjoyable to work with him in this family business.”

A second La Loma Restaurant location opened in Castle Rock in 2020.

“It is a very different environment next to the outlet stores. We get more suburban, stay-at-home parents and shoppers. But, being on the I-25 corridor, it’s become a meeting place for people coming from Colorado Springs and Denver,” Brinkerhoff says.

While the menu and the service may be identical to the flagship Denver location, the ambiance is a callback to La Loma’s Denver hilltop iteration. “The Castle Rock restaurant has an amazing view. You can see from Mount Evans to Pikes Peak,” he says.

The Brinkerhoff company also operates Sierra restaurant next to Cabela’s in Lone Tree. The

company is getting ready to open a new concept, Brinkerhoff (including Bar-Hummingbird) next to La Loma in Castle Rock.

Additional La Loma locations are being considered for the future, according to Brinkerhoff, but they will all have exactly the same menu.

“My favorite dish when I was a kid was a bean burrito with green chile. Now, my kid loves the same little burritos, too. He’s the fourth generation of Brinkerhoffs. We affectionately refer to him as The Chairman.” ©

La Loma Mexican Restaurant, 1801 Broadway, Denver; 6361 Promenade Pkwy, Castle Rock
lalomamexican.com

ABOUT THE WRITER

John Lehndorff is the former Dining Critic of the Rocky Mountain News. He hosts Radio Nibbles on KGNU.



PHOTO CREDIT: JIM BEBBINGTON



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PHOTO CREDIT: LA LOMA

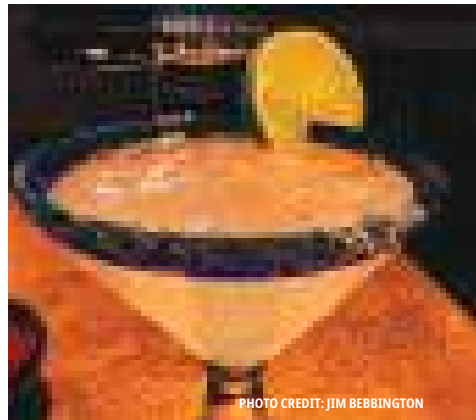


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BY ISAAC BOUCHARD



GENESIS GV80 PRESTIGE

Genesis has quickly made a place for itself as the 21st Century's Lexus, crafting beautiful luxury vehicles at fair prices. The updated GV80 is perhaps the most complete example of the company's ethos, with a level of design cohesion and material quality above what competitors offer for the same MSRP.

Outside, the GV80's already unique aesthetic, complete with hints of Bentley and Rolls, is tweaked to house a better-integrated grill and double-stack headlights that make it stand out even more. Inside, it's a stunner; all materials are of high quality. The biggest change for the 2025 model is a new, 27-inch long screen that resides atop the padded dashtop. Its graphics are soothingly rendered, and it helps enhance the already-high wow factor.

That said, the placement of the speedometer to the far left means it's easily blocked with the sensuously-formed steering wheel rim. Seating comfort is first-rate for the first two rows (the third row is kids-only) and the cargo area well-shaped and large enough for cross-country adventurers, something the Genesis excels at.

There are few vehicles, at any price, that are more serene cruising the superslab than the GV80. Its ultra-low noise levels and an incredibly serene ride quality (despite the gorgeous 22-inch wheels that come on top models) are incredible. The 375-hp twin-turbo V6 provides all the thrust one could require, though fuel economy lags well behind the even faster, similarly-priced BMW X5. The Genesis feels better constructed and is more luxurious though. The GV80 also has one of the better suites of semiautonomous driver aids, making long runs even more relaxing.

It is hard to imagine a more complete machine for chasing one's favorite team or touring the great courses that have always been bucket list items.

GENESIS GV80 PRESTIGE

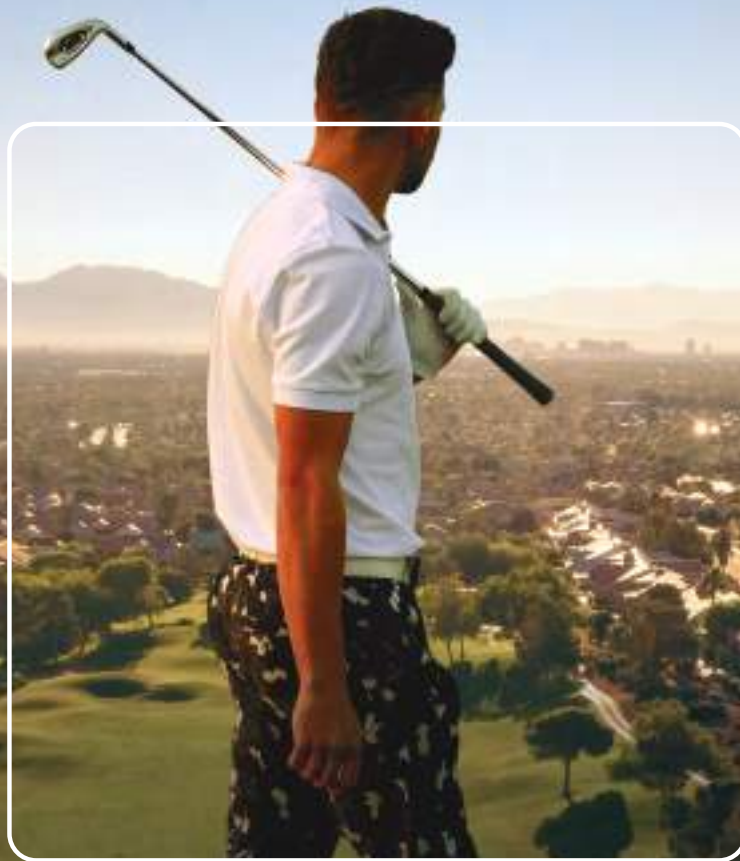
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COLORADO CHRISTIAN UNIVERSITY
LOOKS TO REPEAT AS CHAMPS
BY JAY MCKINNEY

For the students on Colorado Christian University's golf team, the possibility that they might not win last year's 2024 NCAA Division II Men's Golf National Championship never crossed their minds.

Even when they entered the final stage of the tournament as a modest No. 6 seed, they felt they were talented enough to compete with any of the other teams.

Seniors Adam Duncan and Xavier Bighaus have been on the team since they were freshmen and were a major part of last year's success. After coming up short in their sophomore year, it was especially gratifying to bounce back and win a championship.

"We were really disappointed the year before and you kind of need disappointment and you need experience," Duncan says. "And then we came back that next year and had a great spring and the national championship was just unreal. It was awesome."

Collegiate golf is a year-round sport split between the fall and the spring. Having the momentum in spring created a level of confidence throughout the team that proved to be a deciding factor in the tournament. "I think it's something that almost doesn't feel real in a sense," Bighaus says. "And it's one thing about our team that I think really kind of separated us. I feel like a lot of us kind of fell in love with the process at a point in that spring semester and winning or losing, I won't say didn't matter, but it wasn't the first thing on our mind. Rather it was like what's right in front of us was what was important to us."

For the national championship – held last May at the Orange County National Golf Club in Winter Garden, Florida - the top 20 teams from around the country played stroke play for 54 holes. When the three rounds of stroke play concludes, an individual champion was crowned, and the top 10 finishers received All-American honors. Then the top eight teams from stroke play reconvened to pick which golfers would face each other in the medal match play bracket that begins the following day.

Unlike traditional match play where golfers can close opponents out before the round is over, in medal match play, golfers are matched up against each other and play 18 holes. At the end of the round, it's the total stroke score that determines the winner.

