

# PQB GOLF

Golfing in Paradise by Bill Flower



Bill is a true lover of the game of golf and owner of Oceanside Golf Services in Parksville. He also is a professional golf course reviewer for [www.canadiangolfer.com](http://www.canadiangolfer.com) Email Bill at: [oceansidegolfcolumn@gmail.com](mailto:oceansidegolfcolumn@gmail.com)



BILL FLOWER PHOTO

Cold drinks and laughter abound under the big tent.

## Morningstar gets polished up again

Many, many years ago in my teens, a friend of mine was gifted an old car by a generous neighbor. The car was once a gem of a ride, then a bit of rust set in, a few dents and dings occurred and it soon was just another car. My friend had a mechanical mind and a buddy, who was a whiz with a spray gun. Over the course of a couple of years, the car became that gem again.

Morningstar Golf Course is a bit like my buddy's car. In its heyday it was at the top of the list and a course I played over a span of many years often travelling from my former home in Saskatoon to play it on five or six consecutive days. It also went through various well intended, but inexperienced golf ownership groups. Those were the beginnings of the dents and dings with the rust setting in over the last few years when sadly it lost some of its luster.

A new day has dawned for Morningstar Golf Course, with the recently appointed and very talented GM Randy LaRoche at the wheel and key players like head professional Mark Forrest

and superintendent Gord America (pronounced A-mur-ee-ka) riding shotgun. It has already made some huge strides in the first month of Randy's tenure. With the clubhouse still being upgraded and closed for just a little longer, a white event tent has been erected next to the pro shop and the members who did not move to other courses will tell you it's just what the doctor ordered. Well, actually when I was there the doctor ordered two smokies, a burger and three beers. People now have a spot to gather - pretty simple, very effective.

Head pro Mark Forrest, a man who mentored under the legendary Jack McLoughlin at Shaughnessy back in the early 80's knows golf and knows what golfers want. The mood he says is already more upbeat and subtle improvements gleans positive comments from members and guests alike.

The rough is being cut down, the greens look smoother and run truer and bunkers are getting weeds removed and freshened up. There are more bodies on the payroll in the greenskeepers

department, which during recent lean times was just the twosome of superintendent Gord and his assistant, Ryan. These two are the unsung heroes, really, working ridiculous hours, with little or no equipment and minimal tools - lesser men would have walked.

Some money has been injected to get the course looking good again. When Randy LaRoche asked me what I thought of the course, after eating one of Annie's delicious smokies at the turn, I paused for a moment realizing I had to be honest and at the same time not be put on the spot with a few folks sitting within earshot. I looked him in the eye and said, "Randy, one thing about Morningstar is it has great bones." I guess if he asked while I was comparing it to cars I may have said, "It's straight and has a great chassis." Which in a nutshell means it's improving daily and will again in time be the premier course in the mid-island, the layout is too good for it not to be.

It's great to have you back, Morningstar.

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