

2025 Alberta Open



August 11-13
River Spirit Golf Club

Wes Heffernan

2024 Alberta Open
Champion



Q: When you reflect on your victory at the Alberta Open Championship at Desert Blume Golf Club in Medicine Hat, what memories are most vivid?

Heffernan: "I was struggling a bit at the start of the year and it ended up being that my grip. and I didn't realize it. So my first couple of events, I was pretty disappointed in my play. The week before the Alberta Open, we had our PGA of Alberta Assistants' Championship at Sirocco and I noticed my grip was way off. So I changed it back to where it was supposed to be, played a round at Silver Springs and I shot 61. Even though Mitch (Fox) smoked me at Sirocco, I played really well. So going into the Alberta Open, I felt my game was back where it should be. I was excited with that. I'd never played Desert Blume but had heard good things. We got out there and I knew immediately that I was going to love the golf course, and I played well because that golf course fits me. I like it. It's now one of my favourite courses I've ever played."

Q: With your experience, when you show up to a tournament and you're thinking, 'Oh man, I really like this golf course,' how can that translate to a strong performance?

Heffernan: "It's more that you just know you're going to enjoy the week. It puts you in that good mindset. It's hard to think back and remember a course that I showed up and really liked and I played poorly. I may have, but you usually just remember the good ones. Desert Blume, there are some really cool holes to start. It's unique. I was blown away by some of those holes on the back nine. Obviously, you want to play well in the tournament, but you just know, 'I'm going to enjoy this week because this golf course is so fun to play.' Almost every single time, you're going to play better because of that."

Q: Now to be a seven-time champion, can you put into words what the Alberta Open has come to mean to you over the years?

Heffernan: "A lot. Back in 2006, it was my first win as a professional after struggling to start my career. And as soon as I won that tournament, I won the next two and then four Canadian Tour events in two years, so it kind of got me rolling. I've always treated it as a really big event and tried to make it super important on my schedule. To win seven is fantastic. The funny thing is I always look at it feeling like I should have won more,

Heffernan, who is a teaching professional at Dynamic Motion Golf Performance and has long represented Silver Springs Golf & Country Club, won the Alberta Open for the seventh time with a three-round tab of 15-under 201. A model of consistency, he signed for scores of 67, 67, and ... 67.

Alberta Open Past Champions

2024 – Wes Heffernan

2023 – Max Sekulic

2022 – Ethan Choi

2021 – Riley Fleming

2020 – AJ Armstrong

but that's being greedy obviously. You tend to remember the ones you didn't win rather than the ones you did win sometimes. And then I won so many early on and I've only won two in the last 12 years now and, to be honest, haven't really been close, so the last two wins are the ones that are most important to me. To win one at 47 is pretty good. Hopefully, I can get a few more."

Q: Canadian Golf Hall-of-Famer Stan Leonard won nine of these ... Do you think about a run at that record?

Heffernan: "Oh, for sure. I think the ultimate goal of 10 would be fantastic. But a lot of things have to go right for that to happen."

River Spirit Golf Club

hosts expanded alberta open championship

By Kevin Smith

The Alberta Open is the flagship championship for Alberta Golf as the only event with a male amateur and professional division, and in 2025 for the first time ever it's expanding even further to include female amateur and professional competitors. River Spirit Golf Club in the foothills of the Rockies just west of Calgary is a fitting host for the elevated championship.

7-time champion Wes Heffernan is the defending champion having won at Desert Blume Golf Club in 2024, but he also won the Alberta Open in 2018, the last time the championship was held at River Spirit.



"I was happy to see River Spirit as the host this year," Heffernan said. "Being the defending champion this year and also the winner the last time we played at River Spirit gives me some confidence going into the event for sure."

Having a female component in 2025 also means many of the competitors from the 2024 Alberta Women's Amateur Championship held at River Spirit will be competing on the course in back to back years. Golf Operations Manager Molly Bygrove says it's amazing to host such big events.

"It was a great opportunity to host the Women's Amateur in 2024, for them to come out and see the course and compete on it, I think it showcased everything we have to offer and helped grow the women's game," Bygrove admitted. "Watching them compete was a master class in itself, it was one of the best weeks we had all summer, can't wait to see some of the same women back this year."

15-year-old Eileen Park of Red Deer added to her fantastic resume by winning last year's Alberta Women's Amateur. River Spirit recently went through a rebrand, and hosting a rebranded Alberta Open is exciting news for the Bygrove family.

"Honestly it's the best news ever that everyone, men and women, get to be highlighted and showcased at the same time," Bygrove said. "We've had a recent rebrand and the new Alberta Open format is an exciting and bold move, I think more eyes will be on the game of golf and our golf course for sure and I think that's amazing."

In 2002 the country land west of the city was up for sale but the owner wouldn't sell for a housing development, that's when Molly's parents stepped in with the idea to build a golf course. They purchased the land in 2002 and opened the first 9 holes in 2004, now it's a picturesque 27-hole layout with links and valley holes.

"It's been great for me, my sister and my brother to work at the golf course. Why not put all your labour and love into a passion you care about that benefits you, your family and the golf community," Bygrove said. "It's great to see the vision my parents had at the very beginning come to life in this community and now with the ring road complete it's easy for anyone anywhere in Calgary to get out here."

For this year's Alberta Open the Millburn and Cattails 9s will be used. Millburn showcases 6 tightly treed valley holes with 3 holes on the links while Cattails is played entirely on the links with a view of the foothills and a dramatic par 5 finishing hole.

"The valley holes are pretty straight forward to be honest. I'll hit mostly iron shots off of each tee," Heffernan explained. "The pivotal holes are actually on Cattails, there are more difficult tee shots, a few tougher holes and a much more difficult 9, the player that plays that 9 the best will probably win."

And Heffernan, who's played in multiple U.S. Opens, says the Alberta Open is always a can't miss event on his schedule.

"I have always treated the Alberta Open as a very important event on my schedule," Heffernan admitted. "Now that I have won 7 times, I have put myself in a unique position to try and add to that and chase down Stan Leonard who has a record 9 Alberta Open titles, matching and even surpassing Stan would be a very cool accomplishment."

It will also be a cool event August 11-13 at River Spirit Golf Club when competitors in our province come together to compete for 4 different divisions, top professional and amateur male and top professional and amateur female. ■

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