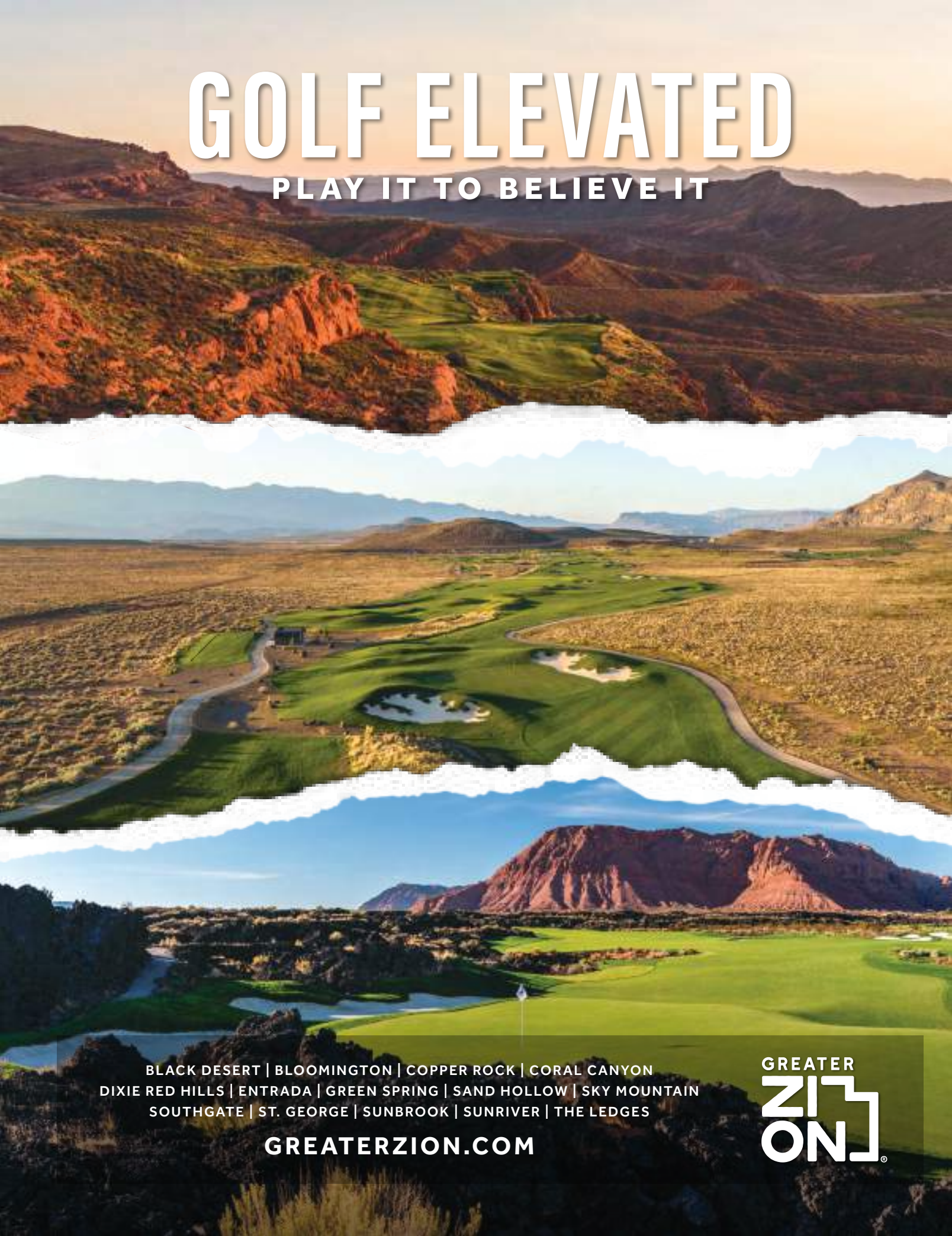
For the finals, CCU's head coach Mark Hull and the head coach of the University of North Georgia picked which of their players they want to face off against one another in a snake draft format. CCU was the lower seed in both medal-play rounds, but head coach Mark Hull says he was happy with all the matchups with a couple of exceptions. But regardless of the individual matchups, Hull had confidence in his team and the development of Duncan and Bighaus.

"Adam and Xavier, they've been the foundation of the team for the last several years and I knew they would be when I recruited them," Hull says. "And you never know for sure how well people will develop. I knew that they would both be top players in the country by the time that they were seniors. And I think that they've both probably done better than I thought they would." While Hull and his team

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were confident about their shot at the title last year, the team is even better this year.

In the Division II national ranking system, CCU currently has three players ranked in the top 10 (first, second and fifth) as well as the 21st and 69th best players in the country. With roughly 1,500 golfers in the system who are ranked, they can change frequently, but Hull believes his dream team of players is the best there will ever be at the Division II level.

They started the season off 5-0 in the tournaments they competed in during the fall semester and are eager for the season to start again this spring. During the dreary days of winter, members of the golf team will frequently be putting in the work at their practice facility located at Hull's house, near the university campus in Lakewood. Hull's setup includes a massive putting surface with built-in breaks of 2.5 to 4 percent and another room with a Foresight GCQuad launch monitor used for dialing in distances.

Since the team competes across the country, they can adjust the elevations to get accurate readings for where they will be playing. Hull gives his players freedom when it comes to practice. The practice facility at his home has its own entrance and is available for the golfers to use from 8 a.m. to 10 p.m. every day.

"There are a lot of different ways to coach and my philosophy has always been, I'm not a micro-manager and I always thought it was dumb when coaches said the whole team is doing this," Hull says. "Every player is their own person, so I try to recruit guys who I think are going to be motivated to be great, and then I try to put all the pieces in place for them to be successful." As they look ahead to their final semester of college golf, one thing that keeps Duncan and Bighaus motivated is their desire to play golf professionally after graduation. Instead of viewing this senior year as a last-dance type of season,

Duncan believes this is just another stepping stone to get to where he wants to be as a golfer. Nonetheless, he is grateful for the experience and not taking it for granted.

"We have one chance to experience this," Duncan says. "We're never again going to be on a college golf team and we're never again going to be the best college golf team. You just don't get that opportunity except for once in a lifetime. We shouldn't squander it and we should keep playing how we're playing." ©

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Platinum Paradiso



PHOTO PROVIDED BY RAVENNA COUNTRY CLUB

A prestigious recognition confers elite status on Ravenna Country Club

By Jon Rizzi

“Names are the consequences of things,” wrote Dante Alighieri, the 14th-century Italian poet for whom the city of Ravenna provided creative inspiration.

It therefore follows that last year, when The Club at Ravenna—whose clubhouse perches on Dante Drive, amid the striking outcroppings east of Waterton Canyon—changed its name to Ravenna Country Club, it came as a consequence of the 634-acre golf-course development having sold out of its 235-luxury-lot inventory.

“We really felt like we needed to separate ourselves from the real estate and be the club,” Kevin Collins, Ravenna’s owner, president and CEO, explains. “Moving forward, our focus is on improving as a club and doing things better for our membership.”

Collins’ focus amplifies the commitment he’s made since taking over management of the Ravenna in 2014. A club member, homeowner and an investor in the development since 2006, he had

watched the property endure a Chapter 11 bankruptcy, amass only 50 members in eight years and provide minimal amenities in a Sprung tent that doubled as a clubhouse.

“When he took over, he said, ‘I can’t tell you what I’m going to do, but I won’t let Ravenna fail,’” remembers Jack Quinlivan, one of the club’s first members and club champions. “And he’s stuck by what he said.”

In his 10 years at the helm, Collins has transformed Ravenna from a struggling entity into a robust one closing in on its cap of 395 members—all of whom now have access to a spectacular and more approachable golf course with a high-tech driving range, a resort-like 11,000-square-foot fitness and wellness facility (La Bella Vita) and an exquisitely appointed, 25,000-square-foot clubhouse (Villa Ravenna) brimming with original art and delivering exceptional cuisine, a vigorous wine experience and an outdoor patio with a view of the serene waterfall complex by the 18th green. All part of a masterplan, those improvements thrilled

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SPOTLIGHT: RAVENNA



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existing members and helped attract new ones. But how best to serve them all in the rapidly evolving private-club industry? Five months after opening the clubhouse in August 2022, Collins looked to the Club Leaders Forum—an international authority on private-club leadership, management and operations, as well as the originator of the prestigious Platinum Clubs of America Awards—to benchmark the club’s efforts against those recognized as the finest in the industry.

“We wanted to ensure we were providing exceptional service, experiences, and facilities for our members,” Collins shares. “These guys know the best of the best, and the knowledge they imparted to us was invaluable. They assess reputation, governance, amenities, staff caliber, member engagement, adapting to change and overall experience. We spent a lot of time on strategic planning, and all the managers and staff got involved.”

Those included his daughter Michelle Totte (Ravenna’s director of events and hospitality) and sons Chris (director of technology and communications) and Geoff (director of development). In addition, Kevin and Chris individually attended

multiple conferences in the U.S. and U.K. concerning best private-club management practices, brand exposure and key club-industry trends.

Collins also drew inspiration from the philosophy of “unreasonable hospitality,” which comes from a bestseller of the same name by restaurateur Will Guidara. “It’s about going beyond expectations to make the member feel special by making the experience great and memorable,” Collins explains. “We really try to focus on what’s how we make them feel. Our end-of-the-day reports even have an ‘unreasonable hospitality’ section.”

CLUBBING UP

Last August, Collins and other owners and/or GMs at 4,026 other private country, golf, city, yacht and athletic clubs across the country received ballots for the biannual Platinum Clubs of America election. The confidential voting is highly competitive and managed and certified by a third-party official to ensure transparency.

Sure enough, Ravenna Country Club made the list in the most competitive category: Top 150 Country Clubs in America. It ranked 149th.

“It’s amazing. I mean, I feel like we’re a 10-year-old club and some of these clubs have been around for a hundred years,” Collins says. “Ravenna’s no longer just another really nice club. Now it’s in the category of elite clubs in the state. We are fortunate to be there.”

A framed plaque bearing the Platinum Club logo and five-star mark gleams beneath a picture light inside the clubhouse entrance. It arguably carries more value to members than the curated and commissioned artwork adorning the walls. Members can now request guest privileges at more than 1,700 participating Platinum Clubs around the world. That not only means rarefied tee times, but access to city clubs for business dinners and athletic clubs for a workout.

