

IN BRIEF

RYE, N.Y. — The Friends of Whitby Castle are campaigning for approval of a June 17 referendum to borrow \$5.4 million to renovate the historic castle, which is located on the grounds of the 18-hole, municipal Rye Golf Club. The plan calls for restoring Whitby Castle, demolishing an addition to it built in the 1920s and improving the golf club, which was built in 1921. The stone castle is situated near the golf club's parking lot and was part of a rambling estate that predates the course.

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SAN JOSE, Calif. — The list of public courses in San Jose is about to shrink by one. Thunderbird Golf & Country Club, a modest and affordable par-61 layout particularly popular with senior citizens, will shut down this month so condominiums can be built on the 55-acre property. "It's a sad situation that they're closing this place up," Thunderbird General Manager Paul Lopes told the *San Jose Mercury News*. "This is the last course in San Jose where you can play without reserving a tee time."

Toughest track draws players

By PETER BLAIS

OAHU, Hawaii — As they have nationwide, rounds have been pretty steady at Koolau Golf Course, located in the heavily forested Windward Side foothills of this Hawaiian island, according to Director of Golf Ed Kegayama [see NGF Golfer Participation story on page 1].

But among the 90 to 100 golfers who daily play the "toughest course in the nation" have been a number of celebrities drawn to Koolau's breathtaking scenery and 162 slope rating, the highest ever recorded by the United States Golf Association, according to course operator Billy Casper Golf Management.

Recent visitors to Koolau, Kegayama said, have included actors Richard Dreyfuss and Adam Sandler (Happy Gilmore), former PGA Tour Commissioner Dean Beman, professional golfers Isao Aoki and Scott Simpson, and scheduled to arrive in July, Olympic figure skater Kristi Yamaguchi.

What attracts them are the numerous jungle-filled ravines and forced carries that account for the difficulty of the Dick Nugent/Jack Tuthill design, which is located tight against the Koolau Mountains rising several thousand feet above the course.

The temperatures at Koolau average 5



Hawaii's Koolau Golf Course, perhaps the toughest in the nation.

to 10 degrees cooler than in nearby Honolulu, making it cool enough for bentgrass greens. Koolau is the only course on Oahu, and one of only two layouts in the entire state, with the cool-season turf putting surfaces, Kegayama said. The bentgrass greens also benefit from the 100 inches of rain that fall annually at Koolau, making artificial irrigation an infrequent occurrence.

"The course is designed to drain well," the golf director said. "Because it's tucked in the mountains on the island's north side, it gets direct sunlight from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m., which also helps keep temperatures cool."

Koolau's superintendent is experiment-

ing with paspalum grasses on several tee boxes, Kegayama added.

Koolau was originally developed by Japan's Minami Group Inc. as an exclusive private club with memberships selling for \$250,000, Kegayama explained. But the Japanese economy soured about the time the course opened in 1991 and the bank eventually foreclosed on the \$104 million property, which includes a 125,000-square-foot clubhouse.

Casper took over management of Koolau and is operating it as a daily-fee facility with green fees ranging from \$45 to \$90. The course is expected to sell at auction later this year.

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