

Course Review: Woodburn Golf Club

Many people are quick to scoff when they hear “Woodburn Golf Club.” They see the no frills, sand greens course and immediately dismiss it. But while the Woodburn course isn’t going to be confused anytime soon with Columbia-Edgewater or Bandon Dunes, it does hold a unique niche in Oregon golf.

According to *Golf Digest*, there are an estimated 100 courses left in the U.S. that feature sand greens, most in the Great Plains states. Woodburn Golf Club is the only one in Oregon. Protocol is to smooth the green with a carpet dragger when you finish each hole — sort of like what a baseball grounds crew does to tidy up the infield between innings. As you might expect, sand greens aren’t particularly quick — yet alternately, they are quicker than you might expect. They are also pretty true, depending on the dragging expertise of the previous player.

We played with “royalty” at Woodburn Golf Club. Our church friend Daroll Nicholson is not only the president of Woodburn Golf Club, he’s also the mayor of Donald. Having heard Don and Pete Golf Oregon tales for several years, Daroll was anxious to show off his course, which he’s very proud of.

An executive course that features three par 3s and six par 4s, holes measure from 154 yards at the shortest to 357 at the longest. White tees for men, red for ladies, but with scant difference — the women only get 10-15 yards per hole relief at best. Don



The Woodburn Golf Club features the only set of sand greens in the state of Oregon.



Don and Pete flanking friend Daroll Nicholson, Woodburn Golf Club President and mayor of Donald.

had played the course a couple of times some 20 years ago, and can report it’s in much better condition than it used to be. The fairways were well-kept and mowed. There are 200, 150 and 100 yard markers (at least) on each hole. The holes could use better signage; Woodburn Golf Club is owned and operated by members who own shares (Daroll owns one), perhaps that’s something they could think about.

No. 8 is the course’s most interesting hole, a 322-yard par 4 with a 90-degree dogleg right about 170 yards out. The right side of the fairway is guarded by some good-sized trees, and course rules dictate you must go *around* the trees, not over — even if you can hit the green directly off the tee.

But this course is all about the greens. You pretty quickly learn that bump-and-run is the order of the day here. Hit a green on the fly from virtually any distance out and it’s just not going to hold. Daroll was a master at the proper technique and schooled us pretty well for the first few holes; we eventually caught on. Putting can be an adventure; not every green has the same amount of sand, so you have to check sand thickness each time before you putt. Overall, a great evening with a great friend. Don’t be a golf snob, give Woodburn Golf Club a chance.