

# Course Review: Watson Ranch

Of all the people we've met over the years out on the road, no one was embraced our Quest to play every golf course in Oregon more so than Jake Adkins at Watson Ranch Golf in Coos Bay. He follows our progress closely and frequently comments on our Facebook page. Because of this devotion, we'd probably lie through our teeth and tell you that Watson Ranch was a really good course even if it sucked. Fortunately, we don't have to resort to duplicity: Watson Ranch *is* a really good course.

Watson Ranch was part of the Golf Week 2012 agenda in which Don and Pete, along with Don's high school classmates Dave Cadd and Mitch Nosack, played every course along the southern Oregon coast from Waldport to Brookings *except* for the Bandon Dunes courses. We headquartered in a vacation rental house north of North Bend — which driver Dave never could find, even after a week — and set out for a new adventure every day.

Watson Ranch is the former Coos Bay Country Club. Founded in 1923, it's the oldest course on the southern coast. The original founders of Coos Bay Country Club purchased the literal Watson Ranch to build the course, and the new owners who bought the layout changed the name in 2006 as a nod to its roots. While the front nine dates back to the 1920s, the second nine didn't open until mid-1998.

Watson Ranch measures 5900 yards from the white tees and 6400 from the blues. Self-proclaimed the "Best Kept Secret on the Oregon Coast," Watson Ranch sort of sprawls across its acreage. It's a fair test of golf, and the crew there works hard at landscaping beyond the fairways and greens to make for a nice atmosphere.

An unusual feature of Watson Ranch is that you start your round with two par 5s, and they're not easy. No. 2, in particular, measuring 448 from the whites, has a creek that runs alongside the right side of the fairway for the first two-thirds, then crosses the fairway and meanders off left, to come into play again on later holes. With the water behind you, you've got trees and bunkers to negotiate before you reach the putting surface. Finish that off, and you come



to the No. 1 handicap hole next, a 394-yard par 4 that has water parallel on the right along the entire fairway. It's a tough opening trio of holes, and your scorecard can suffer greatly right out of the chute if you're not warmed up and ready to go.

Things settle in a bit after that. No. 6 is a short par 3 over a large lake. No. 7 is no picnic, a par 4 with water on the left the second half of the hole. Nos. 8 and 9 are fairly routine. The first three holes on the back side are similar and run parallel to each other: up, down, back up. A small creek is in play on each, especially as it runs the length of No. 12 along the right. Trees and bunkers make up most of the potential trouble for the rest of the back nine, though No. 16 is a medium par 3 over another large pond, similar to No. 6.

Watson Ranch, at least in the summer, features a great little snack bar adjacent to the clubhouse with freshly cooked fare. There was a large enough gap behind us that Don and Pete were able to sneak in lunch while Dave and Mitch backtracked to find Mitch's misplaced iPhone. It's a common occurrence, as Mitch has a GPS program on his phone and is always laying it down to hit and then leaving it there.

Finally, Watson Ranch does have logo balls — Titleists, in fact. We had to ask Jake for them, they weren't displayed, but he dug them out. Once we finish *The Quest*, we'll return to Watson Ranch.