

# To the Spoiled Goes the Victory

When win-win has nothing to do with the golf score by Carl Vigeland

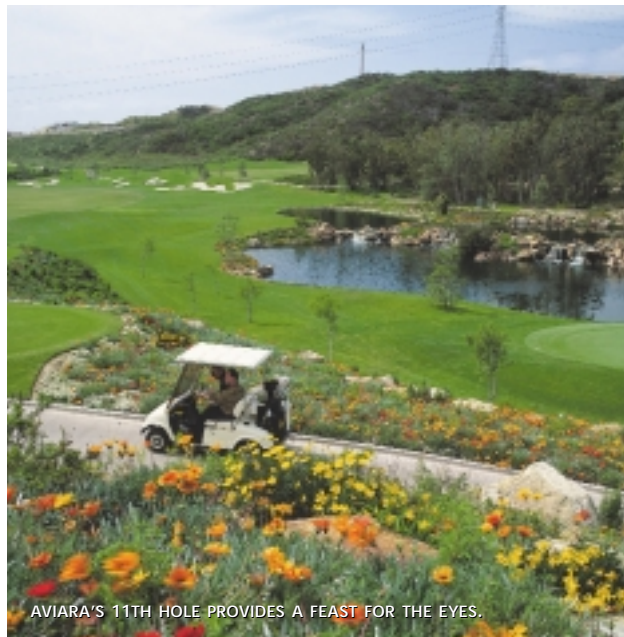
**W**hen a starter asks you if it's all right if a single joins you, you may grumble but you know that there's only one polite answer: of course. The question was posed to me before my round at San Diego's Aviara Golf Club in Carlsbad, half an hour north of the city proper. Sometimes politeness pays off. My single, it turned out, was former NFL star Joe Theismann, now a television announcer and, I soon discovered, a super golfer who often plays on the Celebrity Players Tour. Fortunately, I knew that before we teed off and before I had made any bets on our morning match. I would have lost big time.

On the other hand, at the risk of sounding corny, I felt that on that sunny morning, anyone lucky enough to play Aviara was going to feel like a winner. This Arnold Palmer/Ed Seay design, which plays at just over 7,000 yards from the tips, is routed in and around the bucolic grounds of the swanky Four Seasons resort hotel and its adjacent villas.

The course has water on many holes (my favorite spot was probably the pond between the tee and green of the medium-length, par-3 third) and numerous elevation changes (including a dramatic drop on the

short, par-4 seventh). Colorful flowers, trimmed shrubs, and stately trees seem to be everywhere.

Although part of this garden of a golf course is also bordered by private hillside homes, Aviara is not a private club. As a consequence, the resort management has been able to make fair, independent decisions about access to the course. Anyone willing to pony up the greens fee (as much as \$195 on weekends) can get a tee time, but the number of people who play on a given day is carefully controlled, so you never feel pushed or crowded. You can enjoy the tranquility as well as the challenge.



AVIARA'S 11TH HOLE PROVIDES A FEAST FOR THE EYES.

I did just that once I got used to my new football friend's drives landing 30 yards past mine. Although my game was a little rusty, by the time I reached the back nine, I was swinging freely enough to try cutting the corner around the left side of the pond on the par-5 10th (only 515 yards from the back tees). Alas, my ball landed in a bunker placed strategically between the fairways and the water, but after blasting out, I was able to hit a long iron to the narrow green.

That proved to be one of my best shots of the day. Joe, if I remember correctly, birdied the par-3 11th, one of several on his card, while I struggled through a few of the finishing doglegs. Not that it mattered. A visit to the hotel's hot tub, with views of the adjacent wildlife preserve and the Pacific Ocean, came next, followed by dinner

## TIME OUT

in Vivace, the hotel's superb Italian restaurant. In whatever game you're playing, I believe that's called a win-win. ■

*Continental's golf columnist, Carl Vigeland is the author of the forthcoming book, Gone Golfin'. He can be reached at c\_vigeland@hotmail.com.*

### MORE WINNERS

As luck would have it, I was able to extend my stay in the San Diego area with a visit to Torrey Pines, the site of the PGA Tour's Buick Invitational (and future site of the U.S. Open). This magnificent municipal facility, which comprises two courses set on bluffs overlooking the ocean, features not only dramatic vistas but also some of the longest par-4s anywhere, on the South Course, recently renovated by Rees Jones.

Even from the blue tees the South Course is longer than 7,000 yards, while from the blacks it's a whopping 7,607. (One supposed par-4, the straight, tree-lined 15th, is 477 yards from the tips!) I played the blues, which, sadly, is what I had a case of when I added up my score at the end. Next to Pebble Beach in northern California and Bandon Dunes and Pacific Dunes farther north in Oregon, Torrey Pines ranks among the most memorable and inspiring places to play that I have ever visited.

You can add Pelican Hill to the short list too. Because I was flying out of Los Angeles, I decided to stop en route in Newport Coast, about an hour's drive from Carlsbad. This relatively new high-end daily fee facility, with its interesting Tom Fazio courses, may set the golf gold standard for its kind. Panoramic views, immaculate conditions, and service second to none define this golf experience. It even includes a clubhouse restaurant run by Four Seasons. I felt thoroughly spoiled, and when I was done, thanks to a new national service called Sports Express ([www.sportsexpress.com](http://www.sportsexpress.com)), all I had to do was put my clubs in their travel bag and they were waiting for me when I arrived home.