

Course Review: Missing Link Golf Center

(Note — *The Missing Link Family Golf Center has been sold and renamed Smith Rock Golf Course since we played it in 2010. We understand the new owner is in the midst of some much-needed upgrades, which we applaud. This review reflects how we found the course in 2010. For the time being, we have it posted here on our website under both names.*)

There are par 3 courses, and there are pitch-and-putt courses. Then there's the Missing Link Family Golf Center in Redmond. With a surprisingly well-stocked pro shop and a large driving range, the Missing Link isn't a bad place to *practice* your golf game — it just isn't much of a place to actually *play*.

The Missing Link is a 9-hole affair that measures 699 yards. That's right, 699. You'd think they'd add two yards to a tee box somewhere to at least break that 700-yard barrier. ☺

We played the Missing Link as part of our ill-fated Golf Week 2010. It was essentially our warm-up for the Big Meadow Course at Black Butte, which is where we headed immediately after our Missing Link "round." Alas, we didn't know at the time the Missing Link would be the week's penultimate course, as Pete's back went out after Big Meadow and Golf Week 2010 in Central Oregon came to an abrupt end.

While the Missing Link has a distinguished enough history — it was designed by longtime Sunriver golf superintendent Jim Ramey — the facility could use some work, frankly. We didn't hit on the range (you



hardly need to "warm up" for a 699-yard course), but it was speckled with yellow dandelion heads. We suppose that doesn't really matter if you're just whacking range balls, but it just doesn't *look* right.

As for the course itself, as the yardage length suggests, you pretty much need a pitching wedge and a putter. There is some (murky) water scattered about the course. The "fairways" were OK — hey, it's a par 3 course, you're supposed to hit the greens, right?

The greens, though, were disappointing. When you're playing a pitch-and-putt course, you'd like the putting part to be decent, anyway. We found the Missing Link greens overwatered and spongy. You don't leave ball marks, you leave craters. Don and Pete are dedicated and above-average ball mark repairers, but wow, it was tough to tend to these. You know the old "rule" about repairing your mark and one other? We could have spent the day out there fixing unrepaired or poorly repaired previous ball marks. Needless to say, this all leads to extremely bumpy greens, so you can't really practice your putting much — half the reason you go to a pitch-and-putt course in the first place. The greens also simply needed to be mowed, they were too long.

As mentioned, the Missing Link pro shop is larger than you'd expect and well stocked, and we did pick up a great logo ball featuring the course's Neanderthal/caveman logo. Unfortunately, that was the highlight of the visit. We should note that Missing Link was relatively expensive for what it is as well. It needs some work.

