

Fazio cultivating new private club

Matt McKay
Area Golf

As architect Tom Fazio and lead design consultant Kevin Sutherland surveyed the land they're shaping into the new Club at Vaquero, they trained their eyes on the nuances that have developed during the shaping of the course and considered slight alterations.

However, even as they focused on the detail-oriented improvements they hope to make, there was also an undeniable gleam of satisfaction in their eyes.

The Club at Vaquero, just south of State Highway 114 in Westlake, is one of two Fazio-designed courses under construction in the Northern Texas PGA section. (Westin Stonebriar Resort is the other). But it is the first course to be constructed in the area designed to open as a private equity club in more than a decade. (McKinney's Stonebridge Country Club and Frisco's Stonebriar Country Club were completed in 1988). Vaquero is being developed by San Francisco-based Discovery Land Company, which has also teamed with Fazio to produce Estancia Club in Scottsdale, Ariz., and Iron Horse Golf Club in Whitefish, Mont.

Southlake's Timarron Country Club operated for more than a decade as a daily-fee course before becoming a member-only club in late 1999. Wylie's Woodbridge Golf Club was designed to eventually become a private club, and Keller's Sky Creek Ranch Golf Club is slated to go semi-private at some point. But Vaquero is being built solely for its private use of its equity membership, which will be capped at 385. Discovery is hoping to open the club in the fall of 2001, and there are plans to offer 212 homesites and 76 golf villas within the gated community.

Vaquero takes advantage of Westlake's rolling hills and thick stands of post oaks. Since the land was formerly a working cattle ranch owned by Bunker Hunt, several of the oaks stand alone as sentinels of shade for herds that no longer occupy the land. Construction crews have already scraped fairways and tees, revealing that Fazio has utilized the stands to frame tee boxes, and the solitary oaks guard greens and guide fairways.

Fazio, whose work includes Austin's Barton Creek – Fazio Foothills Course (ranked No. 1 in the state by The Dallas Morning News), was allowed to route the course first, and Discovery planned the rest of the property around it. He said the gently sloping cleared farmland has actually been a golf course all along, waiting to be developed.

"I've been to this general area before and thought about what it would be like to build a course here," said Fazio, who toured the property on Thursday with associates, Discovery officials, and Byron Nelson, who lives in nearby Roanoke. "We have the tremendous definition of specimen trees, and most of the land has been cleared by the previous landowner. So you just come out here and see golf holes."

Golf central

Vaquero is also being constructed in an area that could soon overtake McKinney as the area's modern center of golf.

The club is being constructed on 436 acres of land that borders other ranches, including one owned by former Pittsburgh Steelers quarterback Terry Bradshaw. It is just south and east of Trophy Club Country Club, and Hillwood Development Corp.'s Circle T project (with 36 holes of golf) will be another of Vaquero's neighbors. Discovery

actually purchased a portion of Circle T land to create Vaquero.

There are three other courses currently being developed on the stretch of land between Grapevine and Texas Motor Speedway.

The Creeks at Beechwood Golf Club lies just south of TMS, and the Cowboys Golf Club and Opryland Golf Club near Lake Grapevine will give the area 10 courses (including Grapevine Municipal) by the end of 2002. All but three (Timarron, Trophy Club, Grapevine) will be 4 years old or less.

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