



## Palm Beach's Picture-Perfect PGA National Resort Enhances Image with New Course

By Dan Schlossberg

You don't have to play golf to enjoy a stay at PGA National Resort & Spa. But it helps. Although the plush Palm Beach Gardens resort radiates with recreational diversions, golf is the engine that keeps it humming.



With prime time for snowbirds right around the corner, the South Florida oasis will open a new course Nov. 1 and will welcome participants to its "Institute of Performance," a training facility designed to help both beginners and professionals -- plus the vast army of golfers who rate themselves somewhere in-between.

The new course, called The Fazio, is actually an extensive improvement of The Haig, an existing course that was the first at the PGA National when it opened in 1980. Four other courses (the Palmer, the Squire, the Estates, and The Champion) give PGA National its current configuration of 90 holes.

Coupled with the benign climate of South Florida, that complex should more than satisfy anyone bitten by the golf bug -- as participant or spectator.

PGA National offers plenty of both, with the PGA Tour's Honda Classic coming in early March and a legacy of hosting such major events as the PGA Championship (1987), the Ryder Cup (1983), and two decades of the Senior PGA Championship. Several legendary golfers live at or near the sprawling resort complex.

All are looking forward to the opening of The Fazio, which features a 70 per cent increase in green surface (from 1.5 to 2.5 acres); extension of course yardage to more than 7,000 yards; reconfiguration of tee-boxes from circular to square; a switch to Celebration Bermudagrass on tees and fairways; plus installation of state-of-the-art irrigation technology and PGA-inspired player-friendly tees that allow the course to be played at 5100 yards.

According to Joel Paige, vice president and managing director of the PGA National Resort since 2006, "We offer avid golfers a TOUR-quality practice and playing experience, including David Leadbetter and Dave Pelz academies and championship level club-fitting and practice facilities.

"We also offer a suite of amenities, from spa and tennis to fine dining and relaxing pool-side, that are comparable to the world's great luxury golf resorts."

The statistics are mind-boggling: a European spa that embraces 40,000 square feet; a comparable amount of conference space; a health and racquet club that covers 33,000 square feet and includes 19 Har Tru tennis courts; nine on-site restaurants and lounges; three outdoor mineral pools in a "Waters of the World" complex; plus proximity to both I-95 (exit 79B to PGA Boulevard) and the Florida Turnpike (two miles away).

Also within hailing distance is Roger Dean Stadium, a fine baseball facility that is the only one in Florida to host two teams during the six-week spring training period that starts in mid-February.

Not to mention all that golf, including a private member's club whose growing roster currently tops 2,000.

At the moment, the focus is on the Fazio, which follows in the footsteps of previous PGA National course player/designers Jack Nicklaus and Arnold Palmer.

Tom Fazio II, third generation of a family that designs award-winning courses, brought 20 years of experience to PGA National when he started the project.

According to Fazio, "We think the most appealing aspects of The Fazio are the newly reconfigured greens, tee-boxes, and bunkering, thus achieving an ideal balance where single-digit golfers will be fully challenged while higher handicaps will have a layout ideal for a day of enjoyable resort golf."

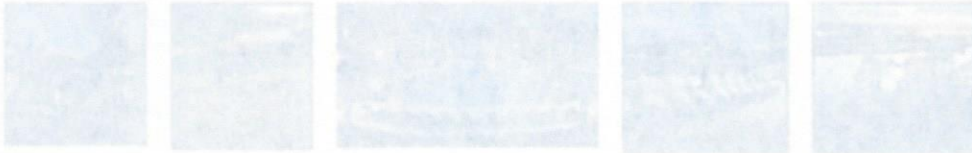
Those whose game need more toning can always enlist in the Institute of Performance, where David Donatucci is the director. According to Donatucci, former director of fitness and performance for PGA of America, the institute will focus on four programs: elite player development, recreational golfer improvement, onsite educational conferences, and national and collegiate team training and consulting.

The opening of both The Fazio and the Institute of Performance, plus a \$100 million revitalization that added new rooms and themed suites, seems certain to help PGA National add to the dozen major awards it has won in the past two years. The list includes "No. 1 Golf Resort in Florida" (About.com), "Top 50 Resorts" (Golf World), and "Best Tour Courses You

Can Play" (Golfweek).

PGA National deserves its impressive four-diamond rating from AAA. But since it keeps getting better, perhaps that coveted fifth diamond -- matching the handsome resort's number of courses -- is just past the next tee.

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With green lines for bunkers and light sand traps, the South Florida course will open a new course look. I and will welcome participants to the "Institute of Performance," a training facility designed to help both beginner and professional players improve their golf skills. The new course, called The Palm, is actually an extensive improvement of the Palm, an existing course that was the first at the PGA National when it opened in 1980. Four other courses (the Palm, the Estate, the Estate, and the Championship) give PGA National its current configuration of 80 holes.

Coupled with the design elements of South Florida, the complex efforts more than solidly enjoyed by the golfers -- as evidenced by the number of spectators.

PGA National offers plenty of both, with the PGA Tour's Honda Classic coming in early March and a legacy of leading and major events as the PGA Championship (1987), the Ryder Cup (1997), and two winners of the Senior PGA Championship. Several legendary golfers live at or near the sprawling resort complex.

All are looking forward to the opening of The Palm, which features a 10 per cent increase in green surface from 1.2 to 1.3 acres; expansion of course yardage to more than 7,000 yards; reconfiguration of the course from 18 to 27 holes; a switch to Cartesian coordinates on tee and fairway; plus installation of state-of-the-art irrigation technology and PGA-approved nifty-green grass that allows the course to be played in 3700 yards.

According to Joe Pate, vice president and managing director of the PGA National Resort since 2008, "We offer and enjoy a TOUR-quality practice and playing experience, including David Leadbetter and Dave Fair's excellent and championship level club-fitting and practice facilities."

"We also offer a table of amenities, from spa and tennis to fine dining and relaxing pool-side, that are comparable to the world's great luxury golf resorts."

The addition of new lodging, a European spa that embraces 40,000 square feet, a comprehensive program of maintenance, a health and wellness club that covers 25,000 square feet and includes 8 hot tubs, 10 tennis courts, two on-site restaurants and a lounge; three outdoor mineral pools in a "Village of the World" complex, plus proximity to both 1-95 and the PGA Boulevard and the Florida Turnpike (two miles away).

Also within walking distance is Roger Dean Stadium, a fine beach of facility that is the only one in Florida to host two teams during the six-week spring training period that starts in mid-February.

Not to mention the golf club, including a private members club whose growing roster currently tops 2,000.

At the resort, the focus is on the Palm, which follows in the footsteps of previous PGA National course player-developments, that include the Palm and the Estate.

For Pate, it's not just a matter of a family that designs world-class courses, brought 20 years of experience to PGA National when he started the project.

According to Pate, "We think the most exciting aspect of The Palm are the newly landscaped green, tee boxes, and bunkers, that allowing us that unique view-right before we fully changed with higher bunkers will have a special look for a day of enjoyment and fun."

Those whose game will more than enjoy the new look in the Institute of Performance, where David Dunaway is the Director. According to Dunaway, former director of fitness and performance for PGA of America, the institute will focus on the player's overall development, including golf improvement, on-site educational conferences, and national and college team training and consulting.

The opening of both The Palm and the Institute of Performance, plus a \$100 million reconfiguration that added new rooms and guest suites, seems certain to help PGA National add to the bottom major success it has won in the past two years. The first includes the "Old Palm" (1980), "The Old Estate" (1987), "The Old World" (1997), and "The Old Course" (2008).