

# Course Review: Meriwether National Golf Club

Meriwether National Golf Course in Hillsboro is a 36-hole complex that counts as two courses under the Don and Pete definition. By our standards, the three full-size nines — North, West and South — count as one 27-hole course because any two of the three make up a “usual” 18 at Meriwether (the same holds true at the Resort at the Mountain near Welches). The “short” nine at Meriwether serves an entirely different purpose, so again, by our accounting, it’s a separate course.

We played the North and West nines in the summer of 2007, in the early stages of The Quest, then finished Meriwether by playing the South and Short courses in January 2014. For you old-timers, the North and West nines are the original pair at Meriwether. More often than not, if you call Meriwether and make a tee time for 18, they send you out on the West and North nines — in that order. If you grew up with Meriwether in your playing cycle, as native Forest Grover Don did, that feels backwards as the West nine was the original “back nine” and the North was the front.

The three regulation nines are remarkably similar in length: 3178, 3186 and 3151 yards for the West/North/South. The West and North nines are definitely more challenging than the newer South, as both include plenty of mature trees and lots of water. In contrast, the South nine mostly borders Rood Bridge Road, and right across the road is a large pasture. The South nine, too, was pastureland, so trees in play are relatively few and far between.

An honest review of Meriwether must include mention of what Don and friends referred to growing up as the “Meriwether mush.” Built in a lowland adjacent to the Tualatin River and its watershed, Meriwether has a very low water table and does not drain well. Earth sciences teacher Pete noted the presence of anaerobic soils — “I can smell them,” he said. It’s not uncommon to play Meriwether in the spring or fall and have the course be very squishy. Given the riverside location, the Meriwether proprietors do the best they can, but it is a factor. Interestingly, as western Oregon was undergoing a winter drought situation during the January 2014 window that we visited the South and Short courses, Don remarked



that the course was actually in the best condition water-wise that he’d ever seen.

A few words about Short Course: we liked it. A lot. At 1600 yards from the yellow tees, featuring six par 3s and three par 4s, the Meriwether Short Course is wide open. The longest hole is 289 yards; the shortest 98. You tee off through a funnel of trees on No. 7, put it’s the 98-yarder, so even hackers would be hard pressed to get into too much trouble there. Otherwise, for the most part, there’s just open landscape between you and the greens. It’s a great place to hone your short game or to just scratch your golf itch if you don’t have much time.

But the best feature of the Short Course is that each hole has two cups — a regulation cup and an 8-inch juniors cup. The two holes are always cut a good distance from one another, but what a great idea! We saw a couple of groups of dads and kids playing the Short Course together, and the two pins give youngsters a chance to play real golf with dad (or mom) yet have an easier target of their own to shoot at. Kudos to Meriwether National for helping grow the game in this way.

Finally, Meriwether features a nice clubhouse with an excellent snack bar/restaurant. It’s large enough and nice enough to host medium size wedding receptions or banquets, but it’s not ostentatious. Built in 1994, it’s a far cry from the small modular building that served as the clubhouse for many years.