

ECI Field Hopes to Shine Down on the Rock

DEVENS, Mass. – Old man winter is gone, and that can only mean one thing: The Endicott College Invitational returns for yet another year of thrilling golf in the New England area with only one small change; the venue. Shining Rock Golf Club just outside of Worcester is this year's host, and hopes to keep the flock of Gulls as a permanent fixture for the future. Marc Zirolli says it was a tough choice leaving Red Tail, but it was in the best interest of the tournament. "The ECI and its field loved Red Tail. So many great memories were had there," said Zirolli in his annual state of the ECI address last month at the Hilton Hotel in downtown Hartford, Conn. "Unfortunately the winter wreaked havoc on the Devens area and the golf course in particular killing greens along the way. Shining Rock was just the best option for us logistically," continued Zirolli. "It's a great golf course, and the condition for tournament week will be phenomenal." Justin McLear returns as the defending champion with a round of 77 in last year's championship. McLear says he feels healthy once again this year and is excited to defend his title. "My game is feeling good," McLear stated during an interview on WEEI Boston last week. "If I continue to make improvements to my short game before Saturday's event, I feel as though I will be right there after 18 holes." McLear will have to compete against the likes of Nick Turczak, Matt Barnes and John Dailey, who returns after a year away from the tournament citing family reasons. "I'm excited to be back. It's a fixture on the calendar. It's our tournament. It's the players' championship in a way for us." Not returning this year are Craig Roderick, with an inflamed anal cavity, Pete Woodward with a separated shoulder, and Carl Bean, who lost his penis. Regardless, it should be a great week at the ECI. Always fun for fans and players as spring makes its renewal in Massachusetts.

Players to Watch

Brian Gill:

Gill has yet to commit to the event.

Nick Turczak:

Turczak has been quiet in recent years. Is this the year he wins his 4th title?

Justin McLear:

The defending champion is ready for another.

Matt Barnes:

Barnes finished runner-up last year. He is still searching for that elusive title.

Matt Davis:

Always dangerous, depending on which Davis shows up.

Ken Dargon:

Dargon says he's hitting the ball better than ever, but is his short game ready to contend?

Marc Zirolli:

With the recent birth of his daughter, Zirolli's focus has shifted away from golf. He's just happy he received a "commissioner's exemption" this year.

John Dailey:

The three-time champ is always dangerous.

Josh Clark:

He is still dealing with a shoulder injury.

Derek Sharon:

Progressively improving each year he plays...Cinderella story?

Matt Gajda:

Lots of analysts think he can win this week.