

SUN BACKSWING

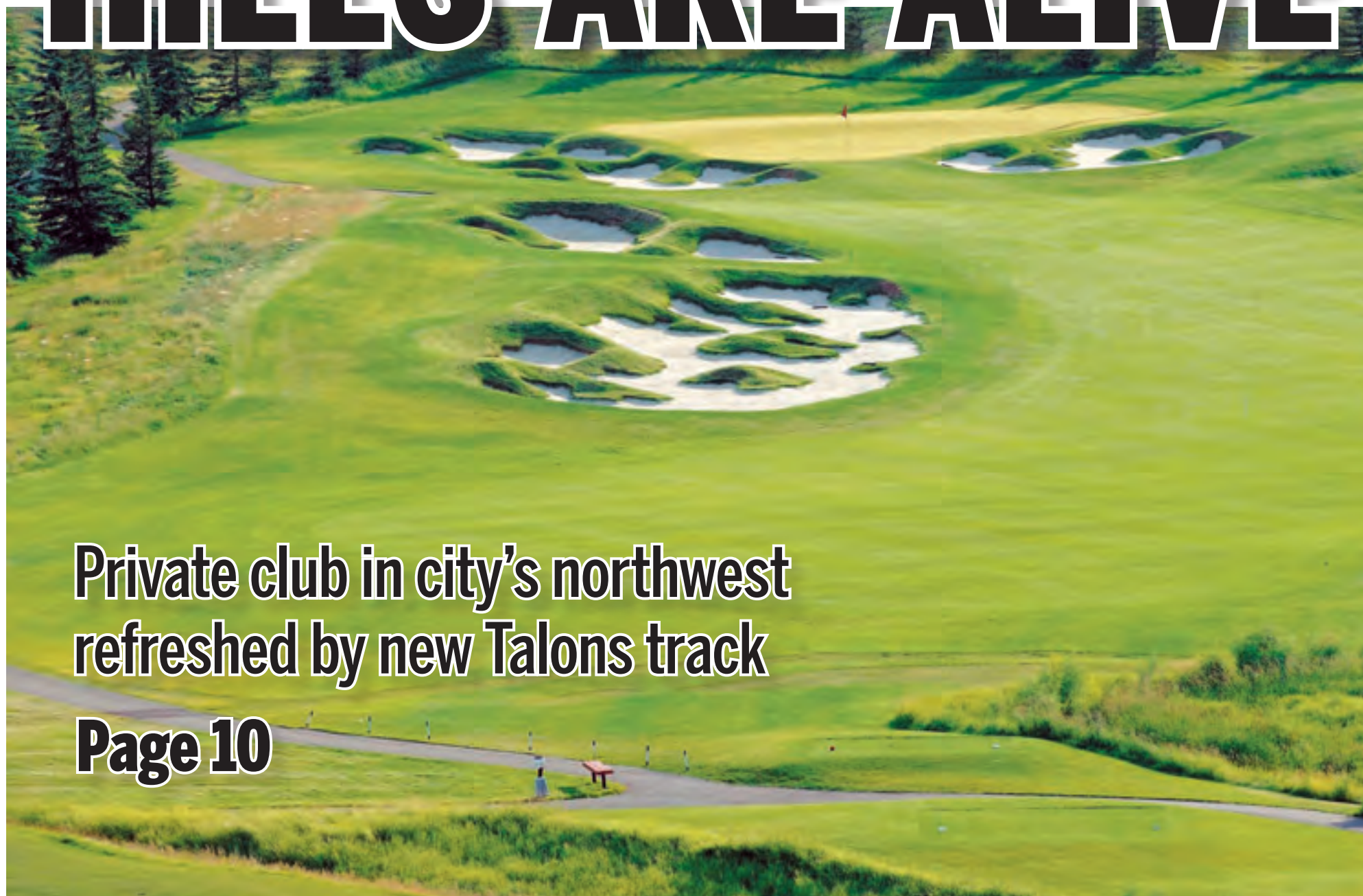
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HILLS ARE ALIVE



Private club in city's northwest
refreshed by new Talons track

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IVAN KARABOALIEV/SPECIAL TO THE SUN

The Links course of Country Hills Golf Club has been renovated — and renamed — by Canadian architect Thomas McBroom, and the 398-yard 8th hole is a striking example of its improved look.

