

Elkington's first design debuts near Houston

SCOTTSDALE, Ariz. — Troon Golf has announced the opening of Fish Creek Golf Club, the newest daily-fee facility in the Houston area.

As part owner of the golf club, veteran PGA Tour professional Steve Elkington designed the 27-hole layout in his first venture into golf course architecture. Elkington was involved in every detail, right down to the rocking chairs on the clubhouse veranda and the color of the carpet.

Eighteen holes are complete, measuring 6,834 yards, with the third nine under construction and slated to open this summer. The course stretches through a heavily wooded area, with Fish Creek meandering through the property and coming into play on a number of holes.

Heritage Links handled the construction.

With wide sweeping fairway undulations, Elkington's layout plays to the natural architecture of the land. Construction required the bare minimum of earthmoving, allowing the course to flow to large, well-bal-

anced green complexes.

"I wanted to see if I could envision the entire project," said Elkington. "It has been a labor of love for the past two years. My plan was to keep everything simple and well-rooted in traditional, classic touches. We chose Troon Golf because they share our appreciation for the tradi-

tions of the game by providing the finest golf experiences available, from the conditioning of the golf course to the service in the clubhouse."

CHALLENGING, NOT RIDICULOUS

Elkington, a native of Australia, drew from years of experience by playing the world's finest golf courses, recalling the

most comfortable aspects of each one he has visited in a style he loosely describes as "country golf."

"I wanted the golf course to be challenging but not ridiculous, and nothing in the look and feel of Fish Creek to be overpowering," he said. "Except for the wafting aroma of barbecue smoking in the cooker between the ninth green and 10th tee, golf at Fish Creek is about relaxing and

enjoying yourself."

The superintendent, John Williams, came here from Troon North, in Scottsdale. His first assistant, Gary Livingston, transferred in from another Troon property in Palm Desert, Calif.



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Norman

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ger than that, but there are no bunkers to save you. You have to hit the green or else."

The next hole is no cakewalk, either. "The 11th hole at Ballybunion is one of the great golf holes of the world, and our 15th will compare to that," Arrington said. "It plays along the ocean and the tee is up high. You hit to a plateau, and the green sits down low, completely surrounded by dunes, like an amphitheater. There's a little opening that you can see into. It's a terrific golf hole — a 420-yard par-4 into a prevailing wind."

SHORT HOP TO SHANNON

Doonbeg Golf Club will be a daily-fee facility with some private elements, similar to Ballybunion and Lahinch. The clubhouse will feature some hotel-like rooms, along with a restaurant and pub. Four-bedroom golf cottages will also be built.

"This is a rural area with not many accommodations," said Arrington. "We see an opportunity to provide that housing. From here you can easily travel to Ballybunion and Lahinch, and Shannon International Airport is only 35 miles away.

"It's going to be great for this part of Ireland," he added, "because it will give it more quality courses. There will be wonderful competition and draws from Ballybunion, Lahinch and Tralee, who will send people to us and vice versa." ■

GOLF COURSE NEWS



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