

A wide-angle photograph of a golf course. In the foreground, there are tall, dry grasses. The middle ground shows a lush green golf course with a sand trap. In the background, there are several large, multi-story buildings with a reddish-brown facade, and further back, a range of mountains under a blue sky with scattered white clouds.

**A CLOSER LOOK:**

# **TWIN WARRIORS AND SANTA ANA**

**THE 2009 NATIONAL  
CHAMPIONSHIP COURSES POSE  
DISTINCTLY DIFFERENT  
CHALLENGES**

*By Don Jozwiak, Senior Editor*

**T**O SAY THAT TWIN WARRIORS GOLF CLUB AND SANTA ANA GOLF CLUB ARE SISTER courses is an apt description. Santa Ana, opened in 1991, is the subtle older sibling, while Twin Warriors is the boisterous younger child that's made waves ever since opening in 2001. The courses are different enough to merit different approaches for the 312 competitors in this month's PGA Professional National Championship, but similar enough to provide a cohesive challenge.

What competitors will notice within the first few swings on the two facilities' large practice areas is the extra distance they pick up on full shots. Both courses are more than 5,000 feet above sea level, which translates into a one-club increase in distance for most players, according to PGA Professional Sandy Lemon, the director of instruction for both facilities.

"I say you can take between eight and 10 percent off the yardages at both courses," Lemon says. "You'll pick up even more yardage on your tee shots, because the ball really stays up in the thinner air for a long time. Depending on the weather, our fairways can run pretty fast – the players at the National Championship will be getting plenty of roll. A real challenge off the tee is going to be accuracy with the driver or 3-wood to stay in the fairway, and the altitude makes it tricky to hold the greens on approach shots."

The thinness of the air is compounded by the sometimes gusty high desert breezes, which can be a factor during the summer. Lemon advises National Championship competitors to work on hitting knockdown shots to keep the ball under the wind and in control. No matter how well competitors manage their ball flight, Lemon says the lob wedge is going to be a popular club at Twin Warriors and Santa Ana.

"If you're playing in the National Championship, you'd better have a 60- or 64-degree wedge in the bag," Lemon says. "On both courses you'll find elevated greens with deep greenside bunkers, and challenging pin placements, too. Over the course of four rounds, you're going to miss some greens and find some of those bunkers."

Lemon's advice covers both courses being used for the 2009 PGA Professional National Championship, but Twin Warriors and Santa Ana have strong differences in terms of layout and strategy.

### **Santa Ana: An Inland Links-Style Course**

Santa Ana, designed by Ken Killian, is an inland links-style course. There are few trees, but there are eight water hazards and the course runs along the Rio Grande River. From the tee, the course presents a straightforward test, with thick native grass rough and challenging greens providing the main defense. As Roger Martinez, the PGA director of golf for Twin Warriors and Santa Ana says, "If you get above the hole at Santa Ana, you might think you acciden-

tally ended up at Augusta National."

Some competitors seeing the course for the first time may think Santa Ana can be overpowered. Dave Brown, Santa Ana's PGA head professional, says those players will quickly realize the mistake they've made.

"The thing about Santa Ana is that it's all right in front of you, but it's tougher than it looks," says Brown, who has been at Santa Ana for 11 years. "You think you can just grab driver and blast away. Once you visit the native grass a few times, you start to rethink your strategy."

Brown says the native grass starts approximately 10 yards off the fairway on many holes and varies in thickness across the course. Some areas will offer playable lies, with others leaving players little chance of even finding errant tee shots. Santa Ana's famously fast greens are another reason for National Championship players to prize accuracy off the tee.

Santa Ana has 27 holes, and the Tamaya and Cheena nines will be used for the PGA Professional National Championship. Brown says the ninth hole on that combined layout will be one to watch: a driveable par 4 that is a pure risk-reward hole. The dogleg-right hole has a large water hazard in the corner of the dogleg, with water short, right and back of the green. An accurate tee shot of 285 yards can set up an eagle putt, but a miss can mean a tricky bunker shot or a trip to the drop area.

