



NORTHERN CALIFORNIA'S HIDDEN GEM

Cache Creek Casino Resort/Yocha Dehe Golf Club

By Robert Kaufman

DAY AFTER DAY, a steady stream of cars and buses cruise the two-lane highway through the rural farmland of Northern California's Capay Valley to reach the unincorporated community of Brooks. The scenic valley, approximately 90 minutes northeast of San Francisco, might be off the radar completely if not for the frequent surge of visitors in quest of jackpots and birdies.

For here, amidst the serenity, Vegas-like slot machines, table games, and poker rooms are found at Cache Creek Casino Resort. Those in search of another kind of excitement will find it on the property's Yocha Dehe (pronounced Yo-cha Dee-hee) Golf Club.

For first-time patrons, what would seem an anonymous locale for an upscale resort and golf course is really not that mystifying upon realizing the 11,000 acres accommodating the

200-room hotel casino, spa, restaurants, entertainment venue, and 18 championship holes is sovereign land that was claimed thousands of years ago by tribal ancestors of the Yocha Dehe Wintun Nation.

However, since the first known tribal-owned golf course blossomed on the American landscape nearly 40 years ago in New Mexico, Yocha Dehe GC represents another in a long line of golf-casino combo play-

grounds (currently 67 tribes in 20 different states own 100 courses) to hit the bonanza on Native American lands.

By no means have these courses been built merely to provide an additional resort amenity. Many have risen up the golf chain to achieve noteworthy positions in national rankings, including Yocha Dehe when it was selected one of *Golfweek's* "Best Resort Courses" and "Top Casino Courses" in



America four years after it opened in 2008.

It has also fared well with accolades presented by their management partner, Troon Golf, achieving the “4-peat” last year with a fourth consecutive guest service award from among all worldwide Troon-managed facilities. Shuffle in Kyle Jones, Troon’s 2012 Superintendent of the Year, who ensures more than half the Certified Audubon course is maintained with organic fertilizers, and the odds for a first-class experience are clearly stacked in the golfer’s favor at Yocha Dehe.

“It’s a championship-caliber course where we are creating a country club atmosphere

for every guest,” says Rusty Seymour, director of golf, who was present during the course’s opening phase but then left for a brief stint at Troon’s Abu Dhabi Golf Club in the United Arab Emirates before returning over five years ago. “With our location not being near any noisy roads, pristine year-round playing conditions and our high level of guest services is what sets us apart.”

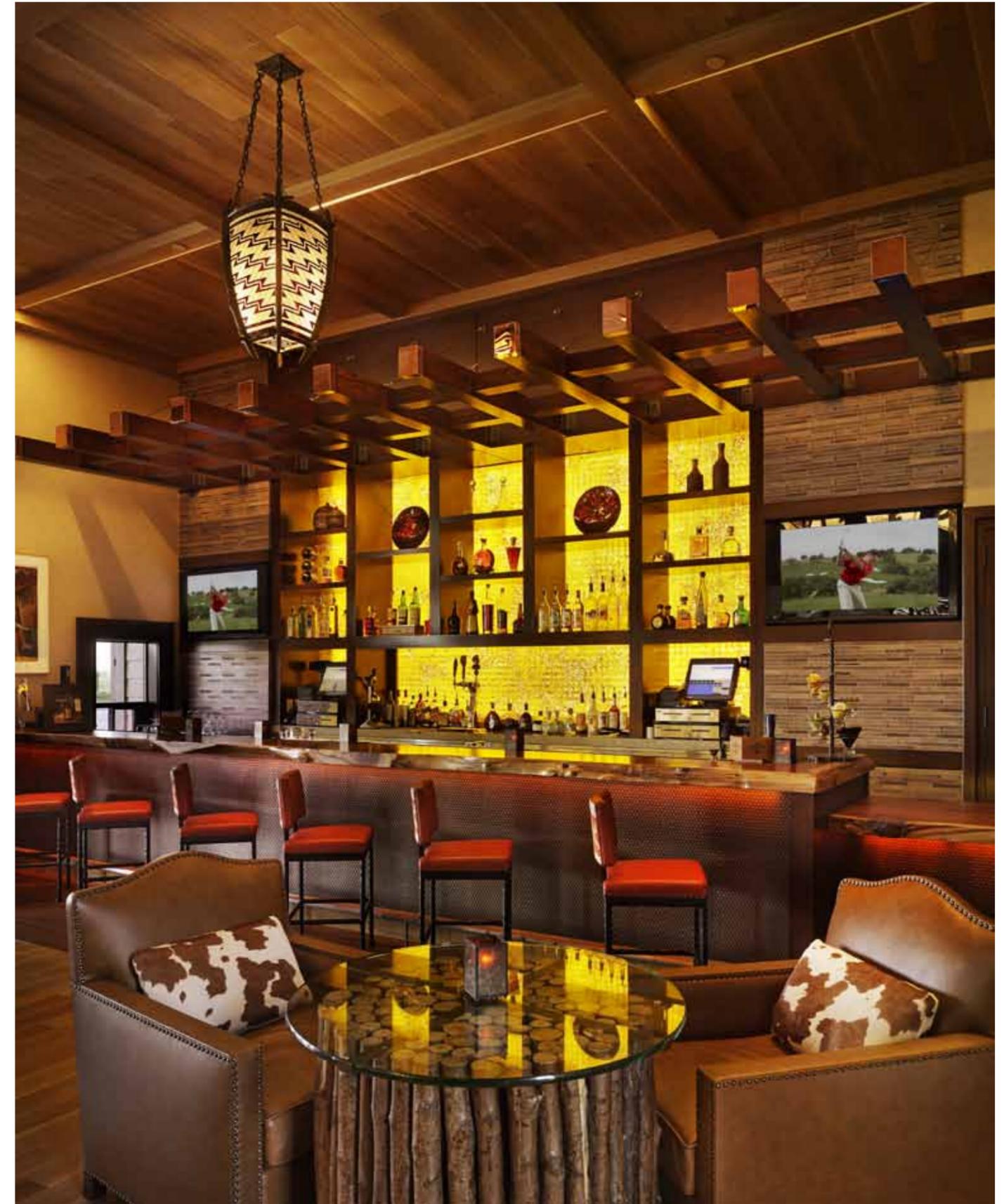
What makes this course so appealing is that unlike the majority of courses built in the last 20-30 years, Yocha Dehe is not driven by real estate sales and therefore not visually impacted by homes lining the

