Second Brauer course in Minnesota aims for 'north woods experience'

By MARK LESTIE

BIWABIK, Minn. — Flush with three years of success with its first golf course, Minnesota's Iron Range Resource and Rehabilitation Board (IRRRB) is adding a second 18 holes to its mix here as it continues efforts to turn the Giants Ridge area into a recreation destination.

"The demand for this caliber of golf course is so high that we decided to go ahead with a second," said IRRRB development director Mike Gentile, who has overseen operations of Giants Ridge Golf Course since it opened in 1997.

Officials had hoped Giants Ridge Golf Course would host about 22,000 rounds by the fourth full year of operation. "We did 22,000 between July 1 and Oct. 15 of that first year," Gentile said. "Last year we did 30,000 rounds and still turned away between 12,000 and 15,000 golfers."

Building on that success, the IRRRB has chosen Giants Ridge course designer Jeffrey Brauer/Golf Scapes of Arlington, Texas, as "the natural choice to do the second course."

"The charge we gave Jeff," Gentile said, "is to build a golf course that will be equal to or better than the first course, difficult as that may be. We want the golfer, when he is traveling from the Minneapolis-St. Paul area, where 90 percent of our golfers come from, to play two rounds of golf at least and get two quality, yet distinctively different, experiences."

Jeffrey D. Brauer and his firm, Golf Scapes, have designed 40 golf courses and remodeled 80. Canton Golf Course in Parker, Colo., and Giants Ridge are rated among the best affordable public courses in the United States, while his Avocet Course at Wild Wing Plantation in Myrtle Beach, S.C., was a Golf Digest best new course winner. His Champions Country Club in Nebraska is highly ranked, as is the Brauer-designed TangleRidge Golf Club in Texas.

President of the American Society of Golf Course Architects during its 50th anniversary year in 1995-96, Brauer also designed Colbert Hills Golf Club at Kansas State, which opened in June 2000 as the cornerstone golf course for The First Tee program as well as the first collaboration between the PGA of America and Golf Course Superintendents Association of America.

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