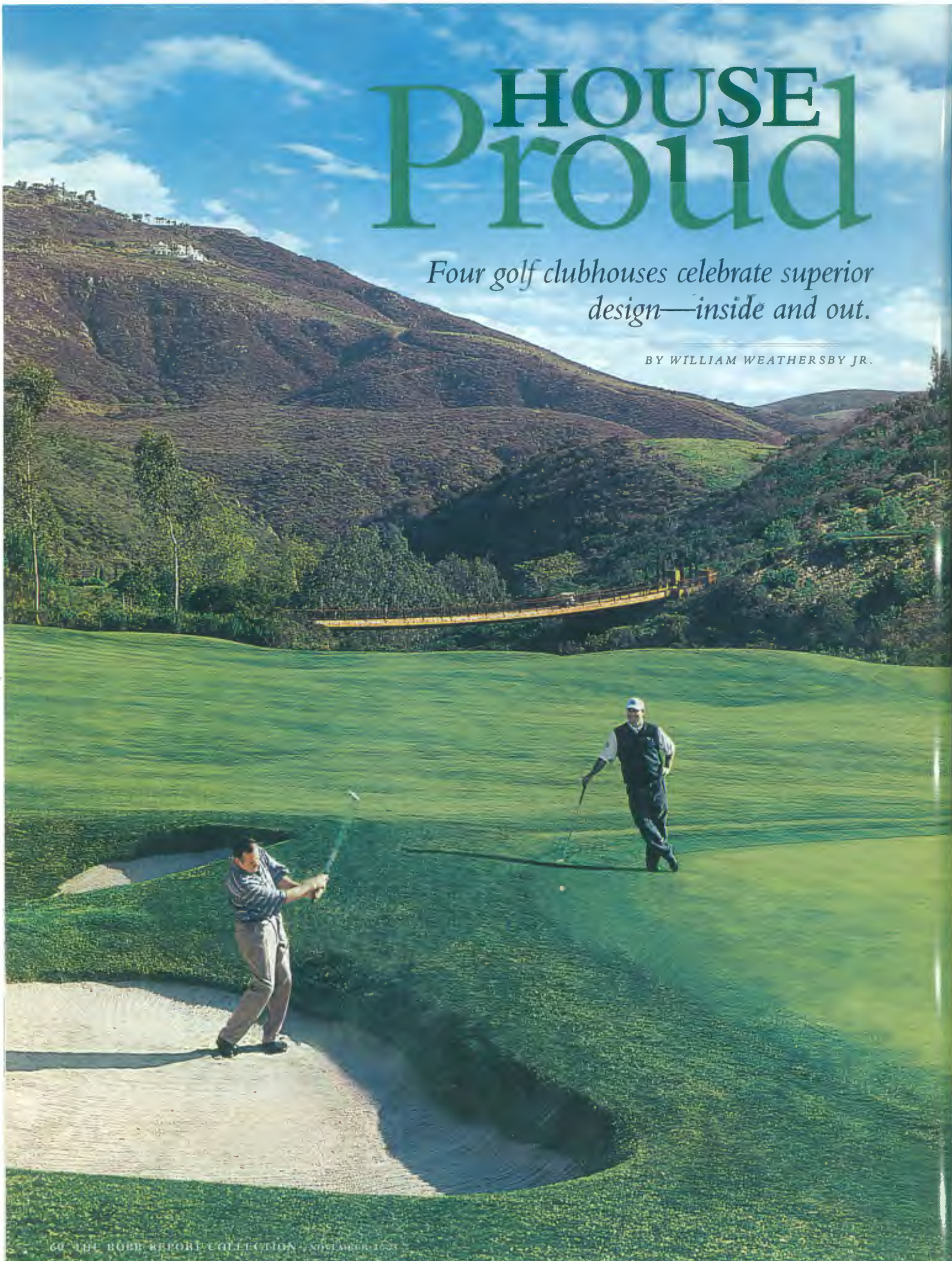



HOUSE Proud

Four golf clubhouses celebrate superior design—inside and out.

BY WILLIAM WEATHERSBY JR.



A photograph of a golf course under a cloudy sky. In the foreground, a green fairway slopes down towards the left. A red flag on a thin pole stands in the grass. In the background, a large, multi-story clubhouse with a rustic, stone-like facade sits atop a hill. The hillside is covered in dense, dark green trees and shrubs. The sky is filled with soft, white clouds.

ALTHOUGH MARK TWAIN FAMOUSLY opined, “golf is a good walk spoiled,” we respectfully beg to differ. And whether you play on foot or navigate a speedy cart toward victory, we think you will agree that it is the golf clubhouse that provides many of the amenities essential to the golfing experience, facilitating the rituals that properly bookend the sporting challenges. Preparing to face off with friends on the fairway in a spa-like locker room or, later in the day, settling

scores over a round of drinks in a hearth-lit lounge—there are a multitude of reasons for becoming a member. The following pages take you on a tour of four top private golf clubhouses across the country. All are renowned for their distinctive architecture and top service amid spectacular natural surroundings. And if you are ever in Elmira, N.Y., be sure to spoil a nice walk by playing the Mark Twain Golf Course. We think the American bard would have enjoyed the irony.



THE BRIDGES AT RANCHO SANTA FE RANCHO SANTA FE, CALIFORNIA

When the creators of this engaging Southern California retreat first visited the site, they were struck by its similarity to the spectacular landscapes of Northern Tuscany. The developers envisioned an exclusive residential community and private country club that would preserve—and perhaps even enhance—the natural beauty of the place with rustic villalike architecture.

The community of Rancho Santa Fe is proud of its rich heritage. Originally an Indian rancheria, the land was granted to Juan Maria Osuna, the alcalde of San Diego, in 1840. Today, Rancho Santa Fe is one of the most sought-after places to live in Southern California. According to census data from 2000, the per capita income of the community was ranked the highest in the nation.

The Bridges comprises 540 acres of gently rolling hills, creeks and deep canyons. Designed by the Robert Trent Jones II Group, the private par-71 course features five sets of tees, playing almost 7,000 yards from the tips. Its dramatic terrain, lakes, streams and mature landscaping make it challenging and visually captivating.

International television viewers were introduced to the

Bridges course while watching Tiger Woods and John Daly battle Phil Mickelson and Retief Goosen in a best ball team match. In 2003, 2004 and again this year, the Bridges played host to the *Battle at the Bridges*.

Whether you play the Bridges course, work out at its Sports Centre, or enjoy its fine cuisine, the Bridges Club, designed by Newport Beach, Calif., and Englewood, Colo., architects Marsh & Associates, offers amenities on a par with those of a luxury resort. The architecture, orchestrated by a team led by principal Michael Marsh, has the feel of a relocated Italian lodge. The scale of the buildings and interiors is immense. Charming broad stone stairways, towering fireplaces and paver-decked terraces transport members to the pastoral countryside.

In addition to taking on the challenge of the dramatic golf course,

Bridges members have unlimited access to a top-grade fitness facility that includes swimming, tennis and a luxurious day spa. Home ownership within this private, gate-guarded community is limited. However, there is still a range of real estate and club membership opportunities available.

The Bridges at Rancho Santa Fe, 858.756.8700, www.thebridgesrfsf.com; Marsh & Associates, 949.717.3077, www.mai-architects.com



Top: A view of the 1st and 18th holes of the golf course from the Bridges' clubhouse. Above: Inside the club's striking men's locker room.