

Course Review: Applegate River Golf Club

Applegate River Golf Club was a course in transition when we played it during Golf Week 2008, a seven-day stint that saw us based at Don's cousin's home in Grants Pass and play the majority of courses in both Grants Pass and Medford.

Applegate River was in the early stages of new ownership during our visit. They were committed, they said, to "doing things right." That included ordering logo balls, which were absent from the previous administration, much to our dismay. Sure enough, when Don stopped by about six months later while on a southern Oregon business trip, there were new logo balls to be bought. Which, of course, he did.

Applegate River is a 9-hole layout located a few miles in the countryside outside of Grants Pass. The course measures just under 2500 yards from the white tees and just over 2600 from the blues; not a big difference, obviously, and on several holes the tees are the same. You can walk the Bermuda grass fairways at Applegate River, it's constructed on a lowland adjacent to, well, the Applegate River.

You begin your round with a 268-yard par 4 that's a pretty easy opening hole as long as you hit the ball straight off the tee, as there are lots of trees on the left and some trees on the right. No. 2 is a short, no trouble to speak of par 3. You tee off over a small creek on No. 3, a 280-yard par 4. Unless you completely duff it, the creek is not in play.

Hole 4 piques your interest as you approach the tee. It's a short par 4, checking in at only about 250 yards. The creek is out there again, maybe 150 yards. Hit the tee shot you want and it's imminently driveable, but if you don't fly it 165 or so you might get wet. No. 5 is a par 5 that can measure as little as 386 yards from the white tees. You've got to fly it at least 180 to clear yet more water. Immediately over the water you've got tree issues on the left, but there's room to dump it right and be safe. This is a definite birdie hole.

No. 6 is Applegate River's No. 1 handicap hole, although it's very playable if you're not a right-handed



hooker. The hole bends to the left during its entire route to the green. You go left and you're impossibly in thick trees. Right, however, gives you all sorts of room to bail out. Hole 7 is a short and easy par 3. That's good, because No. 8 can be a nightmare.

While it's another short par 5 — 382 to 415 yards depending on the tee boxes — there's water everywhere on No. 8. The hole doglegs left gently, and a creek runs parallel along the entire right side for the first 200 yards or so. At that point the water widens on the right and horseshoes around the rest of the hole. The green is surrounded by water and the fairway narrows the closer you get to the dance floor. Hit your approach shot right, left or long and it's gone.

For good measure, No. 9 runs parallel to 8 back toward the clubhouse, so that water on your right on 8 is once again on your right on No. 9, a par 4 in the 340-yard range, again depending on the tees.

We had a nice summer morning at Applegate River, and look forward to returning one day to check out the improvements that were just beginning when we were there.