

Local Scottish inn adds links-style course

By **MARK HARTMAN**

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HOCKING COUNTY — While golfers have to wait a couple of months to watch the British Open on television, they can get the feel of a traditional links course locally without taking an expensive trip across the Pond.

Opening this summer for guests at Glenlaurel Inn in Hocking County will be “The Scottish Links at Glenlaurel,” a replica-style links course that harkens back centuries ago to a more traditional type of golf that originated in Scotland.

“We want our guests to have the total Scottish experience,” Greg Leonard, a partner in the Glenlaurel Inn, said. “We want it to start when they come into our front entrance.”

Scotland is the home of golf and St. Andrews — “the Old Course.” According to the Royal and Ancient Web site, since as early as 1691, when St. Andrews was described as “the metropolis of golf,” the Auld Grey Toon on Scotland’s east coast has been regarded as the game’s spiritual home. As legend has it, the game has been enjoyed en masse on the links since the 12th century, when shepherds would knock stones into rabbit holes with rudimentary clubs.

In the 1700s, the custodians of the course were the Society of St. Andrews Golfers. They took the decision to reduce the number of holes from 22 to 18, so creating the format that would come to represent the standard course layout the world over.

The Scottish Links at Glenlaurel will be an eight-hole course with heather fairways and sand greens and tee areas. Golfers will have the option of playing with their clubs or using five original 100-year-old hickory shaft clubs, a stovetop golf bag, sand tee molds and a golf ball from that era, which will compensate for the lack of yardage on the course.

Leonard noted that to experience it the right way guests should turn back the clock 100 years.

“We want our guests to do the whole thing,” he added. “...Play golf the way they did back then.”

While guests make their way to the course, they’ll travel on state Route 180, turn onto Mount Olive Road and meander past a natural heather pasture, a stone fence or two and a creek (or a burn in Scottish brougue) that runs through the course, to the latest creation of world-renowned golf architect — Dr. Michael Hurdzan, and his son Dr. Chris Hurdzan, from Hurdzan/Fry Environmental Golf Course Design.

The duo suggested the original concept because it fits so well within the Glenlaurel atmosphere and the local landscape.

The designers are advocates of less is more on a golf course and letting nature take its place. The sand greens and tees will be eco-friendly, keeping with the wishes of both the proprietors and the course architects.

Leonard explained that the elder Hurdzan is a family friend and he thought of this unique concept about five years ago.

The course is the only one of its kind in the area and is set to open in late June.

“It’s in the process,” Leonard said. “I’ve gotten behind a bit with all the rain. The fairways are in and 80 percent of all the sand greens. I plan to open up partially by late June, if not the whole course.”

When the course is completely open for play, Leonard encourages guests to regale in the Scottish atmosphere.

“Go out and play and have fun like they do in Scotland,” he concluded. “We want it to be a friendly, unusual and different adventure.”