“And it will be good to see how those clubs compare,” says Steve O’Brien, an IT consultant who joined Ravenna two years ago and can’t say enough good things about how ideal the club’s golf course and wine-tasting room are for entertaining clients and how welcoming the Ravenna membership and staff have been to him and his family. “Those are the intangible benefits to our member-



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SPOTLIGHT: RAVENNA

ship that exposure to the best clubs in the world provides,” Collins says. “I also think that being a Platinum Club helps us focus on providing a good atmosphere and training for our staff, retaining them with good wages and compensation to help them in their goals. And it’s a good plus for an employee to have on their résumé that they were part of a Platinum Club of America.”

WHAT’S NEXT?

Platinum status, Collins knows, is tenuous. More than 50 clubs finished within a whisker of making the list. “Just because we got this Platinum Club recognition doesn’t mean we’re done,” he says. “If anything, it’s almost like we’ve just started.”

Projects already on the books include reconfiguring approximately 400 square feet of the bar area adjacent to the dining room to accommodate seating for at least 20 more people. “We’re not taking anything away from the dining room,” Geoff Collins says, adding that a “six-foot-tall decorative divider on heavy casters will help define the spaces.”

Construction will also soon begin on a two-story 13,500-square-foot maintenance facility on the flatter land west of the gatehouse, on which Collins also recently got county approval for eight new lots. The facility will afford Golf Course Superintendent Steve Datwyler and his staff ample space

for storing, maintaining and repairing mechanical equipment, as well as room to store sand, mulch, seed, fertilizer and other products. “We’re also working towards Audubon Certification, and environmental compliance begins with the features of the facility,” Datwyler says. “We’ll make sure the building and surrounds meet certain criteria, and we anticipate moving in by September or October.”

That’s just when work will start on another project: relocating the par-4 eighth hole and par-3 ninth. Following designs by course architect Kevin Atkinson, who has authored previously well-received changes to the course, both holes will be moved east to improve their challenge and visual appeal.

The uphill eighth fairway will now run alongside and over a deep ravine, forcing a carry to a large, receptive green adjacent to a stunning rockface on the eastern hogback. From the tips, the hole stretches to 465 yards, 16 more than it currently measures; an additional 32 yards will bring the Gold-tee yardage to 450 and Forest-tee’s to 415; and those playing the forward Sage tees will have 47 more yards to cover, 285 instead of 238.

The ninth, which had been problematic because of a blind tee shot from the back tees, will still play over the deep ravine, with the green placed next to its most dramatic section. Golfers will not only see

the new putting surface from an elevated teeing area, but also view their shot suspended against the backdrop of the iconic bridge and natural red rock as it parachutes onto the green. With yardages between 114 and 229, the new hole is slightly shorter than before, especially from the forward tees, where the difference is 70 yards.

No board or committee made these—or any other—decisions regarding the club, which suits most members just fine. A former member of two owner-owned clubs—Denver’s Bear Creek and Scottsdale’s Whisper Rock—Quinlivan lauds Collins’ vision and integrity. “Kevin wants people to feel as though they’re being taken care of,” he says. “He is always upfront about what’s going on. He communicates. If the membership needs to be told or involved, he puts it out there. Of course, some want to feel like owners, and if they have concerns, his door is always open.”

O’Brien, who joined the club during the pandemic, chose Ravenna over comparably priced member-owned clubs closer to his Denver home. “Member-run clubs can be inconsistent, depending on who the president and committee chairs are, and sometimes people are unreasonable,” he says. “I looked at Kevin’s ownership as a massive positive. He really wants to make something special.”

Members who’d fretted about playing two years of 16-hole golf upon hearing of the renovation needn’t have worried. Collins and Datwyler have carefully planned the construction timeline to avoid any significant interruptions to the course layout and playability. The work will begin this fall and finish May 1. But will building two new holes result in a dues assessment? Doubtful. Relocating the holes creates room for four premium one-acre lots, the sales of which should offset the building cost.

Even though the development will again have real estate to sell, Ravenna Country Club won’t be reverting to its previous name. Nor will it stop bur-nishing its Platinum Club status as long as Kevin Collins—and his children, whom he has long been grooming to succeed him—owns it. He and the club have come too far to turn back. “It wasn’t a foregone conclusion we were going to make it,” Collins reflects on the last 10 years.

“But we kept grinding through. When you’re walking through hell, you just keep walking, right?”

Right. And, as Dante might have suggested, you may ultimately arrive in a Paradiso called Ravenna. ©



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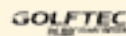
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Pins and Aces, the Arvada-based clothing startup, this winter purchased the Denver-based boutique golf club manufacturer Edel Golf, the two companies announced in January.

Both brands showcased the news at the recent PGA Show in Orlando in January and Nick Mertz, the founder of Pins and Aces, announced the acquisition on social media alongside Edel Golf's chairman Doug Coors.

"By bringing Edel Golf into the family we're expanding our range of premium equipment enhancing your game like never before," Mertz said. "Expect new innovations, elevated performance and continued focus on quality craftsmanship."

Edel Golf was founded more than 25 years ago by David Edel and gained a reputation as a manufacturer of bespoke, fitted putters from its location in Texas. By the 2020s the company had launched weight-adjustable wedges and irons when Doug Coors, a member of the Golden-based beer brewing family, bought the company. He moved its manufacturing headquarters to north Denver, off of Colorado Boulevard, in 2022.

At the time the company stated it was selling approximately 3,000 of its \$450 putters a year and was looking to grow. It had also established strong sales in golf-mad South Korea.

Now under Pins and Aces, which is based in Arvada, Coors is remaining as chairman of Edel and Rocky Hansler, who was brought on in 2021 as chief operating officer, is staying in charge of growing the brand, Mertz said. "Edel Golf, founded in 1996, is renowned for its custom wedges, putters, and fitting systems," the companies said in their announcement.

"The company's cutting-edge approach to club fitting, which combines advanced technology with personalized service, has made Edel Golf a trusted name among passionate golfers. We look forward to leveraging this acquisition to enhance its position as a leading brand in the golf industry, offering a comprehensive range of products that meet the needs of golfers at all levels."

The move is a significant step in a new direction for Mertz and his Pins and Aces team. Pins began ▶

GAME CHANGERS



PHOTO CREDIT: CHRISTIAN MARCY-VEGA

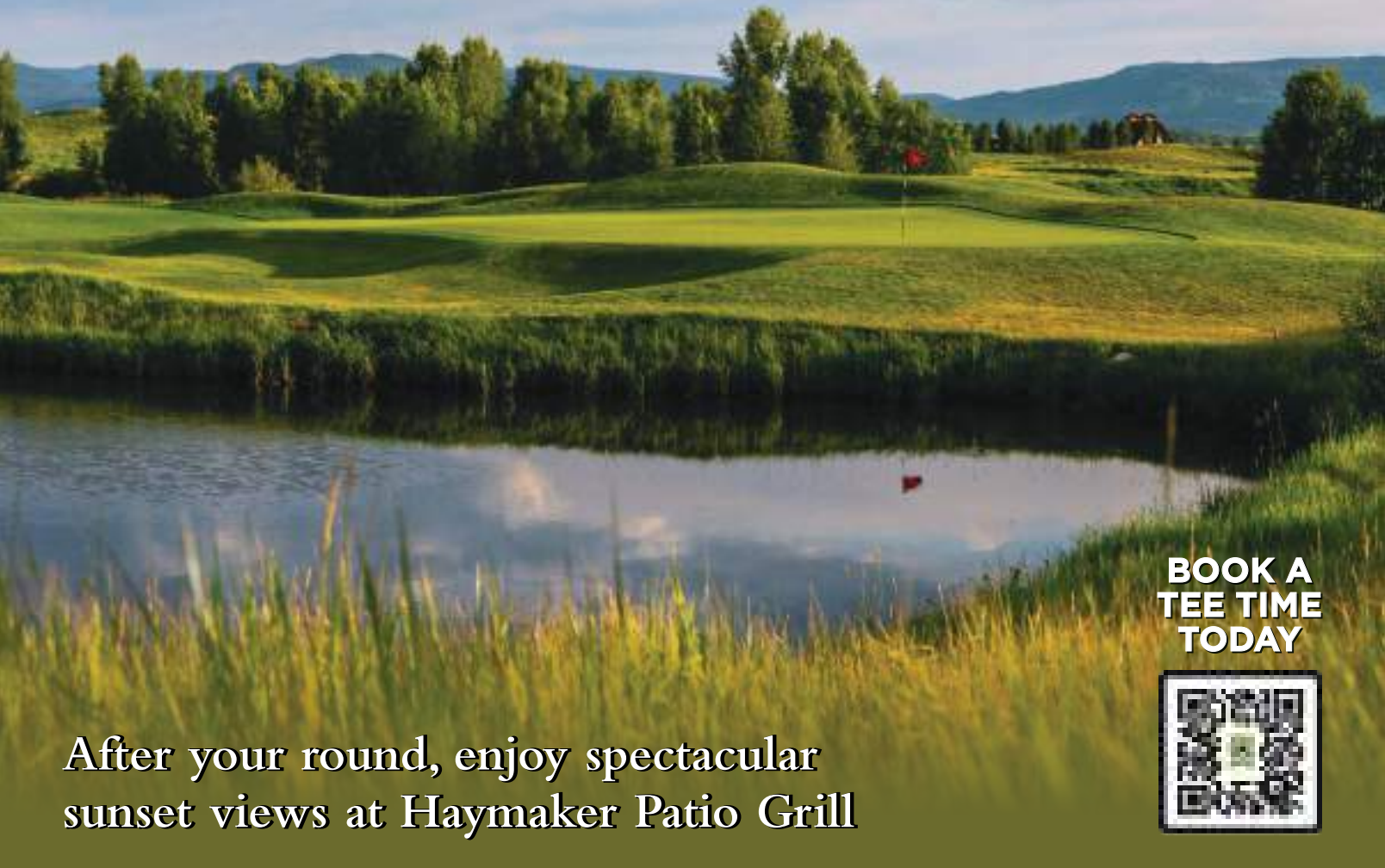
PINS AND ACES SEES GROWTH FOR EDEL GOLF AFTER ACQUISITION ANNOUNCEMENT
BY JIM BEBBINGTON



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GAME CHANGERS: PINS X EDEL

selling edgy golf wear with loud designs and beer-sleeves and other items in 2018 and opened its Arvada warehouse and storefront in 2022.

