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At three of the area's premier public golf courses, summertime is

TEE TIME

By Kris Henry

For the Oregon Daily Emerald

It's summertime here in the Eugene-Springfield area. The sun is out. The birds are singing. It's a perfect time to be outside and active. And, some would say, it's the perfect time to play one of the most popular summertime games — golf.

The Eugene-Springfield area includes nine courses that are open to the public and four courses that are private and open only to members of its country club.

The average duffer is forced into playing public golf courses — but that doesn't necessarily mean he or she must play on low-level, ratty courses. Three fine courses that are accessible to the public are Riveridge Golf Course, McKenzie River Golf Course and Middlefield Village.

Each of these courses is challenging, maintained at a level consistent with most private golf courses and, above all, playable by the average golfer.

Riveridge

Riveridge (345-9160) is an 18-hole golf course that also includes a large driving range. Construction began on the site in June 1988. The driving range opened first in November of that same year. In June 1989, the first nine holes were open for the public and the second nine holes opened in April 1990.

Riveridge was the dream and brainchild of Ric Jeffries and his wife, Debbie. Ric was born and raised in Corvallis and is a member of the Professional Golfers' Association. It had been a goal of the two to return to the Northwest and own their own business.

They started in the golfing business in 1975 when Ric had the experience of re-designing four golf holes while the couple was in Florida and later some more golf holes while they were in North Carolina. When the opportunity arose for him to design an entire golf course in the Eugene-Springfield area, the couple went for it.

Jeffries built his first and only golf course to describe through design exactly how the golfer should play Riveridge.

"The idea of dimension and depth through shadowing characterizes the course," Jeffries said. "As you stand on the tee box and on the fairways, it should depict where you need to go with your shot. There are hints if you look."

As well as hints, there are well over 500 trees, in 77 different varieties, and as they grow, accuracy in shot-making will become more important. The undulating greens are made of pin-length

creeping bent grass and the fairways are made of rye grass to better deal with the damp Northwest weather.

"The golf course philosophy," Jeffries said, "is to make the challenge of scoring well on the short game or chipping and putting. The undulating greens are the equalizer determine whether your score will be low or high."

An average round of 18 holes at Riveridge takes four hours and 10 minutes. The nine-hole rate is \$13 and the 18-hole rate is \$21.

Riveridge gets played by the typical golfing crowd. On week-day mornings, usually the majority of play is by the retired community. Riveridge has league nights four or five nights during the summer. The serious golfer is typically out on the course in the early mornings of the weekend.

It is recommended that men or women that are learning to play golf should try to get teetimes for later in the afternoons during the week and on weekends so they won't feel rushed while they play.

"If you ask me," Debbie Jeffries said, "I think that after 7 p.m. is the prettiest time to be out on the golf course."

Riveridge also actively works on programs for the junior golfer. They have several classes and tournaments during the season.

It was Ric Jeffries' mother who came up with the name for her son's debut golf course. They were looking for a name and his mother saw a natural correlation between the course's location on the Willamette River and its having a ridge, which has since been knocked down in some areas, that runs through the golf course.

Riveridge's focus is to provide a useful product that is first-class in value and atmosphere. They strive to be aggressively friendly at the pro-shop and make sure that the people have a good time while at the golf course.

McKenzie River

McKenzie River (896-3454) is a unique 18-hole golf course that actually consists of only nine holes. After playing the nine holes, the average duffer is then challenged to play the same holes again, using different tee boxes.

The course was started 31 years ago by the three Omlid brothers, Lloyd, Ken and Erl. It is the first course the three brothers ever designed.

Ken Omlid had previously designed a driving range and was a teaching professional at Laurelwood Golf Course. His two brothers were also enthusiastic golfers who had played golf at Eugene High School (now South Eugene).

The Omlid brothers no longer maintain the golf course, but it still has remained within the family. Lloyd's children, Rod and Sally, purchased the golf course 14 years ago and their families have been running its operations ever since. Rod is the owner and manager who does all the architecture work on the course and would rather be outside than in during these summer months.

