



LPGA contingent checks out Crossings Course changes in preparation for May tournament

By Tommy Hicks

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DAN HONDA/Associated Press

Brittany Lincicome hits out a bunker during an LPGA tournament last season. Lincicome was one of eight LPGA golfers who came to Mobile this week to play Magnolia Grove's Crossings Course.

They came, they saw, they liked Magnolia Grove's Crossings Course.

Eight LPGA players arrived in Mobile Wednesday night for dinner with officials, sponsors and others associated with the Bell Micro LPGA Classic, set for the renovated Crossings May 13-16. On Thursday morning, the players played the back nine to get a first-hand look at the changes.

Anna Grzebien, Brittany Lincicome, Irene Cho, Stacy Lewis, Paige Mackenzie, Mina Harigae, Meredith Duncan and Audra Burks were the LPGA players who got a sneak peek at the course's renovations.

They liked the changes, including the softening of the greens.

"I think the changes are awesome," said Lincicome, winner of last year's Kraft Nabisco Championship. "It plays long, but for myself that's fine."

Lincicome said the greens, minus the previous undulations, were the most noticeable change. "They still qualify as hard because of those subtle breaks," she noted.

Grzebien, a rookie in 2008, said the changes in the course and moving the tournament from October to May will be well-received by everyone.

"I think fans and players will be happy about the changes," she said. "Where it falls in the schedule, with two weeks off before and after the tournament here, everyone will be geared up to play."

Mackenzie, who has been on the LPGA Tour since 2007, also favors the tournament's new date. "The great thing for this tournament in this state is we're not going to be competing against football," she said. "I think it will get more people involved and excited about the event."

The LPGA's addition of the Sybase Match Play Championship -- a week after the Mobile event -- may also help the Bell Micro. The top 48 spots in the Sybase will be filled by the top 48 players on the money list through the Bell Micro, and 10 more spots will be filled by the top 10 golfers following the second round of the Bell Micro.

Bell Micro tournament director Jonathan Romeo said the players liked the changes to the greens, the additional teeing grounds, and the openness of the Crossings.

The Bell Micro will be a full-field event with 144 players.

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