

Course Review: Sandelie East Golf Course

Here's a very odd thing to say about a golf course, but entirely appropriate for Sandelie East in West Linn: it needs more grass.

We played Sandelie East on a beautiful mid-April 2014 Sunday afternoon with the temperature right around 70. Joining us were usual suspect Mitch Nosack and friend (unusual suspect?) Ron Hebert. We walked the course, which is easy to do; Sandelie is virtually flat, there's little elevation change.

Unlike its sister 9-hole course, the younger Sandelie West that sits about a half-mile down the road, the 18-hole, par 70 Sandelie East doesn't suffer from an unimaginative layout. There are tree-lined fairways, holes with some gentle bends and others with severe doglegs, nicely tree-framed greens on par 3s and just enough character to keep you interested from a design standpoint. In a bucolic setting outside of West Linn proper, Sandelie is a scenic course that's quiet with a laid-back atmosphere. It's unpretentious, without a lot of rules. Jeans? Fine. Non-collared shirt? No problem. No shirt at all in the summer? OK (at least for men). ☺

There are only two sets of tees at Sandelie, white and red. The whites measure just under 5900 yards, the reds are typically on the same tee box 10-15 yards shorter per hole, so women don't get a huge break on distance. Trees are the only hazard issue at Sandelie, and even if you do hit into them, your ball is usually findable. There's not a single bunker on the course. There's water in play on one hole, a pond that sits between the tee on No. 12 and the green on No. 17. You'd have to hit an awfully poor tee shot to get wet off the 12th tee, so it's really only in play on No. 17. Overall, it's a fairly easy layout, and that's perfectly fine. Not every course needs to be hard. But there are other significant issues at Sandelie, mostly related to grass — or more specifically, the lack thereof.

Driving up to the course, the fairways look green and great. But find your tee shot on No. 1 and you're introduced to the Sandelie fairway. In a word, it's sparse. There's simply not enough grass. Basically you never have a good lie because the ball is never sitting up in the grass — there's rarely enough grass



clumped together to do so. Your ball is always sort of in the mud. We played our own version of “winter rules” and bumped the ball to the nearest clump of grass when possible, which often wasn't.

Alas, the fairways are *great* compared to the greens, and this is the real issue at Sandelie. Oddly, the issues are distinctly different on the two nines. On the front side, seven of the nine greens were severely diseased. All but two were splotchy, with large areas minus any grass at all. They were, in a word, unputtable. Your ball would bounce and hop and randomly change direction; you literally hit toward the hole and hoped. The greens were just as bad on the back nine, but for a different reason. There, the small, frequently domed dance floors had been plugged and sanded — but you could tell that had happened some time ago and it honestly looked as though they'd never been watered since. Just like the front nine, your ball bounces and veers any which way on the way to the cup — every putt is a challenge, but not in a good way.

The course does not drain well and is typically closed from New Year's Day until March. Locals and beginners seem to like Sandelie just the way it is, but it has much unfulfilled potential. We'd rather spend another \$5 per round if that meant better maintenance, starting with the greens. Overseeding the fairways once would help a great deal as well.