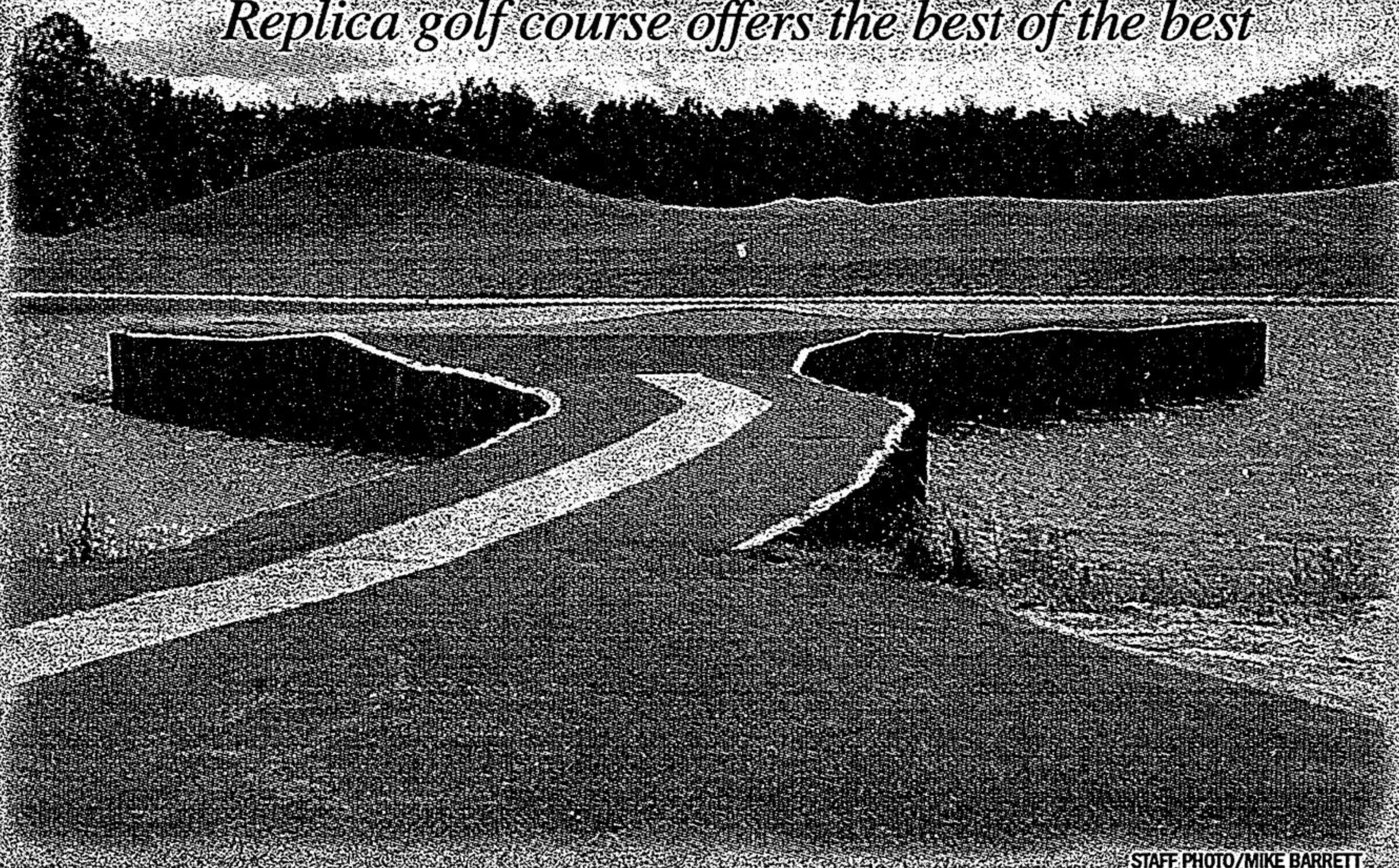


BUSINESS

Fairway flattery

Replica golf course offers the best of the best



STAFF PHOTO/MIKE BARRETT

The 17th hole at Wooden Sticks is patterned after the famous Island Hole from Sawgrass, Florida.

BY PATRICK CASEY
Staff Writer

Imagine making the turn at Amen Corner on the Sunday afternoon of The Masters, standing on the 12th tee staring seven holes between you and the clubhouse at Augusta National.

Then hearing the cleats of your shoes pace along the bridge crossing Augusta's Rae's Creek where golfers from Arnold Palmer to Jack Nicklaus and Tiger Woods have walked en route to an elusive green jacket.