The golf equipment industry has been undergoing the same growth in the past decade as most players have experienced in getting a tee time.

One market analyst, Grand View Research, estimates that the golf club market is going to grow on average 3 percent through 2030.

The game has been fueled by many factors – the growth of off-course golf simulators that drew an estimated 9 million players to them last year. In addition the millennial generation – the nation’s largest – discovered the game as they hit their late 20s and early 30s just as the last of the baby boomers hit retirement age and flooded tee boxes across the country.

“We look forward to leveraging this acquisition to enhance our position as a leading brand in the golf industry offering a comprehensive range of products that meets the needs of golfers of all skill levels,” Mertz said. ©



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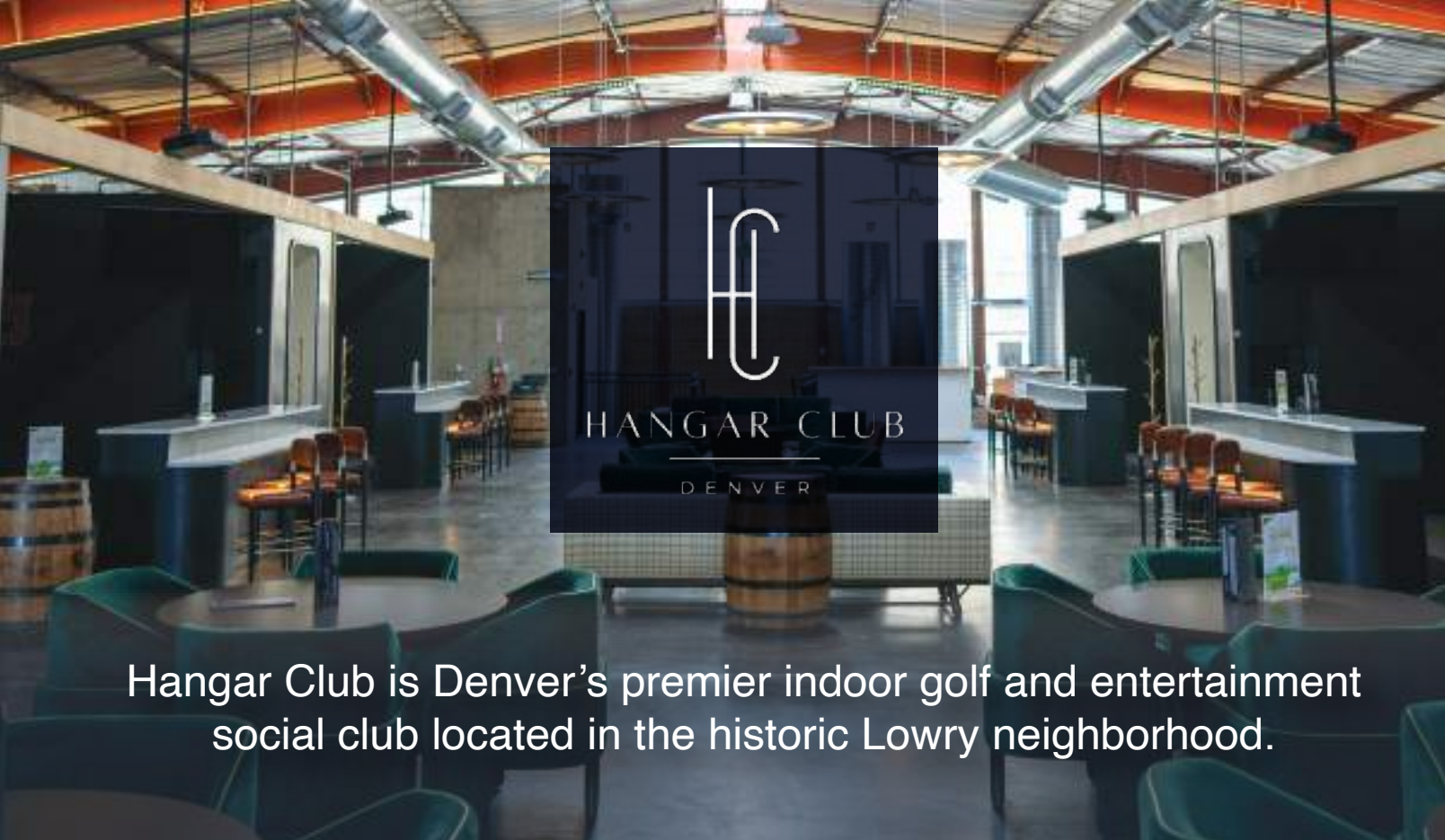
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THE BEST OF COLORADO GOLF PUBLIC & RESORT COURSES

The CAGGY Awards celebrate the best of the Colorado golfing scene – courses that are truly one and a half mile high. These awards also serve as helpful guides in the selection, preservation, and expansion of areas devoted to the staff at these courses, and the general public, and whether they were

Champions 1989 to about this best course, staff and customers, and so that we can thank you for your support and more support from everyone involved at the award!

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GOLF COURSES

1

BEST DENVER REGION COURSE

THE GOLF CLUB AT BEAR DANCE

6630 Bear Dance Dr, Larkspur, CO 80118

Home to The Colorado Section of the Professional Golfers' Association of America, The Golf Club at Bear Dance offers 18 holes of pure championship golf meandering through 753 acres of mountainous terrain with mature Ponderosa Pines, oak-lined ridges, draws and native grass valleys. With an average elevation of 6,800 feet, The Golf Club at Bear Dance offers stunning views of the Front Range and surrounding landscape of The Rocky Mountains. Consistently rated as Colorado's best and most challenging public golf course, Bear Dance offers generous tree-lined fairways framed by flashing white sand bunkers, striking water features, and intricate greens.



BEST DENVER REGION COURSES

#2 Red Hawk Ridge Golf Course

#3 Fossil Trace Golf Club

STAFF PICKS

Alphabetical

- CommonGround Golf Course
- Green Valley Ranch Golf Club
- The Ridge at Castle Pines



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BEST FRONT RANGE/ NORTHEAST COURSE

#1 TPC COLORADO

- #2 Mariana Butte Golf Course
- #3 RainDance National Golf Course

STAFF PICKS (ALPHABETICAL)

- The Golf Club at Fox Acres
- Highland Meadows Golf Course
- Pelican Lakes Golf and Country Club

BEST MOUNTAIN COURSE

#1 POLE CREEK GOLF CLUB

- #2 Breckenridge Golf Club
- #3 Red Sky Ranch (Fazio Course)

STAFF PICKS (ALPHABETICAL)

- Eagle Ranch Golf Course
- Haymaker Golf Course
- Keystone Ranch Golf Course
- Red Sky Ranch (Norman Course)

BEST WESTERN SLOPE COURSE

#1 REDLANDS MESA GOLF CLUB

- #2 Devil's Thumb Golf Club
- #3 Telluride Ski & Golf Club

STAFF PICKS (ALPHABETICAL)

- Battlement Mesa Golf Club
- Bridges Golf Course
- Dalton Ranch Golf Club
- Lakota Links Golf Course

BEST SOUTHERN COURSE

#1 WALKING STICK GOLF COURSE

- #2 Country Club of Colorado
at Cheyenne Mountain Resort
- #3 Kissing Camels at Garden of the Gods

STAFF PICKS (ALPHABETICAL)

- King's Deer Golf Club
- Patty Jewett Golf Course
- Rio Grande Golf Course

BEST PRACTICE FACILITY

#1 THE GOLF CLUB AT BEAR DANCE

- #2 Green Valley Ranch
- #3 Murphy Creek Golf Course

STAFF PICKS (ALPHABETICAL)

- Family Sports Center
- RainDance National Golf Course
- The Ridge at Castle Pines

BEST CONDITIONS PUBLIC

#1 RED HAWK RIDGE GOLF COURSE

- #2 The Golf Club at Bear Dance
- #3 Heritage Eagle Bend Golf Club

STAFF PICKS (ALPHABETICAL)

