

Course Review: Dutcher Creek Golf Course

A perusing of the Internet seems to reveal two rules for online reviews of Dutcher Creek Golf Course in Grants Pass. Rule 1: You must say that the course is “nestled” in the Rogue Valley. Rule 2: You must denote the “360-degree view” of both the Siskiyou and Grayback mountain ranges throughout the course.

OK, consider that said, and let us add that Dutcher Creek, located about 5 miles west of town, is perhaps one of the most underrated Southern Oregon golf courses. It truly is located on a beautiful piece of property, the site of an old dairy, with the Rogue River not far to the south. Given it was a dairy, it should come as no surprise that most of the course is situated on what was once pastureland. That means trees generally aren't a big issue on the course, although there are some holes with tree-lined chutes surrounding the tee boxes. Those trees are mostly deciduous, with a few evergreens and a nice smattering of plum trees as well.

Dutcher Creek opened in 1994. The course plays to a par of 70, measuring 5200 yards from the white tees, and about 400 yards longer from the blues. While there aren't, as mentioned, a lot of trees in play, there *is* water. Water comes into play on 12 of the 18 holes in the form of creeks, ponds and outright lakes. Keep your eyes peeled around the ponds and lakes and you'll see lots of waterfowl. We saw ducks in the ponds and had enough geese flying overhead to make us nervous.

Dutcher Creek features a number of elevated tees, but again, the course is set on pastureland, so by-and-large it's flat and easy to walk. The first two holes are a great introduction to Dutcher Creek, though there's a “Whoa, what have I got myself into?” factor. No. 1 is a short par 5 at 403 from the whites, but you're teeing off over not one but two ponds requir-



ing a minimum carry of 150 yards — just enough to play with your psyche. Just for kicks, there's a fairway bunker looming in the natural landing area for most tee shots, then an oh-by-the-way third pond protecting the right side of the green.

No. 2 is a 356-yard par 4 that features a virtual island tee box; you're surrounded by water as you aim at the fairway ahead. Again, while it's only maybe 120 yards to reach the fairway edge, the water is on your mind and No. 2 is one of the few holes with trees lining both sides of the fairway, so you've got to keep it straight as well.

Things ease up from there, however. You won't see significant water again until No. 7, then again on Nos. 9 and 12. You do have a chance to make a splash coming home, however, both figuratively and literally. No. 17 is a 148-yard par 3 that's basically tee box, big lake and green. Then you have the final hole, Dutcher Creek's toughest and best. It's a 339-yard par 4, but that's misleading. You tee off to an extended fairway to the right, but the green is off to the left, on the other side of two ponds/lakes. It's a target golf hole — you can't shoot for the green unless you can *fly* the ball 300-plus, so you've got to hit the modest fairway and then shoot over the water to what is a very small final green. Par is an excellent score on No. 18.

Dutcher Creek offers very reasonable greens fees. The clubhouse, efficient if not fancy, offers equipment, clothes, snacks and beverages. We played at Dutcher Creek as part of Golf Week 2008: it was August, it was hot — very hot — and we enjoyed a cold Pepsi on the Dutcher Creek patio following the round. The patio offers a great view of the majority of the course.