

Jacobsen Hardy Renovation Integrates Golf & Polo

Jacobsen Hardy Golf Course Design will break ground this month on a unique renovation here at Wellington Golf & Country Club in Wellington, Fla. When the facility reopens at Thanksgiving (with a new name), it will boast a polo field/practice range, and a golf course that will vary in length depending on whether or not the ponies are running that day.

Houston businessman John Goodman, who owns Wellington and the world-renowned International Polo Club Palm Beach nearby, instructed Jacobsen Hardy to renovate the existing practice range into an area that could be easily converted into a polo field, as well as a ring for show-jumping competitions and other equestrian disciplines.



"Mr. Goodman's vision is to incorporate a spectator-friendly area for equestrian special events as part of the new golf course," said Peter Jacobsen, PGA Tour vet and partner with Jim Hardy in Houston-based Jacobsen Hardy Golf Course Design. "It's a unique but extremely efficient use of the practice range that will provide added value to the club members and added challenge to the architects."

The golf course, which will undergo a thorough renovation in addition to its convertible practice area, will close April 15, with plans for a soft reopening on Thanksgiving 2007 as The Wanderers Club at Wellington, a private country club with membership by invitation, according to Louie Bartoletti, general manager of Wellington G&CC. Bartoletti added that Wellington's executive golf course, tennis courts, clubhouse and other amenities will remain open throughout the renovation.

Making the polo field fit on the existing practice range required considerable creativity on the part of Jacobsen Hardy. Polo fields are typically crowned and drain to just 0.75-percent slope, explained Jacobsen Hardy Senior Vice President/Managing Architect Rex VanHoose. The minimum slope to move water off a golf course is generally 3 percent.

"But the really interesting thing is that the polo field has to tie into the neighboring 10th hole since the existing driving range is not wide enough to accommodate a polo field without encroaching onto the course," VanHoose continued. "The solution was to redesign the golf layout so that when they are playing polo, the 10th hole will change from a 420-yard, par-4 into a 180-yard, par-3."

VanHoose said the practice range will be used as a polo field about 10 times per year, meaning the course will play shorter on those particular days. Further course renovations will address playability, aesthetic, drainage and maintenance issues.

"Our goal has been and continues to be bringing the golf course to the highest level of excellence," said Bartoletti. "To achieve this objective, John Goodman and I visited numerous golf courses and met with selective architects, including Jim and Peter. Throughout this process, we continued to go back to Jim and Peter's vision and enthusiasm.

"It was a unanimous decision to pick them. They only take a small number of projects each year and that limited workload allows them to give us more attention, to be hands-on. We're not just another golf course to them and that's very important to us. Without fail, everyone associated with their prior projects gave them a thumbs-up. They've set the standard with proven performance and we want to be on that team."

The Wellington G&CC renovation will involve a great deal more than the better accommodation of golf and polo. Many existing holes feature forced carries over water. Jacobsen Hardy plans to fill in or cut back man-made lake features on half a dozen holes. For instance, the par-5 11th requires a drive over a pond. Most players cannot hit a driver that far, requiring them to lay up with an iron off the tee.

"That makes for kind of a hokey par-5," Jim Hardy said. "So we are pushing the lake to the right and eliminating the part that juts into the fairway, which will allow players to hit a driver off the tee. We are also building a waste bunker that cuts across the fairway but will be a little less imposing. A golfer landing in the waste bunker should still be able play a utility wood on the second shot. The hole will not be as awkward in terms of playability as it is now."

Jacobsen Hardy also plans to make aesthetic improvements to the 21-year-old layout, which is fairly flat, tight and surrounded by housing. Plans are to landscape out from the course with formal vegetation (trees and shrubs), so homes will be less visible to golfers. "We will make sure homeowners still have views of the course. But players will feel a little more secluded," Hardy said.



The existing course has little definition. So, in addition to the formal landscaping, Jacobsen Hardy has proposed incorporating native plants, such as railroad vines and mully grass, and the addition of beachy waste areas, lending the course greater definition and giving players a better idea where to hit their golf shots. Repositioning bunkers, analyzing other existing features and moving tee shots away from the housing will also improve the playing experience.

About Jacobsen Hardy

Starting with its design of The Oregon Golf Club in 1992 (for several years host to the Fred Meyer Challenge), Jacobsen Hardy has produced a succession of award-winning layouts, including Moorpark CC north of Los Angeles - named to Golf Magazine's "Top 10 New Courses You Can Play" for 2003; Houston's Redstone Golf Club, site of the PGA Tour's Shell Houston

Open; and Hammock Bay Golf & Country Club in Naples, Fla., listed among Travel+Leisure Golf's Top 10 New Private Clubs for 2004. Next in this decorated line is Brasada Ranch, which opened nine holes in Redmond, Ore., late in 2006, and will unveil its full routing in fall 2007. For more information about Jacobsen Hardy Golf Course Design, call 281/807-4176 or visit www.jacobsenhardy.com.

For more information on this golf project and hundreds of others around the U.S., go to www.golfconstructionnews.com.