

First domed golf course overcomes winter woes

FLINT, Mich. — Move over, ye giant all-weather creations for baseball and football games. And who said it never rained on the golf course?

"A real marriage of the art of golf and science" now allows golfers to play in a facility always dry and insect-free, with no wind and in comfortable temperatures.

A domed golf facility that permits golfers to play a nine-hole round during the winter months opened Jan. 5 in Flint Township.

The par 3 course, which features natural grass, is covered by a translucent dome trademarked "Turfdome," that allows natural light to pass through.

The course has been named Winter Greens Golf Club at King Par Golf.

Michael A. Thompson, president of American Golf Domes, Inc., of Mount Clemens, Mich., developed the concept and designed the air-supported structure.

Thompson said golfers "can play their game the same way they

play during the summer months. The only difference, if any, at Winter Greens is that you're stepping up to your approach shot to the green."

Michigan PGA head golf professional George Morgan, pro manager at Winter Greens, said initial operating hours will be 8 a.m. through 9 p.m. daily.

The course, "challenging for the accomplished golfer," said Morgan, "also is ideal for beginners, women and seniors."

Winter Greens offers a driving range and full-service golf pro shop

on the premises, as well as other attractions for the entire family.

"American Golf Domes has been erecting air-supported structures for golf since 1968 in Europe and the U.S.," Thompson said. "But this is the first natural grass indoor course in the world, during the development of which we worked with the Sod and Turf Division of Michigan State University and Dupont Plastics."

Michael McElroy of Great Lakes Golf Renovations, the Michigan firm that shaped and grassed Winter Greens, said: "It has been a chal-

lenge to take the plan concept to the undulating terrain of a functioning golf course. I believe golfers will appreciate the test."

A comfortable inside temperature is maintained at about 60 degrees Fahrenheit, regardless of outside conditions.

Broom makes do at ModSod layouts

Hardy souls who wish to stretch their season in the sometimes harsh outdoors are managing a couple of months of extra swings in North and South Dakota and Minnesota.

Veteran pro tour player Fred Haas of Metairie, La., has installed his Mod-Sod at 10 courses in those three states.

"Play at the end of fall and the start of spring is extended," Haas noted. "Golfers need only sweep the snow off the greens. There are no soft bumps on the surfaces, a boon to course superintendents."

Golfers searching for ways to enjoy golf year-round may find domed and Mod-Sod answers.

Maine super makes winter play possible

By Vern Putney

Maine's golf image nationwide perhaps is "beautiful courses beckoning in the summer and fall, but forbidding in the winter."

Webhannet Golf Club in Kennebunk Beach defies that description.

True, temporary greens and tees are in use from November through April, but play is fairly steady and there's added zest to the sport.

Member matches are spirited. After the action, when players move at a pace far more briskly than in languid summer months, coffee is the favorite 19th hole drink.

Course superintendent Roger L. Lowell annually cuts temporary greens from the fairways. They are cut with a hand greensmower at 1/2-inch height, and are about 300 square feet with an eight-inch cup in the very center.

Tee markers, one set of white only, usually are placed on a reasonably flat area nearest the tee.

The temporary course plays host to the annual Blue Ball tournament held either in January or February the past 10 years.

In this A.B.C.D. "one club" scramble, between 30 and 40 players compete in temperatures as low as 5 degrees and as high as 40 degrees.

Snow is not a problem. Players simply clean the snow from the cups, then putt out. Weather permitting, all 10 temporary holes are played, and always the minimum four.

All tournaments have been recorded on video. Wives accompany participants to act as caddies and to keep them comfortable.

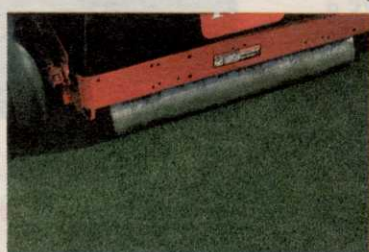
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