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Golden Golf Club earns a gold star

Challenging, diverse track with lovely tiered greens home to bogeys and birds and wonderful mountain scenery

BY JIM MATHESON, EDMONTON JOURNAL JULY 13, 2009 [BE THE FIRST TO POST A COMMENT](#)

STORY PHOTOS (1)



The Golden Golf Club combines breathtaking mountain vistas with abundant wildlife and challenging holes, all at a reasonable price.

Photograph by: Supplied, Edmonton Journal

The Golden Golf Club is a picture postcard piece of real estate, hard by the Columbia River, home to bogeys and birds -- eagles and hawks and osprey--and, on this day, a female deer acting as a four-legged gallery.

"You see some black bears, too, in August. They like eating the

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Saskatoons," said the B. C. golf club president, Bob Munro.

Better the berries than the golfers, but it's all part of the charm of this gem in Kicking Horse Country on the Trans-Canada Highway, about six hours from Edmonton. It's surrounded by three mountain ranges and five national parks.

The front nine, designed by Bill Newis, opened in 1986, and the back nine, a Les Furber piece of work, was completed seven years later--6,825 yards from the tips, or a more leisurely walk of 6,326 yards if you play off the whites. Another 18, this time up on the mountain, is in the works, with the Golden club waiting to see if the federal government will come through with some recreational infrastructure money so they can get a start on it. For now, the feds say golf clubs don't qualify, but they have appealed saying skiers use the course in the winter.

"Golden is a forestry town that's been pretty affected by the downturn in the economy and tourism is going to be our saving grace If we can get another 18 holes, the community will become a golf destination," said Munro, who used to live in Edmonton but retired to Golden.

"I think we've got a good brand name and we want to build on that."

Build it and they will come.

But for now, the current 18-hole layout, which Score magazine has had ranked in its top 100 Canadian courses--it hosted the B. C. men's amateur championship a couple of years ago--is a visual and affordable treat. Green fees are \$70 for 18 holes on Monday through Thursday and \$80 Friday through Sunday.

Munro, Ken Chilibeck, the former TSN broadcaster who now owns the Vagabond Lodge bed and breakfast about 10 minutes from the course, Oilers play-by-play man Rod Phillips and I played the course, which was built with volunteer labour late in the day, in late May just after the first round of the annual women's open.

The wind was calm, the sun casting shadows on the fairways, the balls flying crooked--mine, anyway.

The wonderful second hole set the tone, a 446-yard dog-leg left with the Cabin Creek meandering down the right side. A big drive still leaves a 200-yard second shot to a long, narrow green. This is an easy bogey or a double, a very tough hole so early in the round.

The sixth hole is terrific, a 518-yard dog-leg right with a marsh and a creek, with the backdrop of the mountains. On this day, an osprey is circling, and an eagle is doing flight patterns above us. When we get up to the green, a deer suddenly appears, not 20 feet from where we're putting. It's well-behaved, as quiet as any spectator at a PGA event.

The 11th hole, the club's signature hole, is proof positive that length means nothing. It measures only 356 yards, but Holt Creek, full of rushing water and rocks, runs all the way up the right side, cutting across the fairway about 100 yards from the sloped green.

If you go left with your drive, you still only have about 25 yards of safe landing area. Score called it one of the best par 4s in all of B. C. I wasn't

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about to argue. If you make four on this stunning hole, with a devilish green, you should be dancing.

"I was a spotter on that hole in the women's open and I think there were about 60 balls in the water," said Munro.

The par-5 12th hole is eminently reachable in two with a drive and a hybrid club because it's only 465 yards, but it's another stunning hole. As you approach the green, Mount Seven is the backdrop. There is a paragliding platform on this picturesque peak.

The 13th is short, only 125 yards, but there's lots of water.

"I've seen guys fishing for trout in the stream that leads to the Columbia River, while others are looking for lost balls," said Munro.

The 18th, a nice par 5, is where you'll sometimes see the black bears in the trees by the tee box after you've taken your driver out of the bag.

"They look at you, but then they go back to eating. They like the Saskatoons," said Munro.

On a scale of 1 to 10, I'd give the Golden course a solid 8. It's tough to overlook the magnificent scenery, the greens are wonderful, tiered on the back nine, and there's lots of water to skirt around. It has a homey, small-town feel to it.

The price is less than St. Eugene Mission, another Furber layout in Kimberley, B. C., which we also played.

COURSE REVIEW - WHAT: Golden Golf Club - WHERE: Golden, B. C., 230 km west of Calgary along the Trans-Canada Highway designed by Bill Newis; back nine opened in 1993, designed by Les Furber - GREEN FEES: \$70 for 18 Monday through Thursday; \$80 Friday through Sunday

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