

Hickory shafts, gutta percha balls the new rule at Oakhurst Links

WHITE SULPHUR SPRINGS, W. Va. — Lewis Keller of New York has reopened a historic golf club 91 years after it closed — with an unusual twist.

The Oakhurst Links, which opened in May as a nine-hole course, was founded in 1884, not too far from The Greenbrier resort, as a six-hole course by Russell Montague for him and four friends to play. The layout closed in 1904.

Keller bought the golf course land and clubhouse in 1959 as a retreat and later as a place to raise thoroughbred horses. Three years ago, at the urging of Ladies Professional Golf Association official Phil Patton of Jupiter, Fla., golf writer Dick Taylor of Pinehurst, N.C., and Atlanta golf course designer Robert Cupp, Keller and his son, Lewis Keller, Jr., began the restoration.

But that's just part of the story.

Instead of using cavity-backed irons, graphite-shafted clubs and long-distance, high-trajectory balls, players at The Oakhurst Links will be required to use

hickory-shafted clubs and gutta-percha golf balls. They'll also have to aim shots around sheep that will double as a fairway maintenance team.

So far, Oakhurst has nine members who have paid an initiation fee of \$2,000 plus an annual fee of \$325. The course will also be open to the public, with \$45 greens fees that include the use of a set of hickory-shafted clubs. Golfers must also buy the gutta-percha balls at \$2 apiece.

Designers angle for Traverse City job

TRAVERSE CITY, Mich. — Hale Irwin, Mark McCumber and possibly Johnny Miller are considered the leading contenders to design the newest project at the Grand Traverse Resort. Northern Michigan resident Tom Doak is also reportedly in the running and could align himself with a PGA Tour member.

The project will integrate 18 new holes with an existing course to create two new

courses. Eventually a completely new 18-hole course will be designed. Ken Hornyak, the resort's director of golf and golf development, said a decision will be announced in June.

Grand Traverse Resort's master plan calls ultimately for 72 holes. Right now it has 36 — 18-hole Jack Nicklaus-designed The Bear and 18-hole Spruce Run. A new central clubhouse is also planned.

UMich course closed 'til 1996

ANN ARBOR, Mich. — The hometown of the University of Michigan is down to one public golf course for the summer of 1995. Leslie Park Golf Course, an 18-hole public course built in 1963 and site of the annual city golf championships, is closed for the year for \$2.2 million in renovations and new construction. Huron Hills, the other city-owned course, will remain open for the summer. Leslie Park is scheduled to reopen in 1996.

CALIFORNIA REPORT

La Quinta contracts with Tom Weiskopf

LA QUINTA, Calif. — Tom Weiskopf will join Jack Nicklaus, Arnold Palmer and Pete Dye as course designers at PGA West near Palm Springs. The Weiskopf course, set to open in 1996, is the first developed at PGA West since KSL Recreation bought the property in 1993. Weiskopf said his new PGA West course will be traditional, harkening back to courses in the Eastern U.S. and Scotland. Weiskopf's nod to tradition will include a unique design touch — a short "bye" hole after the 18th where tied matches can be decided. The bye hole will be 125 yards from the back tees and feature a lake and a bunker near the green and a bunker in the middle of the putting surface.

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SAN BERNADINO, Calif. — Reversing an earlier Planning Commission decision, the county's Board of Supervisors recently cleared the way for a 36-hole golf course to be built near the Nevada border close to several major casino resorts. The project was proposed by Redlands builders and former two-term County Supervisor Dennis Hansberger, along with Primadonna Resorts Inc., which owns Whiskey Pete's and Buffalo Bill's casinos in Stateline. Construction is scheduled to start this summer. The project was opposed by some local residents and representatives of the Sierra Club and National Park Service.

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