

GOLF COURSE ARCHITECTURE

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Dan Hixson

A new 18 hole reversible golf course, plus two short courses, will be opening at a new resort in Oregon this summer. Sean Dudley spoke to course architect Dan Hixson about his work at Silvies Valley Ranch

How would you describe Silvies Valley Ranch site?

The property is excellent for golf. There is great natural beauty, with three distinct types of environmental areas on the courses: grassy meadows, Ponderosa pine forest and upland desert sage. There is also an extremely undulating section that has all the above characteristics in a 25-acre section. The main course is routed in and through each of these areas, and often through the transition zones between them.

How did designing a reversible course differ from an ordinary layout?

Designing reversible is not as different as it would seem, but certainly far more difficult than a traditional course. My primary concern was to not screw up by making a bad hole or two just to make the course reversible.

The routing uses mostly a zigzag pattern from one hole to the next. This allowed me to avoid having greens that are approached from fairways in opposite directions or 180 degrees. All of the double green approach angles are less than 60 degrees. This meant I could build green complexes and bunkering that easily work in both directions, because the angles of the routing set this up.

The routing is the most important part, and more so on a reversible course. When done well, the details of the strategic features fall into place fairly easily.

Can you tell me more about the resort's short courses?

The Chief Egan is a par three course with nine holes ranging from 70 to 120 yards. Five play across or along Egan Lake or the small streams that feed it. This is a very informal setting, with small undulating greens and half a dozen bunkers.

McVeigh's Gauntlet is a very challenging seven-holer, where most of the holes start with a simple tee attached to the previous green complex. From there you play to another 'island in the sage' green, with the next tee attached. Golfers will be rewarded with stunning views, crazy golf holes, gifts of libations and a thoroughly unique experience.

What do you think golfers at Silvies Valley Ranch will enjoy the most?

I think the routing aspects of the main course will surprise many of the golfers, and how the two intertwine with the various environments and each other. Hopefully the number one answer to the question though is fun, as everything was conceived to help make the golf experience fun throughout.



An extract from the routing map for the Craddock course, which, when reversed (inset), forms the Hankins course

