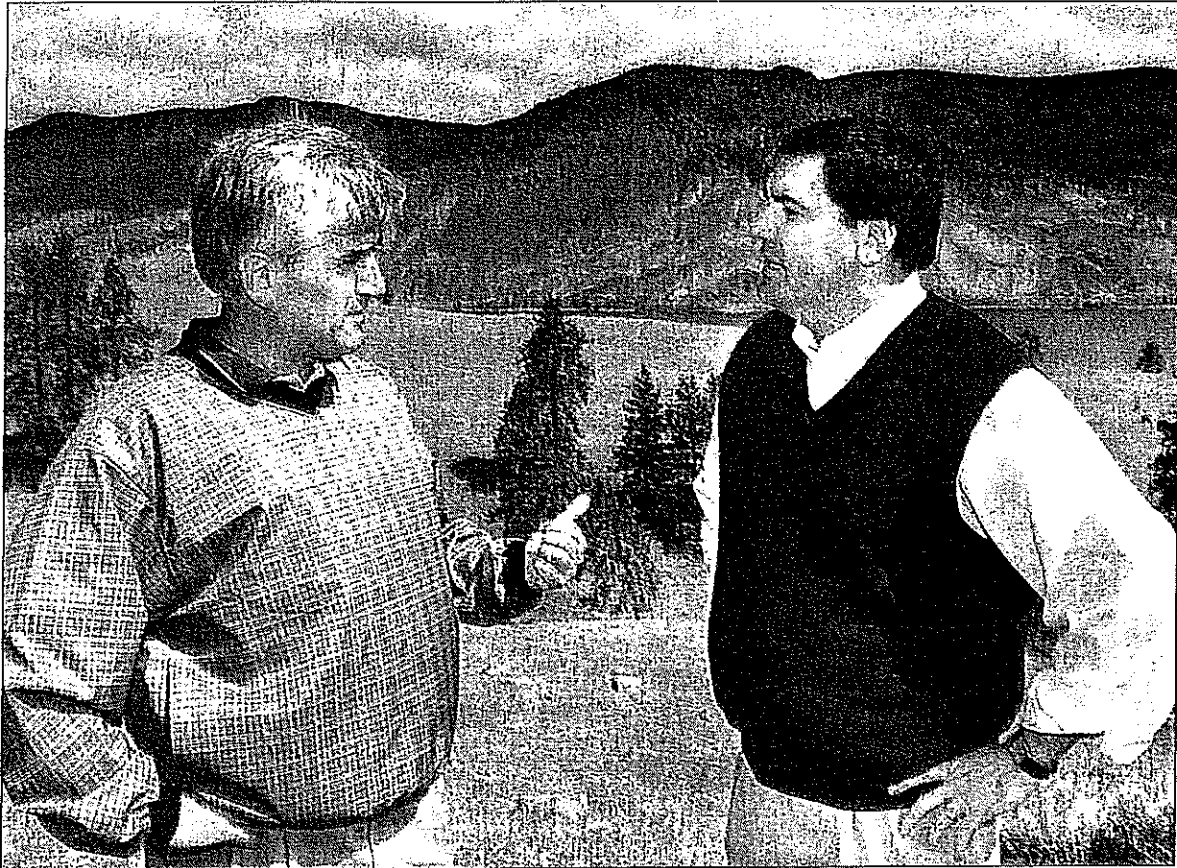


Major development expected to be open in about two years

# Six Mile Ranch site perfect for golf course



KEITH ANDERSON/SPECIAL TO THE VANCOUVER SUN

Architect Thomas McBroom (left) along with developer Michael Grenier at the site of the Kamloops on the Lake golf course, part of a \$180-million resort development west of Kamloops that is expected to open in about two years.

By BRAD ZIEMER

**KAMLOOPS** — In his more than two decades as a golf architect, Tom McBroom figures he has developed a keen eye for identifying pieces of property that have the potential of becoming outstanding courses.

McBroom only needed one quick look at Six Mile Ranch to know that he had something extraordinary on his hands. Something that figures to become one of British Columbia's best golf courses when it opens in about two years.

"It kind of blew me away," McBroom says of the 18,000-acre site. "This is a pretty special piece of land. I don't know what the comparable is anywhere in Canada. I knew the first day I saw this it had winner written all over it."

McBroom first laid eyes on the site five years ago. It's taken developer Michael Grenier nearly that long to jump through all the regulatory hoops required to gain approval to develop the property.

