

Course Review: Black Butte (Glaze Meadow)

The Glaze Meadow course at Black Butte near Sisters is a perfect case study of golf management done correctly. It first opened in 1980, and was always second banana to sister course Big Meadow. For a time, that was OK, it was still one of the best resort courses in Central Oregon and the Sunriver courses were pretty much the only competition.

But the Bend area's golf explosion caught up with Glaze Meadow. While the scenery was spectacular, it had a funky design, which frustrated good golfers, and it was hard to play, which frustrated normal golfers. With the Eagle Crests and Aspen Lakes and Lost Tracks and Tetherows of the Central Oregon golf world coming on line, Glaze Meadow began to see a serious drop in play. Rounds played at Glaze Meadow were nothing like rounds played at Big Meadow. Fortunately Black Butte recognized this, and took action.

The result was a two-year course closure and a \$3.75 million redesign by noted architect John Fought. Glaze Meadow reopened in mid-2012, and it's the ugly sister no more. Don and Pete had played the old Glaze Meadow, and we played the new layout as part of Golf Week 2013 with friends Dave Cadd and Mitch Nosack. The difference was amazing.

What vexed the average golfer at the old Glaze Meadow were the super-skinny fairways and the trees. Beautiful pine trees, to be sure, but pre-renovation you were either in the fairway or deep in the woods. Unlike Big Meadow, which has plenty of trees but also some room for pushes or pulls, there was no room for error at Glaze Meadow. No one will say just how many trees were eliminated in Fought's redesign, but we have it on good authority the number exceeded 3,000. Don't worry, this was no clear cut, but now you don't have to hit every tee shot perfectly to play the course. The tee shot landing areas have been widened throughout the course and many trees that were simply in the way are gone.

Glaze Meadow now features five sets of tees, ranging up to just over 7000 yards from the tips. You're treated to bright white sand traps, spectacular views of Central Oregon's snowcapped mountain tops framed by blue sky, exquisite contouring of the blue-



grass-rye fairways and bent grass greens — plus an overall spaciousness that simply wasn't there before. Most greens are slightly elevated now, and they run fast but true. You'll likely over-putt until you adjust.

You still tee off down a hill to begin your Glaze Meadow round, but now there's room to land the ball. The next four holes have been revamped extensively to accentuate the natural wetlands in that area of the course. That section of Glaze Meadow is distinctly different than the rest of the course, which tends to feature aspen- and pine-lined fairways a la Big Meadow. The back nine is a couple of hundred yards longer than the front side no matter which tees you choose. It includes an even mix of three each par 3s, 4s and 5s. No. 12 may be Glaze Meadow's best hole. A par 5, it plays over 500 yards no matter which of the three championship tees you play (612 from the blacks), and as you approach the green you're greeted by Mt. Washington prominently in the background.

The only thing that Glaze Meadow still lacks compared to Big Meadow is good food. While the Big Meadow clubhouse includes the excellent Robert's Pub, there's nothing to eat at Glaze Meadow other than snacks. If you're planning an afternoon round at Glaze Meadow with lunch beforehand, allow yourself enough time to follow the signs to Big Meadow and eat there first.