

Jacobsen Hardy's Hammock Bay earns honors, tournaments

NAPLES, Fla. — Architects Peter Jacobsen and Jim Hardy resumed their nationwide campaign against “flat-lined” golf courses with the unveiling of Hammock Bay Golf & Country Club here on Florida’s Gulf Coast. With its diverse collection of half-shot holes, dramatic elevation changes and varied-but-accessible green complexes, Hammock Bay is a 7,080-yard riposte to what Jacobsen and Hardy see as a creeping sameness in modern course architecture.

Hammock Bay opened in the spring of 2004; the ensuing 12 months saw a steady flow of national plaudits and tournament dates. In its January/February 2005 issue, *Travel+Leisure Golf* magazine named Hammock Bay one of the nation’s Top 10 private clubs to open in 2004. In February, Audubon International named Hammock Bay a “Gold Certified Signature Sanctuary”, one of just nine such designated communities in the world.

Early in March 2006, Jacobsen’s fellow Tour pros visited Hammock Bay for a Saturday Series Pro-Am, held in conjunction with the PGA Tour’s Ford Championship at Doral. Ten days later, the inaugural Lexus Naples Intercollegiate Golf Invitational was held at Hammock Bay, where a field 12 teams from around the country (hosted by Florida Gulf Coast University) tested the track over 54 holes for team and individual titles.

“Jim and I have a real problem with golf courses whose holes all play to similar standards of difficulty, what we call ‘flat-lined’ designs,” says Jacobsen, PGA Tour veteran and partner in Houston-based Jacobsen Hardy Golf Course Design. “We prefer to design courses that highlight a player’s chances to succeed and fail. For a pro or fine amateur player, that means the chance to make birdie or bogey. For a 90-shooter, that means par or double. The premise is universally applicable — it’s the same design premise that makes Pebble Beach and Augusta National such fun golf courses and such great tests. Hammock Bay gives golfers those same opportunities.”

“From the 6th hole on,” adds Hardy, “the layout at Hammock Bay features a stretch of 12 holes that go back and forth between these extremes. I call them offensive and defensive holes. Peter calls them half-stroke holes. What we mean are reachable par-5s, like the 12th here at Hammock Bay; or par-4s that play more like par-5s, like the 15th out here which measures 460 from

the back tees; or drivable par-4s like the new 13th. There's no in-between out there. It's thrilling."

The semi-private Hammock Bay Golf & Country Club was developed by Naples-based WCI, Florida's premier developer of luxury golf communities. The golf course was constructed on the former site of Marco Shores Country Club, a 60-year-old golf course community that was never "built out" to its master plan. The entire development has been reimagined to make room for Hammock Bay: The housing has been consolidated into a 20-story, 113-unit luxury tower dubbed "Aversana". Later this year, WCI will introduce "Serano," another 116-residence tower.

Nothing of the old Marco Shores layout remains; in fact, Hammock Bay's consolidated real estate strategy enabled Jacobsen Hardy to create a "core" golf course design that flows virtually unimpeded by housing — a trait found at two recent and nationally acclaimed Jacobsen Hardy designs: Redstone Golf Club, new home to the PGA Tour's Shell Houston Open, and Moorpark Country Club, named by *GOLF Magazine* among the "Top 10 New Courses You Can Play" for 2003 .

This free hand at Hammock Bay allowed Jacobsen Hardy to re-double its efforts against design monotony. "Our aversion to flat-lining also applies to the look of our golf courses," says Hardy, who played the PGA Tour, during the 1970s, and has since developed the reputation as one of golf's top swing gurus. [*Golf Digest* lists him among their Top 50 teachers, but Hardy's primary business remains course design, which limits his teaching to touring pros only: Paul Azinger, Scott McCarron, Tom Pernice Jr., Duffy Waldorf and his design partner, Jacobsen.]

"How many times," Hardy asks, "have you heard architects boast about the 'overall' style and/or design theme of a new golf course? Well, Peter and I don't worship that conventional wisdom. We purposely design our courses without a single unifying style, much less a consistent set of design characteristics.

"At most of the new layouts I see today, once I've played two holes I pretty much know what the green settings and bunker styles will be for the next 16 holes. We don't do that. We consciously vary the visual and playing experience on our courses. At Hammock Bay you'll see we have greens

absolutely dead on grade; we have some up the in the air; we created some with backstop mounding and some without.”

Jacobsen Hardy routed the golf course to take optimum advantage of Hammock Bay’s coastal location, with its ocean winds, sandy waste areas and mangrove hammocks — all of it accented by a landscaping theme of tropical wild flowers and crushed shells. The 409-yard 14th is a classic Cape-style par-4 which sweeps left to right around a lake. The risk-taker can bite off as much fairway as he dares, creating a short-iron approach into the green guarded by a large beach-style bunker on the right.

Yet Jacobsen Hardy also transformed this sea-level environment with a series of enormous man-made dunes up to 30 feet high and 200 feet long — a design measure the firm affectionately calls “The Big Dirt”. Some holes at Hammock Bay play downhill from atop these massive promontories while others nip in and out of the resulting nooks and crannies.

The par-3s at Hammock Bay Golf & Country Club take particular advantage of these immense but graceful earthworks. “I think this is the best collection of par-3s we’ve ever assembled,” says Hardy, who vouches for their variety by pointing to the 11th — which plays 175 yards over a cavernous swale (brimming with wildflowers) to a plateau green — and the 196-yard 7th, which strategically skirts a tropical lagoon.

“The left side of the 7th green juts out into the lake with a big hardwood tree hanging out over the water’s edge. It’s a stunningly beautiful golf hole,” says Hardy. “You can bounce the ball onto the green from the right side; in fact, you can bounce the ball onto 17 of the 18 greens at Hammock Bay. But if the pin is tucked left on 7, it’s a dramatic carry to a slender finger of green surface. It’s an extremely beautiful, flexible golf hole. Same goes for the 11th: From the back tee players are obligated to fly the swale, but the forward tees swing around to the right and take all the trouble out of play.”

All four par-3s on this par-72 layout play in different directions, meaning a single wind shift affects sweeping change in the way they play. Jacobsen says he’s particularly pleased with Hammock Bay’s overall directional composition. There’s no back-and-forth routing here, which means the wind affects each hole differently than the next.

Hammock Bay is also notable for its use of SeaDwarf paspalum, a turf grass bred specifically to thrive on the high-saline irrigation water common at seaside venues like this one. The SeaDwarf has been used tee to green, making Hammock Bay a pioneer in this regard. “We’ve used the paspalum elsewhere — during our recent renovation at Galveston Country Club on the Texas coast, for example — and we’re convinced this is the wave of the future,” Hardy explains. “It allows golf courses to forgo potable water supplies for its irrigation, and the paspalum tolerates salt water. The new dwarf strains of paspalum provide an outstanding playing surface.”

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[For more information on Jacobsen Hardy, call 281-807-4176 or visit www.jacobsenhardy.com]