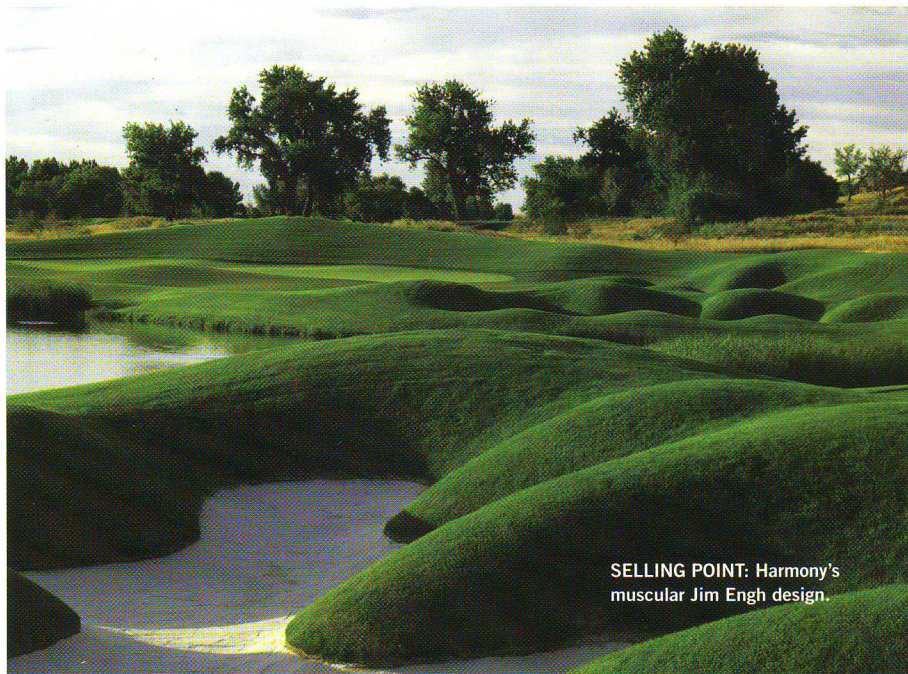


CLUBBING UP



SELLING POINT: Harmony's muscular Jim Engh design.

No Clubhouse, No Problem

Harmony Club has created a close-knit membership without the traditional trappings.

By Jon Rizzi

THE TINY BURG OF TIMNATH, LOCATED JUST SOUTHEAST OF FORT COLLINS, takes its name from the Philistine village where Samson found his starter bride. Yet with the possible exception of a Japanese balloon bomb exploding in a pasture in 1945, nothing of Biblical proportions had ever transpired in this Colorado town of 300.

That is, until Harmony Club opened in 2007. The centerpiece of a 600-acre development with more than 500 planned residences set back from the golf course, the club boasts a serendipitous, 7,331-yard Jim Engh layout and the stately Harmony Center, which houses two well-equipped indoor-outdoor practice facilities—one for members and one for the Colorado State University men's and women's golf teams, both of which call Harmony their home course.

Although the economic downturn changed Harmony's growth plans, it turns out that Byron Collins, Harmony's developer, has the patience of Job and the wisdom of Solomon. "We're not paying for this development with debt," he maintains. "We're paying for it as we go."

So instead of constructing a clubhouse, Collins built a cabin with a modest pro shop and lounge where approximately 40-50 members could gather for beers, sandwiches, cards and camaraderie—"it's like our private fishing hole," says Collins. Instead of overspending on marketing, he has relied mostly on word-of-mouth to get his 150 members (about one-third the projected cap) to share in what he calls "paradise golf—you can get around in three hours." Instead of investing in pricey dining and amenities, he created a "smart card," which gives members substantial discounts at numerous area restaurants, health clubs, other businesses, as well as on services like house cleaning, skin care and massages.

"This virtual clubhouse concept saves our members a lot of money," says Collins, who is not only into building a loyal membership, but a strong relationship with the university and the community—including competitors at the more established area country clubs. "We want them to be successful," he says.

However, Collins insists, "We don't match other clubs' offers. The price is \$12,500 for a (60 percent) refundable membership, plus \$290 in monthly dues. If you don't want refundability, you can join for \$6,500; the dues are the same. It's an incredible value."

Scott Thomas, a 12 handicap who left Fort Collins Country Club to join and live at Harmony, couldn't be happier with his decision. "There isn't a member here who's lobbying for a clubhouse, and I honestly could care less about dining facilities," he says before heading to a restaurant with his wife, Jeanne, and eight other members, all of whom will use their "Harmony Cards."

Fellow member Ralph Shinn echoes the sentiment as he enters the Harmony Center for a lesson with PGA Director of Instruction Stan Fenn. "It's a close-knit group, even though we don't have a clubhouse," he says, adding that there's no distinction between members who live at Harmony and those, like him and his wife, who don't.

About 60 percent of the members live outside Harmony's gates, but they've all bought into the "Paradise Golf" concept. "The course is great, and you don't really need to make a tee time," says Todd Markus, a 7-handicap who recently relocated his young family from the Bay Area.

Harmony's members all know their Eden won't last forever. More members will mean more amenities. But they know expansion will be gradual and well planned. The club won the National Golf Course Owners Association's 2010 Colorado Course of the Year, and it's strategically positioned in a town that plans to increase its population to 20,000 and cover 27 square miles by 2030.

"Our mission isn't to build the biggest club; it's to deliver what we can based on what the market tells us," Collins explains. "We're going to grow into our shoes, not jump into them." **AC**

For more information on Harmony Club, visit harmonyclub.info; 970-224-4622.