

A Golfer's Club

Scottsdale's Whisper Rock is drawing the attention of PGA pros.

PROFESSIONAL GOLFERS — the recipients of gratis shoes, balls, gloves, clubs, clothes, and often club memberships—are not noted for being fast with the wallet. However, in a desert valley chockablock with great places to play golf, 11 touring professionals paid the \$100,000 initiation fee to become members of Whisper Rock in Scottsdale, Arizona, a relatively new golf club that represents Phil Mickelson's first venture into course design. The pros are in good company.

and white chocolate chip cookies for golfers making the turn.) Socializing takes place mostly on the practice range. You won't find any tee sheets in the clubhouse. Members simply arrive at the club, pick up a game, and head out to the course. You might find yourself teeing off with Billy Mayfair, Gary McCord, or Miller Barber.

Mickelson's course (he consulted with architect Gary Stephenson) is an eminently playable routing through the high Sonoran desert. Rocky washes cut through the fairways, and Mickelson took a few greens and pushed them up against close-cut swales, à la Augusta. Cacti and jumbled boulders provide visual references throughout the course, and even from the tees where the forced carries over the desert wasteland appear foreboding, a safe haven is usually within reach.

Now that the club is up and running, Tryhus is swinging into phase two of his plan. Tom Fazio has been hired to route a second course up, over, and around the central hilly spine on the property, where remnants of an ancient Hohokum native settlement have been uncovered. Tryhus plans to build some casitas for visiting, out-of-town mem-

bers to use, as well as some member-

owned town homes near the practice range. When all the construction is completed, Whisper Rock's 800-plus acres will contain only 200 homesites. Most will be about two acres in size, with some estate-sized lots of more than four acres. Prices begin about \$300,000. While there is real estate for sale at Whisper Rock, merely buying a lot will not automatically gain you entry to the golf club. Membership is by invitation only, and Tryhus and his fellow members are looking for like minds: those who truly appreciate the game of golf and the company of golfers. — JAMES Y. BARTLETT

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The seventh tee allows little room for error, but the green is within reach.

Among Whisper Rock's 200 or so members, almost two dozen golfers maintain handicaps of scratch or better, and more than 45 have handicaps under 5. These guys are good.

Whisper Rock has quietly become the golfer's club in the Phoenix/Scottsdale valley, just as developer Gregg Tryhus, who also built the highly successful Grayhawk facility nearby, planned. The lack of pretension is refreshing. Unlike other clubs, Whisper Rock has no social members, tennis courts, five-star restaurants, nor swimming pools. The small hacienda-like structure that currently serves as the clubhouse is little more than a place to change your shoes and grab a bite of whatever the kitchen has cooked up. (There is usually a Southwestern beef stew