

# FAIRWAYS & GREENS Reno-Tahoe

Lake Tahoe  
Reno  
Carson Valley  
Truckee  
Graeagle

INSIDE: IN THE FACE OF UNCERTAINTY, RENO-TAHOE OPEN PUTS ON ANOTHER WINNING SHOW

## TASTY CUPP O' GRIZZLY

Once in a while *Fairways & Greens* breaks its own unwritten rule and puts a private course in prime position. This is one of those times.

As the boom in upscale private mountain courses continues — there's one under construction and at least three more on the drawing board in Truckee, Calif., alone — it's refreshing to find a developer willing to take a chance on a site that isn't within 10 minutes of an interstate or part of Suburbia on the Move. The folks behind Grizzly Ranch fit the description, and that's big news.

The spanking-new golf course at Grizzly Ranch is a bit out of the way, perched on a mountainside in one of the Golden State's least populated areas — Plumas County, about an hour north of Lake Tahoe and Reno and a solid four hours from the Bay Area — but its developers from Lowe Enterprises consider that a plus. You've got to want to be there to make the trip as an absentee member or make the permanent move as a resident. Either way, the golf course is Grizzly Ranch's biggest draw, thanks to two little-but-big words: Bob Cupp.

This is the Georgia-based Cupp's first Sierra design — indeed, his first in Northern California — and to us, that's big news too. He might be *FG's* favorite designer, next to Tom Fazio, for good

reason. Think Crosswater and Pumpkin Ridge in Oregon, Big Sky near Whistler, British Columbia, Starr Pass in Arizona and, farther away, Druid Hills, Hawks Ridge and The Links at Savannah Harbor in Georgia. Think tough-but-fair and often transcendent designs culled from all types of terrain — mountain, links, heathland, wetlands, desert. At Grizzly Ranch, Cupp has accomplished what one of his mentors, a guy named Jack, first did in Colorado years ago and repeated at Montréux in Reno and Old Greenwood in Truckee more recently, adding another miraculous chapter to the book of mountain golf.

BY VIC WILLIAMS

“When I first saw the land, it immediately brought to mind Castle Pines,” Cupp says. “It has the same topography, the same elevation, same slope, same soil and same understory — the forested areas along each fairway that are open enough to let you walk around. I couldn't believe my good fortune when I saw what I had to work with.”

Cupp was on Nicklaus' design team for years before hanging out his own shingle. He even had a hand in Castle Pines, though he's quick to point out “It's

Jack's course all the way. It's his design as are all of them with his name on them. He shows up and does the work.”

Cupp has also laid out courses with other top-name pros, including Tom Kite, Jerry Pate, Sam Snead, Craig Stadler, Fuzzy Zoeller and Fred Couples, and says they all bring something different to the process. “They are as different as anyone else,” he says. “And I have been the major benefactor. Being inside the heads of this many of the game's greatest players has been education and reassuring.”

At Grizzly, Cupp got an assist of a much different but equally satisfying kind, working with renowned land planner Gage Davis. “Gage was invaluable on this project. He knew the acreage so well and was incredibly open and giving and worked hard to make sure the routing worked as seamlessly with the land as possible.”

Having Lowe project manager Mike Mohler on board was a godsend, too. “Everybody has been so open to making this course the best it can be,” Cupp says. “All the people on the real estate side realized how special this site is. It took years for them to work out all the environmental issues, but look what we have now — a course I can count among my best work.”

The Cupp-Lowe credo of cooperation has resulted in 180 acres of sweeping, gently rolling fairways that skirt meadows, launch headlong through corridors of lodgepole pine and bend assiduously to nature's whim. “In total I'd say we moved only 400 [thousand cubic yards of earth],” Cupp says. “So many of the contours were already there — the course just kind of presented itself to us.”

Cupp and Gage no doubt moved most of that dirt to fashion Grizzly's greens, which are designed to run at about 12 on the Stimpmeter. It's doubtful the members will want that kind of speed day to day, but when the club championship comes up, Superintendent





HOLE 12

Rich Scholes — who did such a yeoman job at the Dragon just up the road during his tenure there — and his crew can give them more teeth in no time.

“What do I like about designing greens? Everything,” Cupp says. “I like variety — a little right-to-left, a little left-to-right. I like to keep golfers guessing as the ball gets closer to the pin. I’ll put in more subtle breaks on some holes and bigger tiers on others. False fronts work on uphill holes, give you a sense of where the green actually begins, so I’ve put in a couple of them here.”

Sizes range from Pebble Beach small (including No. 18, the last of four stirring 5-pars, with water up two-thirds of its left side and a narrow tongue of turf that tells the player, in no uncertain terms, that he or she must carry the approach all the way to the putting surface) to wide but shallow (No. 3, whose proper club selection is driver/8-iron/9-iron for men and driver/utility metal/mid-iron for women) to long and big-boned (No. 10, which plays straight downwind and short). Surrounding them are all sorts of humps, hollows, bunkers both shallow and way deep (a nod to Jack, perhaps) and enough angles and choices to keep the most ardent short-game lover honest.

