

Course Review: Laurelwood Golf Course

Laurelwood Golf Course has several quirks that scream *Eugene!*, which makes sense given its location just blocks from the University of Oregon campus. Many players arrive at the clubhouse via bicycle, clubs strapped on their backs. Laurelwood goes out of its way to ensure chemical treatments on the course are environmentally friendly, including a molasses mixture on the greens and an all-natural fairway fertilizer. As long as Fido is leashed, you can take your dog with you on the course. And since you shouldn't be cheating on your UO tests, you shouldn't be cheating on the golf course, either, apparently — the scorecard rules clearly denote **NO MULLIGANS** in capital letters.

The 9-hole Laurelwood Golf Course opened in 1929. City-owned and privately managed, the white/blue/black tees are listed at 2600/2800/3200 yards respectively, but because of the hilly terrain, Laurelwood plays longer no matter which tees you choose. The frequent elevation changes mean plenty of awkward lies (even when you're in a fairway) and several elevated greens. Those greens putt surprisingly fast.

There are no water hazards at Laurelwood and infrequent bunkers, but there is a goodly number of trees. Several majestic, old-growth oak trees dot the Laurelwood landscape along with firs and more mundane species, natural grasses and scrub brush.

We played Laurelwood as part of our mid-August Golf Week 2011, headquartered at a friend's home in Springfield. It's a regulation course with a pair of par 5s but three par 3s, so overall par is 35. You begin your round on a big par 5 (540 minimum) that doglegs left. No. 2 is a 340-yard par 4, with the green set off to the right on an otherwise straight fairway, but your ideal drive left-of-center can't be *too far* left or you trickle into some troublesome trees. No. 3 is a long par 3 (196 yards) with the green guarded on the left by one of Laurelwood's rare bunkers.

No. 4 is a straight and straight-forward par 4 of 340 yards. No. 5 is five yards shorter, but plays much more difficultly due to a severe dogleg right. Nos. 6 and 7 are relatively routine, a par 3 and a par 4 measuring 150 and 305 yards, respectively.



The eighth hole is a beast. A par 5 theoretically only 426, it feels about 600. It doglegs right, and just about the time the fairway begins to bend right it also climbs uphill. If you haven't played Laurelwood before, you're not exactly sure where the green is. Don hit a stupidly lucky third shot that landed near the green, and he managed to get up and down for a welcome par. Pete didn't fare as well. His second shot flared left and his third veered even farther left, onto the adjoining first fairway that's well below the elevated last third of the fairway 8. A couple of recovery shots and a three-putt led to a very crooked nine on his scorecard, not how you want to end.

Drawbacks at Laurelwood include a very small pro shop with little to offer beyond the bare basics of tees, balls, gloves and limited snacks. Maddeningly, there were no logo balls — Laurelwood is much too mainstream a course not to have logo balls. The on-course signage could use improvement. Laurelwood does have a small, irons-only driving range and a pair of practice greens, including one that you can pitch and chip onto.

Finally, special kudos to Laurelwood course pro Debby King for placing a special emphasis on getting more females involved in the game. Laurelwood hosts an annual "Girls' Golf Day" for females 7-17. The event includes free greens fees, clubs to borrow if you don't have your own, instruction from the Oregon women's golf coach and skills training from members of the Ducks' women's golf team. It's a worthy effort that deserves applause.