

Course Review: OGA Course

Back when we decided to start The Quest to play every golf course in Oregon in 2007, Montana native Pete hadn't played nearly as many in-state courses as Oregon born-and-bred Don had. We kicked off our adventure with our "official" round at home course Chehalem Glenn, traveled to neighboring McMinnville to play The Bayou, and then The Quest truly began. Course No. 3 was also pretty close to home, as we ventured over to Woodburn to play the Oregon Golf Association (OGA) Course.

By now, almost everybody has pretty much settled in to calling the track the "OGA Course." For several years after its 1993 opening, many people called it "Tukwila," which is the name of the adjacent housing development. Following our summer 2007 round there, Pete simply called it "similar," as in similar to Chehalem Glenn. Small wonder. The two courses, separated by less than 20 miles, share similar topography and the same architect — Bill Robinson.

If you're a member of the Oregon Golf Association, either directly or perhaps through your course's men's club, then technically the OGA Course is your unofficial "home course." A championship course measuring 5900 yards from the white tees and as much as 6565 from the tips, the OGA Course offers a little bit of everything for golfers of all levels. Meticulously maintained, the course includes holes that range from pretty easy to downright hard — but ultimately, fair. Because it's also *the course* of Oregon golf, the OGA works hard to keep the greens fees reasonable, and there are always a variety of coupon and online specials available.

The OGA Course is walker friendly, though there are some minor hills here and there to climb and decent treks occasionally from green to next tee. You'll encounter trees, water and sand traps as your primary sources of trouble. The bigger trees are on the front nine, where the course was carved out of natural treed terrain. Trees on the back side are typically smaller and were planted as part of an overall landscaping plan. While the course is built inside the perimeter of the aforementioned Tukwila development, and there are holes with adjacent homes, you never feel "crowded" at the OGA Course, and there are



several areas where you're off in completely natural landscape.

The greens at the OGA Course are relatively large. The OGA likes to promote them as "fast." They're quicker than many west-of-the-Cascades public play greens, to be sure, but they're not, say, Central Oregon fast. Many include subtle breaks that take a hole or hole to read, but you can quickly catch on and putt consistently. A distinction of many Robinson-designed courses is a huge double green somewhere on the layout. Home at Chehalem Glenn, it's the dance floor on the first and third holes that's shared. At the OGA Course, the two finishing holes, No. 9 and No. 18, share a huge green that includes water on the side.

The OGA Course was built in a natural wetland area and is an Audubon Sanctuary-certified course; the signs that say "Environmentally Sensitive Area" aren't just there to push pace-of-play. There are a lot of natural hazard areas where you won't find your ball, just drop one and move on. As you might expect, the OGA Course has excellent practice facilities and the in-house Orchards Grille offers tasty and reasonably priced fare.

However, the OGA unintentionally offered other Oregon courses a "what not to do" teaching moment with its clubhouse. It's gorgeous, but it's too large and ostentatious for its location and clientele, and has saddled the organization with a high debt load. Orchards Grille, for whatever reason, has never really caught on in Woodburn as a "must-go" eatery for non-golfers. None of that will matter to you when you play there, you'll enjoy the clubhouse, just be happy you're not paying for it.