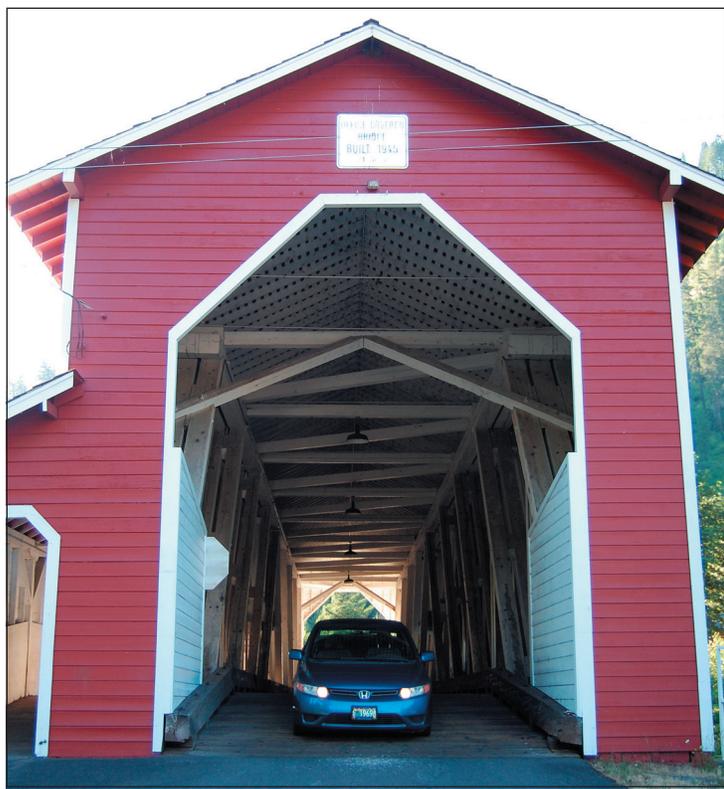


Course Review: Circle Bar Golf Club

The first thing we noticed when we pulled into the parking lot at Circle Bar Golf Club in Oakridge was that there wasn't anybody there. That was a concern. It was Thursday of Golf Week 2011, and we were based at a friend's home in Springfield, playing courses in "greater Eugene." Oakridge was one of the "greater" parts.

To be more specific, there were a few scattered golfers out and about on Circle Bar, there just wasn't anybody in the clubhouse. We had begun the day at Middlefield Village in Cottage Grove, a short track, then had some lunch, so it was around 3 when we arrived at Circle Bar — certainly, it seemed, plenty early to get in its nine holes. Not to worry, it turned out: a sign on the clubhouse door directed us to the "honesty box" near the first tee, where we were to deposit our greens fees.

That was our introduction to Circle Bar. It goes without saying it's pretty laid back. The course was actually built in the early 1950s by the Hines Lumber Company on a portion of the old Sanford/Circle Bar Ranches, hence the name. In 1954 the Circle Bar Golf Club was incorporated to operate the course. When the timber business went south and Hines



decided in the late 1970s to end area operations, the company sold the course to local investors.

Incidentally, one remnant left of the Hines Lumber Company today is the landmark "Office Bridge," Oregon's longest covered bridge. Pete had never driven over a covered bridge, so we had to do that and record the moment for posterity (see photo).

Nestled in a sheltered valley, Circle Bar is set amid the trees, creeks and rolling hills of a pioneer ranch. There's water in play on seven of nine holes, though you've got to be off-track quite a bit in most cases. At 3300 yards, Circle Bar's pretty lengthy. Several holes sprawl over old ranch pastureland; this is not a highly manicured course. But Circle Bar's most distinctive feature is its postage stamp greens. They are small; your approach shots must be *accurate*.

No. 4 is Circle Bar's signature hole. It's a 555-yard par 5 with a large pond on the right, a second pond up on the left at second-shot range, a thick grove of oak trees a hair further on the right, and an uphill finish to another dinky green. Despite all that, we did OK — Pete parred the hole, Don had a bogey. You finish with another long par 5 (504 yards) that features a tee shot over water, another huge pond further left and another big uphill finish.

Happily, by the time we finished our round, the pro shop staff was back, so we were able to purchase our requisite logo balls. We assured them we had paid, but they weren't concerned. They just assumed we had; that's how they roll at Circle Bar Golf Club.