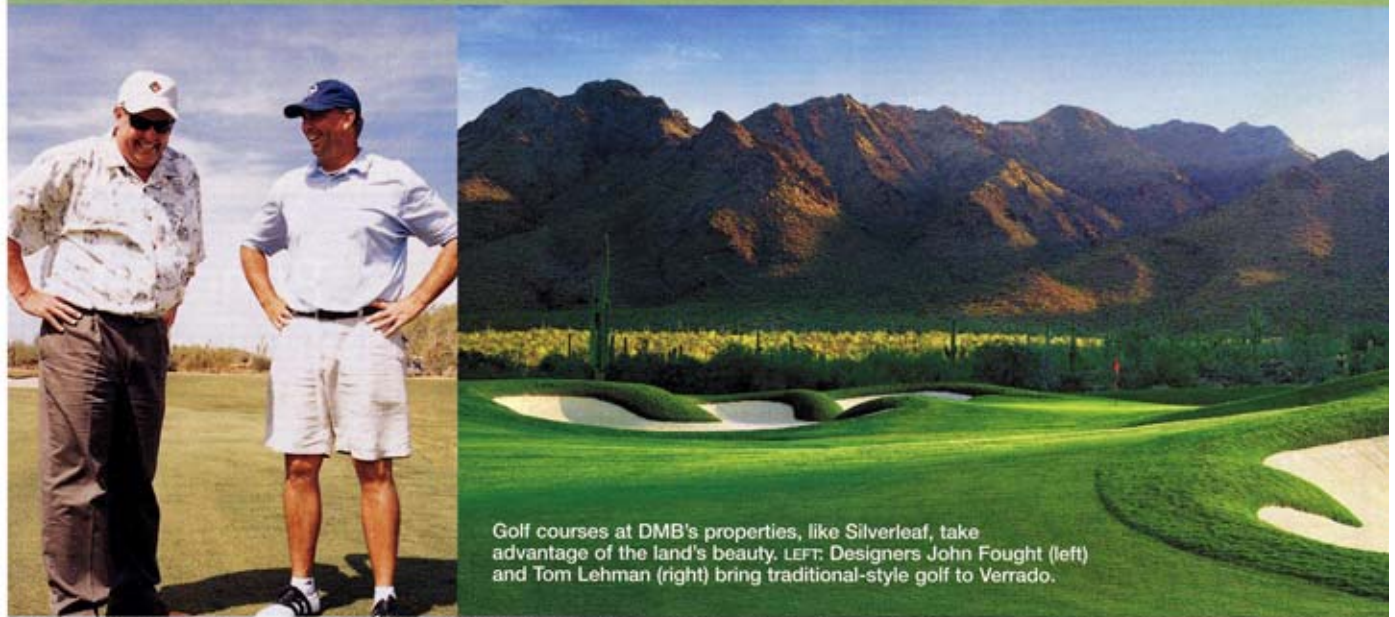


Sport raven golf club at verrado



Golf courses at DMB's properties, like Silverleaf, take advantage of the land's beauty. LEFT: Designers John Fought (left) and Tom Lehman (right) bring traditional-style golf to Verrado.

A new desert **Classic**

Tom Lehman and John Fought turned to the golden era of golf-course design for the Raven Golf Club at Verrado

By David Lansing

Ask former British Open winner Tom Lehman what his expectations are for the Raven Golf Club at Verrado, and he is unequivocal. "It will be a top 10 golf course in the Phoenix area," he says. "No doubt about it."

Of course, Lehman, a Scottsdale resident, might be a little prejudiced. Along with former U.S. Amateur champion John Fought, he's a co-designer of the greatly anticipated course, a centerpiece of the Verrado community. Lehman's confidence makes even more sense when you add in the fact that he and Fought have

been involved in the design, or redesign, of some truly spectacular golf courses—from the highly rated Gallery North Course in Marana, Arizona, to the stylish Somerby Golf Club in Byron, Minnesota, which draws its challenges from the natural creeks, lakes, and grassy wetlands along the fairways.

The Verrado course becomes the sixth golf club in the United States and the second in Arizona, alongside the Raven at South Mountain, to carry the prestigious Raven imprint, assuring its reputation as a "must play" course.

"For a club to be a member of the Raven group, the course design has to be a memorable experience," Kirk

Kokoska says, vice president of operations for Intrawest, which manages the six Raven golf clubs. "Tom Lehman and John Fought really accomplished that at Verrado."

