

Glaze Meadow golf course opens

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Golfers can play 11 holes at the new Glaze Meadow course. *photo provided*

The new Glaze Meadow Golf Course at Black Butte Ranch is now open for play.

"We have 11 preview holes open now," said Kendal Daiger, director of marketing at the Ranch. "We're offering a sneak peak of the golf course before our grand opening the weekend of June 30-July 1. We hope lots of people come to the ranch to help us celebrate this momentous occasion."



The grand opening will be the first opportunity to play all 18 holes of the redesigned and rebuilt Glaze Meadow Golf Course. For the last year and a half the course has been closed and under construction.

The 35-year-old golf course needed help. The irrigation system and most of the infrastructure was worn out and in need of replacement, which required tearing up much of the course.

"We saw a need, and an opportunity," said Jeff Fought, director of golf at the Ranch. "Rather than just fixing the irrigation system, we could build a new golf course; one that would be on par with Big Meadow."

The Ranch board of directors formed a committee to search for a designer. After an extensive interview process, noted golf course designer John Fought was hired to design and rebuild Glaze Meadow. John is Jeff's brother. He is also a very well-respected designer of golf courses with an impressive portfolio of original designs and renovations that includes Crosswater in Central Oregon.

"You can't duplicate what we did here. We had the perfect economic window," said Fought. "This country will probably lose 1,000 golf courses by the time the recession is over. Very few new courses are being built, so prices for both materials and labor were very reasonable."

The fact that few courses are being built also meant that talented golf course builders were available.

"You need the right guys, and we are very happy with the team we put together," said John. "The contractor had lots of experience with classic courses. The skill of the shaper is vital. Our shaper, Ron Hart, has lots of talent and was a tremendous asset.

"We were very fortunate to have John," said Jeff. "He came out here every week. He put his heart and soul into this golf course. We are also very fortunate to have our golf course superintendent, Phil Lagao. He's a real professional who put in countless hours on this project while at the same time maintaining the Big Meadow Golf Course. And he helped us manage every penny as good as could be."

The \$3.5-million project was completed on-time and in-budget.

"The overall goal was to create a top-notch golf course, one of the best in the state," said Jeff. "It has a completely different character than most golf courses in the West and certainly any in Central Oregon."

The design inspiration is from the Golden Age of golf course architecture in the early 20th century, which was characterized by minimal change to existing land contours. Greens were slightly perched and bunkers were grass-faced with flat sand bottoms.

"The Golden Age design characteristics fit very well on the property," said John. "This is a mature site. It lends itself to the classic style. Plus, I just like that style. It's better. It's easier to maintain and is more practical."

Those familiar with the old Glaze Meadow will quickly recognize the new look and feel. The routing of the holes is the same, but that's where the similarity ends. Now at over 7,000 yards, the course is long enough to accommodate the longer distance players are getting using today's golf balls and equipment. It's a lot more open, with wider fairways and renewed mountain views. The practice facility was also completely redone. The driving range has a much larger tee area and new target greens. There's a huge practice putting green next to the pro shop. The pro shop and snack bar also underwent a complete remodel and now offers a full kitchen with an expanded menu.

There are still chances to play on opening weekend. For the grand opening, Black Butte Ranch is awarding weekly prizes and a grand prize. Enter to win prizes online at www.facebook.com/blackbutteranch. The grand prize includes play for a foursome, a set of Cobra "Amp" irons, a Cobra bag, and a lesson with Jeff Fought, the director of golf.

"This new Glaze Meadow Golf Course is going to create lots of excitement," said Jeff. "People from all over are going to want to come play it. It's going to be very good for the Ranch. It's going to be very good for the community of Sisters, too."