

Course Review: RiverRidge Golf Complex

The RiverRidge Golf Complex in Eugene features something for everyone. There's a good practice facility, an 18-hole regulation course, a 9-hole executive course and a 9-hole pitch-and-putt course, all located a couple of miles north of Valley River Center. We played all three RiverRidge courses in one day, part of our Golf Week 2011 that found us headquartered in Springfield at a friend's home while we toured every course in the greater Eugene area.

RiverRidge is a family owned and operated facility built from scratch on farmland purchased by Ric and Debbie Jefferies in the late 1980s. The property was originally flat, but Ric Jefferies had spent some time as a golf pro and met noted course designer Robert Cupp during that time, so even though he was somewhat of a novice course architect, Jefferies learned enough from Cupp to know to add some mounding and other topographic features.

The RiverRidge complex is one of Oregon's handful of Audubon Sanctuary certified courses, so it goes without saying there's wildlife about and the course emphasizes its natural setting and environmental stewardship. There's a "natural" feel to the place — while the main course, in particular, is well maintained, you wouldn't call RiverRidge "manicured" by any stretch.

You can walk any of the three layouts; again, it was originally farmland. Given the heat and the fact we were playing 36, we rode, though we looked silly tooling around the pitch-and-putt course in a cart.

RiverRidge Course

RiverRidge Golf Course is an 18-hole, par 71 layout set on 107 gently rolling acres occasionally bordering the Willamette River. The course has three sets



of men's tees — yellow, white and blue — measuring about 5800, 6100 and 6300 yards respectively. As is our custom when we're playing a course for the first time, we played the white tees.

The front nine is somewhat tighter than the back, but both sides feature a combination of holes where you can bomb away and others where you need to think a bit and target your shots. The front nine is also considerably longer than the back — over 400 yards longer, as the back nine includes four par 3s.

There's not a lot of elbow room anywhere on the course; the 18 holes are tightly crammed into their allotted space. There's quite a bit of water. If you really slice your tee shot on No. 3 and somehow miss the trees lining the right side of the fairway, you have the potential to whack one into the Willamette. Otherwise, there are over a half-dozen ponds both large and small dotting the course, plus a small stream in the bottom corner of the course that houses Holes 11, 12 and 13. Those are, in order, a 183-yard par 3, a 305-yard par 4 and another par 3 of 166 yards. Each of the three holes features multiple opportunities to dunk your ball in water, and this far corner of the course can make or break your round. We both managed to play the trio at two-over par, not very good considering we each parred No. 11, arguably the toughest of the three.

There are also a couple dozen bunkers scattered about, including a handful of fairway traps. They seemed a hair short on sand the day we visited, but were otherwise playable. Nothing is hidden, you can see them all well ahead of time.