

Heritage Oaks Golf Course ~ Cool Breeze Amidst Some Hot Air

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A recent late Friday afternoon in July proved to be a perfect day for golf. Wedged between the stifling blast–furnace temperatures that have been hounding the Shenandoah Valley, came a beautiful day of 80 degrees with low humidity. Also a winner that day was Heritage Oaks Golf Course,



the city owned 18 hole public course located on the west side of Harrisonburg. Depending on who you ask in Rockingham County — reportedly it’s a 50/50 split — the locals either love the golf course or hate the golf course. Not the actual course itself, but the politics of the city owning and maintaining it.

I’ll leave that debate for the powers that be. My buds and I were just interested in the quality of golf at this Bill Love design. If my collective group of eight has a vote, it would be a resounding “yes” — we love this golf course. Short at just 6324 yards off the back tees, Heritage Oaks is a pleasant mix of links– and parkland–style golf that is both scenic and enjoyable. The par 70 track is split unusually with a par 34 on the front and par 36 on the back. Hit the ball well and you can turn in a really fine score. But hit it crooked, especially on the tighter back nine, and well, you may side with some of the course’s detractors. There is nothing fancy at Heritage Oaks, a modest snack bar and pro shop with microwavable cheeseburgers for lunch, which is okay for the group of die–hard golfers in my group. The course alone more than makes up for its lack of fine dining options. The only complaint my group had with Heritage Oaks was that no beer was sold on the premises. The four hour wait for Buffalo Wild Wings across from James Madison University after the round was a fine consolation prize for my thirsty comrades.



Heritage Oaks starts out with a very British Open feel as the first four holes are heavily influenced



Hole 14 Par 4

by the links style. The 424 yard par 4 first plays off a slightly elevated tee with bunkers guarding the right side of the fairway. Let's just say the brownish heather and gorse lining the hole had everything but the obligatory heard of sheep grazing for food. Before I go any further, let me say that despite the harsh summer drought that has browned the perimeters of the

course, Heritage Oaks' fairways, tee boxes, and greens were in superb shape. The contrast between them and the rough created even more of a links-style presence. The links-style vibe changes at the 385 yard par 4 fifth. The hardwoods, mostly oaks, frame the fairway at the fifth making it the most challenging tee shot so far, and a harbinger of things to come later in the day. The 185 yard par 3 eighth is the best of its kind at Heritage Oaks. A well placed shot must carry a small pond to a narrow green that is protected by a bunker to the right.

The back nine starts with a pair of modest par 4's before things start to tighten up on the twelfth through fifteenth holes. The 342 yard par 4 twelfth plays from an elevated tee with plenty of forest at each side of the fairway. A hybrid or long iron is the best option off the tee, leaving a level lie



Hole 16 Par 5

to the narrow green down below. The 386 yard par 4 fourteenth is perhaps the trickiest hole with plenty of trees protecting each side of the landing area. A large lateral hazard waste area gobbles up wayward balls to the left and another large hazard protects the front of the green. The links-style feel comes back big time at the 524 yard par 5 sixteenth. The sharp dogleg right offers up plenty of options for the second shot. Birdie is a real good possibility with two good shots and a little guts. Another par 5 closes out the day at Heritage Oaks in brilliant fashion.

Home to the First Tee of Harrisonburg, Heritage Oaks is a golf facility that has truly become an asset to its community. Like the oasis type day of weather we enjoyed on our visit, Heritage Oaks is truly a hidden gem in the midst of a lot of hot air. 🏌️

For more information visit heritageoaksgolf.com