

Tom Watson's Independence Course at Reunion Resort & Club of Orlando is Destined for Greatness

Reunion, FL -- (Early 2004) – As one of professional golf's most prolific champions, Tom Watson, winner of eight major championships including five British Opens, is universally lauded for his passionate play, exceptional course strategy skills and his attention to detail. As a golf course architect, Watson brings a similar focus and dedication to each of his designs. Since Watson designs only one or two courses each year, his commitment to excellence in golf course architecture is unquestioned.

Watson's latest design is the Independence Course at Reunion Resort & Club of OrlandoSM, which is scheduled to debut in early 2004. A traditional parkland course with a windswept, native appearance, the Independence Course, the first Tom Watson-designed course in Florida, is set on former pasture land and orange groves on the lower end of Highland Ridge and the Davenport Creek Preserve. The un-Florida like undulating terrain features elevation variations of as much as 45 feet from tee to green.

"I designed and oversaw the construction of the Independence Course at Reunion Resort & Club of Orlando so the golfer will experience the three fundamental requirements of an outstanding course: beauty, variety and challenge," says Watson, who uses a hands-on approach with each one of his designs.

Based in Westwood, Kan., Tom Watson Design's courses include Cassique in Kiawah Island, S.C., National Golf Club of Kansas City in Kansas City, Mo. and Phoenix Resort in Miyazaki, Japan. Watson also collaborated with Sandy Tatum and Robert Trent Jones, Jr. on the design of the Spanish Bay Golf Links on California's Monterey Peninsula and he re-designed the Old Course at Ballybunion in Ireland.

Watson visited the Independence Course site more than 10 times on the front nine alone to review every detail of the construction of the course from shaping to design to landscaping.

Highlighted by fast, firm and wide rolling fairways, a variety of strategically placed bunkers and large greens, the 7,257-yard, par 72 Independence Course is as much about strategy as it is about length.

PGA Tour star Fred Couples once described Watson as "one of the finest strategists in golf...he always has a specific plan for every hole he plays."

Watson the designer is an extraordinary strategist as well and the Independence Course demands a well thought out approach from every player regardless of skill level. "Tom has played the greatest courses in the world so he has an incredible encyclopedia to pull from in terms of courses," says Bob Gibbons, a golf course architect with Watson Design who worked closely on the Independence Course project. "He has also played in numerous pro-ams and knows what the average amateur is capable of and what the pros can do."

On the Independence, Watson encourages golfers to take advantage of openings to

greens and he puts a premium on a solid short game with spacious green complexes where club selection can vary from putter to lob wedge to three-wood. Watson, long heralded as a phenomenal bunker player, utilizes bunkers on each hole either as hazards or as landmarks golfers can use to shape their shot.

"Tom always wants golfers to think their way around his courses," says Gibbons. "If you get lazy mentally on a Watson course that's when things can go badly."

To be sure, though, even if a golfer has a bad playing day and struggles on the Independence Course, he or she will still be inspired by the magnificent surroundings. Holes 11 through 17 border the pristine Davenport Creek Preserve, a heavily wooded area dominated by palmetto, pine, live oak and cypress trees. Several of the elevated tees have great views of wetlands. In addition, the man-made landscaping is among the most beautiful in Florida. More than \$750,000 was spent on the landscaping and framing the course with 15 varieties of native grasses, azaleas, hibiscus, camellias and other foliage.

The developer/builder of the Independence Course, Celebration, Fla.-based The Ginn Company, went to great lengths to protect the integrity of the course. Almost all of the housing is on the perimeter of the golf course and no holes are double-loaded with real estate. Further enhancing the separation of housing and golf course is a 30 to 50 foot heavily landscaped buffer area between any home and the course.

"The Independence Course is a great example of Tom Watson, the designer, at the top of his game," says Jerry Thompson, vice president of Golf Operations, The Ginn Company. "It delivers on all of Watson's promises. It's beautiful to look at, it's challenging and there's tremendous variety on every hole."

About The Ginn Company

The Ginn Company, based in Celebration, Fla., is a privately-held real estate development and management firm. The company engages in resort development, real estate sales and golf course management within its master-planned communities.

The company's principals have more than three decades of experience in creating extraordinary large-scale, recreation-oriented communities, including Wild Dunes and Dunes West in South Carolina and Sandestin on north Florida's "Emerald Coast." Current Ginn Company projects include RiverTowne Country Club in Mt. Pleasant, S.C., Hammock Beach & Yacht Harbor Village near St. Augustine, Fla., Reunion Resort & Club of Orlando, south of Orlando, Fla., Watersong on Hutchinson Island, Fla. and Tesoro and Waterford on the St. Lucie in Port St. Lucie on Florida's historic "Treasure Coast."

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