

Trump Course Turns Heads

By Pete Thomas, Times Staff Writer
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On a sunny day at the edge of the Palos Verdes peninsula, some of the world's top female golfers arrived at a consensus that would make Donald Trump proud.

When it comes to scenery, they said before and after pro-am rounds Wednesday, no other stop on the LPGA tour rivals Trump National Golf Club.

"The views are better than you're going to get anywhere," said Janice Moodie, a seven-year veteran from Orlando, Fla. "I think some of them even beat Pebble Beach."

Pebble Beach is not on the tour calendar, but that Trump National is drawing comparisons to one of the world's most beautiful courses says a lot about what a prime location and work can mean.

Trump National, revamped since its ill-fated days as Ocean Trails, is being christened this week during the \$1.3-million Office Depot Challenge, which will be held Friday through Sunday in what forecasters say will be clear and warm weather.

After being closed for slightly more than a year, the course will open to the public by the end of October, said Mike van der Goes, general manager and director of golf.

Twenty-nine of the 30 top money leaders, including No. 1 Annika Sorenstam, are in the Office Depot Challenge field. And if practice rounds and the first of a two-day pro-am are any indication, most if not all of them will leave impressed with not only the vistas and artificial waterfalls, but the golf course as well.

"It's challenging in all aspects," Cindy Figg-Currier, a 21-year veteran from Austin, Texas, said of a par-71 layout that will play 6,017 yards. "The tee shots, you have to know where to place them. And the par-fives are not just straight away. You have to think about the hazards that zig-zag across the fairways."

Many of the fairways have been widened, but beyond them are environmentally sensitive areas off-limits, requiring a penalty drop, so the course favors straight hitters. The greens are enormous and with undulations so pronounced that it will be essential to place approach shots close to pins and below holes.

"You have to pick your target and if you hit the fairways there are a lot of scoring opportunities," said Suzann Petterson of Oslo. "If you shoot three rounds under par here, I think you'll do very well."