

114th Men's Amateur



July 7-9

Fort McMurray Golf Club

Fairways In The Forest:

The Men's Amateur Goes North

By Taylor Tracey

Alberta's natural beauty is known around the world. Each year, visitors travel from across the globe to experience the province's famous Rocky Mountains, hiking the trails, skiing the slopes, and exploring landscapes that have become synonymous with Western Canada.

This summer, however, golfers will be heading in a different direction. Instead of travelling west toward the mountains, they will journey north—into the boreal forest and along the Athabasca River Valley—for the 114th Alberta Men's Amateur Championship at the Fort McMurray Golf Club.

For Head Professional Kyle Corriveau, the setting is part of what makes the course so memorable.

Tucked into Alberta's northern forest, the course offers a golfing experience defined as much by its surroundings as its scorecard. The plethora of trees that frame each hole create a secluded atmosphere that feels far removed from everyday life.

Since arriving as Head Professional in 2019, Corriveau has grown deeply connected to both the club and the community that surrounds it. "I wasn't here during the wildfire, but I arrived shortly after during the end of the clubhouse rebuild," he said. "Then we experienced the floods that were catastrophic for the club. Going through those challenges and seeing how the community came together to support each other was incredible."

That resilience has become a defining characteristic of the region. "The golfing community up here is amazing," Corriveau explained. "It's younger than what you typically see at many clubs, and the town itself is becoming more family-oriented at the same time."

Fort McMurray's work culture also shapes how people approach the game. With many residents working rotational schedules tied to the energy sector, time off often means time spent on the golf course. "It's a very blue-collar community — work hard and play hard," Corriveau said. "If someone works seven days on and seven days off, you'll often see them playing 36 holes a day during those days off."

With that kind of enthusiasm, Corriveau expects several local players will try to qualify for the championship when it arrives this summer.

The course itself is no stranger to elite competition. The Fort McMurray Golf Club previously hosted the 2007 Alberta Men's Amateur, won by Mitch Fox. More recently, the club welcomed the 2021 Canadian Men's Mid-Amateur Championship and served as host of the Syncrude Boreal Open on the PGA Tour Canada from 2012 through to 2016.

During that stretch, several players who would go on to become regulars on the PGA Tour made the trip north, including Joel Dahmen, J. J. Spaun, and Nick Taylor. "Everyone at the club loves seeing how these players perform here," Corriveau said. "When you look at the yardage it might not seem overly complicated, but you have to navigate trees on nearly every tee shot."

That narrow, tree-lined design is what defines the course's challenge. While some championship venues reward power off the tee, Fort McMurray places a premium on accuracy. "If you can't put the ball in play off the tee, you simply won't play well here," Corriveau said. "The underbrush is so thick that if you're even slightly offline, you can be looking at a very long day."

The course's tight corridors have even earned a reputation among visiting players. Corriveau recalled one competitor posting on social media that the course was the most claustrophobic they had ever felt while playing golf—a reflection of just how tightly the forest presses in around the fairways.

"There's a reason we sell close to a quarter-million dollars' worth of golf balls every year," Corriveau said with a laugh. "If you can put the ball in a good spot off the tee and stay in play, then you can really attack because everything is right in front of you. Sometimes it's better to leave yourself a longer approach shot rather than trying to force something."

The closing stretch of holes at the club provides a dramatic stage for tournament finishes and often determines the outcome of club championships.

The challenge begins at the 15th hole, a long par-three, followed by the 16th—a demanding par-four featuring a sharply sloping green. Another lengthy par-three awaits at the 17th before players reach the 18th, a reachable par-five that is in direct view of the clubhouse's patio.

For Corriveau, hosting an event of this magnitude is about more than just the competition. It is an opportunity to showcase the club and the community that has supported it through both triumph and adversity.

The club is already planning ways to elevate the championship experience for competitors, though Corriveau hinted that some of those ideas will remain a surprise until tournament week. What is certain is that golfers travelling north this summer will discover something special. In the heart of Alberta's boreal forest sits one of the province's most passionate golf communities and one of its most distinctive courses. And when the final putt falls, one player will emerge from the trees and river valley as the 114th Alberta Men's Amateur Champion. ■

"You drive down the hill to the facility, and you just feel like you're in a different world," Corriveau said. "Because of that setting, the wildlife you can see is incredible. You might see black bears, moose, deer, even lynx during a round of golf. That's something you don't experience in many other places."