

# Course Review: Sunset Bay Golf Course

We had to take a mulligan at Sunset Bay Golf Course in Charleston. Not on the course (there were undoubtedly a few of those); simply playing the course. It was Golf Week 2012, so the full crew of Don, Pete, Dave Cadd and Mitch Nosack were on hand. We already had Watson Ranch and Coquille Valley Elks under our belts that day, and we left Coquille around 4 p.m. to (we thought) complete a nice 36-hole day at Sunset Bay. It was August and it was sunny and warm as we pulled out of the Coquille Valley Elks parking lot.

Those familiar with the weather patterns along the Oregon coast won't be surprised to hear what happened next. Sunset Bay Golf Course sits right across the road from Sunset Bay State Park on Cape Arago, and the closer we got the foggier it got. We're talking the proverbial "thick as pea soup" fog. The course was closed, and for good reason — you couldn't see a thing.

Undaunted, we returned later that week for a strategic morning tee time. Sunset Bay is a 9-hole layout sprawled amidst 100 acres. Designed by noted Oregon golf architect John Zoller, Sunset Bay — par 36, 3020 yards — opened in 1969 and there's water everywhere. Large creeks are prominent on eight of the nine holes, and the one hole that doesn't feature a creek (No. 6, a 380-yard par 4) has a huge pond just left of its green.

To term Sunset Bay unpretentious is an understatement. A small manufactured home serves as the clubhouse. The friendly staff was extremely welcoming and engaged in hearing of our Quest to play every Oregon golf course. They have a colorful logo ball. And two of the world's happiest dogs (one of which you can partially see in the accompanying photo). A pair of tail-wagging, friendly canines has the run of the place. They lope about the course sniffing, chasing the abundant birds and just enjoying life. You can't help but be a little jealous.

We also teed off on No. 5 (par 4, 330 yards) under the watchful gaze of an adjoining neighbor's un tethered horse. He (?) didn't speak, so it wasn't Mr. Ed, but the beast seemed to take great interest in



our four tee shots. Somehow, he just sort of fit in at Sunset Bay. No. 8 is an interesting 450-yard par 5. It's a virtual 90 degree dogleg right, so you can't see the green from the tee. You can plop it out there 180 or so and play it safe, or you can try to cut the corner, shoot over a stand of trees and then go search for your ball. We all tried the latter, with varying degrees of success, as denoted by our four scores of 5, 6, 6 and 8.

Sunset Bay is not a well-manicured course. The turf is a little rough, and even in August, there were soggy spots. You don't have to be an environmental scientist to deduct that all of the creeks and streams equal a pretty shallow water table, so our educated guess is that Sunset Bay is likely a pretty soggy off-season play.

A quick note about the aforementioned Sunset Bay State Park. You have to veer off of Highway 101 several miles to get there, so it's not the best known coastal park. But it's well worth the venture: trees, rocks, the bay — it's absolutely gorgeous and offers spectacular sunsets (no kidding, right, hence the name?). There are also some great seafood restaurants in Charleston, so there's ample reason to visit the area even if you've never struck a golf ball in your life.