fairways. The opportunity to route 18 holes in such circumstances is highly appealing to course designers. So when the decision was made by the tribe to add a golf course to their already established gaming operation (since 1985), they looked no further than their own backyard and dealt the winning hand to nearby Sacramento-based architect and former PGA Tour pro, Brad Bell.

“When I first walked the valley with the tribe back in 2000, they didn’t really see much since it was a flat, treeless field with plenty of weeds, but I loved the location and how it offered so much visual



NEAR ENOUGH TO THE CITIES OF THE SAN FRANCISCO BAY AREA, YET REMOTE ENOUGH TO BE SERENE, CACHE CREEK GOLF CLUB IS A PLACE YOU’LL WANT TO UNPACK AND STAY A FEW DAYS.





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excitement and privacy," Bell says. "In the end, it turned out to be a dream project to work with a client who, after I was able to convince why something needed to be done, allowed me the freedom to create my own signature and a resort course that sticks out from the crowd. And with Troon doing such an amazing job maintaining the course, it makes me look even better."

The creator may have had loose reins sculpting his vision but make no mistake, the tribe left a distinct footprint stamped

at every hole. In addition to safeguarding any sacred grounds from being touched, as Bell toured with the tribal council members around the layout it became clear what to name each hole. And that they did in their native Patwin language, starting with "Sul Sah" (Eagle Eye) on the first tee box perched 160 feet above the fairway and providing a panoramic vista of the valley floor.

Wildlife is the prevalent theme on the majority of holes with names such as "Watak Kewe" (Frog's House), "Tiwidl"

(Rattlesnake), "Ano Kowa" (Turtle Back), "Sedeo" (Coyote), "Pehtino Hoya" (Animal Gathering Place), and the finishing "Selai" (Bear), named more because of its difficulty as the No. 2 handicap hole.

"Depending which tees (they range from 7,337 yards to 5,426 yards) golfers play there are a good variety of holes, with a combination of longer par-4s, a couple of risk-reward holes including the 328-yard eighth, and two of the four par-5s that are usually reachable depending on weather

conditions," Seymour says. "There's also a good variety of yardages on the par-3s. Off the tee, fairways are wide open and if you're able to avoid the greenside bunkers and land on the relatively large greens you can put yourself into position to score low."

Yocha Dehe is designed to play comfortably for resort golfers or toughened up to host such events as qualifiers for the U.S. Open, U.S. Amateur, and U.S. Mid-Am. With dramatic bookend holes and a scenic collection in between, the wow factor plays a major role throughout. Plus, if playing during harvest period, you'll catch the pleasing scent of fresh-picked grapes on a few back-nine holes that skirt through vineyards planted by the tribe for producing their own wine under the label of Séka Hills.

Many courses are promoted as "hidden gems." Yocha Dehe fits that description to a tee.

■ YochaDeheGolfClub.com



A TRULY ENJOYABLE ROUND OF GOLF IS COMPLEMENTED AT YOCHA DEHE GOLF CLUB BY SCENIC SURROUNDS AND DELICIOUS CUISINE.

