

BRIEFS



Stoned in Pa.: Hurdzan-Fry track a blast in more ways than one

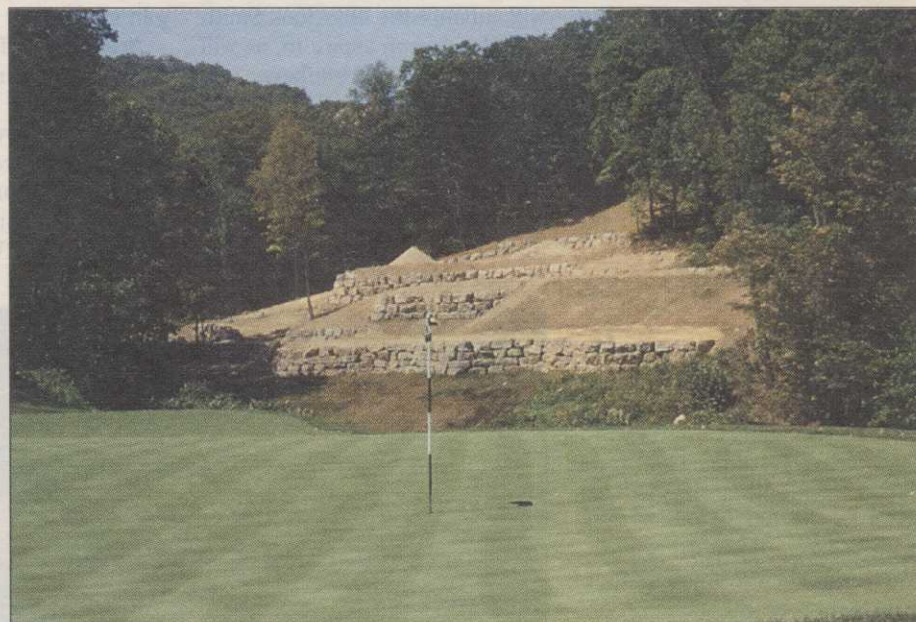
By MARK LESLIE

ELLWOOD CITY, Pa. — The dynamiters at the quarry can't blast the limestone fast enough to keep up with construction of Olde Stonewall Golf Club here. Ten- to 14-foot-high stone walls stretch as long as 420 feet on parts of the course and serve to bulwark many tees and greens, while visitors might confuse the maintenance building or clubhouse with an English castle and this Pittsburgh suburb with British countryside.

"The golf course is starting to look like a quarry," said Joe Niebur of golf course builder Niebur Golf, Inc. "People will be shocked when they play it."

"Purely for scenic reasons, you will go away talking about it, in awe of what the guy has done," said course architect Dana Fry about developer Rick Hvizdak, who fell in love with the limestone produced by a nearby quarry and decided to make it a keystone of the design.

"There is no cutting corners [with Hvizdak]," Fry said. "In a way, he's the ultimate client because he makes his decisions totally on what's best for golf, period. A lot of guys talk the talk, but he lets his wallet do the talking and he does it first-class."



Limestone boulders formed walls and served as the foundation for tees and greens at aptly named Olde Stonewall Golf Club outside Pittsburgh. This shot of the par-3 15th hole looks back from the green at four sets of tees in the background.

Initially to be called Heron's Landing, Olde Stonewall Golf Club became the course's name when it became apparent boulders would play such a dominant part in the project. Ranging in size from 2 tons to 12-ton giants that dwarf even

bulldozers on site, the rocks total 35,000 to 40,000 tons at \$32 per ton. Do the arithmetic, and that is about \$1.28 million for stone on the \$11-million project.

It is so much that folks at neighboring

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BLACK KNIGHT AT GRAND TRAVERSE'S NORTHERN KNIGHT

Gary Player patrols his first signature course in the state of Michigan, Northern Knight, currently under construction at the Grand Traverse Resort in Traverse City. The 7,161-yard layout was completely seeded by mid-July and is scheduled to open in the spring of 1999. Fairways and greens are seeded with Providence bentgrass, tees with Penncross bentgrass and roughs with bluegrass and fescue. Country Golf is the course builder. KSL Recreation owns and operates Grand Traverse.

OWL'S NEST OPENS FOR PLAY

CAMPTON/THORNTON, N.H. — The owners of Owl's Nest Golf Club here have opened its par-72, 7,012-yard layout. Owl's Nest Golf Club was designed by Cornish, Silva and Mungeam, Inc., and has been sculpted around the natural topography of the Pemigewasset River Valley and White Mountain National Forest. Owl's Nest offers five sets of tees on every hole to accommodate golfers at any skill level.

FAZIO'S BIGHORN FACES DEC. OPENING

PALM DESERT, Calif. — Bighorn Golf Club's new Tom Fazio-designed Canyons Course is nearly complete and will be ready to open for member play in December. The Canyons Course, a 7,054-yard, par-72 layout, is set among rock-studded canyons, copper foothills, streams, waterfalls and rich desert flora. It includes a variety of environmental and elevation changes, and panoramic views from every hole.

\$500M PROJECT BOASTS COURSE

AURORA, Colo. — U.S. Home Corp. has broken ground on a \$500-million adult housing development here, Heritage at Eagle Brand, that will feature an 18-hole golf course.

Vegas course copies great holes from British Open

LAS VEGAS — Eighteen holes inspired by famous holes played in the British Open comprise the new Royal Links here.

