

Friday, Jul. 30, 2010

[Comments \(0\)](#)[Recommend \(0\)](#)

Perhaps the NW's best course you've never heard of

By **Eric Degerman**, [SportsTriCities.com](#)

ROSLYN — There's little doubt that [Tumble Creek at Suncadia](#) ranks among the Northwest's elite golf courses.

However, not a great number of public players know much about Tom Doak's design at Suncadia Resort in Roslyn, near Cle Elum.

"I must have run into three guys a day at the Seattle Golf Show who had never heard of Tumble Creek," said David Naboychik, Tumble Creek's PGA assistant professional recently told the Northwest Golf Media Association.

Because this is the private layout among Suncadia's trio of courses, few aside from the Northwest's top players get to know Tumble Creek's timber-lined 2,000 acres first-hand.

It's been the setting for qualifying tournaments for the U.S. Open, U.S. Women's Open and U.S. Senior Open. Tumble Creek also is negotiating to become the home for the 2012 Northwest Open.

At the same time, Doak's design, which opened in 2005, gives it remarkable playability for rank-and-file amateurs. That allows it to serve as a nice setting for as many as four benefit tournaments annually, including one for the Jamie Moyer Foundation.

However, Suncadia's 64,000-acre development has yet to grow as intended. While the Prospector Course opened in 2004, the Rope Rider Course, designed for families, was originally planned to open in 2007. It's now scheduled to open in 2011.

And Tumble Creek has not grown its membership as quickly as hoped. While there's room for 600 homes and 470 members, Naboychik told the NWGMA touring group that Tumble Creek has just 193 members. That total is trending up though, thanks to a recent introductory offer that produced 32 new memberships.

A deposit of \$40,000 is required for membership. While founding members needed to be a property owner within the Tumble Creek development, now anyone owning Suncadia Resort property can apply.

Talk about discretionary income. Naboychik estimated that 90 percent of Tumble Creek's members belong to more than one golf club. And because Suncadia is controlled by the same group that operates Sunriver near Bend, Tumble Creek and Crosswater members pay only cart fees when visiting the other club. There are \$125 reciprocal arrangements with many top Seattle-area clubs.

Bill Tindall, the highly regarded former club professional at Broadmoor and ex-University of Washington golf coach, is considered as Tumble Creek's "emeritus pro," spends a day or two each week at the property.

Understandably, virtually all of Tumble Creek's marketing efforts are targeted for the Puget Sound because Suncadia is about a 90-minute drive east along Interstate 90 from Bellevue. The off-ramp is Exit 80.

Perhaps Suncadia's biggest draws are its dry climate and four seasons of recreation activities. And the golf season, despite the elevation, is longer than one might expect. This year, Tumble Creek's front nine opened for play on March 6, but April is more typical. Maintenance ends each year Nov. 1.

Conditions at Tumble Creek on this morning in late June — reminiscent of a day when eagles soar in the blue skies of Central Oregon — were remarkable for many reasons.

Aside from the 23-member maintenance crew, the well-groomed course was almost empty. That made for a quickly paced round and allowed for an artisan lunch served at the turn by club manager Jared Jeffries' friendly staff.

"Forty rounds is a big day for Monday through Thursday," Naboychik said. That ramps up to averages on Friday (70), Saturday (120) and Sunday (60).

Naboychik reported that about 90 percent of Tumble Creek's members live on west of the Cascades. Two are from the Yakima area. The only Tumble Creek members from the Tri-Cities are Don Watts and his son, Donnie.

And Don Watts is looking to sell his Canyon Lakes home in order to focus attention on his family's construction of [Swiftwater Cellars](#) winery and the adjacent Hoist House restaurant overlooking the Rope Rider course.

The winery is scheduled to open in September, in time for crush.