

Course Review: Killarney West Golf Course

Hillsboro's Killarney West Golf Course, simply referred to as "Killarney" by the locals, is a definite mom-and-pop operation. That's not a criticism, it's simply a fact. A family-owned venture since it opened in 1979, Killarney is not the best course you'll ever play, but it's far from the worst. This is a no frills course. There's no driving range. Heck, there's not even a putting green. Cash only, they don't take credit cards.

But you don't need much cash. While we avoid quoting specific prices in our course reviews (they'd be impossible to keep up-to-date), Killarney is one of the state's better golf bargains; expect to pay somewhere near \$1 per hole.

We played Killarney in mid-August 2013, soon after that year's Golf Week in Central Oregon. We were joined by Rudy Vendrell, a frequent companion at home on Chehalem Glenn and a teaching colleague of Pete's at Newberg High School (Rudy teaches PE and coaches wrestling). Despite existing no more than five miles from Don's Forest Grove childhood home, he was off to the UO in 1976, so Killarney is not a course Don is overly familiar with, though he had played it a couple of times before many years earlier, long before The Quest began.

Measuring only 2544 yards, it's a short layout. The greens are bent grass, the fairways winter rye — a typical Willamette Valley course, in other words. Several holes offer the opportunity to "cut the corner" if you know the course. Yet there are also a goodly number of mature trees, and Dairy Creek runs around the perimeter of the property and an errant shot can land there if you're unfamiliar with the course (Pete on No. 2, Don on No. 7).

Because of the lack of relative length, the cheap greens fees and zero sand traps, Killarney attracts a lot of beginners. That's a bit of a contradiction, as it's not necessarily an easy course. This is not a course where you can or even want to bomb away with your driver very often. The truly drivable fairways are generally lined with *very* big trees, so if you can hit a straight 3-wood or even a 5-wood, frequently that's the better option.



Several holes offer "risk and reward" options, none more so than No. 2. While the hole measures 315 yards, the green is off to the right around a corner shrouded by trees. Even Average Joes can *hit the green* with a good tee shot — a shot made easier for everyday players by the fact that you essentially need to slice it from the tee box if you're going for the dance floor. The 365-yard finishing hole also offers a distinct shortcut option, though the tree placement there keeps you from shooting directly at the green off the tee.

Considering the price you pay, Killarney West is generally well maintained, though you'll find a few pockets of particularly "rough" rough. The greens are smallish, but we found them to be in excellent condition and smooth rolling. They're weren't quick by any means, but there were enough subtle breaks to keep things interesting.

We played on a weekday morning and the course was crowded. Pace of play was slow, though not painfully so. Because of the high number of beginners (and the trees), Killarney has a reputation for being a slow play affair. At a buck a hole, that's something you're just going to have to live with. We're admittedly spoiled by having Chehalem Glenn as our home course, so Killarney is not a venue we'd want to play frequently, but it was an interesting distraction. The small pro shop has limited food and drink fare; we didn't eat there but hear the food is good. Killarney West *did* have logo balls, which is always important to us.