

HILTON HEAD ISLAND, S.C. — The opening of Belfair's new East Course offers golfers the choice of putting on Crenshaw bentgrass or Bermudagrass.

The new Tom Fazio-designed East Course, a par-71 layout measuring 6,959 yards from the championship tees, features Crenshaw bentgrass putting surfaces. Although the course will be open for limited play through the spring, the East Course will be closed through the summer in preparation for a fall grand opening.

At Belfair, choose bent or Bermuda

"We still have some work to be done before the course is completely ready. But most of that work needs to be done during the summer growing season," said Belfair Director of Golf Keith Goodaker. "So in the meantime, we want to give our members a chance to test out the East Course."

Over the summer, the Bermudagrass that carpets tees, fairways and rough will

be grown in and native grasses, including Bahia, sweetgrass and spartina, will be planted. Ten holes on the East Course were open for limited play last summer, while construction was under way on the remaining eight holes. Therefore, for virtually half of the course, the coming summer will be the first growing season for the Bermuda-grass. This explains the planned summer closing and the fall grand opening.

The original West Course at Belfair, also a Fazio design but with Tifward Bermudagrass greens, opened in 1996.

In designing the East Course, Fazio created a traditional style course that encourages walking.

Describing it, Fazio said: "The style is a combination of looks, but the overall result is distinctive. There is some Pine Valley in it; there's some Wild Dunes in it. There's some Jupiter Hills in it, some Shinnecock, some old classic style. But when you put it all together, it really has its own style."

McFarlane and Garl

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and site. You look at the constraints you have, what grows in that area, and what type of course fits that environment. It's a matter of absorbing all the information from all the sites and working your style onto that canvas."

Hiring McFarlane, Garl said, came as a response to developers.

"Constantly, clients keep talking about the Scottish influence," he said. "It looks simple, but to do it correctly is extremely difficult. If you do it right, it looks great. If you don't, it looks terrible, and there's a fine line between the two."

"A lot of people say they have a Scottish design," Garl added. "But, personally, I think they miss the visual impact. Most people think 'Scottish' just means no trees. So if they get a piece of fairly flat ground with no trees, they say, 'We've got a Scottish golf course.' But it's the subtle nuances and also the feeling you get while you're there."

Asked if he thought he could duplicate that feel, Garl said, "We think if you get the right look — and landscape it properly, which is often greatly overlooked — we can duplicate it."

Meanwhile, Garl intends to "bring something to the table that nobody else can find in Great Britain: an American firm that has Scottish and American architects."

Having an architect in the office who lived there, he said, "we feel we have the upper hand for somebody who wants to hire an American firm. We have someone who has worked over there for years, knows the contractors, knows the environmental responsibilities, understands the customs, knows who are the best local shapers and contractors."

"Everybody talks about design being our business. But there is another side of it that is extremely important, and that is picking the right people to build it and getting the job done properly and on time. Steven has done that. Americans have no experience in doing it over there. Everyone who goes over there is reinventing the wheel."

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