

THE OFFICIAL
PUBLICATION
OF THE
SCGA

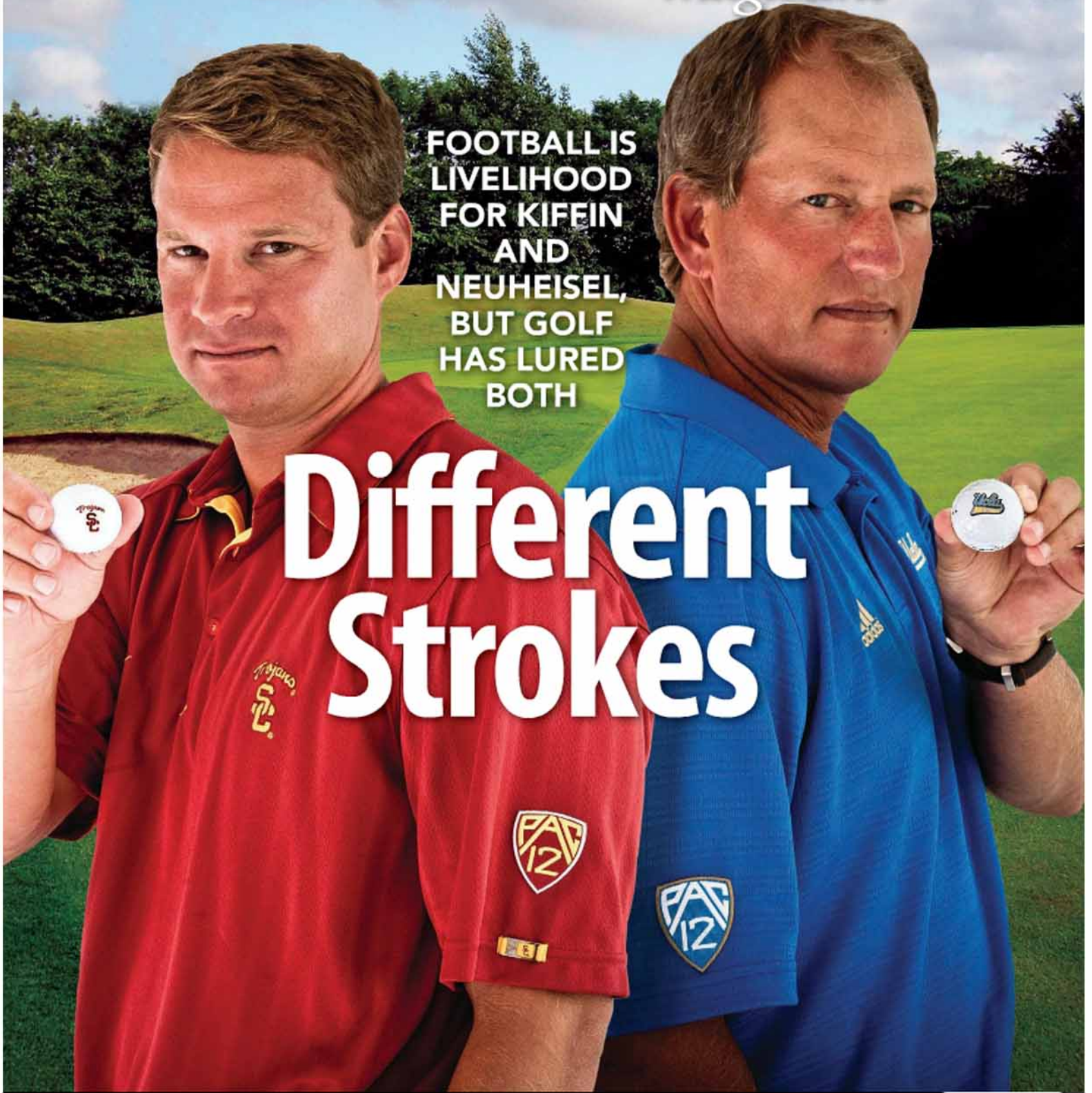
FORE

SEPTEMBER/
OCTOBER 2011

magazine

FOOTBALL IS
LIVELIHOOD
FOR KIFFIN
AND
NEUHEISEL,
BUT GOLF
HAS LURED
BOTH

Different Strokes





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The Southern California Golf Association, one of the nation's oldest and largest regional golf associations, is a trusted resource for Southland golfers. In addition to providing a host of member services, including access and preferred pricing at some of the area's top courses, the SCGA administers the USGA Handicap System and conducts major amateur golf tournaments in the region. For more information, visit www.scga.org or call (818) 980-3630.

