

Course Review: Persimmon Country Club

The Persimmon Country Club, a private course in Gresham, isn't as "private" as many Portland area membership-based tracks. Persimmon hosts a lot of public play tournaments, including one that we play in every year, so it doesn't have that snooty feel that some private layouts have. They're used to real people on their property at Persimmon, and seriously, that makes a difference.

Technically, Persimmon always has been a private club, but there have been many times it allowed public play — through GolfNow.com, for example — and access to its restaurant. It went fully private in 2006 when Pleasant Valley Golf Course in Clackamas closed and about 200 Pleasant Valley members merged into Persimmon. Since then, it's been a little harder to get on, but it's certainly far from impossible to play the course.

Persimmon somehow feels bigger than it is, probably because every now and again there's a decent trek between holes. The white tees are only 6000 yards, the blues another 450. Par is 71; there's an extra par 3 on the front nine. Sculpted in rolling, hilly terrain by noted Oregon golf course architect Gene "Bunny" Mason, Persimmon is sort of tucked into a natural bowl setting. There are trees both large and small, lots of bunkers (especially surrounding greens), numerous natural wetland areas along with ponds and creeks — in other words, enough potential trouble spots that you're bound to find some.

You could walk Persimmon, but we wouldn't recommend it. There are enough elevation changes that you'd be flagging by the end; the course is difficult enough that you don't want to be fighting yourself while you play. Take a cart and enjoy yourself. Persimmon is a well-kept course with lots of flowers and shrubbery, plus many of the holes offer views of Mt. Hood, Mt. St. Helens and/or Mt. Adams in the backdrop. The greens are always in very good shape; some have a lot of slope, but they putt consistently.



While, as mentioned, we have played Persimmon several times in tournaments, the "official" time we played it as far as The Quest is concerned was an outing with Dale Conway and Andy Schmitz, teaching colleagues of Pete's. It was late spring and the course was mushy. Since then, we've heard they've made drainage improvements, but all of our other visits have been for summer tournaments, so we can't confirm that.

It turned out to be an unusual round — not because of Dale and Andy, who we play with periodically — but because there was an eagle involved. On Hole No. 8, a very short par 4 at 229 yards (but steeply uphill), Pete's drive was maybe 20 yards short of the much-elevated green. Don was already on the green's fringe when Pete pitched up. His ball hit about 15 feet past the hole on the sloped dance floor, then slowly rolled backwards right into the hole for a 2. Pete didn't see it and we didn't tell him, so he was looking around for his ball before Don finally gave in and told him, "Look in the hole."

That was certainly the highlight for either of us in what was otherwise not a great scoring round. Persimmon features a nice variety of holes. It doesn't have one signature hole as much as it has twins. No. 9 (377 yards) and No. 18 (383), which sit side-by-side, both force you to hit accurate tee shots from elevated tees toward the creek that cuts across the fairway. Both greens are just over the water, so even a perfect drive leaves you a decently long target golf shot where you're either on the green, in the creek or in a natural brushy area nearby, in the eye of the clubhouse on a knoll above you. You get a definite sense of déjà vu on No. 18.