The Kamloops on the Lake Resort development sits on a spectacular piece of land 20 minutes west of Kamloops on the Trans-Canada Highway. Bordering 30-kilometre-long Kamloops Lake, the land features rolling hills of sagebrush and ponderosa pine and offers picture-postcard views that McBroom admits make his job easy.

He knows this is one job where he won't be starting with a blank canvas. Mother Nature has already done much of his work.

"That's the beauty of great golf, the landscape that you put the golf on," McBroom said during a recent tour of the site, which nearly a half-century ago was depicted on the back of the 1954 \$100 bill.

"Whether it's Pebble Beach or Augusta, everything has its own strong natural attributes and this just seems to have it all. It's got views, it's got water, it's got contour. But this isn't just ordinary contour, this is unique and spectacular.

"When you create great golf holes, when you have those natural features that are just totally unique, that's a good part of what makes great golf. Obviously, we have to design a good hole that takes advantage of that, but you get the combination of the good golf hole in that unique

spectacular surrounding and you've got a winner. We're ready to get at it."

So is Grenier, whose initial plans for a golf course at Six Mile Ranch were rejected by the Agricultural Land Reserve. The B.C. government subsequently declared the project to be in the "provincial interest."

Grenier's development company, Pagebrook Inc., plans a \$180-million project that will include a 300-room hotel and conference centre, a 100-room village hotel, a 50-guest ranch hotel, 962 resort residential homes and townhouses, a 100-slip marina that is already under construction and an equestrian centre.

The focal point of the resort, however, will be the golf course.

"Mike is a pretty enlightened guy," McBroom says of Grenier. "There are a few engines that are driving this train but golf is definitely one of the main engines. If we don't get the golf right, it will have a ripple effect. The

homes won't sell, the hotel won't rent rooms, so it has to be great golf or this is not going to work."

"But if you get the great golf," adds Grenier, "then the flip side is this is the right place, this is the place to be, this is the place you'll want to come. This is the place where you'll get a three-day escape from Vancouver, this is the place where you might bring somebody from Toronto to play."

Grenier said his choice of Ontario-based McBroom,

*"That's the beauty of great golf, the landscape that you put the golf on."*

TOM MCBROOM

Golf course architect for the Six Mile Ranch site near Kamloops.

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regarded as Canada's top golf architect, is testament to how seriously he is taking the golf component of his development.

McBroom's designs include Crowbush Cove in Prince Edward Island, Bell Bay Island, Beacon Hill in Nova Scotia, Beacon Hill in Ontario and Morgan Creek in Surrey. His designs have been named Best New Canadian Course by *Golf Digest* in four of the past six years.

"I'm a very fortunate developer," says Grenier, who now lives in a home overlooking Kamloops Lake with his wife and their two small children. "I was given an opportunity to do something with a special piece of property and not many developers get that chance. I mean a subdivision of 100 houses is one thing, a resort like this is a lifetime opportunity. So for me to hang onto that ski rope and not let go, that was what it was all about for me. Getting to days like this where I'm walking the golf course site with a top North American architect, that's what we've been work-

ing towards."

The golf course, which is scheduled to be expanded to 27 holes as the project moves along, figures to put Kamloops in a position to rival Kelowna, the Kootenays, Whistler and Vancouver Island as top B.C. golf destination resorts.

"We are targeting the destination golfer," says Grenier. "We want the guy that is going to Whistler and the Okanagan for a holiday and we want him to go away and say, 'You know what, I paid \$200 a round in Whistler but the course that stood out in my mind was that Kamloops course at half the price. The hotel accommodation was half the price, the food was half the price, the experience was second to none.' We're trying to blow people away."

Grenier's project has solid support among the Kamloops citizenry and no one is happier to see it come to fruition than some of the fellow golf course operators in the area.

Kamloops has always had a couple of terrific courses in the Dunes and Rivershore Golf Links. But it needed more product to truly gain a place on the B.C. golf map. The additions of the Sun Rivers Resort, which includes a Graham Cooke design that has just opened its first nine holes, and the Kamloops on the Lake Resort figure to make the area a bit of a golfing mecca.

"You know this is what we've been waiting for," says Dave Coombs, general manager of the Dunes. "We're very excited about it. I think it's going to be an exceptionally good product. The addition of Kamloops on the Lake and Sun Rivers as well as the completion of the course at Sun Peaks is going to mean we are a region with some new product."