

# Course Review: Black Butte (Big Meadow)

Don and Pete are both high on Big Meadow Golf Course at Black Butte Ranch near Sisters. At this writing, Don has Big Meadow at the top of his Oregon course listings, and it's way up there on Pete's list, too. That says a lot, as we've played dozens of excellent and beautiful courses to date on our Quest.

So what makes Big Meadow No. 1? It's a combination of scenic beauty, overall course and greens condition, fairness and staff. Big Meadow is similar in setting to Tokatee, even though it's on the east side of the Cascades. Nestled in a declivity of the Cascades, the area is a favorite place to visit.

Before the excellent 2012 remodel of sister course Glaze Meadow, Big Meadow offered a stark contrast to Glaze in that there was always room to be a little off. At Big Meadow, you can "oops" a bit and still have a shot. And even if you hit it into the woods at Big Meadow, unless you're really deep in the forest there's usually an alleyway out if you play smart.

Big Meadow features just the right amount of elevation changes to make it interesting without being so difficult to make you would struggle. Hazards and bunkers are well placed and make you think about where you want to be on the fairways and approaches. The greens were in great shape with straightforward reads; we felt we had a fighting chance on most putts.

Designed by acclaimed golf course architect Robert Muir Graves in 1972 and upgraded in 2007, Big



Meadow plays about 6100 yards from the white tees (where we played), 6500 from the blues and over 7000 from the tips. The moderate Par 4 No. 14 (346 from the whites, 401 from the blacks) is a stop-and-take-a-picture hole with Three-Fingered Jack looming in the background. Don is our photographer, and he wishes he could claim credit for the shot of No. 14 you see here, but we stole this off the Internet. Every hole is scenic, but this is the best of the 18, which explains why Black Butte uses it on the front of the Big Meadow scorecard.

The toughest hole is No. 7, a 536-yard par 5. One advantage: the hole usually plays downwind. If you manage to hit a good tee shot, beware the fairway bunker on the right that likes to catch second shots.

One oddity at Black Butte is the restaurant situation vis-a-vis the golf courses. While Big Meadow has the excellent Robert's Pub located within its clubhouse, decent food is scarce at Glaze Meadow; there's no restaurant at all. So even if you're going to play Glaze Meadow, get there early and follow the signs to Big Meadow first for lunch.

One other suggestion: shop around and look for specials before trekking to Big Meadow. Summer single play rounds can be a little spendy, but the course generally features coupon specials and/or online specials, plus Black Butte Ranch is seemingly always running good "stay and play" promotions.