- CommonGround Golf Course
- Raccoon Creek Golf Course
- Riverdale Golf Courses

BEST CONDITIONS RESORT

#1 BEAVER CREEK GOLF CLUB

- #2 Keystone Ranch Golf Course
- #3 Red Sky Ranch (Fazio Course)

STAFF PICKS (ALPHABETICAL)

- The Club at Inverness
- Lone Tree Golf Club
- Omni Interlocken Resort GC

BEST TO WALK

#1 COMMONGROUND

- #2 Flatirons Golf Course
- #3 Aurora Hills Golf Course

STAFF PICKS (ALPHABETICAL)

- Applewood Golf Course
- City Park Golf Course
- Indian Peaks Golf Course

BEST GOLF LOUNGE

#1 VAIL COUNTRY CLUB

- #2 The Hangar Club
- #3 Evergreen Golf Club

STAFF PICKS (ALPHABETICAL)

- Optimum Golf
- South Broadway Country Club
- The Swing Bays
- The Clubhouse Work & Golf

BEST ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP

- #1 HERITAGE EAGLE BEND GOLF CLUB
- #2 The Golf Club at Bear Dance
- #3 Pole Creek Golf Club

STAFF PICKS (ALPHABETICAL)

- Green Valley Ranch
- Pelican Lakes Golf & CC
- Raccoon Creek Golf Course

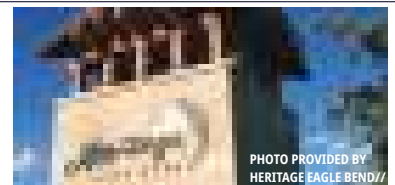


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BEST INSTRUCTOR (MEN)

#1 DENNIS MURRAY

- #2 Mike Knights, Indian Tree GC
- #3 Brad Alston, Optimum Golf

STAFF PICKS (ALPHABETICAL)

- Sherry Andonian, Valley CC
- Nick Clearwater, GOLFTEC
- Ed Oldham, The Ranch CC
- Jason Witczak, Pradera

BEST INSTRUCTOR (YOUTH)

#1 MIKE KNIGHTS

- #2 Dennis Murray, Valley CC and DAC
- #3 Brad Alston, Optimum Golf

STAFF PICKS (ALPHABETICAL)

- Stephanie Ferguson, ExperienceGolf
- Kelli McKandless, Kelli McKandless Golf
- Keith Rogers, Green Valley Ranch
- Trent Wearner, Trent Wearner Golf

1

BEST INSTRUCTOR for YOUTH

MIKE KNIGHTS



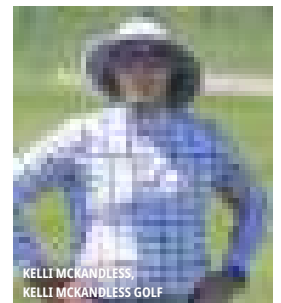
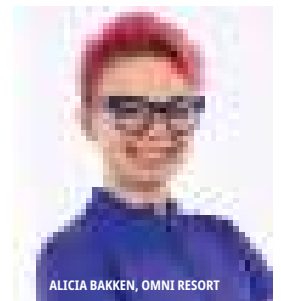
BEST INSTRUCTOR (WOMEN)

#1 DENNIS MURRAY

- #2 Alicia Bakken, Omni Resort
- #3 Mike Knights, Indian Tree GC

STAFF PICKS (ALPHABETICAL)

- Elena King, CommonGround
- Dustin Miller, Dustin Miller Golf
- Chris Schultz, Aurora Hills & Indian Tree
- Ashley Tait -Wengert, Turtle Creek



1

BEST INSTRUCTOR for MEN & WOMEN

DENNIS MURRAY

Dennis Murray is a Certified PGA Professional in Teaching and Coaching at both Valley Country Club and Denver Athletic Club. With background experience in Neuro-Motor Skill Learning, Sports Psychology and Kinesiology, Murray developed an Accelerated Learning System at Valley CC, home of the Uncomplicated Golf Academy, providing natural learning for beginners and golfers of all skill levels to make learning and improving much easier. His career highlights include competing on the PGA TOUR, Ben Hogan TOUR, NIKE TOUR and South American PGA TOUR.





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BEST DENVER REGION CLUB

RAVENNA COUNTRY CLUB

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Nestled in the picturesque foothills of Littleton, Ravenna Country Club offers a premier golfing experience along with world-class amenities. The 18-hole course features colorful green fairways contrasted by walls of ancient red sandstone, gamble oak and stands of pine. Multiple sets of tees provide a variety of experiences and allow you to make the game as challenging or casual as you want it to be. As a family-owned club, Ravenna is dedicated to exceeding the expectations of Members and Guests with unmatched hospitality and fostering an environment where Members can forge lifelong friendships and enjoy an unparalleled lifestyle.



HOLE 9// PHOTO BY BRADEN HANSEN, PREMIER AERIALS

BEST DENVER REGION CLUBS

- #2 Castle Pines Golf Club
- #3 Cherry Hills Country Club

STAFF PICKS

Alphabetical

- The Country Club at Castle Pines
- Cherry Creek Country Club
- Colorado Golf Club
- Lakewood Country Club



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ASPEN GLEN CLUB
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BEST FRONT RANGE/ NORTHEAST CLUB

#1 BALLYNEAL GOLF CLUB

- #2 Ptarmigan Country Club
- #3 Fort Collins Country Club

STAFF PICKS (ALPHABETICAL)

- The Fox Hill Club
- Greeley Country Club
- Harmony Country Club

BEST CLUBHOUSE (PRIVATE)

#1 RAVENNA COUNTRY CLUB

- #2 Castle Pines Golf Club
- #3 Cherry Hills Country Club

STAFF PICKS (ALPHABETICAL)

- The Broadmoor Golf Club
- The Country Club at Castle Pines
- The Sanctuary



THE BROADMOOR GOLF CLUB
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BEST MOUNTAIN CLUB

#1 RED SKY RANCH

- #2 The Club at Cordillera
- #3 Country Club of the Rockies

STAFF PICKS (ALPHABETICAL)

- Aspen Glen Club
- Eagle Springs Golf Club
- Frost Creek Country Club

BEST CADDIES

#1 CHERRY HILLS COUNTRY CLUB

- #2 Castle Pines Golf Club
- #3 The Broadmoor Golf Club

STAFF PICKS (ALPHABETICAL)

- Ballyneal Golf Club
- Colorado Golf Club
- Frost Creek Country Club



COLORADO GOLF CLUB
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BEST SOUTHERN CLUB

#1 THE BROADMOOR GOLF CLUB

- #2 The Club at Flying Horse
- #3 Kissing Camels at Garden of the Gods

STAFF PICKS (ALPHABETICAL)

- Colorado Springs Country Club
- Eisenhower Golf Club
- The Club at Flying Horse (North)

BEST WESTERN SLOPE COURSE

#1 TELLURIDE SKI & GOLF CLUB

- #2 The Glacier Club
- #3 Bookcliff Country Club

STAFF PICKS (ALPHABETICAL)

- Cornerstone Club



CASTLE PINES GOLF CLUB
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The Granby Ranch 18 hole golf course is perfect for families and avid golfers alike.

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The People's Par 3

BY JIM BEBBINGTON

For six months every year the corner of Frank Lloyd Wright Boulevard and Hayden Road in Scottsdale, Arizona, is a bustling community with tidy homes, challenging golf courses, delicious restaurants and well-executed resort hotels.

The vibe for the most part is quiet efficiency. The golf courses there – the TPC Scottsdale pair of Stadium and Champions – fit right in. They are immaculate, with lush emerald fairways lain among the light brown of the Sonoran desert.

But then every fall, workers descend and start building one of the most iconic structures in golf – the WM Phoenix Open Coliseum stadium. It takes months prepare, but when the PGA Tour's WM Phoenix Open finally rolls into town in early February – dubbed 'The People's Open' - the coliseum helps the neighborhood become the rowdiest, most-crowded and arguably most-fun golf tournament on earth. When it comes to visiting or playing the TPC Scottsdale courses, golfers can choose their energy level. Feeling ready for a

rowdy blast? Wade in with the crowds around the time of the WM Phoenix Open. Want a wide-open tee sheet and willing to endure eye-watering heat? Come during the searing hot summers for the best deals. Want a fun combo of quiet anticipation that is ramping up for the February bacchanalia? Visit in the Fall.

STADIUM COURSE

First things first: they don't let you just run out and play hole No. 16. You have to earn it.

Designed by Jay Moorish and Tom Weiskopf, the Stadium Course was built to host the WM Phoenix Open and opened as the sixth club in the TPC network. This was in the era in which courses vying for PGA Tour events all built in slopes beside greens to enable crowds to sit in stadium-like configurations.

At Scottsdale, that configuration became the 'Coliseum' built each year around No. 16. But before you get there you will navigate a creative, mostly

flat, winding course that uses the natural desert environment to narrow landing zones to protect green complexes and intensify the importance of shot-making. Balls can roll through the natural spaces and leave a player plenty of room to swing, or can nestle down among the landscaping for a long winter stay. Washes protect the greens on No. 3,4,5, 6 and 12. No. 11, the No. 1 handicap hole, is where water enters your calculus. The natural wash area protects the right side of the long par 4 while a rare water hazard protects the left.

