

# Weiskopf tackles Mich. site rich in assets

By NORMAN SINCLAIR

BELLAIRE, Mich. — Northern Michigan's collection of famed public golf courses will add its first Tom Weiskopf-designed track, which is under construction at the Shanty Creek Resort.

As an old Ohio State Buckeye, Weiskopf's first Michigan

project is a homecoming of sorts. "This land is very much like Ohio, where I was raised," he said during a recent working visit at the resort in Bellaire, northeast of Traverse City. "You have big trees, constant elevation changes, and natural water features."

The Weiskopf course, scheduled to open in 1999, will team

up with the resort's 11-year-old Arnold Palmer-Ed Seay design, "The Legend," acknowledged as one of the better resort courses in the Midwest. Shanty Creek's two other older courses were designed by William Diddle and Warner Bowen.

"This is a great area for golf," Weiskopf said. "You are only lim-

ited by your imagination. You have to try hard not to overdo it."

It was his hands-on approach to the construction of the course that sold the resort's managing partners, Terry Schieber and Vic Zucco, on Weiskopf. Despite the critical success his designs have enjoyed around the world, Weiskopf said he limits his jobs to no more than five at any one time.

"You have to be able to balance what the owners want with

what you can do. Everyone gets equal time on each project," Weiskopf said.

On this warm summer morning, Weiskopf's third visit to the site since construction began last spring, the former British Open champion was setting a brisk pace as he inspected the progress since his last tour.

His hands-on style was evident as he studied the tee box and shapes of fairway bunkers on the first hole he inspected. The tees were fine, he said, but the bunkers needed adjustments. Weiskopf first used his boot to redraw the new outlines for the bunkers in the dirt, before switching to a spray gun to outline the new shapes he wanted. He said among his main concerns on these on-site visits are the bunkers and the edges of greens.

"You build a course by being there," Weiskopf said. "By being on site often, you limit your mistakes, just like playing the game."

The 9th hole, a par-4 from an elevated tee, down a tree-lined ravine, to a green set in a bowl, gave Weiskopf a chance to put his architectural talent on display.

Clambering up the steep incline to the tee, he first studied the tree line and heavy underbrush on the steep face of the embankment on the right side of the fairway. Then he took note of the line of pine trees on the more gentle slope on the left side.

The position of a fairway bunker on the apex of the slight dog leg was taken into account, before he marched down through heavy dirt and sandy soil to the green site some 430 yards away.

After pacing around the roughed out green site, Weiskopf decided the hole had to be reworked. Despite the muggy 84-degree heat, he trudged back up the hill for one more look.

Using ribbons to mark off the clearing line, Weiskopf delineated how far back the trees should be cut to open the hole on the left side of the fairway. He used his spray gun to move the fairway bunker back a few feet. The green was moved over to the right of the bowl, and back another 30 to 40 feet. With a blue grease pencil, he then drew in the changes on the architect's sketch of the hole, making permanent outlines he made in red paint on the dirt.

"You have to let the contour of the land tell you what to do, or what you can't do," he said of his on-the-fly redesign of the hole. On his next visit, scheduled for three weeks hence, he will be able to make additional tweaks if needed.

Weiskopf said his philosophy for a resort course with private members is to incorporate some of the characteristics of great traditional golf courses such as

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The par-3 17th hole at Mount Hawley Country Club before, above, and after, left, Bob Lohmann's renovation.

## Mount Hawley sports new look

PEORIA, Ill. — Mount Hawley Country Club, which turned 75 years old this summer, had seen better days.

"The members felt, quite rightly, the course simply didn't have many memorable holes," explained architect Bob Lohmann. "The greens had no contour, no pizzazz. The bunkers were in disarray. It was just a worn out private club."

Three months and \$1.2 million later, none of the above comments apply as Lohmann Golf Designs (LGD) of Marengo, Ill., has completed its full-scale renovation here. With construction assistance from Lincoln, Neb.-based Landscapes Unlimited, Lohmann directed reconstruction of all 18 greens, regrassed all 18 fairways with bentgrass, created five new ponds, improved the tee areas, added appropriate fairway bunkering and installed a new irrigation system.

"This wasn't so much restoration as it was complete renovation," explained Lohmann, vice president of the American Society of Golf Course Architects. "The job started out as fairly minor but it snowballed. It ended up being a big job — and we got it done in three months... The members really like it. Some thought you couldn't spend enough money to improve the course. But they came back and now they believe."

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Just down the road at the Country Club of Peoria, LGD recently completed a complete reconstruction of all 18 greens and extensive greenside bunker work.

"The putting surfaces at Peoria were very small, less than 4,000 square feet, and some had slopes of 6 to 8 percent," said Lohmann. "There was nowhere to put the pin. They had drainage problems."

## Weiskopf in Mich.

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Donald Ross' acclaimed layouts at Bloomfield Hills and the Detroit Golf Club. That means the contours and undulation of greens are modest, while blind shots, water close to the green, and deep bunkers are eliminated.

"Strategic value and beauty are what the great courses have in common, and that's what you try to duplicate as you create a whimsy of your own," he said.

The course is 100 years old and the greens were just worn out.

"After consulting with the USGA [U.S. Golf Association], the members decided to completely rebuild them. We also convinced them to do them all at once. If we do three or four greens at a time, often we hear complaints like, 'They don't play like the old greens.'

"Well, of course they don't. It's the transition period that invites the comparison. By doing them all at one time, the renovated surfaces have the same style and play consistently."

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Lohmann Golf Designs has also been retained to provide more minor restoration and renovation services at Calumet CC in Homewood, Ill., and Kankakee (Ill.) CC.

"Calumet is supposed to have — quote-unquote — 'Donald Ross features' on it. But it's been recontoured and fiddled with several times," Lohmann explained. "This is mainly a bunker restoration project. We're leaving most of the bunkers where they are, but we will restore them to the Ross-style. Currently, they're best described as big blobs of sand."

In Kankakee, LGD will perform similar tasks: Moving bunkers, adding bunkers and shape around the greens, and recontouring the fairways.

"We'll redo a great many greenside bunkers where they are — we won't be moving them down the fairway," said Lohmann. "Instead we're concentrating on the creation of strategy off the tee. It's a very short golf course. With some fairway contours we can toughen it up and provide the player better shot values without moving the bunkers."

True to his disdain for mounding and other artificial effects, there is very little earth being moved, except from three new ponds and a driving range. As a side-light, the 300,000 cubic feet of dirt from the ponds and the range are being used to create another 40 feet of elevation on the top of the resort's ski hill.

In addition to Palmer, there are resort courses by Jack Nicklaus, Arthur Hills, Robert Trent Jones Sr., Tom Fazio, Gary Player, Tom Doak and Rick Smith within a 40-mile radius of Shanty Creek.

## LEGION MEMORIAL DRAINED

EVERETT, Wash. — A mammoth subsurface remodeling has transformed city-owned Legion Memorial Golf Course from often-muddy conditions to one of the driest facilities in the area. Burns Golf Design of Fernandina Beach, Fla., and builder Daylen, Inc. of Fresno, Calif., carried out the \$4.7-million project which included more than \$1.3 million for drainage. In the past, the course, which averages more than 70,000 rounds a year, was plagued by extremely muddy conditions much of the time. Some 70 acres are being capped by a 6-inch sand layer over drainage lines installed on 50-foot centers. The course will re-opening in mid-1998.

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