

First Tee breaks ground at Fort Smith project

FORT SMITH, Ark. — The First Tee program here kicked into gear in December, when ground was broken on a complex containing a six-hole executive-length course, a full driving range, a short-game practice area and a teaching facility.

The complex, laid out by Glen Day/Alan Blalock Golf Design, aims to provide afford-

able golf access and teaching programs for kids 17 and younger. "This is a great opportunity to be involved in exposing these youngsters to a great game that they might otherwise never have the opportunity to learn," Blalock said.

Students who participate in The First Tee learn much more than just how to swing a club.

Before being allowed on the course, they are taught the proper stances, grips and swing techniques, along with classroom instruction regarding golf etiquette and rules.

Once they learn the basics, they move out to the course to practice their skills. Students also work toward a certification that permits them privi-

leges and discounts at participating courses. Children who are interested can also receive supervision and training on golf course maintenance and care.

The Fort Smith project also will include an indoor training facility to be used in inclement weather. The clubhouse features classrooms, pro shop, a snack bar and restrooms. The classrooms will have doors



Blalock (left), and Day in Arkansas

that, when opened, directly face the driving range, so students can hit off indoor mats out onto the range. A maintenance facility will house golf carts and provide storage for machinery and tools.

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NWS update

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bama, Mississippi, and Louisiana. The NWS said drought conditions were as severe as any observed during the 20th century.

The driest July to September on record occurred in Texas, Oklahoma, Kansas, Arizona, Louisiana and Mississippi before torrential rains brought flooding to many cities and made



November the wettest November on record. The Dallas-Fort Worth area, location of the Golf Course Superintendents Association of America's annual Conference & Show, went 84 straight days without any measurable precipitation, breaking local records that started in 1898.

The widespread drought – 36 percent of the nation's landmass was in severe to extreme drought in August – contributed to one of the worst U.S. wildfire seasons in 50 years. Some 7.2 million acres of forest and grasslands were consumed by fire. The greatest losses were in western states, particularly Idaho and Montana, with nationwide losses estimated a \$1 billion.

For the first time since 1994, the United States escaped a direct hit from a hurricane. According to the NWS, there were 14 named storms in the Atlantic Ocean, the Gulf of Mexico and the Caribbean. Eight became hurricanes and three reached major hurricane strength.

After two years of unusually high numbers of tornadoes, the 2000 season remained relatively calm with 898 tornado reports.

The average U.S. temperature for 2000, once calculated, is expected to be between 54.1 degrees and 54.2 degrees F. "As we progress through the winter, there is a good chance of seeing a couple of more major cold outbreaks, and considerable swings in temperature and precipitation across the nation," said Jack Kelly, director of the NWS. ■