

# Madison Club's best feature? It's the golf course, of course

Forget for a moment that the car valets at the new Madison Club are dressed better than the maitre d' at an exclusive French restaurant, or that practice balls at the club come in supple leather bags. Forget that Madison Club may be taking service at private clubs in the desert to a new level.

The true appeal of the newest 18-hole course in the desert is that Tom Fazio has added to his already impressive list of designs in the desert.

Fazio, one of the game's best architects, has put together a



LARRY BOHANNAN

playable yet challenging course at The Madison Club. Those who are familiar with some of his other work in the desert, such as The Vintage Club, the Canyons Course at Bighorn and The Quarry at La Quinta, know

that Fazio puts together beautiful layouts that somehow seem to fit the exact needs of the developer and the membership.

The Madison Club, located off Avenue 52 near Monroe Street in La Quinta, easily slips into the same category of Fazio's other work in the desert. Wide fairways with plenty of landing areas are still made challenging by reachable bunkers and perhaps more water features than golfers might expect from a Fazio layout in the Coachella Valley. The course also has some large, interesting greens that seem to curl

around bunkers and up and down hills.

## Another masterpiece

Fazio's variety seems to come out most on the course's par-5s. The fifth, at 543 yards from the middle set of tees, takes nearly a 90-degree turn around a lake. The 541-yard eighth features a fairway split by a stream, forcing players to make a decision on an aggressive line to the left or a safer lay up to the right.

On the 534-yard 18th, the green seems to hang over a lake to the right, meaning only the

bravest of golfers will take a shot at the putting surface in two.

Also separating The Madison Club, the 126th course in the desert, from other private clubs in the valley is the level of service obvious from the moment a golfer opens his door to have this car valeted.

Most of the high-profile private courses built in the desert in the last 10 to 12 years put a premium on service to the membership. The Madison Club's version of mat service includes someone at every turn calling you Mr. or Mrs., temporary facil-

ities that could pass as permanent and a pro shop that sells suits.

But service rings hollow if the main attraction, the golf course itself, doesn't measure up to the same high standard. That isn't a problem at The Madison Club, where Fazio again shows why he's one of the busiest and perhaps the best designer working today.

**Larry Bohannan** covers golf for the Desert Sun. His columns appear Tuesdays, Fridays and Sundays. He can be reached at 778-4633.