

A Perfect Match

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With a field of the world's top 64 players destined to duel, The Accenture Match Play Championship garners international attention with a spotlight on Tucson.



It's not every day that a brand-new golf course makes its debut on the PGA Tour. This February, however, the new Ritz-Carlton Golf Club at Dove Mountain will take center stage while hosting the world's golfing elite on the longest course in PGA Tour history.

Although the course spans more than 7,850 yards, length won't necessarily be the deciding factor of the match play format.

"I don't think it'll be the length, though a long golf course like this will certainly favor some of the longer hitters," says Wade Dunagan, executive director for The Accenture Match Play Championship. "I think the real challenge will be the accuracy of the second shot because there are several greens within each green, meaning there are different levels. I think someone who is able to control their trajectory and distance will do well on the golf course."

For daily patrons of the event fixing to catch the action live, the match-play format combined with a little Nicklaus design expertise make for a viewing euphoria from several angles. Because the course was designed for this specific tournament, fan enjoyment was a consideration in all aspects of the tournament setup.



Following its grand opening on Jan. 17, where 27 Jack Nicklaus-designed holes will be revealed for play, the Ritz-Carlton Golf Club will begin putting the final touches on a course that will be seen on TV broadcasts around the world. According to Nielsen, the Accenture Match Play Championship has attracted greater TV viewership numbers over the past few seasons, up 8 percent from NBC's broadcast of the final round in 2004. During the tournament week, the Golf Channel and NBC will provide 28 hours of event coverage that will be broadcast to more than 180 countries.

"The event generates a tremendous amount of interest and exposure for the entire state, let alone Tucson," Dunagan says. "We are hoping that the community and the state really embrace the event."