According to Fought, now in his 16th year of designing golf courses, both he and Lehman approached the design the way classic golf course designers like A.W. Tillinghast or Donald Ross, creator of historic Pine Needles in North Carolina, might have. "It's not a course where everything is big and massive and in your face," Fought says. "It's much more subtle than that. The thing Tom and I aimed for was to design a course that was logical and didn't just try to torture

people. We want you to think a bit as you're making your way around the course so when you come back, you have a strategy and some idea of how to play it a second or third time. That strategy shouldn't be dependent upon whether you manage to avoid some massive bunker that is almost impossible to get out of."

Lehman agrees. "John and I like traditional-style golf courses, and that's what the Raven Golf Club at Verrado

pond where the green sits on the edge of a lake ringed with rocks." The final hole, Fought says, is a long par-4 that plays downhill, awarding players with a breathtaking view. "Even from the tee you can see all of Phoenix in front of you. And at the green, there's a bunker on your left and water on the right that creeps all the way around to the clubhouse behind it. It's really a fantastic finish."

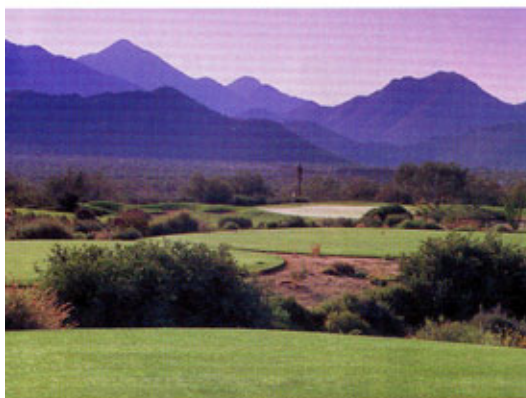
But as important as the layout of the course is the Raven's exceptional standard of service. It starts the minute golfers arrive at the public course and are greeted by a friendly attendant, who takes your clubs, inquires about your tee time, and directs you to the pro shop while setting up your bag at the practice range. "Our goal is to give everyone a 'members only' experience at the Raven," Jeff Perry says, the club's director of golf. Any player who opts for the all-inclusive package receives practice balls, a golf cart, and food for one flat price—everything but alcoholic drinks is included. "That's a first in this marketplace," he adds.

At the first tee, players are given general instructions about the course, as well as a complimentary yardage book, extra tees, ball markers, and a ball mark repair tool. And Perry won't send golfers off without making sure that there's help on the course too. Personal golf assistants are ready to hand you a scented, cold towel, help you look for an errant ball, or hold a flag stick while you're putting.

Designed by professionals with a commitment to excellence, Verrado's golf course is sure to garner accolades. "I think this is the sort of course where, after you've played it, you'll think about how spectacular it was as well as

is. It's not one of those courses that's going to have sand everywhere. We tried to make it as natural as possible. The idea was to create something that both looks good and plays well. Visually, it's important that you are stimulated by the golf course when you're playing it."

Both Fought and Lehman get excited when describing the course in detail. "The three finishing holes are really wonderful and probably the most exciting finishing holes I've ever worked on," Fought says. All three holes slope gently downhill. Lehman describes the 17th hole as a relatively short par-3 built around "a quarry



Borrowing from their redesign of DC Ranch's links in Scottsdale (above), Lehman and Fought brought traditional challenges to their new course at Verrado.

A Player's Guide

The Raven Golf Club at Verrado provides a truly spectacular desert golf experience. From the tips, the Raven stretches more than 7,300 yards and will prove a challenge to even the most accomplished player. And with four tee boxes on each hole, golfers of all abilities have a fair chance at par. Below are thumbnail sketches of some of the course's most intriguing holes:

Hole No. 2, Par 4, 328 to 408 yards

With a 60-foot-deep ravine that cuts sharply into the fairway from the left and a well-protected green, accuracy is a must.

Hole No. 8, Par 4, 442 to 475 yards

A 30-foot-high granite monolith guards the left side of the fairway, so play your tee shot to the right to avoid ricocheting your ball into the desert.

Hole No. 12, Par 4, 347 to 433 yards

Nestled in a box canyon with the rugged beauty of the mountains on all sides, this hole is perhaps the prettiest on the course.

Hole No. 15, Par 5, 463 to 587 yards

The back tee is tucked amid palo verde and ironwood trees on the bank of a desert wash.

how we really delivered on the service," Kokosa says. "But most of all, you'll going to be talking about coming back and playing it again." 