

**SPORTS:** Mid-day specials on carts, green fees

# After wet spring, golfers eating up heat wave

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Summer doesn't last too long in these neck of the woods.

But when it arrives, golfers tend to make the most of it.

Or at least make the effort.

What could make golfers a little hesitant in taking to the fairways are periods of a prolonged heat wave as has been the case over the last week that's engulfed the province.

Some public courses acknowledged the sweltering weather conditions, which included near record-breaking temperatures Thursday, have been a deterrent.

## 'GET ROUNDS IN'

"It's affected us," John McLellan, Ballantrae Golf Club general manager, said of the recent heat wave. "I'm sure other courses have been affected by it, too."

Rob McGarrigle, Parkview Remington Golf and Country Club's events co-ordinator, noted their course fielded some telephone calls from players Wednesday who wished to reschedule their rounds they had booked for Thursday in anticipation of the extreme weather forecasted.

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If there's any consolation to the recent oppressive weather, it at least represents a far better situation than what courses endured during the months of April and May when periods of rain prevented golfers from setting foot on the fairways.

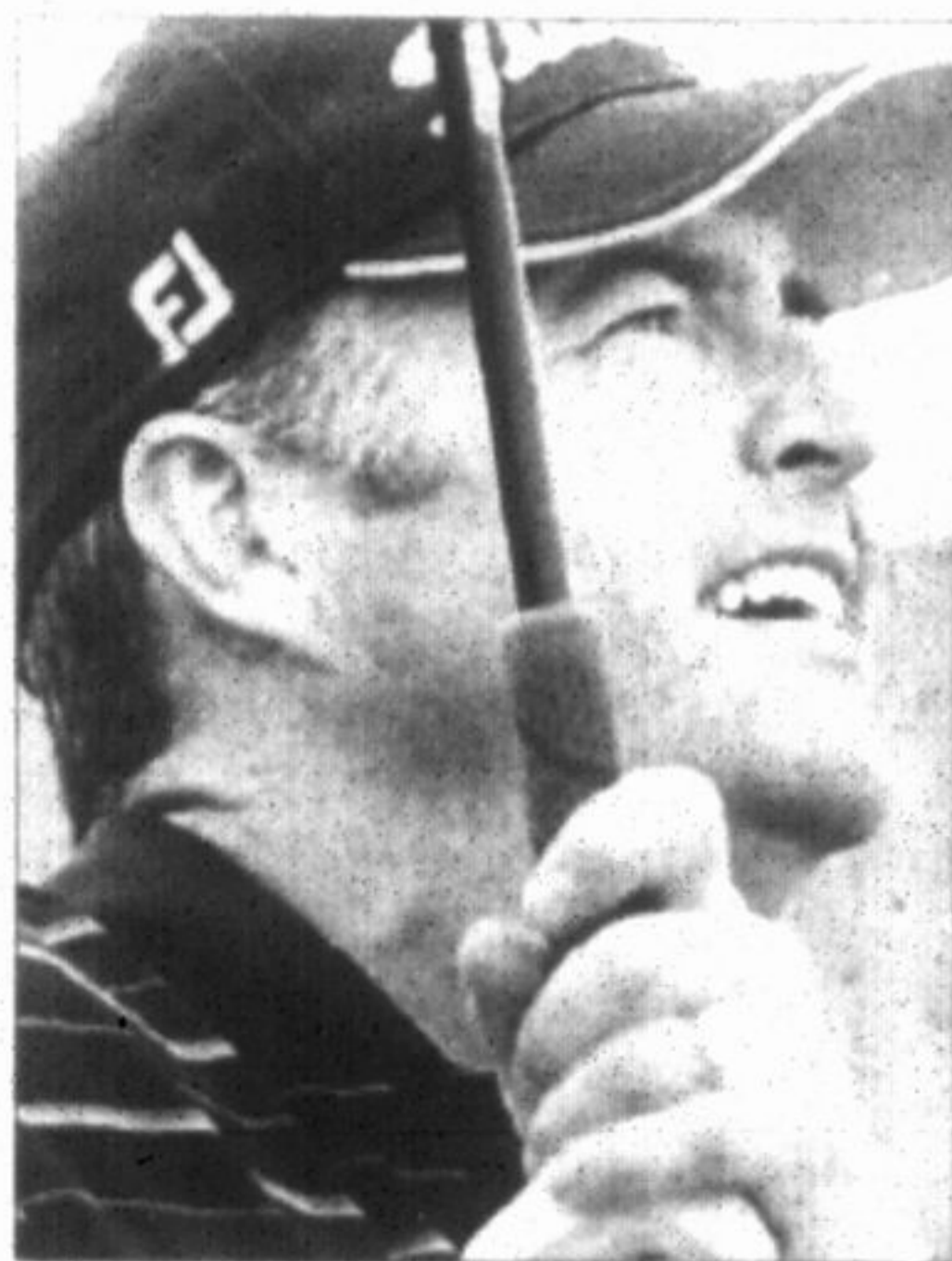
"This past spring was the worst I've seen in my 30 years of being in the business," Mr. McLellan said. "In April and May, we lost close to 1,500 rounds. With the weather in June improving we were 10 per cent over last year at the same time. But we're still around 1,000 rounds in the hole. We need three good months to get it back. But it'll be hard to make it up."

"Rain certainly hurts more than the heat," said Roy Chan, head pro at the Maples of Ballantrae Golf Club near Stouffville.

Citing their business has been good, in part due to promotional work, Mr. Chan thinks golfers want to make for the lost time they experienced during the spring.

Current weather notwithstanding.

"People want to get their rounds in because of the poor spring that



**JOHN McLELLAN:** Ballantrae pro says course is 1,000 rounds behind last year thanks to weather.

we had. In June and July our course has been rocking. In terms of the hot weather, people want to play. All they need to do is to drink plenty of fluids to avoid heat stroke," he said.

Tom Aird, Bushwood Golf Club's business manager, concurred.

"The hard-core golfers will be out there. They'll play when they can and more people will play in

the heat rather than in the rain," he said from the north Markham public course.

The above-average temperatures has generated more business in terms of players choosing to rent power carts rather than walk and consuming more cold beverages.

That adds up to added revenue.

With the warmest part of the day running from around late morning through the afternoon, some traffic patterns are changing.

"We tend to get a rush in the morning and then when it gets cooler later in the afternoon," said Scott Haynes, Markham Green Golf Club's director of golf. "In between those times, (participation) tends to ease off."

To encourage play during warmer periods, the Markham course, which at one time was an 18-hole private layout owned by IBM, has discounted cart rentals and green fees at some times.

The economy and changing landscape of the business are bigger issues than the weather, Mr. Aird said.

"The number of new courses has spread out the golf population.

There's a huge market for discounting rounds," he said.

Rain, which hurt business during spring, would be welcome.

"Right now our course is in great shape. We have enough ponds on the course to get us going. But we can always use rain overnight," Mr. Chan said.

Acknowledging his course is the driest of its 11-year history, Mr. McLellan said it is well equipped to battle the summer elements.

## DRIEST IN COURSE HISTORY

"Our course superintendent said he saw some dry spots that he hadn't seen before. But we have lots of water where a lot of places don't," he said.

Other playing tracks, such as Remington Parkview Golf and Country Club, have been under strict water usage constraints. Fairways, greens and tee boxes still get watered.

"If a ball lands in the rough, they'll get more of a roll than if they are on the fairways," cited McGarrigle. "Our greens and fairways are looking good. But if we had some rain in the evenings, we'd have even better conditions for golf."

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