

2026 U17



August 24-26
Connaught Golf Club

Connaught

looks to make their mark on Junior Golf

by Jim Clagget

Age is a relative thing, but one can't ignore the numbers gap between the golf course and the players trying to beat it. Here, we're talking about the Connaught Golf Club in Medicine Hat, which will be the site of the provincial U17 championship August 24 to 26.

The course has been in the community for 104 years now, and the participants' parents, maybe even grandparents, were not. There's some perspective for you to chew on.



Connaught Head professional, Brian Oliphant, says they got a call from Alberta Golf, looking for a host club for this tournament, and the Connaught stepped up.

This is a common statement across all sports, and golf is no exception, as the future lies with the upcoming talent. Connaught's junior program sat at about 20 players a few years ago, but the Notre Dame Golf Academy uses our facility now, and that number has tripled. There is a plan to run a junior league this season, and Oliphant thinks they could reach the hundreds' mark down the road, especially with this kind of exposure.

Oliphant says the membership of the public track has always been active in volunteering, especially for growing the game through these young men and women.

I haven't heard any complaints about missing three days of golf."

Oliphant sees the value in allowing juniors a chance to hone their skills at Connaught, having seen half a dozen eight or nine years old grow as individuals and as golfers over the years.

"Now they're 14,15 years old and they're out here every day which is great to see, and some of them take back shop jobs because they love hanging around the golf course."

An experienced volunteer base will make things run smoothly over the three-day event, and Oliphant says the course will mount a defence against these future stars of the game. The greens will play a role in the scoring, of course, and even this section of the Palliser's Triangle can be quite warm in the summer, which could also play a role. He says if you've never played Connaught before, you may find out the hard way that there are some subtle breaks in the greens which vary in size.

"We have some that are quite big and we have some that are a little on the small side that have some tricky slopes in them. It all depends on where they decide to put the pins."

Starting on the front nine, players will confront the number one handicap hole immediately, followed by the par-five second hole, which experts rate as one of the easiest. The first nine will get your attention with a stretch of three holes, starting with hole four and then on the back he figures #16 and #17 are tougher holes with the reward of getting through there being the chance to tee it up on the par 5 18th which is the easiest hole handicap wise at least.

During Connaught's Southeast tourney, Oliphant says many times the winner is the one who plays 18 the best, usually an eagle or birdie, but cautions the players not to take it for granted.

"Our board thought it was great, being a junior event," he said. "We're trying to attract more juniors, and our program has increased quite a bit in the last two or three years, so we thought it would be a good opportunity."

"You can also get a bogey if you don't play it right," he said, adding, it all starts with the tee shot.

Another factor which can contribute to the heartache or jubilation will be if the course is dry. Oliphant says it can make a player question which club to use off the tee especially when trying to cut a corner. The danger is you may run through the fairway with a driver on a dogleg or not bite off enough by using

something less. Club selection and strategy will be part of the conversation all three days.

"If there is a little indecision in the head, you know, thinking is this going to roll out far enough? Indecision in the golf swing is not the mindset that you want."

One thing is for certain, you will see some very good golf played over the three days. To borrow the phrase from the PGA Tour, "these guys/girls are good". ■