WASHINGTON NATIONAL OPENS UNIVERSITY COURSE

AUBURN, Wash. — Washington National Golf Club (WNGC) has unveiled the first of a two-phase development with the opening of the University Course, which will serve as home to the University of Washington’s men’s and women’s golf teams.

The public, 18-hole, par-72 layout, designed by golf architect John Fought, is owned and managed by Kirkland-based OB Sports.

The head coach of the Washington Huskies golf team, O.D. Vincent, is the son of Orrin Vincent, owner of OB Sports and a native of the Pacific Northwest. "It’s been a dream of mine to build a course worthy of hosting a major championship, and Washington National is that course," said Orrin Vincent. "It is all the more meaningful having been afforded the opportunity to do it in my hometown."

The University Course features five sets of strategically placed ryegrass tees, allowing golfers of all skill levels to play the course, which ranges from 7,304 yards from the back tees down to 5,117 yards from the shortest markers. A large clubhouse deck overlooks the 18th hole and offers expansive views.

The most dramatic holes, perhaps, are the par-5 14th and the par-4 15th. Vincent modeled the 14th – a 635-yarder – after Pine Valley’s sixth, a hole so tough it’s often called “Hell’s Half Acre.” Vincent’s version skirts several bunkers and requires a downhill third shot that can send balls bouncing sharply off the back of the green.

The 15th hole, 342 yards long, plays to an island green against a backdrop of boulders, flowers and a waterfall. Precision is required to reach the green safely. “This,” said Vincent, “is an Augusta hole.”

Various details at the course expand on the college theme. The golf carts, for example, are gold with purple trim, the Huskies’ team colors. Each cart is custom named for a Husky athlete, and inside the cart is a description of that “Husky Legend.” For instance, the Warren Moon cart features a runday of his collegiate and pro football careers. There’s also one custom colored cart for each of the other Pac-10 Conference schools, complete with...

Ernie Els Enterprises joins forces with Nicklaus Design

NORTH PALM BEACH, Fla. — Nicklaus Design has entered into a joint venture with Ernie Els Enterprises to pursue golf course design opportunities. The parties intend to develop, implement and market a golf course design business supported by the infrastructure of Nicklaus Design, and featuring the design work, strategies and endorsement of Ernie Els.

Nicklaus Design, a division of Golden Bear International, Inc., the privately held company of golfer Jack Nicklaus and the Nicklaus family, will provide Ernie Els Design, Ltd. with the staff and technical support required to complete the conceptual and planning documents necessary to design a golf course. Support will include all computer-aided design work related to routing, strategies...

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Oneida Nation’s Shenendoah Golf Club ready for play

ONEIDA, N.Y. — The Oneida Indian Nation recently opened its 18-hole championship Shenendoah Golf Club adjacent to the Turning Stone Casino Resort in central New York. Playing to a par of 72 and ranging up to 7,129 yards from the back tees, the course provides a challenge for everyone from the high handicap to the most accomplished shooters.

Designed, constructed and maintained to tournament standards, golfers at Shenendoah will experience conditions normally reserved for tour professionals. “The Shenendoah Golf Club is a great tour-caliber course that is as fine a course as you will find anywhere in the United States,” says Bob O’Brien, director of golf at Turning Stone Casino Resort.

The Oneida group chose course designer Rick Smith for his attention to detail and commitment to maintaining the integrity of the existing landscape. Recognized by Audubon International for his efforts in designing courses that preserve and enhance the environment, Smith has blended this 18-hole layout into its natural surroundings.

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Muirhead and Ken Dye. "I'm very excited about the BlackHorse project," he said. "The Jacobsen/Hardy group has designed a challenging and traditional, yet very aesthetically pleasing, layout that has enhanced the surrounding areas. BlackHorse creates an environmental sanctuary for wildlife and golfers alike."

Matt Swanson, former director of golf at Ravenneaux CC in Houston, has been appointed head golf professional.

Committed to protecting the environmental integrity of the site Jacobsen and Hardy went to great lengths to protect the trees, to minimize the effects on the land and to maximize environmental stewardship. The course feature several wetlands and oxbows with palmetto and other native plant species that attract birds such as ducks, egrets, and sand hill cranes. The fairways use Tifsport grass, while the greens feature TifEagle. Both Bermuda species are new to Houston-area daily-fee courses.

"We've taken advantage of the natural terrain and features of the area in order to challenge all golfers," said Peter Jacobsen, a 22-year veteran of the PGA Tour and former golf commentator. "The use of the creek, lakes and wetlands, as well as the sand quarry and trees make this course unique among daily fee courses here. The course details, layout and environmental use of the land make it a special course for Houstonians."

The developer and owner of BlackHorse, Redstone Golf Properties, serves as the holding company for additional golf properties to be purchased, developed or managed by The Redstone Companies. The company provides management for two Rees Jones-designed golf clubs in Richmond: the private ShadowHawk GC, and the resort-style Houstonian GC, an amenity to The Houstonian Hotel, Club & Spa in Houston.

WHAT A FAIRWAY MOWER SHOULD BE.

Excellence has a new letter. The new John Deere 3215B Turf System I and the 3235B Turf System II take lightweight fairway mowers to new heights of efficiency, cut quality, and grass collecting. Both machines boast new 22-inch bedknife-to-reel cutting units. These units have larger reel motors than the previous generation for improved power. (The 3235B can be equipped with ESP cutting units for use in lush, warm-season grasses.)

A new yoke and ball joint design on the cutting units improves grass collecting. And the cutting units can be easily removed for servicing. A more efficient new triple pump has 12-tooth gears for a lower internal pressure drop and improved flow dynamics. A standard electric fan drive improves engine cooling performance while reducing sound levels to an all-time low. And to cap it all off, both the 3215B and 3235B sport new streamlined, fiberglass hoods. To see the new John Deere Lightweight Fairway Mowers in action, call 1-800-537-8233 for your free video today. Then call your local John Deere golf & turf distributor.

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plans, layouts and feature details, and technical specifications. The venture's designs will be branded, marketed, and promoted independently of Nicklaus Design, using the name, image and endorsement of Ernie Els. Els' manager, Nic Frangos, approached Nicklaus Design last year to discuss opportunities for Els to work with the Golden Bear and his firm to learn the business of golf course design.

"Jack Nicklaus is the most highly regarded Tour professional designing golf courses today," Frangos said. "His firm has an established reputation of being one of the most talented, comprehensive, full-service design companies worldwide. Ernie wants to do more than simply lend his name to a golf course; he wants to be involved in the design business for years to come. It made sense for us to approach the Nicklaus organization to propose the joint venture."

Just as Nicklaus began his design career over 30 years ago working with such noted architects as Dick Wilson, Pete Dye and Desmond Muirhead, Els aspires to follow a similar pattern, Frangos said, learning from the best and eventually evolving into his own design company. Currently, the group is looking at several opportunities for Els' first design project.

"My staff and I are looking forward to working with Ernie," Nicklaus said. "I have long admired Ernie as a player. At the same time, I aspire to work with Ernie, his manager, Nic Frangos, and his manager. "He has great golf sense and he has the talent to be one of the best players in the world."