The closing holes – Nos. 8 and 9 on the Cheena nine – are also a stern test. The former is a 616-yard par 5 that plays across the prevailing winds. If the wind turns into the players, reaching the fairway from the tee can be a challenge. The Rio Grande winds along the left side of the hole, and getting home in two is seldom achieved. The last hole is a converted par 5 for the public that will play as a 471-yard par 4 at the PGA Professional National Championship. This dogleg left plays uphill to the fairway, then back down to a green guarded by water short and left. Mounds on both sides of the fairways steer errant tee shots into thick native grass.

### **Twin Warriors: Features Plenty of Distance**

Twin Warriors, designed by Gary Parks, has less dramatic greens than Santa Ana. As competitors in the 2003 PGA Professional National Championship found, however, the course has plenty of distance as a defense.

## **Twin Warriors Golf Club**

**Designer:**  
Gary Parks

**When Opened:**  
2001

**Length, par:**  
7,493 yards  
par 71

**Description:** Twin Warriors Golf Club is eighteen holes of high desert, championship golf routed in and around 20 ancient cultural sites. The course has beautiful grassy knolls and ridges dotted with Juniper and Pinon Pine.

Arguably Twin Warriors' toughest hole, No.18 is a 472-yard par 4 that plays directly into the prevailing wind, and features a three-tiered green.



## Santa Ana Golf Club

**Designer:**

Ken Killian

**When Opened:**

1991

**Length, par:**

7,217 yards  
par 71

**Description:**

The golf course offers the glorious natural splendor of the Santa Ana Pueblo.

Located north of Albuquerque and woven through the desert along the Rio Grande, it is surrounded by the grandeur of the Jemez Mountains to the west, the Sangre de Cristos to the north and the Sandia Mountains immediately east.



The fourth hole on the Cheena nine will play as the 13th hole at Santa Ana Golf Club during the PGA Professional National Championship.

“You must drive the ball well at Twin Warriors,” says Derek Gutierrez, PGA head professional at Twin Warriors Golf Club since 2004. “The holes are long enough that you can’t lay up on many of them. You really need to hit driver if you want to score, and you have to be accurate enough to stay in the fairway.”

Gutierrez says one of the toughest holes on the course is No. 10, one of the few par 4s where driver is not usually the best option. An arroyo cuts the fairway of the 483-yard hole, forcing players to lay back and face a mid-iron shot into a green protected by a huge bunker. But the toughest of all the Twin Warriors holes is likely No. 18, a 472-yard par 4 that plays directly into the prevailing wind.

“Even a long knocker is going to have a long iron into that green if there’s any wind at all,” Gutierrez says. “The green has three tiers, and you have to

stay below the hole or even a three-putt isn’t a given. I’m sure the stroke average will be closer to five on that hole, and it could be where the National Championship is decided.”

Lemon advises competitors in the PGA Professional National Championship to play practice rounds on both courses, but to get around Twin Warriors twice if they have the time.

“If you make the cut, you’re going to play three rounds on Twin Warriors, so I’d weigh that in my practice decisions,” Lemon says. “But that’s also because you can figure out Santa Ana fairly quickly – you can play it once and understand where you should be off the tee. With Twin Warriors, there are holes with more than one good angle of attack. There are a lot of things you could pick up on a second time around, especially figuring out where not to hit it.” ■

### The 42nd Professional National Championship at Twin Warriors and Santa Ana Golf Clubs

**Proposed Yardages – Twin Warriors Golf Club**

Hole	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	Total
Par	5	4	4	3	4	4	4	4	3	4	4	5	3	4	3	5	4	4	71
Yards (men)	563	479	477	198	460	449	489	498	208	483	349	556	183	420	224	584	401	472	7,493

**Front 9:** 3,821 Yards - Par 35 | **Back 9:** 3,672 Yards - Par 36

**Proposed Yardages – Santa Ana Golf Club**

Hole	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	Total
Par	4	4	5	3	5	3	4	4	4	4	4	3	4	3	4	4	5	4	71
Yards (men)	412	473	600	198	601	193	462	390	337	438	428	230	385	171	376	436	616	471	7,217

**Front 9:** 3,666 Yards - Par 36 | **Back 9:** 3,551 Yards - Par 35

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