

Brasada Canyons on course to be tough test

By Mike Stahlberg
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It's too soon to say where Brasada Canyons Golf Course will rank among Oregon's great golf courses. The major golf magazines have yet to weigh in with their ratings of the semi-private resort layout that opened east of Redmond last August.

But Brasada Canyons has already made the list of the Oregon Golf Association's most difficult 18-hole courses to play from the tips — or “Jake's tees,” as Brasada Club members refer to the back tees in honor of Peter Jacobsen, the former University of Oregon golfer who helped design the course.

The 7,295-yard, par-72 layout has been assigned a course rating of 74.3 by the OGA, putting it in a tie for the 13th-most difficult course in the state.

“Course rating” is the score a scratch-handicap male golfer “who plays to the standard of the U.S. Amateur” would theoretically average on a particular course.

According to the United States Golf Association manual on course ratings, the mythical male golfer the handicapping system is based upon “can hit tee shots an average of 250 yards and reach a 470-yard hole in two shots.”

The USGA's Course Rating System provides a way to level the playing field among golfers by taking into account the fact that some courses are more difficult than others.

In Oregon, the most difficult course to play from the back tees is Bandon Dunes, on which the mythical scratch golfer is expected to post an average score of 76.7 — nearly five strokes over par.

Crosswater at Sunriver is second with a rating of 76.5.

Following in close order are two Central Oregon courses that Brasada Canyons overlooks from the shoulders of Powell Buttes — the Nicklaus Course (76.2) and Fazio Course (75.8) at Pronghorn, a few miles to the northwest.

Rounding out the top five is Sandpines in Florence, at 75.2.

Brasada Canyons' course rating of 74.3 puts it in a tie for 13th with Royal Oaks Country Club in Vancouver, Wash., just ahead of Eugene Country Club at 74.2, and a couple of spots behind Diamond Woods, in 11th place at 74.5. (Several of the above courses will be bumped down a notch when Tetherow, the new David McLay Kidd track in Bend, opens later this summer. The OGA last week announced Tetherow's USGA course rating is 74.8.)

Brasada Canyons also ranks high in the second component of the handicapping system — “slope.”

Slope is a formula-driven number designed to reflect a course's difference in difficulty for a scratch player versus a bogey player.

Slope adjustments work on a sliding scale and are more significant the higher the handicap. For example, it takes 20 units of slope to equal one stroke of course rating at the 5-handicap level, while at a 20-handicap level, five or six units of slope can equal one stroke. The average course in the U.S. has a slope rating of 113.

Brasada Canyons' slope rating is 147 from the back tees. Only six courses in Oregon have higher slope ratings. (Tetherow's slope is 141).

A typical (mid- to high-handicap) golfer would get three more strokes playing a course with a slope rating of 130 than at an average course.

Course ratings are designed to help adjust a golfer to par, while slope ratings adjust one's handicap for the course (or set of tees) being played.

Brasada Canyons and Eugene Country Club, for example, have nearly identical course ratings from the championship tees, but Brasada has 11 more slope points. So, it plays a stroke higher than ECC at most handicap levels — and two strokes higher at some index levels.

For example, a 10-handicapper actually gets 12 strokes when playing from the back tees at Eugene Country Club. The same golfer would get 13 strokes at Brasada Canyon.

To correctly figure a net score, one needs to consult a course handicap table that takes the USGA slope and course ratings into account.

A handicap chart for any course and set of tees can be generated by using the free calculator at www.mulligansoftware.com/golf/stats.html.

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