But during the same round, you also walk the Swilcan Burn Bridge from Scotland's Royal and Ancient course at St. Andrew's before coming face to face with the stone wall that borders the Road Hole at the 17th green.

Let's face it, golf fanatics will go to incredible lengths in support of the game they treasure dearly, but to play eight of the world's most challenging holes in one round is the appeal of Wooden Sticks golf club, a replica style public course in Uxbridge ready to open to limited play next Friday.

This is not a recent phenomenon, explained Alan Chud, who joined Newmarket's Greg Seemann to get the \$10-million project off the ground more than two years ago.

There are courses around the world built to play and look like Augusta National. There is a tribute course in Tampa with all 18 holes dedi-

cated to Pine Valley. If you study golf architecture, designers are always looking for a particular place to put their favourite holes.

"We are just trying to provide golfers with an experience they might not otherwise get," he added. "Imitation is the best form of flattery and this happens quite frequently."

With 17 partners that also includes course architect Ron Garl, plus NHL stars Joe Nieuwendyk of the Dallas Stars, Gary Roberts of the Carolina Hurricanes and former player Steve Rice, Wooden Sticks' eight replica holes include:

- Nos. 3 and 4 representing Amen Corner, Augusta National's 12th and 13th holes;
- No. 10 is the first hole at St. Andrew's;
- No. 11 is the Postage Stamp Hole from Royal Troon, named because of the tiny green encased with bunkers;
- No. 14 is Carnoustie's Hogan's Alley hole;
- No. 15 is the Road Hole from St. Andrew's;
- No. 17 is the famous Island Hole from Sawgrass, Florida, home of the Tournament Players Championship;
- No. 18 is St. Andrew's impressive finishing hole.

Another three holes (Nos. 9, 12 and 16) bear similar design features from the exclusive Pine Valley in New Jersey, while the first hole at Wooden Sticks highlights a re-creation of the Church Pew Bunker from Oakmont,

Pennsylvania.

However, with five sets of tee blocks measuring between 5,307 and 7,001 yards in length and a clubhouse ready next spring inspired by the facility at Augusta, Garl has saved a portion of the 132-hectare parcel for 10 spectacular holes of his own.

Using the property's rolling terrain and scores of pine trees rows, Wooden Sticks is scattered with knee-deep delicate white sand, intriguing waste areas and some tough Scottish terrain where a true lie doesn't exist even in the middle of the fairway.

"Our market is every golfer in Southern Ontario who believes our course will be appealing enough to try it once each season," pointed out Seemann, adding the name Wooden Sticks is actually a tribute to the three NHL investors.

"First of all, you can't get on Angus, Glen, Lionhead and Glen Abbey the time that you want. Any true golf fan will want to try it once. Anybody that knows these holes from TV will give it a shot. In terms of difficulty, guys will love it."

Wooden Sticks will open up all its tee times completely next spring, while the Ontario Golf Association has already scheduled its 2000 mid-amateur championship for the course.

But with 10 beautiful holes of golf combined with eight extraordinary replicas, Chud insisted golfers are in for a definite treat.



STAFF PHOTO/MIKE BARRETT

Greg Seemann, left, and Alan Chud at the Island Hole.

Playing tribute

BY PATRICK CASEY
Staff Writer

It didn't take Ron Craig long to decide he wanted a piece of Wooden Sticks, a new replica golf course in Uxbridge featuring eight of the world's most popular holes.

As president of Turf Care, a Newmarket-based business specializing in golf-related products, Craig has spent the better part of 25 years awaiting a perfect opportunity to help showcase a line of equipment ranging from heavy machines to irrigation materials.

But when Greg Seemann approached him two years ago about investing in the public course set to open next week, Craig leapt at the opportunity to be one of 17 investors that includes Joe Nieuwendyk of the Stanley Cup-winning Dallas Stars and Carolina Hurricanes forward Gary Roberts.

"I knew the concept of replica golf works in the United States, and it was a simple decision when Greg first approached me," explained Craig in an interview Tuesday. "It's a great piece of property and I'll have the chance to take my customers to a world-class project."

"I was born in Glasgow and I have played every one of the replica holes at Wooden Sticks, so this is going to be pretty exciting for golfers. And clearly I'm looking to use the course as a selling system for Turf Care. People don't like to buy things sight unseen, but it's different when they can come and see exactly how things are working."

Seemann, meanwhile, has spent

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