

Rugged and rolling

Exciting design brings Scottish feel to Piper's Heath Golf Club



Garry McKay

[MILTON] You know you're playing a links style golf course from the moment you turn off Trafalgar Road into Piper's Heath Golf Club. The lack of trees, the windswept look all are hallmarks of links style.

There is something different about Piper's Heath, however, and what it is may not hit you until you're actually playing it.

Designer Graham Cooke has lined a number of the fairways with large razorback mounds spotted with fescue. It gives Piper's Heath a much more rugged and distinct look than most links-style courses.

"When we sat down with Graham and talked about the design he mentioned (the rugged look) was a very prominent feature that he wanted to carry through the golf course," said Marc Gruehl, who is both general manager and part of the ownership consortium. "It's a turn-of-the-century look that was brought over from Scotland, England and Ireland.

"In order to create those razor-back fescue mounds we had to move a lot of material. Some of it came from on-site where we dug out our reservoirs but we also trucked in about 700,000 cubic metres of material."

Piper's Heath, Hamilton and area's newest golf course opened July 16 on the East side of Trafalgar Road about three kilometres North of Highway 407.

Gruehl and his brother York along with Moses and David Comarin are the principals behind Piper's Heath, which rolls over 216



CLIVE BARBER / SPECIAL TO THE SPECTATOR

NEWEST COURSE. The windswept look of Piper's Heath Golf Club overlooking the 15th green from 13th green, gives the Oakville area club a much more rugged and distinct look than most links-style courses.

acres formerly used to grow soybeans and pumpkins and assorted other crops.

The large acreage also means that holes are not jammed tightly together.

"We started planning this about eight years ago," said Marc Gruehl. "Originally we were planning on doing a championship golf course and we were talking with the Royal Canadian Golf Association about moving their headquarters onto the site, but the green fee we were looking at was going to be about \$150 so we decided to step back and see if we couldn't find a niche in the market."

The group re-evaluated and decided that the market was saturated at the top end.

"We found that green fees be-

tween \$79-\$100 was what was missing," said Gruehl. "We didn't want to build a course where you're charged an exorbitant amount of money for a course that is mediocre."

Piper's Heath, which is operating as a public course, is far from mediocre and they priced it just where they'd planned.

Greens fees are \$79 for 18 holes and \$50 for nine. They also have early-bird rates at \$50 before 8 a.m., Monday to Thursday, as well as twilight and senior rates.

And, unlike many new courses that insist you ride, Piper's Heath is definitely walkable.

Ian Carabine is the club's head professional and the club has a full range.

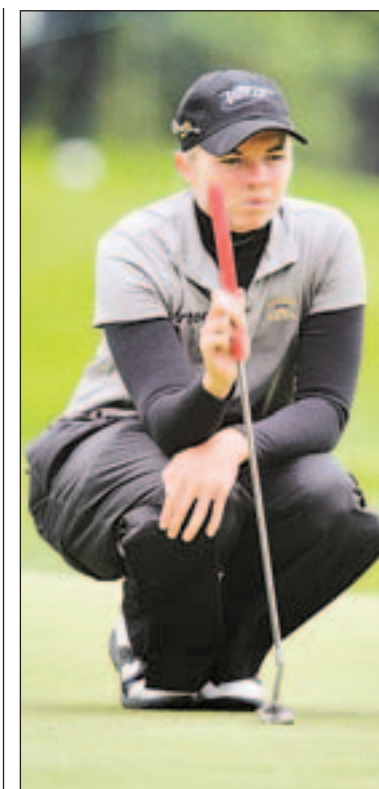
Gruehl says a full clubhouse is

probably a couple of years away but their temporary clubhouse, which will eventually become the halfway house, is large enough to house the pro-shop and a restaurant.

Many Graham Cooke-designed courses have greens that within the industry are considered way over the top, almost to the point of being silly. That's not the case at Piper's Heath where the ownership group told him they wanted much more subdued putting surfaces.

The website for Piper's Heath is www.pipersheath.com. Check out their logo which is among the most unique golf logos in Ontario. Their phone number is 905-864-1025.

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JOHN ULAN / THE CANADIAN PRESS

EYE ON THE BALL. Alena Sharp's performance on the weekend enabled her to move up in LPGA Tour rankings.

Alena moves up Tour list in Sharp contrast to Kane's slip

[TORONTO] Alena Sharp moved up 23 spots in the women's world golf rankings yesterday after her tie for 10th place at the CN Canadian Women's Open in Edmonton.

The 26-year-old Hamilton native is No. 125, only one spot behind Lorie Kane, who has been Canada's highest-rated golfer since the LPGA rankings launched in February 2006.

Sharp, in her second year on the Tour, started the year ranked No. 227. The top 10 in Edmonton and three other top 25s have helped her ascend more than 100 spots.

Kane, of Charlottetown, P.E.I., slid five spots to No. 124 — her worst rating since the rankings were instituted.

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