

Eye on the sky

Weather key to successful season

BY MIKE TERRELL

Special to the Record-Eagle

TRAVERSE CITY — Ask area golf managers what the most important thing is to key a successful golf season, and almost all of them will say the weather.

"The last three Mays have been absolutely terrible to the golf business," said longtime High Pointe pro Ben Croftchik. "The weather is the key to our having a successful season. People were leaving town during the Cherry Festival last year, because it was cold and wet in July. That should be a busy time for our business, and it wasn't."

Dave Taberski, head pro and part-owner at The Crown Golf Course, agreed.

"We were down last season a little bit like most area courses, but we had a great September," he said. "That was probably our nicest month of the summer and the golfers came out in force. We are a weather related business."

The high cost of gas was mentioned as a minor factor in influencing the outcome of the season.

"If we have a good hot summer the golfers from downstate will be up here," said Croftchik. "I don't think the few extra bucks they spend on gas will keep them from coming."

"Attendance at the downstate golf shows was good, and many were making plans for a trip north this summer."

April has been kind to the golf business, coming in like a lamb. Many courses opened ahead of schedule.

"The weather has really been cooperative so far this spring," said Crystal Mountain spokesperson Joan O'Neill. "We closed for skiing at the end of March, and the next day we were able to open our Betsie Valley Course for the golf season. It doesn't always work out that well."

"Package reservations, also a good indicator for the coming season, are looking good," she added.

Following is a selective look at some of the courses around the Grand Traverse region and what to expect for this season. A few have made some major improvements and most are running spring specials now through the end of the month; some carrying over into May. It's a great time of

year to get out and play before the summertime crowd arrives.

~ The big news among area courses and resorts is the opening of A-Ga-Ming Golf Club's second 18-hole course (see related article). A Jerry Mathews design, it's slated for an early June opening. In the meantime they are running an early season \$25 special for 18-holes with cart on The Torch that is good through the end of the month. For tee times call (231-264-5081).

~ Another local Mathews-designed course,



Hawk's Eye in Antrim County

Mistwood, made some major additions during the off season that will continue into the summer; not to the 27-holes they presently have, but in the way of amenities (see related article).

Mistwood spring rates through May 19 are \$41 for 18 holes with a cart and \$59 for all 27 holes in one day. Mistwood, boasting 13 golf leagues with over 400 players, has always been a popular course with local golfers, but with three nine-hole courses there is always room for public play. To reserve a tee time, call (231) 275-5500.

~ One of the region's oldest golf courses, Interlochen, also made some major off-season improvements.

"We removed over 200 trees making the course much more user friendly, and also added some length moving the tee boxes back to around 6,600 yards," said owner Tony Kochevar. "It really opened up some of the fairways that were pretty tight before."

The course is 41 years old, and Kochevar has owned it for the last 25 years.

"We've made some major improvements over that time actually lengthening the course by almost 1,600 yards," he added. "That wasn't easy with limited land space, but I'm proud of what we've achieved; especially the latest renovations."

Interlochen Golf Course is running a \$20 mid-week special for 18-holes with cart through April. It's \$25 on the weekends. For tee times, you can call (231) 275-7311.

~ The region's other 40-year-old course,

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