Coore-Crenshaw Nebraskan track stirring whirlwind of speculation

'I've always thought Pine Valley was it. This blows Pine Valley off the charts. Within 10 years, it will be No. 1 in the world.'

— Dana Fry

By MARK LESLIE

SOMEBODY IN THE SAND HILLS OF NEBRASKA — Here lies the ultimate example of the motto: "Build it and they will come." It is a golf course. It is an hour's drive from a city that is an hour's flight from anywhere. And it was "just there" — fashioned by the hand of God. They call it Sand Hills, and golf purists who have heard tales of it are itching for its gates to open, sometime around Labor Day.

Less than 4,000 cubic yards of dirt is being moved in construction of Sand Hill Golf Course. Yes, that is 4,000 — not 400,000.

"I had a great natural piece of ground and wanted a natural, traditional golf course," said Dick Youngscap, whose "other" course, Firethorn, is the number-one rated track in Nebraska.

Golf architects Bill Coore and Ben Crenshaw obliged Youngscap, weaving 18 holes between and around breathtaking sand dunes in this country known for its prime grazing land, but certainly not golf.

"There were only two places where we knocked a knob [of dune] off maybe three feet," said Crenshaw, who took week after week off the PGA Tour to complete this project.

"It's as British- or Scottish-like as I've ever seen in North America... It is sandy. It has undulations. It has contour. In its natural state it is very, very close to how the game was born."

"It's the piece of property that we will have to work the least on. It's very, very difficult to know what to leave out. It is there in its native magnificence. We're really only trying to prepare it for golf, which is not very much."

"It is the best golf course we have ever done—or will ever do," Crenshaw declared.

"It will be one of a kind," agreed Bill Kubly, whose Landscapes Unlimited built the course. Kubly needed only three people on site and nearly all his work was installing the irrigation.

"Most of the course was simply leveled out and seeded," Kubly said. "The greens were just smoothed out with a Sandpro or small tractor and planted with bentgrass.