

# PACIFIC NORTHWEST GOLFER



March 2005

## OLYMPIC exposure

Even B.C. golf courses excited  
over prospects of Winter Games

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- Dissecting Ryan Moore's swing
- New courses abound in Northwest



# Olympics could mean gold for golf

Winter Games in 2010 will bring world-wide awareness to British Columbia, which down the road could lead to financial rewards for golf as it did in Utah after 2002

By Paul Ramsdell, PNGA Media

**W**hile the connection seems far from obvious, the potential could be limitless.

On the surface, one would think the 2010 Winter Olympics in Vancouver and Whistler would have no impact on the golf community in British Columbia. Those within the industry, however, say the Winter Olympics could be a financial gold medal for golf, despite the fact Whistler courses will be buried deep beneath the snow when the world comes calling in February 2010.

And they even have some historical precedents to back their claims.

"There's no better advertising in the world, obviously, than the Olympic Games," said Alan Kristmanson, the director of golf at Whistler Golf Club. "You just can't purchase that, right? It's just unbelievable."

However, just sitting back and waiting for the cameras to roll won't be enough for Whistler golf courses.

"We'll be working all very hard to make sure that the summer story gets told as well," Kristmanson said.

"There is more to Whistler than just skiing, I guess that's the message," said Andrew Smart, the director of golf at Nicklaus North.

"Get people here once and they will come back again," he said.

While the Whistler-area courses have the challenge of promoting a product no one will see during the Olympics, the Vancouver courses will have something that's rarely been seen at a host city of the Winter Olympic Games – open golf courses.

Visitors and journalists from around the world will be able to play golf during the day, then take in the figure skating at night. That certainly wasn't the case at Salt Lake, or Nagano, or Lillehammer.

"There is not going to be any snow in Vancouver probably at the time," said Peter Harrison, a regional and sector marketing manager for Tourism B.C. "There's certainly an opportunity for that to be played up."

Regardless if visitors will be able to play during that time or not, the Olympics will be a financial boost for golf in the area.

"The word seems to be getting out already a little bit about the golf product we have here in British Columbia," Harrison said. "When you consider the amount of attention and awareness that an Olympics destination, the country that

## 'You can't buy that type of awareness, and even though golf is obviously more of a summer sport it's still going to benefit from that increased awareness.'

is hosting the Olympics, receives, it's obvious it's really going to benefit British Columbia and also increase awareness of the different things people can do here – with golf not being an exception.”

The exposure is the key for the Whistler-area courses.

“You can't buy that type of awareness, and even though golf is obviously more of a summer sport it's still going to benefit from that increased awareness,” Harrison said.

“Overall, the amount of people coming for this event, it's not only going to drive tourism, it's going to drive tourism winter and summer I believe,” said Andy Hedley, the general manager at Furry Creek.

“But we just want to make sure that the people don't recognize it purely for its winter activities, that it's showcased as a year-round destination.”

“That's the key,” Kristmanson said, “making sure that everybody understands this is a year-round destination.”

The exposure and awareness has meant great things for golf in Salt Lake and Utah, where the 2002 Winter Games were held.

“Utah's overall golf rounds are way up over what they were prior to the Olympics,” said Scott Whittaker, the executive director of the Utah Section of the PGA.

“It did get people used to the area and coming in, and we had never been known as a destination,” he said. “It showed many of the courses in our area that we could attract people to play golf so we really tried to expand our out-of-state play, try to get a piece of the travel industry for golf,



Furry Creek  
Golf Club

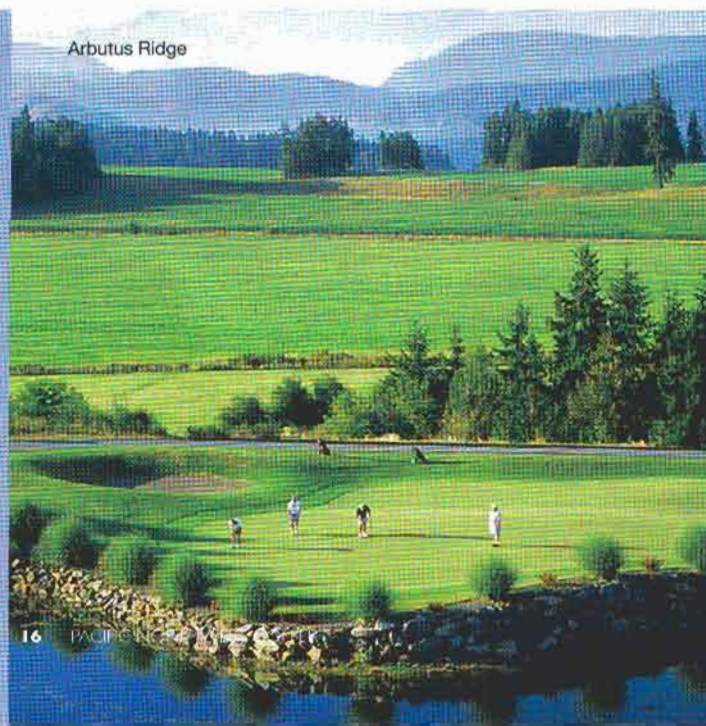
Furry Creek  
photo by  
Rob Perry

which we had never attempted before.”

Whittaker said a direct result of the Olympics is now a slew of high-end golf courses in exclusive residential developments in the Wasatch Mountains up out of Salt Lake.

Promontory, near Park City, has a Pete Dye-designed course already open, a Jack Nicklaus course ready for next year

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Arbutus Ridge

## Island already a big winter host

Trying to entice those involved in intense winter sports competition to relax a bit with some recreational golf will be the challenge for some Vancouver-area golf courses during the Winter Olympics in 2010.

