

Course Review: Shadow Hills Country Club

OK, we admit it. We were at first a hair underwhelmed by our visit to Shadow Hills Country Club in Junction City. That wasn't Shadow Hills' fault, really. We played there as part of Golf Week 2011 in greater Eugene, and we played Shadow Hills two days after our round at the Eugene Country Club. Having been at very few country clubs, we were understandably impressed with ECC, which is one of the best courses in the state — possibly even *the* best. What we knew was that ECC had been spectacular, and that Shadow Hills was the one-time home course to the University of Oregon Ducks, so we had sky-high expectations when we arrived.

And ... it's no disgrace to report that Shadow Hills isn't quite ECC. That's just a fact, and once we got that (unfair) comparison out of our heads, we had a great time. Perhaps the first thing to mention is how friendly everyone was. The two hicks from Newberg were made to feel very welcome. Shadow Hills lacks any hint of pretentiousness. A colleague of Don's has a friend who is a Shadow Hills member, but he was unable to join us on the course. Despite the course's official policy of "guests accompanied by members," he arranged for us to play "unattended," and nobody at the course looked sideways at us or implied in any way that we shouldn't be there. We were greeted warmly, answered questions about our Quest and were quickly accommodated at round's end when we asked if a staffer could trek to the end of the long driveway to take the picture you see here by their sign. Staff and others present that day simply couldn't have been nicer.

As is our custom, we played the white tees, which measure about 5900 yards at Shadow Hills. The course stretches to over 7000 yards from the tips.



There are more than 60 bunkers scattered about the layout; we actually did a great job of avoiding those. There's water on the course that comes into play frequently, especially on the back nine. And there are trees. Shadow Hills features a wide variety of tree types, mature and in play, but not obtrusively so. Fairways have landing areas that are, well, fair, and most have a little wiggle room. You can't spray the ball indiscriminately at Shadow Hills, but it's not impossibly tight either.

However, any discussion of Shadow Hills really begins and ends with the greens. They are poa annua grass, somewhat unusual for Oregon. They are lush and manicured to a T, and are some of the best greens you'll find anywhere in the state. The Shadow Hills staff likes to keep them super quick; they will reach speeds as high as 11 on a Stimpmeter, the device used to measure golf course green speeds. Putting at Shadow Hills is both a treat and a challenge.

Shadow Hills was in a transition phase when we visited. The driving range was torn up, set to re-open in full that fall as a complete state-of-the-art practice facility. We are also aware that Shadow Hills' members are enjoying a new clubhouse since we were there. "Dated" would be the best word to describe the clubhouse and pro shop that we saw, but the course opened a new clubhouse in June 2012 that had to have been built pretty quickly, as there was no clubhouse construction ongoing when we were there. We hope the folks at Shadow Hills kept the same friendly attitude we encountered at the old facility; we have no reason to think otherwise.