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Restaurant at **Rancho Valencia**



BY BOB
BUTTITTA

There are moments in life when you simply need to escape. Those times when you'd love to be have a secluded spot to go where you can get away from the stresses of life, take a deep breath and forget about the world outside.

Located just east of Del Mar in the tiny community of Rancho Santa Fe, Rancho Valencia is a

KEEPING IT SIMPLE, FRESH AND TASTY

modern day Shangri-La, a luxury resort that provides its weary guests a tranquil and secluded spot where they can relax and recharge.

The resort sits atop a 40-acre plateau that is nestled among rolling hills and swaying palm trees. Opened in 1989, Rancho Valencia features 26 casitas, each housing 49 one- and two-bedroom suites that all include fireplaces and private garden patios.

The resort's guest list includes the likes of President Bill Clinton, Microsoft founder Bill Gates and former NBA superstar Michael Jordan.

But while some of the world's most famous people have been drawn to Rancho Valencia's seclusion and charm, the resort is also a haven for everyday folks seeking a romantic getaway and families desir-

ing to spend time together and reconnect.

Within the confines of Rancho Valencia, guests will find everything they need. The resort features a world-class spa and one of the finest tennis facilities in the country. As for golf, resort guests also have playing privileges at four of San Diego County's premium golf courses: Del Mar CC, The Farms, Aviara and Torrey Pines.

And after working up an appetite on the golf course or tennis courts, guests can step into the Rancho Valencia Restaurant, where Executive Chef Eric Bauer and his staff create cuisine that satisfies guests of all ages.

Named "One of the Top 100 Hotel Restaurants" by Zagat Survey, the Rancho Valencia Restaurant brings together stunning valley views with California upscale brasserie cuisine in an elegant Mediterranean setting.

Floor-to-ceiling windows along the main wall of the dining room provide guests with a spectacular view of the surrounding vistas. Several smaller dining rooms are also available for more private settings.

For those who enjoy a less-formal environment, there is a beautiful patio where patrons can enjoy everything from a drink and appetizers to a full meal.

When Bauer arrived at Rancho Valencia last December, he brought with him a passion for creating uncomplicated dishes using only local and seasonal ingredients. That means incorporating market-fresh vegetables, free-range meat and seafood from the San Diego coastline into a locally inspired menu.

"We purchase the majority of our ingredients from seven or eight local farms," said Bauer, who had previously been executive chef at Anthology in downtown San Diego. "Because of that, I believe the overall freshness of our product is better than any other place in the country, bar none.

"When you start with great product, if you don't screw it up with your technique, then 99 percent of the time you will have a dish that customers love."

Upon his arrival at Rancho Valencia, Bauer resolved to give resort guests and restaurant regulars a place where they could have a different dining experience every night.

When Bauer took over, he ruffled some feathers

with restaurant regulars who had grown accustomed to certain items and preparations.

The biggest uproar came when Bauer opted to take veal piccata off the menu. While he recognized that the dish was popular, he felt it too pedestrian – a dish you can get at almost any Italian restaurant.

"It was a tough one to take off, but we pride ourselves on being an upscale brasserie restaurant," he said. "We don't want to be a Cheesecake Factory



with a menu 10 pages long, because when you get that big, the quality tends to go down. We want to do the things we do to the best of our ability."

The fish dishes on the menu are popular, including the olive oil-poached big-eye tuna and Pacific salmon in black truffle sauce. The filet mignon is another signature dish.

Also favored by diners is the extensive offering of cheeses and cured and dried meats.

One unique offering is a ready-to-grill kit that guests may have delivered to their villas, so that they may dine on their patios with friends and family.

It's just one more feature that makes a stay at Rancho Valencia something to remember.

The Restaurant at Rancho Valencia, 5921 Valencia Circle, Rancho Santa Fe, serves breakfast, lunch and dinner daily. Reservations: (858) 759-6216. Information: www.ranchovalencia.com/dining/the-restaurant.