The course itself is 5,665 yards in length with a front nine par of 35 and a back nine par, using different tee boxes, of 36.

"People are somewhat deceived by it," said Harold Mathers, McKenzie River's jack-of-all-trades, "because they think it's not really that long.

They forget about the amount of trees that come into play."

While Mathers was not sure how many trees McKenzie River has overall, he said that Rod has put in 51 trees in the four years Mathers has been there.

The design of the course is mostly straightforward, with a couple of deviations on two dogleg holes. Standing on the tee box, the course does not seem very intimidating because of its straightness but, as Mathers points out, there are not very many people who can hit a golf ball straight.

When sunny, between 180 and 200 people are out at McKenzie River. The management believes that golf is a four-hour game but insist that they don't care how long it takes you, as long as you play nine holes in two hours or under.

The green fees at McKenzie River are \$10 for nine holes, \$17 for 18 holes during the week and \$18 for 18 holes on weekends and holidays. Also available are punch cards that are non-transferable, but have no expiration. The cards can be used for nine hole rounds. A 10-punch card costs \$75, a 50-punch card costs \$350 and a 100-punch card costs \$650, a bargain for the economical golfer who knows that they will want to play McKenzie River several times.

The playing schedule is similar to Riveridge, but weekend golfers should call about four days in advance for a tee-time.

Middlefield Village

Middlefield Village (942-8730) is an 18-hole golf course with a 350-yard long and 50-yard wide driving range.

The course is in its fourth year of maturity and was designed by Bunny Mason, who is responsible for several golf courses throughout the West Coast and Oregon.

Middlefield Village is only 4,905 yards long for the men, and 4,260 yards long for women, with a par of 67. It is deceiving because the golf course is made up of six par-3 holes and only one par-5 hole. The six par-3 holes are at distances ranging from 90 yards to 130 yards to 200 yards so the course remains challenging and requires the golfer to be handy at golf shots of varying lengths throughout the course.

"The main attribute," said Tom DeLuca, general manager and head professional at Middlefield Village, "is the condition of the greens and fairways. The grass is always playing like a country club."

"Even though the course is only about 5,000 yards, the holes are long enough to be hitting driver on the par-4 holes. It's still a very challenging course for all skill levels."

The design of the course is to



Area golfers can pick from nine courses open to the public when looking for fun on the links.

sharpen the abilities of the golfer's short game, but the back nine holes were designed for the golfer to be able to work on hitting tee shots straight. There is trouble on both sides of the fairway — such as out-of-bounds areas, trees and the river — for the duffer who has a problem with a hook or slice. An average of about 15 trees frame each fairway.

For weekends it is advisable to call two or three days ahead for a tee-time. Middlefield Village starts taking tee-times on Tuesday for the coming weekend and it is a good idea to have one by Thursday. Play has been picking up in the mornings and, since it has been hot lately, afternoon play has diminished. The average round takes about three-and-a-half to four hours.

The weekday green fees are \$11 for nine holes and \$18 for 18 holes. The weekend green fees are \$13 for nine holes and \$20 for 18 holes. Middlefield Village also offers a discount for students with a current University of Oregon identification card. The discounted green fees are \$6 for nine holes and \$11 for 18 holes before 4 p.m. on weekdays and \$8 for nine holes and \$13 for 18 holes before 3 p.m. on weekends.

Based in Cottage Grove, Middlefield Village is getting more play from people in the Eugene-Springfield area, which is approximately 20 minutes away. "People are realizing that it's worth the drive to come down here," said DeLuca.

"We're also starting to get more female golfers. The length of the course helps the nonlong or strong game."

With the golfer's green fee comes a chance to win \$3,000 on the par-3 fifth hole.

"It's 131-yards long," said DeLuca, "and they get a token which activates cameras that actually film the shot. If they hit a hole-in-one, they get the \$3000 and a video of their shot. So far we've already had one winner."

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