The same lake comes into play on No. 15 – the warmup to the stadium course's signature hole. This hole requires focus; a 550-yard par 5, the hole's narrow fairway runs between a lake on the left and natural wash on the right.

The fairway narrows considerably right at the point in which the biggest hitters would like to land their tee shots. Then the island green is fronted additionally by bunkers. Then it is on to No. 16. In the spring and summer, when the stadium scaffolding

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- Caddies allowed at this level
- Double Par + 1 Stroke Limit

Junior Player Series

- Players will strive to improve their games while gaining competitive experience.
- Open to kids ages 11-18
- 18-hole playing opportunities
- Opportunities to qualify for Cup Series during the season
- Caddies not allowed
- 10 Stroke Limit

Junior Cup Series

- Provides local opportunities for top junior golfers to hone their skills in a competitive environment.
- Players can earn invitations from Q-School, Cup Qualifiers, & Major Qualifiers
- Caddies Not Allowed
- No stroke limit
- Cup Membership is by Invitation Only



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AVID TRAVELS: TPC SCOTTSDALE

is packed away, the hole is a simple experience. It's 160-yards to a narrow, deep green protected by four bunkers front and middle. For six months of the year players must enter through a tunnel in the gigantic temporary stands which are built. Inside the sense of drama spikes immediately, even when there are only a handful of workers installing seats. Shots to the left of the green can run off up against the stands. Just landing on the green feels like an accomplishment, and there is nowhere a par feels more earned.

The TPC Scottsdale experience also includes the Champions Course - less expensive and across the road from the Stadium Course. The TPC Scottsdale Champions course lacks the televised fame of its neighbor but still provides an elite experience. The course gives numerous options to play from, with four tee boxes and combinations offering lengths from 5,300 yard to 7,115. The course features well kept, rolling holes with more trees nestled among the natural desert washes and large greens.

GETTING OUT

Like with many big-name golf destinations, it pays to prepare if you are interested in playing TPC Scottsdale's Stadium Course. Spur-of-the-moment rounds can be booked, but they will cost you. The best deals benefit players who spend significant time each year near Scottsdale, or are willing to come off-season.

If you just hit their website and seek out a weekend morning tee time in January, it will cost you \$579. Rates go down later in the afternoons and weekdays, but still often top \$300. The lowest rate offered in the summer is currently \$129.

ANNUAL MEMBERSHIPS:

- **87 Club:** Cost is \$17,500 upfront, then rounds on the Stadium Course are as low as \$37 and guests get deep discounts.
- **TPC Pass:** Cost is \$979 and from May to September offers rounds as low as \$85

APRES ROUND

The bar/restaurant Toro by Chef Richard Sandoval bills itself as 'Latin Without Borders.' It is managed by the neighboring resort Fairmont Scottsdale Princess, the restaurant received a full makeover in 2024. It provides an elegant dining experience at a level of execution equal to its golf surroundings. Executive Chef Gage Smit is the former Chef de Cuisine at The Fitz Bar and Restaurant in Vail.

The lunch and dinner menus include Nikkei-style sushi rolls, sashimi and nigiri.

MENU SAMPLER

- Starters: Short rib tacos (\$22), Grilled octopus (\$22), Sweet corn empanada (\$19)
- Specialties: Pork shank (\$46), Cusco chicken (\$34), Lobster fried rice (\$46)
- Off the grille: Churrasco steak, lamb, chicken and chorizo (feeds 2-3) (\$125), New York Strip (\$56). ©



PHOTO CREDIT: JIM BEBBINGTON

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THE VISTA

As TMRW Sports' new simulator-based golf league plays each week on ESPN this winter, one Colorado investment fund is watching with great interest. Colorado-based investment fund Old Tom Capital is one of TMRW Sports' initial investors. It was a move consistent with Old Tom's goal of investing in golf-adjacent start-up businesses that are seeking to bring the game to the growing generation of 'golf-curious' viewers.

Old Tom Capital is the creation of Broomfield-native Matthew Erley and his Atlanta-based partner Evan Roosevelt. Erley, 38, came to angel investing after several entrepreneurial start-ups of his own, including Drizly – the alcohol delivery service that Uber purchased in 2021 for \$1.1 billion.

Now Erley and Roosevelt are taking the unusual path of creating an investment house that is specifically targeted to one deep niche product line – golf.

"We're fundamentally optimistic about the fundamental upside in golf," Erley said in a recent interview. "If you want to play golf anyone can play golf. There's so many different ways to experience it. Golf is really changing and innovating and we're interested at being at the forefront of investing in great companies." Old Tom Capital's investment portfolio includes some familiar names as well as some still seeking recognition.

TMRW Sports is having its moment. Its indoor-golf competition TGL (TMRW Golf League) is in the midst of its first season, and players such as Tiger Woods, Rory McIlroy and Wyndham Clark are playing live televised matches in a state-of-the-art indoor arena.

The matches are played on fancifully-designed golf simulator holes with players hitting off real grass into 30-foot tall screens. The ratings for the matches are evolving – Tiger's first appearance on the show drew more than 1 million viewers for ESPN at one point, better than the NBA's Denver Nuggets game played at the same time on TNT.

Old Tom Capital is also an investor in Sweetens Cove Spirits, a Peyton Manning-backed project that is both a 9-hole course in Tennessee as well as a whiskey distillery that produces 'The official bourbon of golf.'

Other companies are Birdie Houses (which offers luxury short-term rentals near golf resorts), Quiet Golf golf apparel, TerraRad irrigation management, Lusso Cloud footwear, Dryvebox portable golf simulators, as well as the Fairgame golf app. ▶



OLD TOM CO-FOUNDER, MATT ERLEY/
PHOTOS BY COLORADO AVIDGOLFER

THE EPICENTER OF GOLF

COLORADO BASED OLD TOM CAPITAL IS HELPING FUND THE NEXT
GENERATION OF GOLF COMPANIES
BY JIM BEBBINGTON & MICHAEL COLANDER

In an interview with Andrew Petcash of the sports podcast Profluence Erley said they are less interested in golf investments into traditional courses or even golf-simulator bars, but more in the companies seeking to build products that help get the new wave of 'golf-curious' people deeper into the game.

The golf-curious is a broad label for the new generation of players who have been introduced to the game through simulators, facilities like TopGolf, and VR headsets. This is a group that will stick around the game for something bigger if the right tools and environment present themselves.

"If we had to pick one space that we're interested as investors the most ... it's that," Erley told Petcash. "When someone goes to a TopGolf for the first time or when they pick up a Golf Plus VR headset and plays a hole ... where can go after that? They're certainly not going to an 18-hole traditional golf course and teeing off on the first tee. They're looking for something else." Old Tom's strategy is looking for companies that can grow to at least \$100 million in annual revenue.

For example, with TMRW Sports' TGL Golf League, if the broadcast product goes well it's a very short leap to see the facility and fanciful golf holes be-

ing offered to amateur golfers – either remotely or through new facilities built nationwide. "There's nothing wrong with building a lifestyle business, but for us as investors, we obviously have to find stuff that has scale," he told Colorado AvidGolfer's Michael Colander. "So (is it) golf focused, large addressable market, great founders and a growth strategy, a growth narrative that we think they can actually get there. They can use our money, they can use capital that they're taking to get to that next level. So if those check the boxes then then we're in."

Erley lives in the Washington Park neighborhood of Denver with his wife Shannon and their two children. He is hoping to build his new venture while remaining in Colorado, and said the state's growing reputation as a golf stronghold makes him optimistic he'll be able to help lead the next generation of golf innovation from here.

"There are pockets of the golf industry – Carlsbad, Orlando - but Denver has become a great place for a lot of founders and builders," he said. "You have GolfTec, Pins and Aces, Edel Golf is here now. You have a lot of great golf founders and golf businesses. Colorado is actually becoming a great epicenter for the golf industry. It's where I plan to continue." ❖





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For sports fans, few experiences rival a spring training trip to Arizona, where the Cactus League brings Major League Baseball teams to the desert for a month of preseason action. But for those who also love to hit the links, Arizona offers an incredible bonus: some of the best golf courses in the country. With perfect spring weather, stunning desert landscapes, and a mix of world-class courses and casual municipal layouts, Arizona is a golfer's paradise.

This guide is designed for baseball enthusiasts who want to balance their trip with time on the fairways. Whether you're catching a Chicago Cubs

game at Sloan Park in Mesa, watching the San Francisco Giants in Scottsdale, or following your favorite team across multiple stadiums, you'll never be far from a top-tier golf course. From the breathtaking scenery of Troon North in Scottsdale to the exciting challenges of the Legacy Golf Club, there's a course for every skill level and budget.

So, whether you're a single-digit handicapper or just looking to enjoy a casual round before first pitch, this guide will ensure your Arizona spring training trip is a grand slam—on the diamond and the course.



