



COURSE RENOVATIONS

The Wanderers Club at Wellington



Polo and golf? To some, that may seem like an odd combination. But it's what John Goodman, owner of Wellington Golf & Country Club in South Florida wanted. Of course, Goodman also owns the nearby International Polo Club Palm Beach, so the connection is logical. Just the same, Wellington is most likely the only golf course to double as a polo venue.

Goodman asked the design team of Jim Hardy and Peter Jacobsen to put a polo field into the plans for the renovation of Wellington — which they accomplished by allowing the golf practice range to double as a field for the ponies to roam, plus a ring for show jumping competitions. When horses are on site, golfers will find less space to warm up and the course slightly shortened.

"Mr. Goodman's vision is to incorporate a spectator-friendly area for equestrian special events as part of the new golf course," said Jacobsen. "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."

In addition to some issues concerning the differences in slope and drainage requirements for golf holes and polo fields, the amount of land to be used also caused a concern. The existing range wasn't large enough to accommodate the polo field, so on polo days the par-four 10th hole will be converted from 420 yards to 180

yards and become a par-three.

Jacobsen and Hardy also faced some other design challenges to make the 21-year-old course more enjoyable. Like all of South Florida, the topography is flat, but many of the old holes called for forced water carries — necessitating changes to lakes on six of the holes, such as the par-five 11th. It required a drive over water beyond the capability of most club members, meaning they had to lay up off the tee.

"That makes for kind of a hokey par-5," 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."

A thorough landscaping redesign and upgrading of the course's bunkering improved playability, according to Jacobsen, a PGA Tour veteran and current Champions Tour player. Hardy is also a former tour player and one of the top ten golf instructors in the country, in addition to his design work. The duo has completed several well-regarded designs, including Hammock Bay Golf & Country Club in Naples.

When Wellington opens the end of November, it will have one other new thing ... a name. The Wanderers Club at Wellington will continue as a private club with membership by invitation. ♦