

Awaiting a banner season

Improving economy could help area courses

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ing. Hawk's Eye features large landing areas and large greens. Carved through a northern Michigan hardwood forest, the course pitches and rolls over the hilly terrain, but doesn't have nearly as many blind shots as The Chief.

It plays over 7,200 yards from the back tees — for those that like challenge — and slightly over 5,000 yards from the forward tees. There are four sets of tees on each hole to make it as challenging as you like. Construction on a new clubhouse at the Hawk's Eye course is slated to begin this fall, according to golf pro Dave Hill. For tee times, call (231) 533-4295.

The other new Robinson course being built in the area, Hawk Ridge, will have nine holes open beginning June 1, according to owner Jerry Balmes. Being developed at Skyline ski area, just south of Grayling off I-75, the course was supposed to open last season, but was set back a year due to irrigation problems.

"We got all the problems corrected and actually had the nine holes open for limited play late last fall," said Balmes. "We hope to get the second nine open this fall. Comments have been great on the front nine."

The course will play 6,200 yards from the tips and around 4,800 from the forward tees. Large generous landing areas and large, deep greens will appeal to the average player. For those that like to "pound it," they had better be accurate. The farther out a player hit's the ball, the narrower the fairway gets; a Robinson trait.

Hawk Ridge will feature bent grass tees and greens and blue grass fairways. It will also have lots of sand traps — over 50 — and sev-

eral elevation changes.

"The golf course is built on a ski hill," pointed out Balmes. "The land drops over 200 feet from front to back. Some of the holes are pretty dramatic and very scenic. Carts will be mandatory, because of the hills. It would be very difficult to walk."

To check on the opening date or book a tee time, you can call (989) 275-5445 or visit www.skylineski.com.

If you haven't yet played Lochenheath, the wonderful Steve Smyers layout perched along a ridge overlooking East Bay, you may be a little late. The course is closed until August while they redo a couple of the greens. But, when it reopens, it will be only for member play and will be closed to the public.

"That's really right on target," explained golf pro Jeff Coble. "When Lochenheath opened in 2001 it was anticipated that it would be open for limited public play only the first few seasons. Ultimately it was to become a private golf community, and we've taken that next step."

The Grand Traverse Resort and Spa is the second year of a \$10 million, three-year upgrade since the Grand Traverse Band of Ottawa and Chippewa Indians took over the resort last year. Golf improvements were made to the clubhouse and The Bear last season.

Additional new golf course maintenance equipment will be purchased this year, and the resort will once again be hosting the prestigious Michigan Open on The Bear in June, a tournament they have hosted since 1981. The dates are June 28-July 1. For more information on the tournament or to book a tee time, call (231) 938-2100, or click on [sort.com.](http://www.grandtraversere-</p>
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Elmbrook will once again be hosting the Haig Hickory Tournament, which is slated to take place June 18. Space is limited and several teams have already signed up, according to manger Roger Putman.

"It was such a hit last year we hope to make it an annual affair," said Putman. "The format will remain the same as last season. Everyone will be playing with the old hickory clubs, which Elmbrook will furnish."

Traverse City's oldest public golf course—celebrating a 40th birthday—has added a fourth set of tees that will be new for this season. They will play around 2900 yards, according to Putman, and offer patrons another option for yardage choices.

"Golf should be played within your comfort level," added Putman. "This just offers golfers more choices to find that comfort level."

The Crown Golf Course has been busy during the off-season, according to manager Dave Taberski.

"We've added 22 new sand traps, not as punishment, but in spots along the course where they can help hold errant shots that would normally be lost or out of bounds," he said when I spoke with him in late March. "We also added about 100 new flowering crab trees along the course, and started the second phase of construction on the back nine holes."

One of the few area golf courses to show a substantial gain last season, play was up 11-percent last season, according to Taberski.

"We aggressively sought out leagues and outings last season, and it paid off. We're up to 18 leagues now, but still have plenty of room for individual play."

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