North Valley

SALT RIVER FIELDS AT TALKING STICK

The 11,000-seat stadium shared by the Colorado Rockies and the Arizona Diamondbacks has been named the best spring training facility in Arizona by numerous entities. More than 300,000 fans have packed the stands in each of the last seven seasons – the only Spring Training complex to draw that many. Seats on the outfield lawn can be had for as low as \$19 and you can spread a blanket on the grass to watch the action. Public golf in Scottsdale abounds, but great courses within a few minutes drive of Salt River Fields include **Scottsdale Silverado Golf Club** (scottsdalsilveradogolfclub.com), **Talking Stick Golf Club** (talkingstickresort.com) and **McCormick Ranch Golf Club** (mccormickranchgolf.com).

CAMELBACK MOUNTAIN AND OLD SCOTTSDALE

Nestled against Camelback Mountain and less than a mile from one another, The Phoenician Spa and old town Scottsdale offer a great combination of resort golf as well as great restaurants and shopping. **The Phoenician** (ThePhoenician.Com) features everything from separated villas to cozy traditional rooms. It's outdoor pool complex received renovations this fall. The short and tricky 18-hole course on the grounds features holes clinging to the sides of Camelback Mountain. Old Town Scott-

sdale is a two-minute Uber away and includes Scottsdale Stadium, the Spring Training home of the San Francisco Giants as well as boutiques for fashion, art, antiques and gifts. (OldTownScottsdaleAZ.com)

ONE HOLE TO TRY

We-Ko-Pa Golf Club's Cholla Course No. 8 - The No. 1 handicap, par 5 runs between 550 and 600 yards. Drives must clear the waste area and find a narrow fairway. Approach shots need to navigate a fairway that rolls balls left toward a deep and rocky waste bunker. (WeKoPaCasinoResort.Com)



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**Golfweek Best Courses You Can Play 2023: State by State*



South Valley

THE PATIOS ARE OPEN

Mesa dubs itself 'City Limitless' and the options for good food, beer and entertainment live up to the name. **12 West Brewing Tap Room and Restaurant** in downtown is part of the city's 'patio tour' with outdoor dining and relaxation. Patio restaurants throughout the city take advantage of the beautiful spring weather and gorgeous sunsets. Others include **Tacos Chiwas**, **What's Crackin** café and **The Patio at Las Sendas**. VisitMesa.com.

THE TACO TRAIL

If you're closer to Chandler, take advantage of their pride-and-joy taco restaurants. Many restaurants incorporate recipes from the old country. Bierria **Don Jose**, **Calitacos Restaurant** and **Backyard Taco** are all good options. VisitChandler.com.

WHERE TO PLAY

Legacy Golf Club (GolfLegacyResort.Com) ranked as one of the best in the Phoenix region – offers fairly wide-open, flat greens with one or two bunkers each, minimalist tee boxes surrounded by desert, and somewhat rare tree-lined fairways. The **Ak-Chin Southern Dunes Golf Club** in Maricopa (akchinsoutherndunes.com) is a perennial favorite of visitors. Long and winding, many greens are protected by enormous bunker complexes.

ONE HOLE TO TRY

The **Ocotillo Golf Club**, an Arcis club in Chandler, has 27 holes of championship golf available. No. 16 is a 550-yard+ monster with trouble left early, then right. Ball placement is crucial. (OcotilloGolf.Com)

BASEBALL

Tempe Diablo Stadium, the home of the Los Angeles Angels, is nearby. The stadium is in the midst of a \$20 million renovation. Sloan Park in Mesa, the home of the Chicago Cubs, is often packed as well.





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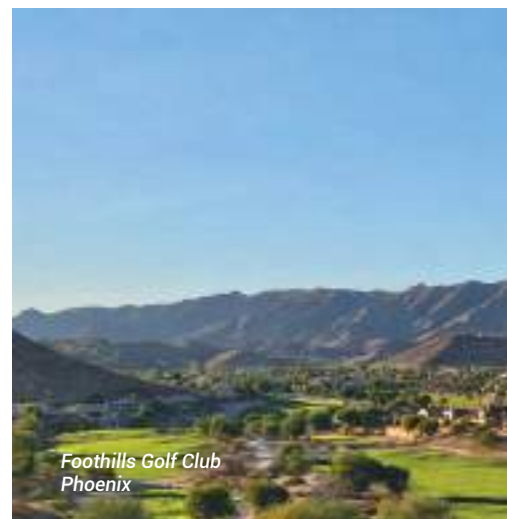
TroonGolfAZ.com



Eagle Mountain Golf Club
Fountain Hills



Longbow Golf Club
Mesa



Foothills Golf Club
Phoenix



West Valley

THE BASEBALL

Stadiums dot the west valley of the Phoenix region that host the Royals, Twins, Mariners, Padres, Dodgers, White Sox, Guardians, Reds and Brewers. Fresh from their stomping of the Yankees in the 2024 World Series, the Dodgers will open up at **Camelback Ranch Park** in Glendale Feb. 20.

GOLF

For visitors looking for a lot of golf at affordable prices, the **Sun City public courses** offer the best deals (SunCityAZ.Org). The top rate is \$61 for 18-holes at any of their eight golf courses – five regulation courses and three executive tracks. One of the newest courses in the valley, **Verrado Golf Club** includes two desert beauties designed by Tom Lehman – The Founders Course and the Victory Course. (VerradoGolfClub.Com). The **Arizona Traditions Golf Club** in Surprise (aztraditions.com) is an enjoyable parkland style course, compact and great for an accessible, quick round.

The Golf Club of Estrella in Goodyear (EstrellaGolf.com) is a Troon-managed course in the West Valley that is consistently ranked by Golfweek magazine as one of the Top-Twenty Public Courses in Arizona.

ONE HOLE TO TRY

Verrado's Victory Golf Course No. 18 – After a long

journey through beautiful desert terrain and holes studded with natural rock formations, you'll have to blast it over water first and then have two strong follow ups to finish well on this long par 5.

FUN ON THE SIDE

In 2023 Tiger Woods' new venture, **Popstroke**, opened in Glendale and has been providing good food and golf entertainment to families since. It's TopGolf, but with putters. And if you're looking to use all the clubs in your bag, you can make it a two-fer and visit the TopGolf facility a mile away on the other side of StateFarm Stadium. PopStroke.com



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Tucson

THE GOLF

Sewailo Golf Club, designed by Notah Begay III – friend of Tiger, former PGA Tour member and NBC and Golf Channel commentator – is adjacent to the Casino Del Sol (Casinodelsol.com). The well-maintained resort course keeps you in sight of the resort’s iconic tower and the Sierrita Mountains on the horizon. Northeast of downtown Tucson, **Ventana Canyon Club and Lodge**, (Ventanacanyonclub.com) has two 18-hole Tom Fazio courses that can test all level of player. The Mountain Course is a huge test that gives stunning views to the surrounding foothills. The Canyon Course is just a little shorter and during the rainy season can feature mountain runoff coursing through the washes. Other great local courses include the **Club at Star Pass** and **Arizona National Golf Club**.

ONE HOLE TO TRY

The signature hole at Ventana Canyon’s Mountain course is it’s par 3 third hole. It plays just a smidge over 100 yards, but it’s all carry over a deep desert ravine. It’s a stunner.

SONORAN DESERT GETAWAY

Tubac Golf Resort and Spa (Tubacgolfresort.com) is a quiet, beautiful golf resort away from the crowds. A 50-minute drive south to Tucson, Tubac offers a perfect getaway with enough golf to challenge the active traveler, but laid back shopping, hiking and dining.

THE CULINARY CAPITOL & BASEBALL

Tucson humbly boasts of having the best Mexican food in the U.S. and it would be hard to argue. The variety, complexity and availability of fantastic restaurants helped lead Tucson to being named one of the world’s great culinary cities by UNESCO. (VisitTucson.org/eat-drink/Mexican-food). Spring training baseball brings a special energy to the region, as fans flock to nearby locations in Arizona’s Cactus League. While Tucson no longer hosts spring training games directly, its proximity to cities like Phoenix and Scottsdale makes it a convenient base for day trips to catch the action.



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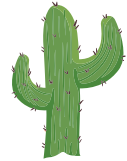


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ARIZONA CACTUS LEAGUE 411

WHERE TO EAT, SLEEP & PLAY



COLORADO ROCKIES/ ARIZONA DIAMONDBACKS

Salt River Fields at Talking Stick
7555 N. Pima Rd., Scottsdale
saltriverfields.com

PLAY: Talking Stick, TPC Scottsdale, The Boulders, Troon North, Grayhawk, We-Ko-Pa, Wildfire, Ak-Chin Southern Dunes

STAY: Talking Stick, JW Marriott Desert Ridge, Fairmont Scottsdale Princess, Omni Montelucia

EAT: The Henry, Ocean Trail, The Vig



IT HAPPENS EVERY SPRING:
The Colorado Rockies call Salt River Fields at Talking Stick in Scottsdale their home for Spring Training.



