

## Kinloch GC to unveil front nine in April

RICHMOND, Va. — With the back nine of the new Kinloch Golf Club having opened here in late October, all eyes are already on the front nine set to debut next month.

"The reaction has been phenomenal," said amateur golfer Vinny Giles, who co-designed Kinloch with Lester George.

"The standard comment from local people is, 'Never thought anything like this could exist in Richmond.' Nothing else around here has the finished look this golf course has, with bentgrass fairways and bluegrass to the treeline. We have never had a bentgrass fairway in this area."

Many visitors touring the

course felt that "the back nine is spectacular but front nine may be even better," Giles said. "The lake on the back nine gives prettier views. But the front nine is tree-lined all the way around and the sixth, seventh and eighth are probably the best three holes in a row on the course. I don't see a weak hole out there."



The 13th hole at Kinloch Golf Club in Richmond, Va.

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Director of golf Phil Owenby said nearly half the 300 memberships have been filled at the private, invitation-only golf club, which will include peripheral houses.

"People have walked the front nine, which won't open until next spring, and signed on as members without even seeing the back nine," said Owenby. "The word 'spectacular' is being used a lot. It is a spectacular layout that fits the terrain so well. Because the older specimen trees were left, many are saying the course looks like it has been here forever. Lester did a great job, leaving the wetlands, creeks and cliffs, and there are wonderful features and vistas."

#### 'MYSTICAL AND SURREAL'

The front nine is expected to open the Saturday following the Masters - April 14.

"The front nine," said George, "is not as intimate to the water's edge as the back nine. But the front nine has similar dramatic terrain features. From a design perspective, the nines are different-looking but complement each other. One has very, very dramatic features, like the palisade that runs through the sixth, seventh and ninth holes, and the wetlands that adjoins the sixth."

"Now that the front is done, everybody is stunned," he added. "Someone described the series of holes from the third through the ninth as 'mystical and surreal.' They all have different personalities and traits, and I love them all."

#### FUTURE TOP FIVE IN STATE

"Obviously, the proof of the course is in how well it plays," Giles said. "I will keep Cascades at the top of my list of Virginia courses because of its history and my love for it. I think Kinloch, in a couple of years, will be in the top five, and perhaps in five years I will rate it second, trying to be objective."

Taking credit for only 20 percent of the design, Giles said: "Lester has done a phenomenal job. The grassing pattern is really impressive and the variety is excellent."

The facility also includes a short-game practice area and teaching center. The 3,200-square-foot teaching center is finished, featuring three indoor hitting bays, video equipment and a video room. The short-game area will open in April.