The magic continues from tee to green. Even the most forward tees have a forced carry here and there (and, as at Crosswater, a minimum 175-yard carry is di rigueur from the whites and longer

## Grizzly Ranch

PORTOLA, CALIF. in Feather River Country

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**DIRECTIONS:** From Bay Area and Sacramento: Take Interstate 80 east, exit onto CA 89/CA 267 (Exit 188B). Continue on CA 89 for approximately 40 miles, then turn left and get onto Westside Road and follow CR A23. Turn left onto CA 70, then right on Grizzly Road.

**MEMBERSHIPS:** 380 available, approximately 120 sold; \$50,000 buy-in (resident or non-resident) with a \$10,000 credit and monthly fees suspended until Lodge completion.

Real estate: third-acre to 3-plus-acre sites, priced from \$200,000 to \$650,000, include forest, creekside, golf and premium golf sites with mountain views. Large estate sites bordering National Forest land also available.

**For more on Grizzly Ranch’s real estate, visit the April 2005 issue of *Fairways & Greens* online at [www.fairwaysgreens.com](http://www.fairwaysgreens.com)**

tees). Creeks or ponds come into play on 11 holes and fescue sways unabated in all the right places, working in concert with target bunkers, rocks and trees to define landing areas. Driving lanes are more generous than they look and “gambling”

lanes are justly tight. As a former amateur and professional player of not inconsiderable talent, Cupp deals harshly with poor judgment or, worse, missed opportunities. But hit it where he (and God) ask you to, and you’ll find yourself flush with birdie-ops.

Cupp also proudly employs his penchant for building long 4-pars and 5-pars into the wind and short ones downwind. It’s unconventional, but wait: The net result of the opposite tack is a course where every hole plays about the same distance. Boring, to say the least. With Cupp’s plan, a big hitter actually must stop and think before letting it rip, a one-dimensional wedge player is quickly exposed and smart players come away with the spoils.

Grizzly’s 5-pars bring this philosophy into full focus. Take No. 12: At 649 yards from the blacks, 621 from the greens and 546 from the white tees, it’s longer than any other hole here, and most others in the Sierra; even with the 5,200-foot elevation figured in, it’s three shots home — driver from elevated tee up the right side, mid-iron or hybrid layup to a C-note out, and a flip over stream to green. It’s the kind of hole where a mid-handicapper can hold his own with a scratch player if he’s patient.

And that’s the gist of Cupp: He makes sure his version of modern golf is fun but honest, penal when one loses his way but ultra-rewarding when players “listen” to his directions.



"We've all heard the phrase, 'playable for every level of golfer.' Well, that's bull ...," Cupp says. "You can't hold yourself to that standard and have a great course."

On that score, call the Grizzly great. Cupp has expertly imbued it with elements of the toughest private courses (including Augusta National, where Cupp has had a hand in recent changes) and the most memorable resort layouts (like Crosswater, Big Sky or Savannah Harbor), and laced it with highlights from old-line designers such as Donald Ross (Oakland Hills) or Alister MacKenzie (Pasatiempo). Right from the opening bell, he's created a bear of a mountain course that makes Grizzly's \$50,000 buy-in seem like a bargain, no matter how far members have to drive to put it to use.

We'd certainly buy in if we had that kind of scratch, especially when we figure in the high service bar set by the staff, the longer-than-Tahoe golf season and the many non-golf amenities and activities, from hiking to cross-country skiing to a flyfishing club to a spa to fine dining in the already-built Lake House and the Lodge, which will be built on what Cupp calls the most perfect site he's ever seen — overlooking both starting tees, both finishing greens and the spacious practice facility.

And that's why we broke our own rule. So there.



HOLE 9, with Beckwourth Peak

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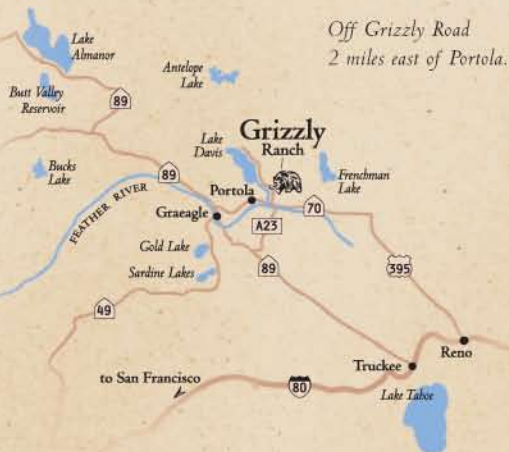
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