

Golf courses getting set to roll after extra-lengthy winter

Predicting when local golf courses will open their links to start a new season is a crapshoot.

With a little co-operation from Mother Nature as was the case two years ago, they've been known to let golfers get in some early swings.

But in others, such as this year when Old Man Winter refuses to go into hibernation, they will give the fairways and greens a little extra time to become playable.

Even with temperatures hovering above the freezing mark during the past week which in turn has given way to greener pastures and provided golfers with a sense of hope, you still can't fool Mother Nature.

Especially after the brief return of those dreaded white flakes from the sky Tuesday.

"We're getting there slowly, but surely," said Roy Chan, Maples of Ballantrae Golf Club's head pro. "Because we're located on the Oak Ridges Moraine we still have some snow on the course. Some trees on the the south side of the course

that block the sun a bit has prevented the snow from melting."

Acknowledging this year's start will be about one to two weeks later than normal, Chan anticipated their 18-hole Championship course and nine-hole executive layout to open around April 25.

SNOWY SPRING

"Our greenskeeper said the course is looking good, there's not much ice damage," he said. "The greens and fairways are looking good."

Ballantrae Golf Club also anticipates a start of at least 10 days to two weeks later than the norm.

John McLellan, the Hwy. 48 club's general manager, said they might open shortly after the Easter long weekend.

"We still have snow in a couple of areas," he said.

Despite the long winter, six inches of snow that was already on the ground before the disastrous December ice storm came in handy.

"Everything was protected. We're fortunate," he said.

Golfers will enjoy the absence of any construction on the adjacent housing development that is now finished.

"For the last 12 years when you played you heard hammers and saws. Now it's all done," he said. "Ballantrae is complete."

Some courses, which are located below the moraine, will have the advantage of opening at least one week earlier.

Bushwood Golf Club, just south of Stouffville, is scheduled to open tomorrow.

Mary Evelyn, Bushwood Golf Club owner, acknowledged it's about one week later than the average.

"The course has come through very well despite the extreme weather we experienced this past winter," she said.

During the offseason, she noted they continued to do work on their drainage system and bunkers.

—Michael Hayakawa



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