

Golfweek

FOR SERIOUS GOLFERS

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A CERTAIN SWAGGER

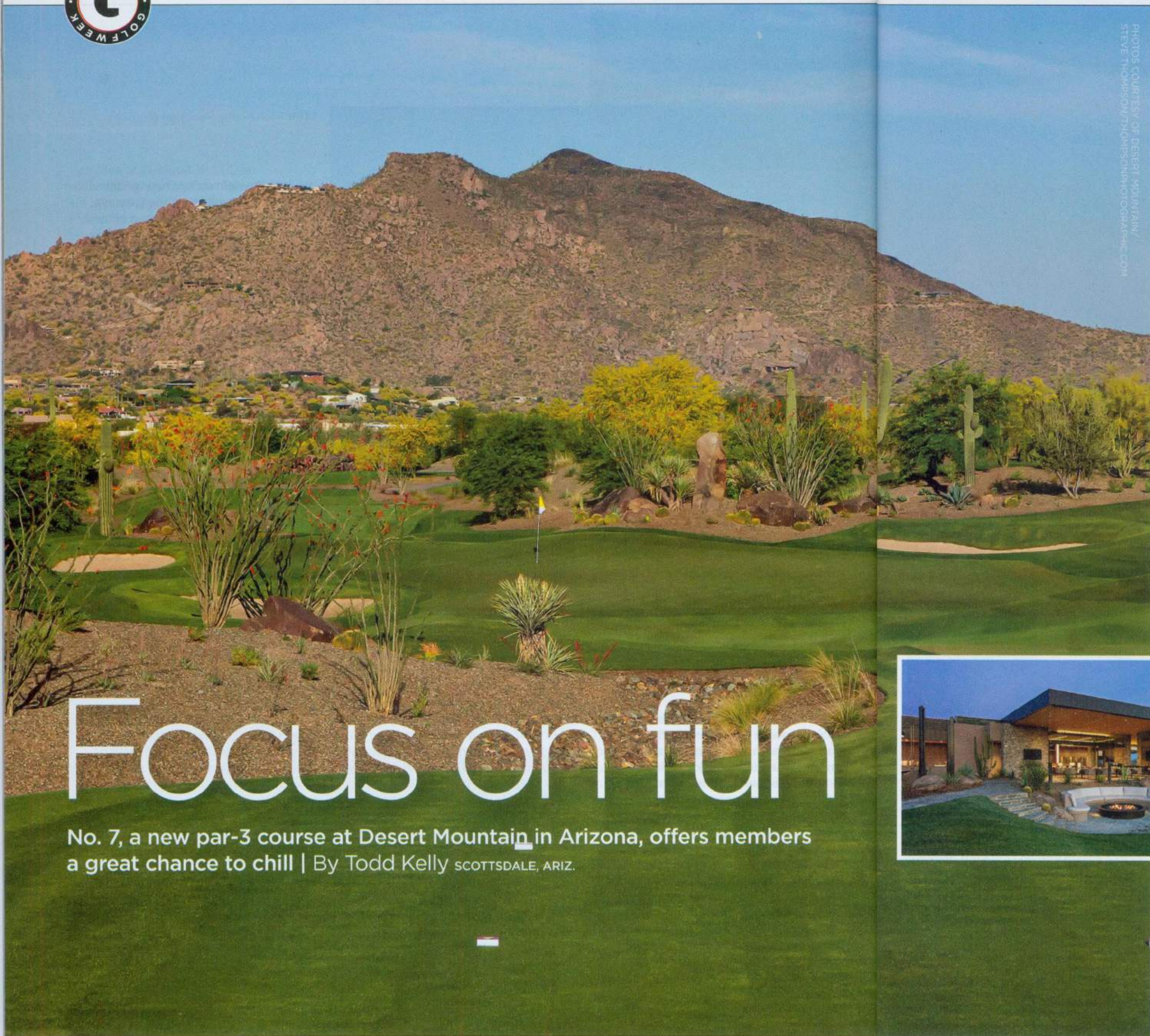
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Focus on fun

No. 7, a new par-3 course at Desert Mountain in Arizona, offers members a great chance to chill | By Todd Kelly SCOTTSDALE, ARIZ.

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Awalkable, par-3 golf course. Front tee boxes from which the young and old alike can putt, rather than drive, a ball down the fairway to the hole. Bunkers just off the tee boxes to bring an extra challenge to starting a hole. A relaxing, outdoor clubhouse with food, drink and desert views.

Last but not least, the most important ingredient to a day on the course: fun.

That's just what No. 7, the seventh and newest course at Desert Mountain Club, brings to Scottsdale.

"The most important guiding principle was just to have fun," said Wendell Pickett of Greey|Pickett Partners who, along with Bill Brownlee of M3 Companies, designed the course. The two members created what is just the second private par-54 course in the United States.

It brings a nice change of pace to a complex that already included six par-72 championship golf courses.

"There's more challenging, stressful golf just up the hill. ... We didn't need any more of that," Pickett said. "We needed somewhere we can we can come and create a bunch of smiles, a lot of fun, have a great time, a purpose for everybody to get together, have a beer. Create a really killer clubhouse and a golf experience that was a lot less stressful."

Add the simply named No. 7 to the roster of courses with western, rugged names such as Renegade, Cochise, Apache, Geronimo, Chiricahua and Outlaw. So why just 7?

"The whole idea is that everybody knows now that we have seven courses," Pickett said. "Other than being a

spiritual number, it's a lucky number, it's an attractive number. To me, it represents an opportunity to create the final course at Desert Mountain."

Measuring 3,114 yards, No. 7 is "sanctioned by the PGA, so from the back tees you can record a handicap. The average hole length from the tips is 175 yards, from the middle 147-149 and the front 80-85 yards," Pickett said.

"From the time it started. ... from what was once called Parcel 19 to what it is today, it is absolutely remarkable," said John Lyberger, the PGA director of golf at Desert Mountain. "This is the model and the future of fun going forward for golf. I've had a lot of my peers and local pros come up and take a look shortly after we opened (in spring 2019), and every one of them said, 'This is it. This is exactly what we need to grow the game. We wish we had the space to do it.'"

As for those bunkers just off the tees? It's a new concept of alternative teeing that Desert Mountain calls the Sandy, which allows golfers to work on their bunker play by starting each hole in sand.

Desert Mountain sits at 2,745 feet above sea level, about 1,600 feet higher than Phoenix proper, which is located about 40 miles south. That allows for different agronomy and course maintenance than what is normally found below.

"This is a year-round, cool-season grass," Lyberger said. "Bent grass tees, greens, fairways, approaches. It's a mix of blue and fescue, a little bit of rye in the rough, which gives it that different coloration, different definition out here, but an opportunity to never have to really shut it down to overseed."

The Jack Nicklaus-designed Desert Mountain's first course opened in 1987. Now, 32 years later, 7 caps things off and brings a variety of options for golfers of all ages and skill sets.

"It's an attraction. It's a beautiful green space. It's not only just green but it's functional," Lyberger said. "It gives you an opportunity to live and to play in your backyard and in your community and become part of a like-minded environment where you can go to a clubhouse and have dinner and have a cocktail and watch the sunset, play bocce, pickleball, whatever the case may be. It's a place where it's your happy place, you want to have fun." **Gwk**



LEFT: No. 7, the par-54 course at Desert Mountain

INSET: The clubhouse at No. 7, which earned its name as the seventh course at the club