N.H. course to test artificial greens

LEBANON, N.H. — A new nine-hole par-3 course at Fore-U Golf Center will be watched closely by golf industry observers from around the country.

The reason? The course will have artificial surface putting greens.

U.S. Indoor Golf Inc.'s Tour True Turf Technologies developed the synthetic greens at Fore-U's par-3 course. The Tour True greens consist of a synthetic turf packed with an artificial aggregate fill that allows them to realistically mimic a bentgrass surface.

Mark Johnson, a professional golfer from Lebanon who developed the Fore-U center with his father, said the synthetic greens appealed to them for two reasons. One, the course is near a river and the synthetic greens will greatly reduce the chemical use on the course and thereby almost eliminate any negative environmental impact. Secondly, the greens will be as playable in early March as they are in the middle of July, which is a bonus for a golf course in northern New England.

Johnson said he and his father have been keeping an eye on synthetic greens for the past 7 or 8 years. He said it's only in the last two or three years that synthetic greens have become good enough to be realistic for the course they wanted to open.

Tour True President Irving Bookspan said the synthetic green will never replace greens on PGA championship courses, but it would be perfect for heavily used public courses, municipal courses and 18-hole executive courses where there's a lot of traffic.

W. Va. golf instructor finally gets to build dream track

RIPLEY, W. Va. — Longtime instructor and former golf school owner Keith Marks Sr. has partially realized his dream of creating an idyllic golfing retreat in his native West Virginia.

Marks, 60, has opened nine holes of a public 18-hole course called Sycamore Creek. He has taught golf worldwide and once owned a golf school in Hilton Head, S.C., before returning to West Virginia in 1993. His original plan was to build a golf instruction center and three practice holes in Jackson County.

But as he began to shape the fairways and greens on the land, Marks decided the pasto-

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Both mowers feature fully floating reels and independent baskets. And the 3200 also offers a single point connection. All ensuring a consistent height of cut. In addition, the 3200 has an all new cutting system. New reels, bedknives, rollers, everything it takes to give your greens an incomparably superb quality of cut. Cleanly consistent with few stray clips. Plus a true roll.

Oak Ridge president Hughie Thomas said the club considers the synthetic green a remarkable setting was perfect for an 18-hole layout.

Marks teamed with longtime friends and businessmen Marshall Hanno of Columbus, Ohio, and Tom Wynne of Washington, D.C. Sycamore Creek opened nine holes in June. Plans call for work to begin next summer on another nine holes, with the entire course ready for play by spring or summer 1998.

Jason Griffith, formerly of Woodridge Plantation golf club in Mineral Wells, is superintendent. Marks plans to sell lots along the course to persons willing to build log homes. He also wants to build a 24-room lodge.