

Trump Dons Cap of Mansion Builder

By Josh Cohen - Peninsula News

RPV – Donald Trump came to Rancho Palos Verdes Friday to talk about the emergence of multimillion-dollar mansions at his 260-acre Trump National Golf Club. What an audience made up of local dignitaries, top real estate agents and media came away with was Trump's excitement about an anticipated summer golf course opening, harsh words for a local School District attorney and plans to construct a hotel to attract guests to his only West Coast resort.

Trump, donning a pink tie, strode into his newly remodeled ballroom after all others sharing the dais – from RPV City Council members to Coldwell Banker President Bob Foster – had been introduced.



"It's been a difficult job, very difficult," said Trump of his resort, formerly known as Ocean Trails and still known as the golf course that lost its 18th hole to a landslide in 1999. "It's been a problem and a mess, and there were 3 million yards of dirt sitting in the Pacific Ocean. They say to this day, [the new 18th hole] is the most expensive golf hole ever built – \$61 million."

Since it gained approvals in 1992, Trump National's owners have wanted to construct expansive homes overlooking the golf course and panoramic scenes of Catalina Island. A series of events, from a downturn in the economy to lawsuits with neighbors over view impairments, finally culminating in the landslide and subsequent bankruptcy of the Zuckerman brothers, led to Trump's takeover in 2002. The purchase price at the time was \$27 million, considered low for a project that sits on what its new owner calls "the finest piece of property anywhere in the world for a golf course."

Trump immediately launched into repairing the landslide and last fall closed the public course to remodel the original Pete Dye design.

"We could have left the course the way it was," he said, "or we could have built a great course. We decided to go out and do a truly great course. I think this course will be better than Pebble Beach."

"This is a major milestone in this development," said RPV Mayor Larry Clark of the plan to finally construct homes on the site. "This project has a long history, not all of it the best. It brings a tremendous amount of opportunity to our community. I hasten to add it brings additional tax revenues to our city as these estates are built, as well as the prestige and recognition that RPV and the entire Palos Verdes Peninsula is really the gem of the California coastline."

The developer plans to open the course in June, just in time for the 2005 Office Depot Championship in September, which Trump solidified with the LPGA last winter.

But Trump said he doesn't want to open without a driving range, the plans for which currently await city approval.

"It's going to be very hard to tell Anika Sorenstam in September and everybody else, 'Enjoy the course, but you can't practice,'" said Trump.

Homes on the Range

Before Trump took the reins, Ocean Trails' planners split the development into two sections. The far eastern section, which contains most of the golf course, is home to 36 residential lots known as The Estates at Trump National Golf Club.

Homes sizes at The Estates will be up to 10,000 square feet and prices will range from \$6 million to \$15 million.

"They'll be marketed to local people, people from New York, people from Chicago, people that want to live here," said Trump. "There's been tremendous interest."

The Trump Organization will build the homes itself.

"One of the reasons we wanted to build the homes is that we don't want to have a hodge-podge," said Trump. "We don't want a number of houses on the top of the hill that don't look good for the golf course. It's always been about the golf course."

Trump said he still entertains plans to construct a hotel on the site's western half near the proposed driving range, an additional 12 homes and the refurbished clubhouse.

"There will be bungalows at a very high level, like the Beverly Hills Hotel," he said. "There won't be any

taxing of the School District, because [hotel guests] won't be needing the schools. So we're actually reducing the number of houses, adding tremendous open space and instead of adding houses, adding smaller bungalows. We'll probably be submitting that over the next few months."