

Terrific Tokatee

By Robert Weber
Emerald Sports Reporter

In an age where a game of golf usually consists of \$50 green fees and six hour rounds on poorly kept, manufactured courses, it's nice to know that places like Tokatee Golf Club still exist — even if it is an hour's drive from Eugene.

Located 47 miles east of Eugene in Blue River, Tokatee has earned a reputation during its 21 years of existence as one of the most enjoyable and scenic 18-hole tests of golf in Oregon, and the country.

The 6,817-yard course continues to pile up state and nationwide awards, including recent honors like the best public course in the Northwest (*Back Nine*, 1989) and one of America's top 25 public courses (*Golf Digest*, 1990).

Nat Giustina, a partner of Giustina Land and Timber in Eugene and the sole owner of the course, thought of Tokatee as something fun and exciting to do when he began building the front side in 1966 with designer Ted Robinson on some of the 380-acre ranch land he owns in the Blue River area.

"When I started out it was more of a hobby type of thing, but I decided that if I was going to do it I might as well do it right," said Giustina, an avid eight-handicapper who said he finds time to play Tokatee at least once a week during the summer.

After the back side was completed in 1970, Tokatee began to draw attention with its beautiful setting, natural layout and immaculate conditions.

While the beautiful setting is something that came with the territory, the layout and condition of the course are two factors that Giustina and head pro Mickey Sullivan believe sets Tokatee apart from other courses.

"I think things have to look natural on the course," Giustina said. "I like the way God made it."

Sullivan, who has been running the day-to-day golfing operations for the past 19 years, couldn't agree more about what makes Tokatee a special

place to play golf.

"The layout of the course fits in beautifully with the land and the trees," Sullivan said. "Nat's standards are high and those are the guidelines we go by."

The condition of the course is greatly enhanced by the rest it receives while the course is closed from Nov. 15 to Feb. 1 every year.

"The rest for the golf course really helps keep it nice," Sullivan said. "It helps cut down on the wear and tear."

Mowing the greens and changing the cups positions daily during the summer is expensive, Giustina said, but it helps ease the burden brought on by roughly 30,000 golfers a year.

"Basically, we do a good job of maintaining the course," Giustina said. "We spend the money we have to spend to keep it in good shape, and we don't waste money."

Tokatee is in the process of being renovated with the building of a new pro shop and an updating of the course's irrigation system.

Work on the irrigation system has begun and should be completed by the end of the summer, while work on the new pro shop, which is to include an office and coffee shop in addition to a pro shop area, is expected to begin shortly and should be finished by next spring.

While winning awards — especially on the national level — helps bring people to Tokatee, Giustina believes word-of-mouth is still the course's best form of advertising. It is with that belief that Giustina offers a half-price discount to all college students with student identification.

Green fees are \$22 for 18 holes and \$13 for nine holes, but students can play 18 holes during the school year for \$11 and nine holes for \$7. Tee times are recommended throughout the week and cancellations should be called in order to allow more golfers to enjoy Tokatee, Sullivan said.

"We've had the student rates from

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Center photo: Tokatee head pro Mickey Sullivan (behind counter) sells a shirt to Mark Fleming.

Photos by
Mark Ylen

Many golfers have enjoyed playing the Tokatee Golf Course.




The Three Sisters Mountains are in plain view for golfers on Tokatee's back nine.

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