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THE HUTCHINSON NEWS

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Faldo is back on 'tour'

Faldo makes fourth visit to Cottonwood Hills course he's designing

By Mary Clarkin

Clad in brown coveralls and rubber work boots, Nick Faldo perched inside the open back of a sport utility vehicle, finishing up a lunch from Hog Wild.

The 47-year-old professional golfer who still has a home in England - and others in Bermuda and Florida - was dressed for business Thursday.

Faldo Design, a golf course-designing firm with completed projects around the world, is directing the sculpting of the 18-hole Cottonwood Hills course east of Hutchinson. Faldo arrived late Wednesday for an approximately 24-hour visit to Hutchinson - his fourth stop since the project started.

"This is what we call the final shaping before the irrigation lines come in," he said.

"It's quite tough to visualize, looking at brown on brown," said Faldo of a landscape of brush and sand.

But the best golfers visualize a course, and Faldo is among the best, having won 43 tournaments.

Seeding and sodding won't start until May, but Faldo can envision what the Cottonwood Hills golfer preparing for his third shot to the 15th hole will face.

"It will look like a green stuck on a hill," he said, with bunkers and wind threatening to intervene.

"Big and bold," Faldo said.

Golf has turned into a power game, where golfers "are hitting at ridiculous distances," Faldo said.

In his designs, though, he tries "to keep strategy in the game."

The undeveloped acreage already had plenty of unexpected dips and dramatic inclines among the sandy dunes and cedar trees.

"Ninety percent of it is there," Faldo said.

London-based Guy Hockley, a Faldo Design official traveling here every four to six weeks, offered a similar observation.

"There's so much natural strength to the site," Hockley said.

Nine holes will be open for limited play in September, and a grand opening for the entire course is slated for April 2006, Cottonwood Hills President Lane Neville said.

The course will be open to the public, no membership required. Upscale housing and retail businesses also are planned in the development at 4th and Buhler Road.

Faldo is balancing roles as a golfer, designer and television broadcaster. In mid-April, he'll be back in the first role, competing for his fourth Masters' title in Augusta, Ga. And probably in the next couple months, Faldo the designer will return to Hutchinson for another inspection.

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