

Another gem added to Prince Edward Island's golfing crown

By PETER BLAIS

GEORGETOWN, Prince Edward Island, Canada — Dundarave Golf Course, a new Hurdzan-Fry design that opened this summer in eastern PEI's Brudenell Provincial Park, represents another step in the island province's journey toward becoming a major Atlantic Canada golf destination.

The 18-hole, 7,284-yard track runs along the Brudenell River adjacent to the park's existing Brudenell River Golf Course. It

boasts bentgrass tees, greens and fairways and is dotted with more than 120 red-sand bunkers. The peak-season \$60 green fee matches that of nearby Crowbush Cove, a Thomas McBroom design voted Canada's best new course by many golf publications when it first opened several years ago.

"PEI is definitely becoming a golf destination," said Jeff Ready, assistant manager of GolfLinks PEI, the government agency that runs four provincial courses

and promotes golf on the island. "With Dundarave, we have three world-class courses within a half hour of each other. Our other course [Mill River] is only an hour and 20 minutes from Charlottetown."

Dundarave was privately developed, but is operated by GolfLinks PEI, which pays the developers a yearly lease fee on the property. After 10 years, the government has the option to purchase the property at fair market value or continue to lease it.

"It was a good arrangement for both

groups," Ready said. "We [GolfLinks PEI] got a world-class golf course and the developers have an investment to look after."

A group of local golfers/business people had discussed developing a major golf resort on PEI for several years. Charlottetown attorney Eugene Rossiter was among them.

The group, Rossiter said, wrote a business plan that identified a need for a 36-hole resort with a golf academy and accompanying amenities.

"We looked at various sites and Brudenell was an obvious fit," Rossiter said. "It had one of the top 50 courses in Canada already there [Brudenell River GC]. It had 1,800 acres available for development. It had a first-class hotel, RV park and 100 full-service campsites. It was on a river with beautiful views. Horseback riding and a theater were available. It just had everything one could want."

The group consulted with Columbus, Ohio-based Hurdzan-Fry Design and had Michael Hurdzan walk the site. The group approached the province with a public/private partnership proposal in which the government would donate the land and the private group would develop, construct and put together a turnkey operation for the government to take over with the yearly lease arrangement.

"The private sector has the capacity to do things the government can't," Rossiter said. "We could build it on an expeditious basis; make decisions quicker; and bring our resources to bear to get the job done in a timely yet quality manner. We were all of the firm belief that there was nothing the private sector couldn't do quicker, cheaper and better than government... It wasn't built without glitches. There were some disagreements between us and the government. But we're very satisfied with the product."

One of Dundarave's most striking characteristics is the dark red sand bunkers. High concentrations of iron give PEI sands and soils their dark red hue. Most of the island's courses, including the original layout at Brudenell, have opted for imported white sand in the bunkers. But Hurdzan chose the native red sands, an attractive feature that fits the landscape.

"That was sort of controversial," said Hurdzan designer Jason Straka, "because it's a little lower quality of sand. But the owner wanted to use native red sand and buy it from local vendors rather than truck it in from Ohio."

Added Rossiter: "We did everything we could locally — the sod, sand and everything else we could. It was important to us to keep the money on PEI."

Straka said Dundarave is the first course on the island with continuous cart paths and has the widest fairways and largest greens in the province.

From a design standpoint, there were some wetlands to deal with and some land ownership issues that complicated the routing, Straka said. "We had a final routing, but we had to tweak it. It ended up for the best in the long run," he said.

The land was easy to work, being either a red clay or sandy soil, Straka said. "There were no rocks, which was nice for shaping," Straka recalled. "The only problem was when it rained, it turned into

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IRISH EYES SMILING ON O'MEARA DESIGN

DUBLIN, Ireland — Mark O'Meara has announced that he will be designing his first course in Europe at Carton Demesne outside Dublin. The project will consist of two courses, the other designed by Colin Montgomerie, and a hotel and convention center. The course will be located at Carton Demesne, a 17th-century estate that was the ancestral home to the Fitzgerald's Earls of Kildare. "The property offers a host of options and is absolutely perfect for the development of a world class golf course," said O'Meara. O'Meara Design plans to use much of the existing woodland for the routing of the course and three holes will lead down to the River Rye which meanders through the project. Work on the course began in September and is scheduled to be completed in 2001.

Dundarave added to PEI pool

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muddy clay, like that red Georgia soil."

"We turned the first shovel of dirt on May 4 [1998] and the owners played the course in late October. The last date of seeding was Sept. 15. They wanted to get it done quickly so they could have it up and running this year.

The person most responsible

for getting the job done on time and on budget was project manager Robbie Hellstrom, who had worked with Hurdzan at Le Diable at Mt. Tremblant [Quebec], Straka said.

"When we started talking to Eugene about this project," Straka recalled, "he was looking for a project manager. We told him we had just finished

with Robbie and what a terrific job he'd done for us. He built it [Tremblant] very quickly and it's gotten great reviews. We put Eugene in touch with Robbie and they worked out an agreement."

The need for quick cash flow was the reason for opening the course in one year rather than the two it usually takes to build a course in this region, said Rossiter.

"We worked 20 hours a day, seven days a week," Rossiter said. "We built the course in loops. There were holes 1-2-17-18 in one loop, 3-13-14-15-16 in another loop, 4-5-6-12 in a third loop and 7-8-9-10-11 in the final loop. We might have been 80 percent complete in the first loop, 60 percent in the second, and 30 percent in the others. If the weather was too inclement to work in one loop, we could go work in another. So we kept the men and equipment going all the time. And we had fantastic weather just about the whole time... We understood the time line was very aggressive and knew the risks, but we met it."

The only problem has been the roughs, which suffered from this spring's prolonged drought. "It was late growing in, but that could have happened anywhere," Rossiter said.

"The speed to get it open and the vastness of the grading were the biggest challenges," Straka said. "We used experienced shapers. The builder was a local person, Harry Annear of Kings County Construction. He had never built anything of that magnitude before, but did a great job."

The practice facility was originally envisioned as a three-hole loop with sand greens, driving range and short-game center. But with the increasing number of top-quality courses on the island, Hurdzan convinced the developers to expand the practice facility to a nine-hole track with push-up greens and bunkers.

"That was a testament to Mike's vision," Straka said. "They just had a Canadian Tour stop there in late August and held a pro-am pairing local kids with the pros on the practice course. That drew a lot of people. The pro tournament itself was held in Brudenell, but will be moved to Dundarave permanently next year."

Ann Chinouard, who is the coach for LPGA player Lorie Kane, is the director of the Brudenell Golf Academy.

In addition to Dundarave and Le Diable, Hurdzan's Canadian credits include Royal Woodbine, Devil's Pulpit and Devil's Paintbrush outside Toronto and Westwood Plateau near Vancouver.

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