

Coore-Crenshaw Nebraskan track stirring whirlwind of speculation

'I've always thought Pine Valley was it. This blows Pine Valley off the charts. Within 10 years, it will be No. 1 in the world.'

— Dana Fry
golf course architect

By MARK LESLIE

SOMEWHERE IN THE SAND HILLS OF NEBRASKA — Here lies the ultimate example of the motto: "Build it and they will come." It is a golf course. It is an hour's drive from a city that is an hour's flight from anywhere. And it was "just there" — fashioned by the hand of God. They call it Sand Hills, and golf purists who have heard tales of it are itching for its gates to open, sometime around Labor Day.

Less than 4,000 cubic yards of dirt is being moved in construction of Sand Hill Golf Course. Yes, that is 4,000 — not 400,000.

"I had a great natural piece of ground and wanted a natural, traditional golf course," said Dick Youngscap, whose "other" course, Firethorn, is the number-one rated track in Nebraska.

Golf architects Bill Coore and Ben Crenshaw obliged Youngscap, weaving 18 holes between and around breathtaking sand dunes in this country known for its prime grazing land, but certainly not golf.

"There were only two places where we knocked a knob [of dune] off maybe three feet," said Crenshaw, who took week after week off the PGA Tour to complete this project.

"It's as British- or Scottish-like as I've ever seen in North America... It is sandy. It has undulations. It has contour. In its natural state it is very, very close to how the game was born.

"It's the piece of property that we will have to work the least on. It's very, very difficult to know what to leave out. It is there in its native magnificence. We're really only trying to prepare it for golf, which is not very much."

Coore said the only work done on fairways was grading by a D4 bulldozer — "and that was done within a week."

"It is the best golf course we have ever done — or will ever do," Crenshaw declared.

"It will be one of a kind," agreed Bill Kubly, whose Landscapes Unlimited built the course. Kubly needed only three people on site and nearly all his work was installing the irrigation.

"Most of the course was simply leveled out and seeded," Kubly said. "The greens were just smoothed out with a Sandpro or small tractor and planted with bentgrass.

The soil is pure sand, so there is not a drainage problem."

Youngscap bought 8,000 acres (Nebraskans sell land by the thousands of acres) in July 1991 and began construction last June. "In the intervening time, Ben and Bill walked it, day after day after day," Youngscap said.

Their struggle was not finding 18 holes of golf on the property, where dunes are 30 to 40 feet high — and higher. It was narrowing the holes down to 18.

"We found 131 holes," Crenshaw said. The final 18 are spread over 500 acres.

"The routing is fantastic," said Dana Fry, a lead architect for Hurdzan Design Group in Columbus, Ohio, who visited the project. "They have the greatest shapes of golf holes and the views are unparalleled."

"This land is probably one of the biggest secrets on the face of the earth," Youngscap said. "It is the most tranquil — kind of like a beautiful lady. She's fickle. Most of the time she's exquisite and you're entranced by her beauty. And then there are times where she gets mad and slaps you around... wind and storms. It's a very fascinating



The sand hills rise up 30, 40 feet and higher at Sand Hills Golf Course.

Photo by Ron Whitten

place. It will be a real challenge for people to play golf there."

Not everyone will play Sand Hills, stuck out in the wilderness of Nebraska. Non-natives will have to fly into North Platte, then drive 50 minutes due north to Mullen.

Once the course opens, possibly by Labor Day, "We anticipate 60 to 70 rounds a day," said Youngscap. "It's a purist golf

retreat." To that end, Youngscap is building housing along the nearby Dismal River to lodge 48 people.

Youngscap is an architect by profession and has done the design work of the clubhouse and lodges. He personally supervised all the deep main irrigation. "To say he's 'hand-on' would be the understatement of a lifetime," Coore said.



Redhawk Golf Club, Temecula, California, Hole #12, 168 yard, Par 3

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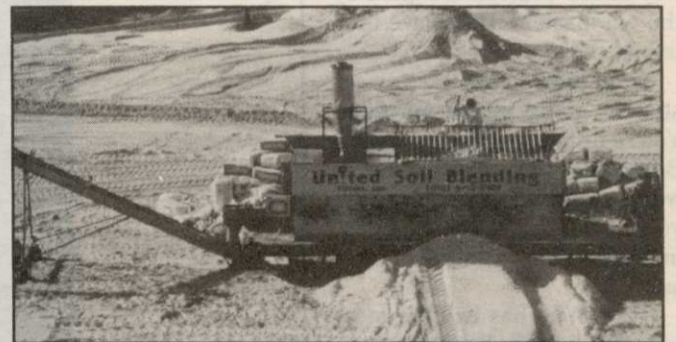
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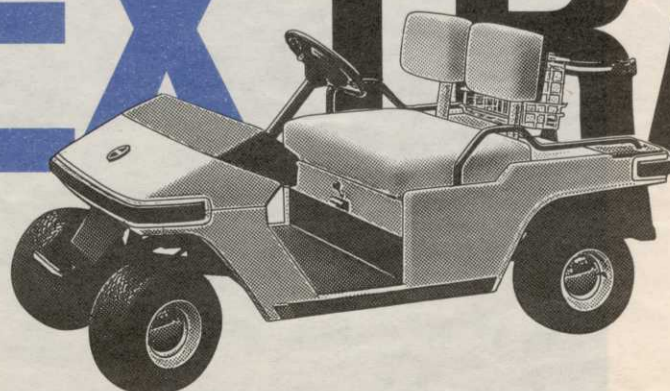
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