On Vancouver Island, though, courses already are finding a niche in that market.

“We reach out to hockey and curling because they do come here in the winter,” said Sarah Cruse, the regional general manager for GolfBC on Vancouver Island.

Cruse said that's one of the beauties of living in Victoria and on Vancouver Island, that golf is available year-round. And for hockey players or participants in a curling tournament, there's a special

## Whistler perfect for new-wave golfers

He didn't follow the mainline road that leads to being a young, teaching golf professional, but that's the type of diversity that's common at an uncommon place like Whistler.

Ryan Pepper is a microcosm of what Whistler prides itself on being -- something for everyone and for all seasons. In the summer he's a teaching pro at Whistler Golf Club. In the winter, he's a mountain guide and a snowboard instructor at Whistler Blackcomb.

"He's a classic Whistler kid," said his boss, Alan Kristmanson, the director of golf at Whistler Golf Club. "He came here to snowboard, and then found out like all of us this is a resort he wanted to live in year-round. He got in the golf business, took his pro ticket, and now has a great thing going. He's a golf pro in the summer and teaches snowboarding in the winter. He's got it all figured out."

The 24-year-old from outside

Toronto moved to Whistler six years ago, and truly does have it all figured out as far as deciding to get into the golf business.

"There's more golf courses being built than mountains growing, right? It made sense, it totally made sense," he said.

And for someone so versed in sports, having the Olympics in his own backyard will be a treat.

"The Olympics will be fantastic, especially for Whistler," he said. "It's going to be crazy around here." ✦



Big Sky Golf & Country Club

excitement to come in from some place like Winnipeg or Edmonton for a mid-winter competition.

"They were just jazzed about playing golf," Cruse said.

The two GolfBC properties on Vancouver Island – Olympic View and Arbutus Ridge – make it a point to have high-end rental clubs available to make it even more enticing for those visitors.

"You brought your rocks for curling and your hockey sticks and pucks, but hey, we've got the other set of tools you'll need," Cruse said.

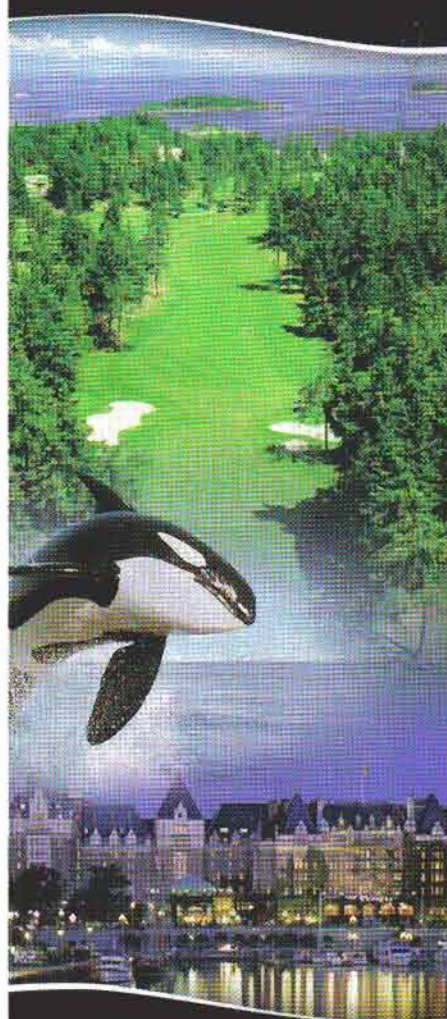
Olympic View and Arbutus Ridge are two of the 10 courses that make up the Vancouver Island Golf Alliance. The group has launched a new web site that will make even more information about its courses readily available.

Besides photos and scorecards from each course, free instant quotes will be available for golf and vacation packages through Golf Vancouver Island.

More information on Golf Vancouver Island and its web site is available at [www.golfvancouverisland.ca](http://www.golfvancouverisland.ca) or by calling 888-465-3239.

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...a direct result of the Olympics is now a slew of high-end golf courses in exclusive residential developments in the Wasatch Mountains up out of Salt Lake.

and then plans for two more courses. When finished, the 6,500-acre development will have added 72 holes to the Utah landscape.

Glenwild has a new Tom Fazio course for its residents. Tu'have is another new development with an 18-hole golf course.

In fact, if you want a direct correlation between the Olympics and golf in Utah, there's Soldier Hollow. What was the site of biathlon and cross-country skiing in the Olympics now is a 36-hole golf complex in Wasatch Mountain State Park.

"What it has brought in is a whole new level of golf that we did not have," Whittaker said.

"It's bringing out-of-state people to resort-type golf courses, which is something we just didn't have in Utah."

While Soldier Hollow came in after the 2002 Olympics, there's already a direct benefit for golf before the Winter Olympics in British Columbia.

Marked improvements to the Sea to Sky Highway from Vancouver to Whistler already are underway.

"The road is really going to help us," Hedley said. "There's the one thing, to reduce the travel time from Vancouver to Whistler and vice versa, that is really going to help this particular area."

Kristmanson agreed.

"It's going to make the trip 15 to 20 minutes closer from Vancouver, and that can't hurt," he said.

For Kristmanson, these won't be the first Olympics he'll get to see up close. He was a member of the Canadian National Basketball Team and played in the Seoul Olympics in 1988.

"I was just absolutely amazed at how you bring the whole world together in one place, and what that felt like," he said.

And what will it feel like in 2010?

"It brings in a feeling of pride and accomplishment in your little town of Whistler that you can actually pull this off." ✖

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