



COURSE REVIEW

MOON VALLEY cc



moon valley greens just can't be beat



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As a writer for Tee Times I am fortunate to be able to play a lot of wonderful golf courses. Typically that means non-private clubs, someplace available to all of our readers. So when I heard that Moon Valley Country Club is now accepting a limited amount of outside play, I got really excited for two reasons; the first being selfish in that I get to go play this wonderful old track and the second is that I get to share that experience with you and that hopefully, you will go play it as well. Trust me, it is worth the effort!

Moon Valley is situated in an established neighborhood in North/Central Phoenix, just north of Thunderbird and west of 7th Street; easy and quick to get to from just about anywhere. As you approach the clubhouse you start to realize that this is going to be a unique experience. No adobe desert-style structure here, this is the kind of clubhouse many of us grew up at in the mid-west or back east. A multitude of tennis courts, an aquatic center designed for family fun and club competitions, a full fitness center, great practice facilities, "The Moonwalk" Par 3

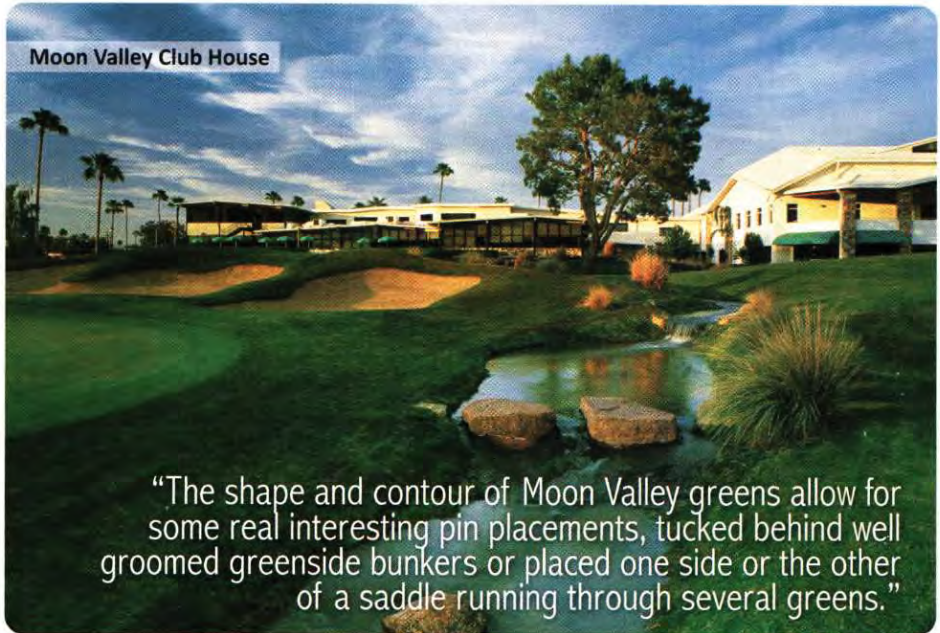
MOON VALLEY COUNTRY CLUB

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course, and a choice of an elegant dining room or club room for whatever mood you're in. Oh, and if your daughter is planning on getting married there are beautiful banquet facilities, indoors and out, just perfect for the occasion.

At the bag drop my companion and I were greeted by a friendly member of the staff who loaded our clubs on a clean and well stocked cart, gave us directions to the pro shop and wished us a good round. Companion jokingly asked about the course record and was answered with "59 shot by Annika Sorenstam



Moon Valley Club House

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in 2001 en route to a victory at the Standard Register Ping LPGA tournament...beat that!" As you can guess, the course record is still intact. Moon Valley played host to that prestigious event from 1987 to 2003 and was always a favorite of the ladies. The course was designed by Dick Wilson and opened in 1960; it underwent a facelift by Bob Cupp and Associates during the Solheim ownership days in preparation for the tournament. While I never saw the original layout, what was before us now was looking to be as good as it gets.

The golf course is a traditional, tree lined layout, and we are talking 50 year old big trees. The kind that gets in your way off the tee and hitting your approach shot....cacti don't do that. The shot shaping demand from the course is one of the true qualities that set it apart from the more contemporary desert layouts in the Valley. In a classic design style, sight lines off the tee are often provided by fairway bunkers in the distance, gives you something to aim at and to avoid at the same time. One of the true markings of any good golf course has to be the greens, they are after all where the hole is and that is the object of the game. The greens at Moon Valley rank among some of the best I have

seen. Not only are they in perfect condition and smooth as a pool table but 'fun to putt'. It took many attempts before companion finally figured out he was over-reading them, damn because I had him two down on the front due to his poor putting. The breaks are very subtle and the greens are fairly large... including the unique shared green of #2 and #8. The shape and contour of Moon Valley greens allow for some real interesting pin placements, tucked behind well groomed greenside bunkers or placed one side or the other of a saddle running through several greens. #14 green is a true cloverleaf shape and requires a very accurate approach to avoid bunkers in-between the three narrow corners and all on different levels. In my mind, the signature hole of Moon Valley has to be #9. This gentle dogleg has a pond on the left at about 230 yards off the tee. Avoiding that leaves you a mid-iron to a green fronted by a beautiful meandering creek that you can't really see the first time on the course. I think my companion will remember it next time since he fell short and wet. I on the other hand, will always remember this golf course, all of it! And isn't that one true test of a fabulous course, when you can remember it hole by hole and can't wait to return again and again.