

BackSwing

Prairie jewel a peaceful test



**TODD
SAELHOF**

Steve Garside calls it 'a peaceful life.'

With society's fast lane far from sight and out of ear-shot, there's little doubt spending time at Beaver Dam Golf Course has a considerable upside.

Far from the hustle and bustle of Calgary, Beaver Dam seems like it's been built to put all the big-city pressures behind. Truth is, the 6,021-yard track at Madden — about 40 km north of Calgary — has been growing for quite some time and is slowly gaining a reputation for being an unlikely gem on golf's landscape.

"People think it's a hick golf course outside of Calgary," said Garside, in his second year as GM of Beaver Dam. "But 'challenging' is one of the comments we get all the time.

"This is a diamond in the rough — and it's getting better."

Not to mention, it's getting more popular.

Its low price-point with a power cart — even on weekends — is as attractive as the course itself, which boasts plenty of variety and elevation change for a spot out on the bare Alberta prairie.

And its location? "It's a 25-, 30-minute drive in the country," Garside said. "There's no houses, and it's not noisy out here. It's a peaceful life.

"We've had members leave other clubs and come to us and say, 'I should've done this a long time ago.'"

The reasons for staying are plentiful.



COURTESY OF BEAVER DAM GOLF COURSE

Beaver Dam has a stretch of testy holes on the front nine that includes the par-3 No. 3 — a shot over hazards up to an elevated green.

In 2000, course officials added a second nine to the original nine built in 1991 and then turned to upgrading the prairie gem into a jewel to challenge all golfers.

The result is a front nine that features five straight holes in a coulee flush with rugged rough, strategically placed sand traps and ball-hawking water hazards, mostly due to a winding creek that seems to find its way into play at every turn — and every stroke.

The tour of the crafted cou-

lee is highlighted by elevated tee boxes and tiny greens, including on the 360-yard No. 6. The tee-box is blessed with a view of the mountains to the southwest, a fairway choked by heavy brush below and a dancefloor surrounded by water in the distance.

Play on the heady five holes is made harder by the need to airmail drives or approach shots with surgical precision. Add to that a timely blast of prairie wind, and the drop shots are made even more

challenging.

The back nine offers its charms, too, with a steep 147-yard par 3 on No. 12, which many declare the course's trademark hole. It has a green surrounded by water on three sides.

"And most times, you wound up behind a tree on the right side because you're trying to stay away from the water," Garside said. "The idea is to just aim for the centre of the green."

It's followed by 13, which

is lucky only for those golfers with a drive on the straight and narrow. That's because the fairway is toothpick-wide.

Water comes into play in 12 or 13 holes.

"We're not just back-and-forth," Garside said. "Every hole provides a much different look than the others. There's a lot of variety. And to me, you get to use every club in your bag. You've got to hit a straight ball or lay up.

"On some holes, you can grip it and rip it. On others,

BEAVER DAM

Madden

Established 1991
18 holes • Par 71
6,021 yards

GREEN FEES

Weekdays: \$26 (9 holes);
\$36 (18 holes)

Weekends: \$33 (9 holes);
\$48 (18 holes)

Power carts: \$20 (9 holes);
\$30 (18 holes)

Memberships: \$1,299
(unrestricted); \$865
(restricted); \$249 (junior);
\$237.14 (power cart card)

Amenities: Driving range,
licensed clubhouse.

Directions: North on
Symons Valley Road (Hwy.
772) 40 km to Madden.
Watch for signs.

Tee-times: 403-946-5200
or visit beaverdamgolf.ca

if you use the same attitude, you're in trouble — and that helps pro-shop sales on golf balls."

What's on the horizon for Beaver Dam?

It is in the process of flattening its tee-boxes, and they are awaiting zoning approval of an RV park to the west that Garside hopes will feature 140 lots.

Also on the agenda is a new club house.

But through it all, Garside plans to have the club provide the same outstanding service.

"We hope because we're family-oriented out here that we are providing a family atmosphere," Garside added. "It is a small-town course, but it has the potential to be a big-city course. Whether we want that or not, we're not sure right now."

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