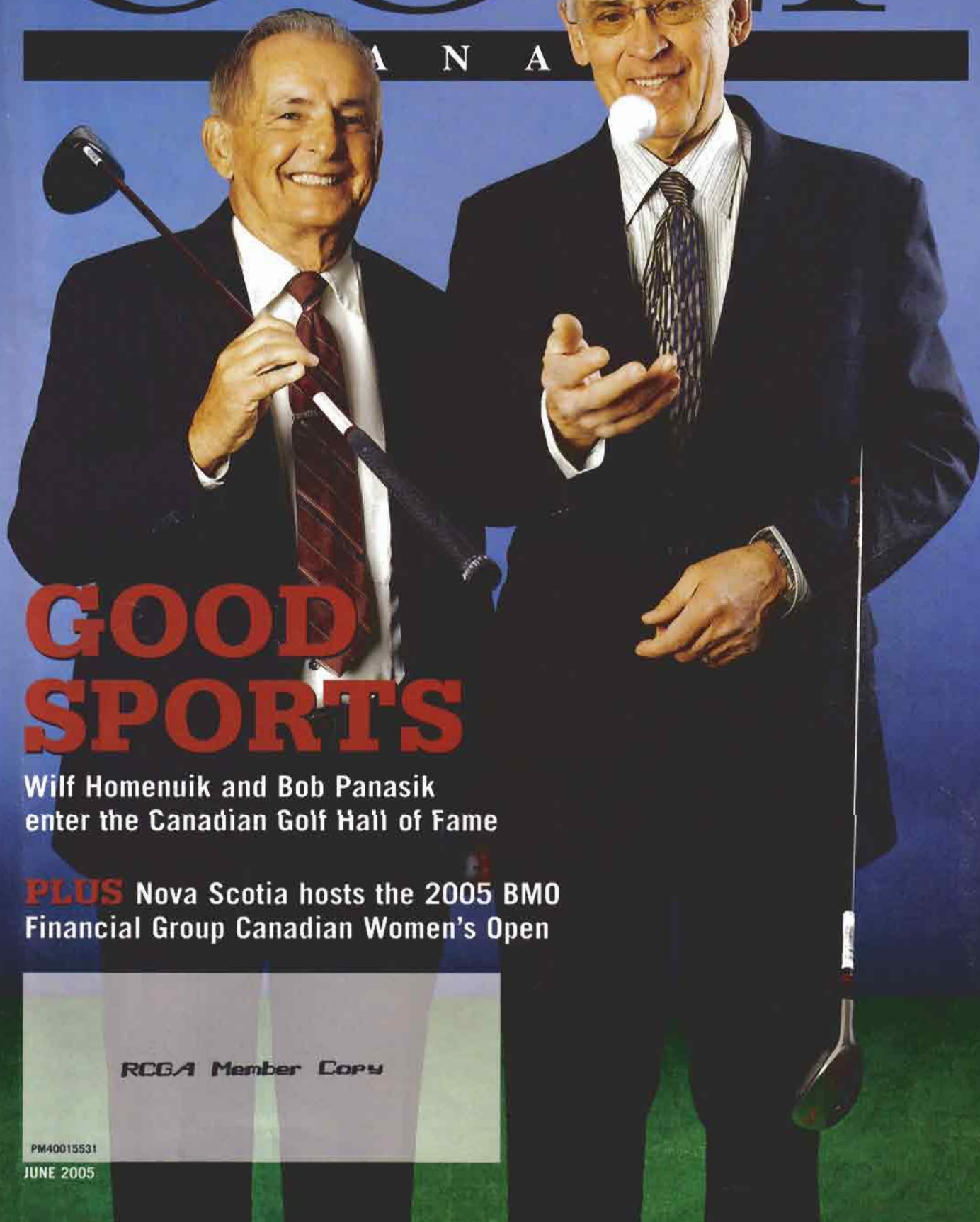


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OnCourse



The par-4 18th at Arbutus Ridge.

Arbutus Ridge G&CC

2005 ROYALE NATIONAL JUNIOR GIRLS CHAMPIONSHIP, AUGUST 1-4

BY BRAD ZIEMER

The field at this summer's Royale National Junior Girls' Championship can expect tight fairways, tricky greens and some tasty homemade cookies when they gather at British Columbia's Arbutus Ridge Golf & Country Club.

That's right, cookies. Members of the scenic southern Vancouver Island course are so excited about playing host to their first national championship they are determined to pull out all the stops.

"We have ladies here who plan to bake cookies for these girls," says Diane Cook, chairperson of the volunteer force at Arbutus Ridge. "Everyone, it seems, wants to help out for the event.

"I'll give you an example," she says. "The gentleman in charge of finding forecaddies said the first 20 people he phoned all said yes."

Arbutus Ridge is the first Vancouver Island course to host a national ladies championship since 1993, when Marlene Streit won the women's senior title at Uplands Golf Club. In 1983, Island native Dawn Coe-Jones won the

women's amateur at Victoria Golf Club. Coe-Jones has been a regular on the LPGA Tour practically ever since that victory and many of the 96 young women who gather at Arbutus Ridge this summer will undoubtedly be trying to follow in her footsteps.

Arbutus Ridge is located about 45 minutes north of downtown Victoria in the scenic community of Cobble Hill. The golf course is set atop a plateau and offers breathtaking views of the southern Gulf Islands and Georgia Strait. Arbutus Ridge opened in 1987 as a 9-hole course and about five years later expanded to 18 holes. The course is part of the GolfBC Group, which owns nine courses in the province and is run by Vancouver-based businessman Caleb Chan.

Arbutus Ridge is not overly long, measuring anywhere from 5,113 to 6,168 yards, but what the par-71 layout lacks in length it more than makes up for with the premium it places on accuracy. Most of the holes are lined with either trees or houses, so keeping the ball in the

fairway is vital to scoring well.

"It's not a tricked-up golf course and it's not overly long," says director of golf Scott Kolb. "The key to playing this golf course is picking your times to be aggressive."

The opening hole is probably not one of those holes players will want to attack. For good reason, it has long been regarded as one of the toughest opening holes on Vancouver Island. It plays anywhere from 335 to 372 yards, but again, length is not the problem. Players must thread the needle off the tee as they attempt to hit a narrow fairway that has out-of-bounds markers both left and right.

"Last year, to help make it easier, we widened the fairway as much as we could," says Kolb. "We took out a couple of bunkers, so it is definitely more playable now. You do have the option to hit driver, so it's a good risk-reward hole."

The changes on the first hole have been repeated on some other holes at Arbutus Ridge to help improve playability. "We felt some of the holes were trying to penalize players too much, so we tried to make the holes that were already difficult more fair," says Kolb.

One such change occurred at the par-5 seventh hole, which is regarded as the toughest on the course. With trouble right and trouble left, the size of a large fairway bunker was dramatically reduced to create a larger landing area. On the par-4 18th hole, the green, which used to be a massive 13,000 square feet and full of undulation, has been reduced in size and flattened. The signature hole at Arbutus Ridge is most certainly the par-3 17th, where players must hit a green that is almost entirely surrounded by water. It plays anywhere from 151 to 214 yards.

It is part of a strong finish at Arbutus Ridge, where birdies will be hard to come by. Of course, that's okay, because there will be cookies in the clubhouse.