



PHOTO BY JOHN &amp; JENNIFER HENNER PHOTOGRAPHY

*The dramatic sixth hole at the new Ridge Course.*

# PEAKING AT THE RIDGE

Carrick's new course puts Predator Ridge over the top

BY HAL QUINN

Every once in a while a new golf course opens that sets itself apart in a signature way. Too often, the average resort golfer — and the better-than-average golfer and the accomplished player — stands on the first tee of celebrated layouts and desperately checks the GPS or fumbles through the yardage book for guidance. Far too rarely, those players stand on a resort course tee box and simply see the hole and the challenge.

That is the hallmark of a good, or a very good, golf course design. In this case, it is

the new Ridge Course at the Predator Ridge Resort in Vernon, B.C. In a signature way, Canadian architect Doug Carrick has created a layout that is a pure pleasure for players from the forward tees (5,047 yards) to the tips (7,123 yards). Through valleys, over grasslands, around and past rock outcrops, by peaks and forests, Carrick's carefully crafted routing and design excites golfers while never confusing them.

Predator Ridge Resort sprawls over 1,200 acres on a spectacular site above Lake Okanagan. Over the past two decades,

original developer Herb Patterson's vision of a residential resort retreat in the Okanagan Valley has evolved gracefully. Individual homes overlook the resort and the two golf courses — Carrick's new Ridge and Les Furber's 20-year-old Predator — as well as the 75-suite lodge, the spa, pools, conference and meetings facilities, tennis courts and restaurants. New owner Westbild has taken it up a number of notches with multi-million dollar renovations and by having Carrick remake an existing Peregrine nine-hole course and add another nine to create the Ridge.

"There wasn't really one square inch of the old course that we didn't touch," Carrick explained. "We wanted to create 18 new holes with the same character and feel throughout. We did significant regrading and shaping of the old holes. And, we changed the par on a couple. The old fifth was a par 4 and is now the par-5 13th; and 17 used to be a short par 5 and is now a long par 4."

The Ridge is Carrick's second B.C. course. His Greywolf at the Panorama Resort on the edge of the Rockies is consistently ranked

PHOTOS BY HAL QUINN



The 14th at The Ridge winds through terrain rarely seen in the Okanagan.

among Canada's best. The Carrick on Loch Lomond, Muskoka Bay, Bigwin Island, Magna, and King Valley are among his impressive and award-winning designs. But he had never before tackled re-creating a nine while building a new nine.

"There were a number of issues we faced on the existing holes; some to do with drainage, the similarity in alignment of holes, routing, steep pitches of greens that made it difficult to find pin positions," said Carrick. "Essentially, we wanted to make it more fun to play, with better looks into greens — like No. 3 where we raised the fairway about 10

feet and dropped the green about 10 feet. Some may appear subtle, but they really are big changes to the golf holes."

The biggest challenges facing Carrick and his crew from NMP Golf Construction were the elevation change (450 feet) and routing through some of the more rugged sections of the property — holes five, six and 11 — with minimal blasting.

"When people think of the Okanagan, they think of rolling grasslands like the Predator Course and the first hole on the Ridge," Carrick said. "But when you come over the ridge on No. 5 it's a completely different landscape with views of the lake, elevation changes, even different types of trees."

The 235-yard fifth off a 150-foot cliff is the most dramatic par 3 in the Okanagan, and rivals any one-shot hole for excitement and panoramic lake views. As the Ridge Course meanders through the pines, the rock outcrops — many of which are exposed by Carrick for their

visual effect — are reminiscent of formations in the Canadian Shield. The overall effect is eye-popping drama.

The project began in the winter of 2007, with construction during 2008 and 2009. The Ridge officially opened in mid-June, after what Carrick described as the "best grow in of any course I've worked on." Indeed, the blue grass fairways and smooth bent grass greens seem like they've been there for years.

Something else struck general manager Rod Cochrane after the opening-day round. "It's remarkable that on this terrain, you don't play uphill and from the back tees there is only one hole where you can't see the green, the fourth with a slight dogleg.

"If somebody said, 'Here's the piece of land you have to work with and, oh, by the way, you can only have one hole where you can't see the green from the tee, and although there's 450 feet of elevation change I don't want to play any uphill golf,' you'd say, 'How is that possible?' But that's how ingenious Doug Carrick is with this routing."

The Ridge is indeed an example of one of Canada's finest architects at the top of his game.

For more information, rates, and stay-and-play packages on both the Ridge and the Predator (where the greens have all been resurfaced) visit: [www.predatorridge.com](http://www.predatorridge.com) ❖



The Ridge Course is up for SCOREGolf's Best New Canadian Course this year.