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Growing with flow at Ocean Edge

Redesign uplifts Brewster course

By Jim McCabe

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BREWSTER - In the twilight of a golf season that has provided many opportunities to enjoy this game, one of the most pleasant surprises in 2008 was the discovery of a "new" Ocean Edge.

It remains where it's always been, the focal point to a peaceful Cape Cod resort setting, but thanks to lead architect Chris Rule of Nicklaus Design, the redo has given Ocean Edge a more comfortable feel.

"They took a golf course that felt like it was 'forced' into the land," said Mike Medeiros, Ocean Edge's director of golf. "Now, it looks like it belongs on that piece of land. There's a nice flow to it. It's very inviting."

Certainly, due diligence was put into the work, because Ocean Edge for more than a year was just a nine-hole course. It wasn't until May 1 of this year that it reopened as an 18-hole layout - the front and back nines flopped - and if one thing was apparent from the start, it was this: Members' and golfers' patience was greatly rewarded because the golf course is a joy to play and golfers couldn't ask for better conditions.

Purchased by Corcoran Jennison in 1980, the property was home to an impressive mansion for years, but in 1986 a golf course opened amid a series of condominiums. Instantly, Ocean Edge became a destination point and for several years after it opened, the New England PGA Championship was held there. While it remained popular with members and resort guests for many years, there was always the feeling that the course could be better, that holes that were judged too penal could be better, that it could be less about target golf and more about allowing for better sight lines and inviting shots.

What Rule saw in Ocean Edge was a parkland setting that could be put to better use. He loved the topography, the rolling fairways, the subtle elevation changes, but there was a tired look to the landscape.

"In the redesign, we've maximized the natural landscape, while modernizing the course," he said.

It was a \$6 million effort, but attention was paid to a long list of details, from better bunker complexes, to new tees, a better strand of grass (A-1), to collection areas in front of the greens that allow for a wide variety of shots. In many ways, Rule's work greatly softened the course, because areas that were severely penal are no longer, but that isn't to say the redesign has made it an easy golf course. It isn't, but it is one that will allow for good scores for well-struck shots.

The key, said Medeiros, is a player's tee shot, and that is where he heaps praise upon Rule.

"He's allowed you to play it freely, meaning when you set up [over a tee shot], you can hit it where you want," said Medeiros, who previously worked at Nashawtuc CC in Concord. "You're not penalized if you want to hit driver. You have the opportunity to put that club in your hand."

Hit it well, and you'll have a chance to score. Hit it crooked, and well "you bring bogey into the equation," said Medeiros, who knows that that wasn't always the way with Ocean Edge. Having played it in the New England PGA many years ago, he remembers many a tee shot that had to be steered around trouble spots and some quirky layout designs that made the course difficult. Those areas of contention were addressed, so from the opening tee shot to the final green, a golf experience at Ocean Edge is a playable experience without hiccups.

"You're never caught in a rut out here now," said Medeiros, whose summer season was steady, though it is about to give way to what he considers the best time of year

"Fall golf on Cape Cod," he said. "And we've never looked better."