CINCINNATI REDS/ CLEVELAND GUARDIANS

Goodyear Ballpark
1933 S. Ballpark Way, Goodyear
goodyearbp.com

PLAY: Wigwam, Verrado, Palm Valley, Golf Club of Estrella

STAY: The Wigwam, TownePlace Suites

EAT: Bella Luna Ristorante, Cheddar's Scratch Kitchen, Litchfield's



SEATTLE MARINERS/ SAN DIEGO PADRES

Peoria Sports Complex
16101 N. 83rd Ave., Peoria
peoriasportscomplex.com

PLAY: Quintero, Trilogy at Vistancia

STAY: JW Marriott-Desert Ridge, Cibola Vista Resort

EAT: Firebirds Wood Fired Grill, Arrowhead Grill, Peoria Artisan Brewery



TEXAS RANGERS/ KANSAS CITY ROYALS

Surprise Stadium
15850 N. Bullard Ave., Surprise
surprisestadium.com

PLAY: Wigwam, Quintero, Cimarron, Pebblebrook, Echo Mesa, Coyote Lakes, Trilogy at Vistancia

STAY: Residence Inn by Marriott, Windmill All Suites Surprise, The Wigwam

EAT: Chef Peter's Bistro, Vogue Bistro



LOS ANGELES DODGERS/ CHICAGO WHITESOX

Camelback Ranch
10710 W. Camelback Rd., Glendale
camelbackranchbaseball.com

PLAY: Golf Club of Estrella, Wigwam, Verrado

STAY: The Wigwam, Renaissance Phoenix/Glendale

EAT: Fleming's Prime Steakhouse, Litchfield's, Ground Control



LOS ANGELES ANGELS OF ANAHEIM

Tempe Diablo Stadium
2200 W. Alameda Dr., Tempe
tempe.gov/diablo

PLAY: Raven Golf Club, The Legacy, Papago Golf Club, Rolling Hills, Shalimar, Foothills, Arizona Biltmore Golf Club

STAY: The Phoenician, Marriott Phoenix at The Buttes, Canopy by Hilton

EAT: Top of the Rock, Four Peaks, The Keg Steakhouse



OAKLAND ATHLETICS

Hohokam Stadium
1235 N. Center St., Mesa
mlb.com/athletics/spring-training

PLAY: Royal Palms, Longbow, Scottsdale Silverado, McCormick Ranch, Alta Mesa, Apache Wells, Western Skies

STAY: W2ND Historic Inn, Delta Hotels by Marriott, Hyatt Place Phoenix/Mesa

EAT: Charleston's, Cholla Prime, Rustler's Rooste



CHICAGO CUBS

Sloan Park
2330 W. Rio Salado Pkwy., Mesa
mlb.com/cubs/sloan-park

PLAY: Longbow, Papago, Raven, Rolling Hills, Dobson Ranch

STAY: Sheraton Mesa at Wrigleyville West, Homewood Suites, Kasa Tempe

EAT: Sonesta Select, The Westin Tempe, Carolina's, Foch Cafe & Bistro, Cholla Prime, SanTan Brewing



SAN FRANCISCO GIANTS

Scottsdale Stadium
7408 E. Osborn Rd., Scottsdale
scottsdaleaz.gov/scottsdale-stadium

PLAY: Coronado, Continental, Estancia, Scottsdale Silverado, Phoenician Golf Club

STAY: Scottsdale Marriott, W Scottsdale, Sienna House, Hotel Valley Ho

EAT: Cornish Pasty, Olive & Ivy, Chelsea's Kitchen, Lo-Lo's Chicken and Waffles



MILWAUKEE BREWERS

American Family Fields of Phoenix
3805 N. 53rd Ave., Phoenix
mlb.com/brewers/spring-training

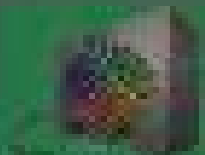
PLAY: Palo Verde, Papago, Grand Canyon University Championship Golf Course

STAY: Hyatt Place Phoenix/Downtown

EAT: Huss Brewing Co. Brewpub, Pizzeria Bianco, State 48 Brewery



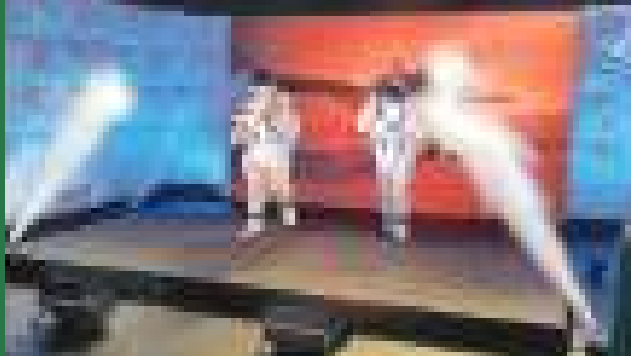
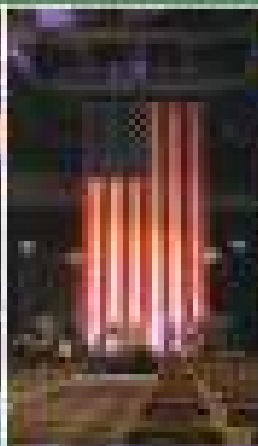
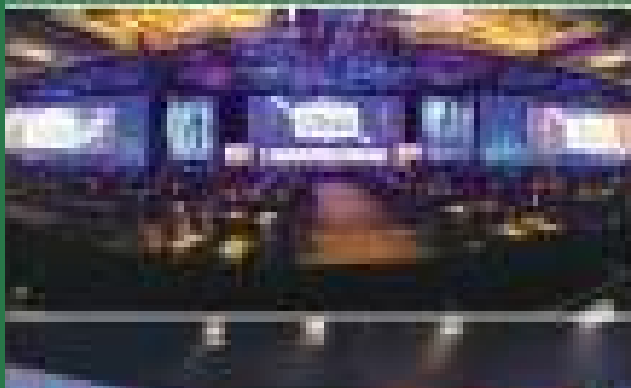
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MARK HUBBARD:

“My Demon is my Inner Critic”

BY JIM BEBBINGTON



PHOTO BY LOGAN WHITTON/USGA CONTENT HUB

PGA Pro Mark Hubbard, who grew up in Denver, is coming off his two highest-earning seasons in professional golf and spoke in depth this winter about how the mental side of the game is the one he is working the hardest on.

Hubbard and sports psychologist Gen Fulton, a 2004 graduate of the University of Colorado, did an hour-long Instagram Live interview this winter and went in-depth on Hubbard's mental approach to the game.

Hubbard is one of the best golfers in the world and is ranked in the top 70 of all PGA Tour pros. The past two seasons he has earned nearly \$3 million each year, and last season he started and finished strong, which he attributed in part to his new habits of meditation and staying 'present' while on the course.

Hubbard finished in 3rd place in his second to last tournament, the Butterfield Bermuda Championship, the week before Thanksgiving. At Pebble Beach last February he also finished 3rd in the rain-shortened AT&T Pro-Am won by Coloradan Wyndham Clark.

In between, he told Fulton he worked all season to keep his mind clear of past failures, or successes, and focus instead on each shot in the moment. "My demon is my inner critic; I'm very nice to volunteers. I don't take it out on my caddy. But I'm historically not super nice to myself

when things aren't going well," he said. "I am my biggest critic on the inside and that's the work I've been doing the most on is trying to be more kinder with myself and trying to leave the golf course happier regardless of what I shot."

He said that at the end of the 2023 season, he was so tired of golf he wanted to throw his clubs in a lake. In 2024, because of his meditation and new focus, he stayed engaged all the way to the end.

"The way I finished this season I had maybe the best tournament of the year in my second to last tournament (Bermuda)," he said. "When I walked off the 18th hole in Sea Island last year (2023) I was devastated and felt like a complete failure. This year I finished two spots higher but essentially the same place but walked off feeling great about myself and feeling I had made a lot of strides and feeling proud of myself."

He described two tactics he uses to stay in the moment.

One is a form of meditation, he said, that takes two minutes and which he'll do on a tee box while waiting to hit: the 5,4,3,2,1 technique.

He said he begins focused breathing then looks for five things he can see, then closes his eyes and focuses on four things he can hear, three he can feel, two he can smell and one he can taste.

"It gets me back in the moment if I'm truly committed to that and not thinking about the three putt I just had," he said.

The other technique that paid immediate dividends was committing to thinking one positive thought before each swing. He deployed that during a 36-hole U.S. Open qualifying tournament on June 3 at Cherry Hill Club in Ontario, Canada.

"What I found when the round went by I was over the ball thinking 'ok you're a great putter' but that lasted only about six holes," he said. "Then it became 'you're a good dad; you're a good friend' and they had nothing to do with golf at all. There is definitely something to do that." He won the qualifier by three strokes and advanced to the U.S. Open later in June, where he made the cut and finished T50.

Fulton told Hubbard that even now he talks less than neutrally about being able to manage his reactions, and she urged him to be proud of his progress.

"You're kind of judging yourself," she told him. "You're human Mark. Just because you're one of the best golfers in the world doesn't mean you're not going to experience a whole spectrum of emotions. It's all about the recovery." 🧘

Shanahan's

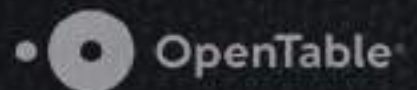
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