A daily-fee course developed by Southwest Golf and designed by Dye Designs International, the project will include a traditional Scottish-style clubhouse and numerous museum-quality displays honoring the history of the game.

"Golf is very, very special to me," said Bill Walters, chairman and CEO of Southwest Golf. "I look at this as an opportunity to give something back to the game by providing players who might never visit Great Britain an opportunity to experience golf the way it was originally in-

tended."

The Royal Links is not associated nor affiliated with or sponsored by The British Open or any of the courses that inspired The Royal Links, nor has permission been sought or attained to use their names or hole designs.

In designing the 6,970-yard, par-72 Royal Links, Perry Dye sent his design team to the United Kingdom to experience the golf courses for themselves.

"What we learned from visiting the actual golf holes that inspired The Royal Links is much more than simply what the holes looked like and how things were laid out," said Dye. "Those things

you can get from a drawing or a photograph. Rather, we gained first-hand knowledge of the real nuances that give these great holes their endearing character.

"For instance, we now know exactly what it feels like to stand in one of these menacing sod-faced bunkers and peer out towards the green. We know from experience how deceptive reverse bunkers can be to a player. And, all of these 'feelings' will enable us to ensure that what we are building here in Las Vegas is truly authentic."

The scorecard reads like an all-star

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The par-4 3rd hole at Arcadia Bluffs looks out over Lake Michigan. The photo is taken from the tee box. The green is being watered at the center of the background.

Rick Smith's Arcadia Bluffs set for 1999

ARCADIA, Mich. — Perched dramatically above Lake Michigan, and offering water views on every hole, Arcadia Bluffs Golf Club is entering its final construction phase in anticipation of a summer 1999 opening.

"It reminds me of Ballybunion in Ireland," said course designer Rick Smith of the property located just north of Manistee.

"When I'm here, I stay on-site until sundown, because the landscape is so intriguing and so enjoyable to work," said Warren Henderson, the senior design associate on the project. "There's not a day that goes by when I don't see something new and amazing."

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Arcadia Bluffs

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"With no water hazards on the course, the fescues, bunkers and chipping areas around the greens will make Arcadia Bluffs look as much like a seaside links as possible," said Smith. "And, best of all, it won't require a passport or an overseas flight to get there."

The Arcadia Bluffs site is com-

prised largely of sand, lending itself to a windswept dunes appearance. Native grasses and fescue will enhance the links look Smith and Henderson aspire to, as will dozens of sod-wall bunkers.

"The sod-wall bunkers create a fantastic visual effect," said Smith. "As the sun goes down late in the day, they create shadows which give every hole a unique look, one that seems to change by the hour."

The par-72 layout stretches over a 245-acre parcel situated 150 feet above the Lake Michigan shoreline.

Arcadia Bluffs will be a daily-fee course offering private club amenities. The club will feature a clubhouse overlooking Lake Michigan as well as a practice facility and practice putting greens. The project was commissioned by RVP Development Corp. of Grand Rapids.

DYE, WEED OPEN OCEAN LINKS AT AMELIA ISLAND PLT.

AMELIA ISLAND, Fla. — Featuring five holes along the Atlantic Ocean, the Pete Dye and Bobby Weed-designed Ocean Links at Amelia Island Plantation opened for play on Sept. 1. "Building this golf course represented two unique opportunities for me: working with my mentor, Pete Dye, and designing the ocean-front holes," Weed said. "It was certainly an experience I will remember for some time. The course provides golfers with a memorable experience as well. The medium-length par-3 15th plays directly towards the Atlantic, and club selection is at the mercy of the ocean breeze. It can be anything from a 5-iron to a bazooka," Weed said.

The first nine holes opened in April.

Olde Stonewall

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Connoquenessing Country Club nicknamed Hvizdak "The Stone Baron," a moniker that will be given to the bar in the 30,000-square-foot, castle-like clubhouse, which will boast 47-foot-high turrets on the corners.

Superintendent Richie D'Ambrosio, who came here after serving three years as an assistant at both Allegheny Country Club and Diamond Run Golf Club in Sewickley, sits in a 8,000-square-foot maintenance building also shaped like a castle.

Yet, D'Ambrosio points to other facets of the course that set it apart. Among them:

- a 30-foot-high bridge that spans a 250-foot natural ravine and has a natural rock waterfall ledge beneath it; and
- a par-3 14th hole on which two waterfalls front the green.

But in the end, Fry said, the upscale public-access course "will gain its notoriety from the amount of rock walls. It physically is unbelievable, especially when you see the size of these rocks."

To wit:

- More than 2,000 linear feet of sloped rock served as rip rap along the Connoquenessing River.
- The 420-yard length of the par-4 6th hole was "rock-walled."
- All the tee boxes, curbing, lakes, rivers and streams were rock-walled.
- Rock walls serve to hold up many areas along the back nine that were built with severe elevation changes and deep cuts.

For Niebur, the project encompassed challenges far beyond the norm. "We're using a 690 with an oversized grapple," he said. "We busted the thing twice, but it's as big as we could find."

"The other problem was getting the rocks to the back of the property where the terrain is severe."

But it was worth it, Niebur said, adding: "The owner has a good taste for quality. He and Dana have come up with some great stuff."

Fry summed it up:

"Rick loves golf," he said, "and is one of those guys that if one rock's good, two is better, and three must be the best."



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