

The Highlander

Wednesday, March 10, 2010

Skywater, Nicklaus seeing good progress

by Stephen Colwell
Highlander Sports Editor



Staff Photo by Stephen Colwell

Jack Nicklaus spent time with the press on Thursday to talk about the development of his signature course, Summit Rock at Horseshoe Bay.

1,618-acre plot of land that lies between FM 2147 and SHW 71 to see how it is developing. The layout of the 1,200 home sites and the golf course has been roughly carved and home sites are being sold, but the course is still in its infancy, with bulldozers still doing the majority of the work to move the soil.

Nicklaus made it clear that the progress is a very good sign for golf in the U.S. While courses are being built all over the world, very little has been done in the last year in the United States. According to Nicklaus, his design company, Nicklaus Design, brought in only .3 percent of their income from the United States in the 2009 calendar year.

The developers are projecting the courses' completion by the end of the 2010 year, but it won't be open for play until the spring of 2011.

"The course will be between 6,500 and 6,600 yards long. I wanted to design a course for the people who will play it the majority of the time," Nicklaus said. "A golf course with a little spice in it is good. When someone comes off one of my courses I want them to ask when the next time they can come back is. I want to create a course where you get 18 great experiences on 18 different holes."

Summit Rock will be a new style of course for the Horseshoe Bay area with a mixture of link-style golf and traditional American-style holes. The course is built on land that has a large hill with 150 feet of elevation gain, so "routing is the most important thing to keep in mind," Nicklaus said. He went on to talk about the way he used the natural habitat in the course's design. "What shows up on the ground is what I want to see there. I want to use the lay of the land and as much natural habitat as I can, and not as much wall-to-wall green grass."

Nicklaus was very candid about the Horseshoe Bay area and why it is one of the few courses in the country that are moving forward with construction.

"The Hill Country is a place where a lot of golf is already played. The lakes certainly bring in a lot of people, and the weather here is great almost year around. And the lakes give you a lot of natural help to work with (when building a course)."

Nicklaus Design currently has hundreds of courses in development across the globe. Recently Nicklaus spent time in Moscow and St. Petersburg, Russia on courses he is designing. He also mentioned the great number of courses that are cropping up all across Asia, including 18 that are under construction in China. Another hot spot is Brazil. Since receiving the bid for the 2016 Olympic Games, the first games in which golf will be played, demand for courses is quite high.

The poor economy has affected nearly every industry across the nation, including golf. But Thursday afternoon Jack Nicklaus, the Golden Bear, was in Horseshoe Bay at the Skywater sales office for two reasons.

"My visit is two fold. First I want everyone to know the project here is live and well. Our course here is one of few in the nation that is moving forward," Nicklaus said.

The second reason for his visit is to take a look at the