

The end of an era?

Golf Canada, Canadian Open players react to potential Glen Abbey Golf Club development

by Jon Kuiperij
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Plans for residential development of Glen Abbey Golf Club, rumoured for years but finally announced this week, would leave both Canada's national open golf championship and Canada's national golf association without a home base.

The Oakville golf course, the first solo design of PGA Tour legend Jack Nicklaus, was built by Great Northern Capital Corp. developer Rod McIsaac and the Royal Canadian Golf Association in 1976 to be a permanent home for the Canadian Open. Though the RCGA (now Golf Canada) chose in the mid-1990s to move the PGA Tour event around the country, Glen Abbey will host its third Canadian Open in four years next summer. Next year's tournament will mark the fifth time the Canadian Open has been played in Oakville in a nine-year span, and Glen Abbey has been the venue for the event a record 27 times — including 22 times in 24 years from 1977-2000.

Golf Canada's head office



Former world No.1 golfer Tiger Woods blasts out of a trap on the 10th hole at Glen Abbey Golf Club during the second round of the 2000 Canadian Open. Two days later, Woods hit perhaps the most memorable shot in tournament history, clinching the Canadian Open title with a 216-yard six-iron out of a fairway bunker and over a pond on the 18th hole. | **Toronto Star file photo**

has been located on Glen Abbey Golf Club grounds since the course was constructed. The golf course is also home to the Canadian Golf Hall of Fame and Museum.

ClubLink Corp., which purchased the course from the RCGA in 1998 at a reported price of \$40 million, sent a pre-consultation request to the Town of Oakville's Planning Service Department Oct. 23 regarding plans for a potential development application.

Asked by the *Oakville Beaver* for comment Tuesday, Golf Canada CEO Scott Simmons released a measured statement.

"ClubLink has informed us of their intentions to explore possible alternative uses of Glen Abbey Golf Club. They

will be keeping us informed on their due diligence," Simmons said.

"However, at this stage, there is no impact on Golf Canada's operation, including our corporate offices and the Canadian Golf Hall of Fame. Speculating on Glen Abbey's future would be premature at this time."

Simmons added that he expects the Canadian Open will still be held in Oakville next summer and that the club will still be considered to host future Canadian Open tournaments beyond 2016.

Local golfers who have played in Canadian Opens at Glen Abbey expressed disappointment when informed of the potential development plans.

"Holy smokes. That's unbelievable," said Oakville resident Lars Melander, who played in the 1979 Canadian Open at Glen Abbey.

"It's a tremendous course, and it's early in its stage. It only opened in 1976, it's a relatively young course. In 25-30 years, the top

of the course when the trees fully mature, my goodness. (It appears) we'll never get to know, though."

"That's unfortunate. That's big-time unfortunate. Wow," added Burlington's Blair Hamilton, a 22-year-old senior at the University of Houston and a member of the Canadian national team who made the cut in his Canadian Open debut this year at Glen Abbey.

"I think it's a big loss for Canadian golf if this course were to be developed. There's so much history there. One of (Tiger Woods') best shots of all time came on the 18th hole at Glen Abbey (a 216-yard six-iron out of a bunker and over a pond to all but clinch the tournament title in 2000). I know the tour pros were raving about it this year... I love it there. It's a great golf course, obviously, and it holds great memories for me."

According to the Fairway Hills Commu-
see Land on p.32

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Scott Simmons
Golf Canada CEO