

Super Focus

A Badlands Connection: Stan Weeks meets Red Mike in N.D.

BY TERRY BUCHEN

WILLISTON, N.D. — Red Mike Hill has long been famous for the horse thief who was hung there in the late 1800s. However, it is about to become even more famous — thanks to the unique, links-style golf course to open here in this remote corner of northwestern North Dakota.

Some background: Back in 1990, Stan Weeks was superintendent at Williston Country Club. He was sitting around the clubhouse with some member friends when a brilliant idea popped into his head: "You know something," he wondered, "we do not have an 18-hole golf course within a 120-mile radius of Williston and we have to do something about it. We have the highest per capital golf participation of any state in the country and I think we could support a new 18-hole course."

After further talk with other golfing friends in the area, Weeks hooked up with Mike Ames, a successful irrigation agricultural engineer from Williston. Weeks convinced the non-golfing Ames and few other locals that they could support and build an 18-hole course. They looked at three potential sites before settling on Red Mike Hill.

In the meantime, Weeks felt he needed a formal education, so he began attending the two-year professional turfgrass management program at Rutgers University in New Brunswick, N.J., in 1991. At the end of his first year at Rutgers, Weeks scheduled a meeting with golf course architect Stephen Kay, who had befriended him.

"I told Stephen about my idea for a new 18-hole, links-style golf course and told him about the land we had put an option on at Red Mike Hill," Weeks recalled. "He got real excited. We talked for a quite a long time."

"Stephen came out and looked at our property — which was a natural for a



The 2nd hole at The Links at North Dakota, with Lake Sakakawea, formed by the Missouri River, in the background.

links-style course — and loved every square inch of it. He was so excited I knew that, if we could pull it off financially, we would have something really special. We bought 270 acres of the property, with an option for 240 more acres, in the fall of 1992. Then we convinced the county to give us a five-year property-tax exemption, which was a big help and the best we could do locally."

Weeks graduated in 1993 from Rutgers and pursued his dream of founding his own course. Groundbreaking finally took place on May 1, 1994.

"Most people in the area feel we have big corporate money behind our project, which is not the case at all," he said. "Me and Mike Ames, Stephen Kay and Marvin Schlauch, (a north Dakota



Stan Weeks

native) the contractor, are the principal owners of the course. We then sold stock to farmers and ranchers and we have a privately held company with no debt!"

"We built the entire course for \$1.5 million. We need 12,000 rounds annually to break even and we are going to do it. The property looks like it was in the middle of Scotland and we have 120 feet of elevation change, plenty of 'buck brush' and also an abundance of native grasses."

The property lies next to Lake Sakakawea, formed by water flowing from the Missouri River. Since Ames is in the irrigation business, the system was designed in-house, saving a lot of money. The team also used a unique design. The main line is 15 inches in diameter going a half-mile uphill from the lake. Then an 8-inch main line

"loop" goes 2.5 miles fully around the golf course proper. A total of 750 Toro 670 heads on 80-foot triangular spacing were installed with Osmac controllers.

The bunker sand, from a gravel pit about 10 miles from the course, passed U.S. Golf Association specifications and now fills the course's 85 bunkers. Grass selection includes South Shore and Putter on the greens; Cobra, Jamestown II chewings fescue on tees; Jamestown II and Seaside creeping bentgrass on fairways; and Reliant hard fescue, Jamestown II and Cindy creeping red fescue in irrigated roughs. The native, undisturbed grasses include western wheatgrass, bluegramma, crested wheatgrass and timothy. The driving range has five tiers of teeing ground, with 30,000 square feet of space; two putting greens; two chipping bunkers; four target greens and one practice green.

"We named the course The Links of North Dakota at Red Mike Golf Resort and we opened nine holes for play last fall, for about three weeks, to rave reviews," Weeks said. "Area people are totally convinced that we were onto something. I can't wait until we have all 18 holes open by July. Founding this golf course is the proudest thing that I have done in my entire life."

Added Ames: "We always believed in Stan's idea and enthusiasm to conceive our new golf links. After we found the Red Mike Hill property and showed the 91-year-old owner our golf course blueprints, he got real excited and decided to sell us his land. We had him hit the first ball last fall. We were very fortunate that the land owner was and is a golfer."

"Without Stan Weeks' drive, determination, enthusiasm, technical ability, common sense, business savvy and being a nice guy, this project would never have started."

Penn State releases Agronomy Guide


UNIVERSITY PARK, Pa. — The 1994-95 Penn State Agronomy Guide is available and has new information on weed management and control, as well as keys for identifying common grassy and broad-leaved weed seedlings in Pennsylvania.

The 214-page publication contains detailed information on corn, grain sorghum, soybeans for grain, small grains and forage crops. Included are sections on pest management, soil fertility management, crop storage and erosion control.


Contributors to the guide include faculty and extension staff in Penn State's departments of agronomy, entomology, plant pathology and agricultural economics and rural sociology. Government agencies and businesses also contributed information.

The guide is available for \$7 from Penn State Cooperative Extension county offices, or from the Publication Distribution Center, 112 Agricultural Administration Building, University Park, Pa. 16802; 814-865-6713.


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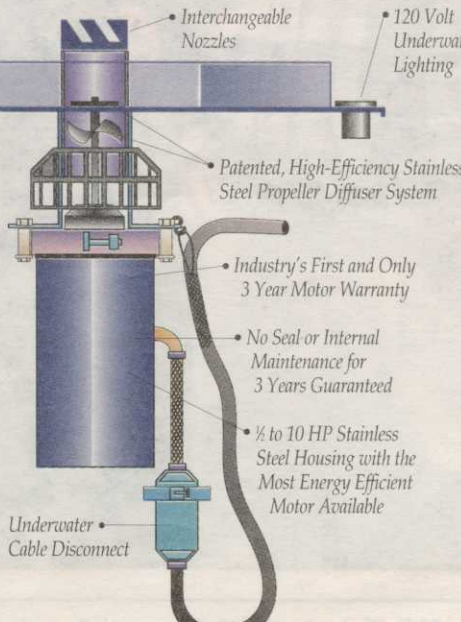


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