

2025 Men's Mid-Master



June 16-18

Lacombe Golf & Country Club

Christopher Thayer

2024 Alberta Men's Mid-Master Champion



Q: When you reflect on your victory at the Alberta Men's Mid-Master Championship at Trestle Creek Golf Resort, what memories are most vivid?

Thayer: "It was a lot of fun. It was my first trip internationally for competitive golf. I'm 44 and I've been playing competitive golf since I was 13, always as an amateur, but had done it all in the U.S. What kind of brought me up there is the Mid-Am age division spans from 25 all the way to 55. That's a long time to play in the same age division — 30 years. So what had gotten on my radar is this Mid-Master age division, which is 40-plus. I did my research and there's only about six or seven proper Mid-Master golf tournaments in the world. The list was pretty short. I ended up talking with John Deneer (of Alberta Golf), because I'm also on the Colorado Golf Association's board and we have a tournament committee and I'm part of that, so we're always looking for ways to run better tournaments and know what other associations are doing. I have work in Canada, as well, so it just all pointed toward this tournament. That's what brought me up. And then when I got there, it was just a very cool golf course. The green complexes were very undulating. You had to be in the right spot. And that really matches up with my game. My iron play is usually pretty good. My distance control is pretty good. So I knew if I could get it on the putting surface and in the right spot, I'd have a lot of good looks for birdie."

Q: You must have, because your three-round scorecard featured 14 birdies and an eagle. You have previously won a handful of state championships in the U.S., but how cool is it to now add a provincial title to your resume?

Thayer: "It's very cool to win any golf tournament, and especially to do it on your first try out of the country. That was really fun. Any time you're playing for a title that has some weight on it, whether it's 'provincial champion' or 'state champion' or whatever, it gets the nerves going at the end. You don't want to let one of those slip away, because they are so hard to win. So I just tried to stay focused on my game and keep playing good golf."

Q: One of the highlights at Trestle Creek Golf Resort is an island-green assignment that played as No. 16 during the tournament ... As you try to close it out, how nerve-wracking was that tee-ball?

Thayer: "Oh yeah, holding onto a lead, hitting to an island green ... And that tee-shot is probably down 30 yards, so you watch the ball hang in the air for six or seven seconds and you're thinking, 'OK, is it going to hit land?' But I got it done, so that was good."

Thayer, who hails from Colorado, introduced himself to Alberta's golf community by cruising to a wire-to-wire win.

He signed for a three-round total of 5-under 211. The closest competitors were six shots back in his rearview mirror.

Alberta Men's Mid-Master Past Champions

2024 – Christopher Thayer

2023 – Jamie Welder

2022 – Shiro Mani

2021 – Shiro Mani

2020 – Grant Oh

Alberta men's mid-master championship heads to Lacombe for their centennial

By Kevin Smith

The Lacombe Golf and Country Club dates back to 1925, and in their centennial year they'll host the 2025 Alberta Men's Mid-Master Championship. The golf course will hold several events during the summer including a weekend for public only play with green fees of \$19.25, a gala for shareholders and long-time members along with a centennial event where members will play with hickory shafted clubs. The 400 members at this semi-private country club are certainly looking forward to the summer celebration but before that they are looking forward to kicking off the Alberta Golf championship season June 16-18 as the host of the Mid-Master Championship for males aged 40 and over. Lacombe Head Professional Weston Gillett says this course sets up well for this age of competitors.



"I feel like that age bracket niche is really going to enjoy themselves out here and yeah we're excited to kind of tie that in with our centennial celebration as well," Gillett said. "Within our industry, how many people get to say they've been part of a 100 year celebration within their club, it's going to be very special."

Gillett was raised in Lacombe and played all his junior golf there before getting his PGA status and working at golf clubs across Western Canada. In 2019, after being the Head Professional at Drayton Valley Golf Club for seven seasons, he returned home to accept his dream job as the Head Professional at the Lacombe Golf and Country Club.

"To be honest coming back here is a dream job, my family still lives here, from a professional perspective it's great and comfortable, I know everyone here from my childhood and many are members which is awesome," Gillett beamed. "The golf course is located right across from where all three of my kids play their minor sports, life balance is much easier here with help from our family for my wife Linda and I."

Having grown up in Lacombe, Gillett has strong ties to the legendary McKinlay family. Tom McKinlay Sr lives just off the 14th hole while his boys Bobby, Perry, Kelly and Tom Jr are all accomplished players at the course themselves. Perry's son Brady McKinlay is the 2022 Alberta Men's Amateur Champion and has recently turned professional. Perry actually lives on McKinlay Crescent, according to Gillett that's just a coincidence, but being golfing royalty in the area most assume streets are named after them! He says they're all great people and give a lot back to the club.

Tom McKinlay Jr won the Alberta Men's Mid-Master title in 2017 and was runner-up in 2024. When his nephew Brady competes at Alberta Golf events a family group known as the "Brady Bunch" come to watch and show their support and they'll be cheering Tom on at this event, a few of Tom's brothers might even compete as well.

"I think I'll be a little bit nervous because I've played a ton of events here, club championships, but this will have a much different feel being an Alberta Golf event," McKinlay Jr stated. "Our Men's Open is a match play format which is a little easier as far as stress level goes, so when it's a stroke play event like the Mid-Master will be, it'll be a different feel but also fun to see the scores I can put up."

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Weston Gillett thinks McKinlay Jr will have a great chance to be near the top of the leaderboard considering the style of course and the short game you need to compete well.

"The course has tree lined fairways, small greens, it's not overly long by any stretch but it requires a really good short game. A lot of the trouble is around the greens, and we're probably best known for having very difficult par threes," Gillett stated. "Anybody who can

chip and putt it well will succeed. Tom McKinlay Jr has such great hands and short game, Lacombe typically has a lot smaller greens than your typical golf course, so you're going to miss a lot of greens no matter who you are and having that great short game will fair you well."

Celebrating 100 years of the Lacombe Golf and Country Club while having the McKinlay brothers competing and their family cheering them on should make this year's Alberta Men's Mid-Master Championship a very memorable one. ■