



McBroom sweeps through Thunder Bay

A river runs through Thunder Bay's new Whitewater Golf Club. In fact, it drove most of Tom McBroom's world-class design and was the anchor that convinced him to finally develop the property. Photo supplied.

By KRIS HARRIS
For Northern Ontario Business

Duffers in the Thunder Bay area will have something new to look forward to when the ground finally thaws this year.

The Whitewater Golf Club, designed by renowned Canadian golf course architect Tom McBroom, will be opening its greens for its first full season in 2005. The semi-private facility is nestled between the Kaministiquia River and the Rosslyn Oxbow Wetlands, and offers a vast array of exquisite natural landscapes, as well as two distinct nine-hole courses.

The front nine, or Forest Course, delves deep into the boreal forest of the area, surrounding each hole with a bounty of large pines and poplars. The back nine, or River Course, runs alongside the river and features more water play than the front, while encompassing natural ridges and hills for a greater change in elevation.

"(It is about) the panoramas, the natural beauty and the pristine environment," says Silvio Di Gregorio, co-owner of the club. "All you see is the golf course - the wetlands, the mountains. There are lots of trees between fairways, it's a very private feeling and the vistas are fantastic. You just feel so relaxed, even if you're not having a good round of golf."

"We tried to run as many holes as we could along the river," says Chris Nelson, another golf course architect who

worked on the project with McBroom. "There are certainly some beautiful views into the river valley and the distant mountains, which is why we opened up the views around the greens and tees."

Development is already underway for a third nine; the Sand Barrens Course should be operational within two years.

"It'll be a very different nine from the others because the site is very different," Nelson said.

Learning to appreciate the course

The course also boasts a premier golf academy where golfers can work on all aspects of their game.

"This is probably the best setting I have ever had to develop a practice area," McBroom says.

Set in the middle of an immense pine forest, the academy offers double-tiered tee decks and a shot for every club in the bag.

"You can reproduce every shot you'll have to make on the course," Di Gregorio said. "There's nothing like it. It's probably as good as anything in Canada, or better."

The club has garnered some national attention, despite its as-yet status as officially closed. Whitewater has already booked the Ontario Junior tournament in 2006, had discussions with the Ladies Futures tour, and has even been contacted by representatives of the CPGA.

"It has enough length and difficulty with the bunkering and

the way the greens are designed that it's good enough for the pros," Nelson said. The course is about 7,300 yards long as it stands.

But the course is not strictly for the pros.

"We just wanted to get the course up and running," Di Gregorio said, "but by next year we'll be ready for anything that comes along."

He adds the four sets of tees, red blue white and black, offer a variety of difficulty anyone can enjoy.

A monster tourism magnet

"We do have a good membership base," Di Gregorio says. "About half of the course is already being used by members and the other half is available to the public. (But) we need to bring tourists to the area from northwestern Ontario and also from Manitoba, Minnesota and Wisconsin."

"We really have to bring people in from outside the city to make it work."

Membership to the club can be purchased for \$2,400 per year with a one-time initiation fee of \$8,000.

Green fee rates for guests will range from \$45-\$70, depending on the time and day of the week.

For more information, phone the course at (807) 475-4653. www.thomasmcBroom.com

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