

# The Idaho Statesman

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## Jug Mountain is a mix of natural beauty and modern golf



Jug Mountain Ranch's public golf course was designed by Don Knott, principal of Knott-Brooks-Linn Golf Design Group. His previous work as project architect for the Robert Trent Jones II Group included the renowned Links at Spanish Bay and Rancho La Quinta, among more than 60 others.

**By Chadd Cripe**  
*The Idaho Statesman*

McCALL — Most golfers haven't heard of Don Knott, but they know his work.

The Links at Spanish Bay. The renovation of Sun Valley Resort Golf Course. Sunriver Resort's Woodlands Course in Oregon.

Knott, the senior vice president of design at Robert Trent Jones II Group

for more than 25 years, was the lead architect for more than 60 courses that carry the respected Jones name.

He recently split from the company, and one of the first designs with his name on it is on the outskirts of McCall.

Jug Mountain Ranch — nine holes going on 18 — is a stunning blend of natural beauty and modern golf.

"It was spectacular," McCall golfer Wes Rhoades said just after completing his first round at Jug Mountain. "It's a great addition to this area."

Jug Mountain opened June 19 almost unnoticed. A tiny newspaper ad and a few radio spots in McCall were all the owners put out, not wanting to build up expectations before the first golfers gave their reviews.

The feedback is obvious from the steady stream of golfers trying out Jug Mountain on a recent weekday afternoon. They didn't get there by accident, because the course is 5 miles south of McCall and 2 miles east of Idaho 55 at the intersection of East Lake Fork Road and Farm to Market Road.

Word has spread.

"My parents have a cabin a mile away, and I've kind of been watching them build the entire course," said Andrea Baxter, a BanBury teaching pro who set the Jug Mountain course record with a 1-under-par 34 from the tips. "I was super impressed with their thoroughness."

Jug Mountain Ranch is a golf and housing development carved out of the personal ranch of a California engineer and his family.

D. John Carey bought the 2,000-acre ranch 24 years ago. The property includes more than 200 acres of water and runs into the foothills at the base of its namesake, Jughandle Mountain.

"(My dad) fell in love with McCall



Looking across Jussila Bow Pond, the 5th hole tee box of the Ranch's 18-hole golf course is seen on the left with the Council Mountains in the distance.

when he came up here," said David Carey, John's son and one of six Carey family members working on the project. "He'd come out here with his dogs. He enjoyed walking it."

And now he's sharing it.

Carey will use 1,300 acres for the golf course, 320 home sites, a small village patterned after those in his native England and sweeping common areas.

(The first phase of 40 home sites sold through a lottery; the next phase goes on sale soon.)

The 700 remaining acres surround the public part of the ranch to give it a natural buffer from other development. The Carey home is just a few hundred yards from the course.

"We built this in our back yard," David Carey said.

Everyone should have a back yard like this. The terrain is mostly open—providing

clear views of Jughandle and Council Mountain — with trees, wildflowers and deep native grasses surrounding the holes.



**David Carey**

The second nine, which the family hopes to open by 2006, should top the first. It plays along and across a sea of wildflowers in a meadow that will be left mostly untouched.

Knott already has designed the holes —

which will play as Nos. 1-6 and 16-18 — and stakes in the ground show the routing.

Knott left Robert Trent Jones II while working on Jug Mountain Ranch and nearby Tamarack Resort. The Careys chose to stick with Knott, not the company, and brought him to McCall every two weeks during construction.

"It's built the way he designed it," said Craig Collins, the director of golf operations at Jug Mountain Ranch.

Knott, in a statement on the Jug



**Craig Collins**

Mountain Ranch Web site, extols the "serene" and various setting.

"The difference between a very good golf course and an exceptional golf course is often the site," Knott said.

"... A site with natural beauty, character and features, coupled with quality design, will always stand apart as a memorable golf experience."

The Careys and Knott aimed for a minimalist design. The first nine holes feature just 12 bunkers, and relatively little dirt was moved.

Yet nobody would call this design plain. The fifth hole is one of the most intimidating 300-yard par-4s you'll play, with water seemingly from tee to green (it's actually a fairly easy hole).

The sixth forces players to hit a blind tee shot over a ledge, and the par-5 sweeps to the right just in time to frame Jughandle Mountain above the green.

"I love the design," Collins said, "the views, the way he positions holes."

The well-conditioned course can be attacked from the fairway. It plays 3,382 yards from the longest of four sets of tees.

It's also a mighty challenge if you get off the fairway, as a foursome of McCall golfers was quick to point out.

"It's a great course," Rick Cox said. "There are several beautiful holes — but the rough is rough."

Added Rhoades: "Be in the fairway."

The course opened with "introductory" rates of \$35 for 18 holes Monday-Friday and \$45 Friday-Sunday for this season. The rates for the future haven't been determined, but operators say they want an inclusive facility.

"We'll see how it goes with these rates," Collins said. "We don't want to price anybody out."

## Jug Mountain Ranch File

**Holes:** 9

**Yardage:** Gold, 3,383; Blue, 3,110; White, 2,810; Red, 2,360

**Par:** 35

**Green Fees:**

**Weekdays: (Monday-Friday)**

\$20 for 9 holes

\$35 for 18 holes

\$15 after 6 p.m.

**Weekends: (Sat-Sun & Holidays)**

\$25 for 9 holes

\$45 for 18 holes

\$20 after 6 p.m.

**Junior discounts:**

**Weekdays: (Monday-Friday)**

\$15 for 9 holes

\$25 for 18 holes

\$15.00 after 6 p.m.

**Weekends: (Sat-Sun & Holidays)**

\$20 for 9 holes

\$35 for 18 holes

\$20.00 after 6 p.m.



**(208) 634.5072**

**[www.jugmountainranch.com](http://www.jugmountainranch.com)**

**Driving directions:**

**From Hwy. 55 at Lake Fork, go east  
1.5 miles on Lake Fork Rd.**