BackSwing



IVAN KARABOBALIEV/SPECIAL TO THE SUN

The green at the 555-yard seventh hole of the Talons course at Country Hills Golf Club is well-guarded by water in front, sand to the right and an elevation change to keep you honest in a birdie bid.

Talons will grab hold of you

It's a course you can really sink your ... well ... fingers into.

So hopes the brass at Country Hills Golf Club, where the new Talons course is now at hand for members of the private facility in northwest Calgary.

The renovated 18 — once The Links course — at the 36-hole private club is the first Alberta foray for premier Canadian golf-course designer Thomas McBroom.

And he brings with it his trademark vision — redesigned sand-traps which frame the track and six new greens as part of a flow that fits within the rugged surroundings of Sandstone Valley.

"The bones of the original routing were good," said McBroom, who is known for other popular tracks across Canada, such as Kamloops' Tobiano, Kelowna's Tower Ranch and P.E.I.'s Crowbush Cove. "However, the course lacked visual distinction and needed



TODD SAELHOF

refreshing on a number of levels. The bunkering was tired and did not articulate the playing strategy of the holes. I saw a golf course that had the potential of becoming 'a great course.'"

And so it is.

The 7,209-yard Talons course opened earlier this summer to its members after 18 months of renovations worth \$6 million, brought on by the need to upgrade a 17-year-old irrigation system.

The revamped course, which starkly contrasts Country Hills' parkland-type Ridge 18, has earned rave reviews from a membership of 200 and from its staff, including head professional Brett Burgeson.

"With Thomas, everything is visual," Burgeson said. "The biggest difference is he's such a visual designer, and we really needed that.

"Lots of the bunkers were hidden from the tee-boxes and were very punishing," Burgeson continued. "Now, you can see them. Now, you can see where not to go. You see the bunker complexes.

"It's much more aesthetically pleasing."

McBroom agrees.

"Aside from the obvious, which is the new bunkering and how that has enhanced the aesthetic of the golf course, I think the most positive change is how the course plays so differently from each of the (five) new sets of tees — challenging and difficult for skilled players from the back tees, and fair and fun from the middle and forward tees," McBroom said. "That is exactly how it should be."

Better still, says Burgeson, is the revamped Talons height-



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Head pro Brett Burgeson talks about Country Hills Golf Club's new 18-hole adventure, the Talons course.

ens Country Hills attraction on the city's golf landscape.

With the economy negatively affecting membership in golf-happy Calgary, a new 18 holes is likely to have a positive impact on business at the club.

"We feel like we're in a great position now," Burgeson said. "As a member, what an advantage to have two golf courses. Even better that renovations of our Talons course were done by one of the top designers in the world.

"What a great place to be."

Equity memberships are available for \$40,000 — and members can sell privately

— while invitational, annual corporate and annual social memberships are also available.

"I've worked at a private club with 18 holes, and it's just such a challenge to meet the demands of members," Burgeson said.

"With another 18 — with 36 holes and our location — the challenges are very easy to meet here.

"With 36 holes, members do get a huge benefit," Burgeson continued. "Access is big — you pretty much get whatever time you want on the weekend. If there's a tournament happening on one 18, you've got the other 18 that's open for golf.

"We're always looking at where we sit in the big picture — we don't have the environment of Priddis Greens or The Glencoe, but we have a little oasis in the city here. We're 15 minutes from downtown, we have 36 holes and we make sure we have a standard that's

COUNTRY HILLS Golf Club

Private

The Talons/The Ridge
Estab. 2010/1992
7,209 yards/6,654 yards
Par 72/ Par 71

Slope rating: 140/132

Architects: Thomas McBroom/Dave Bennett
Amenities: Driving range, putting greens (revamped), chipping area (revamped), licensed restaurant, banquet facility, golf academy.

Directions: 1334 Country Hills Blvd. NW, Calgary
Tee times: 403-226-7777 or countryhills.ab.ca

as good or better than most private clubs. It's important that we are doing as much as — or more than — we can for our members."

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