



Meadowcreek Golf Course ~ The Mighty Muni

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There was a time when the word “municipal” was treated like a four-letter word or a plague when it came to golf courses. The lure of the upscale golf evolution in the late 1980’s left many of the municipalities between a rock and a hard place. New golf projects have drastically slowed down in the past ten years, and all across the mid-Atlantic we are seeing some of the most successful golf facilities being operated by local and regional governments. In Maryland, both Montgomery and Baltimore County as well as Baltimore City have solid regimes of courses under their bureaucratic golf belt. In the Commonwealth, Prince William and Fairfax oversee golf operations at several of the best courses in their counties respectively. The cities of Buena Vista and Harrisonburg hold the keys to local courses, while not long ago the Town of Front Royal pulled in the reigns of one of Virginia’s oldest nine hole layouts.

One of the most successful golf-government marriages is in the city of Charlottesville, Virginia, home of Meadowcreek Golf Course. Situated on a delicious wooded property on the grounds of the 280-acre Pen Park complex, the par 70 plays 6050 yards from the back tees to a friendly 4568 from the forward tees. Don’t be fooled by the moderate length. The course carries plenty of challenge and sports a stout set of par 3’s. The playing surface features large Pennecross bentgrass greens and Bermuda fairways. Architects Buddy Loving and Bill Love did a fine job here incorporating the lay of the land with creeks, wetlands, stately oaks, dogwoods, and cherry trees. With the parkland setting, there’s not a hint of civilization on most of your journey.

The front nine opens with a strong par 5 where birdie is still a good possibility because the two-tiered fairway drops off dramatically setting up a downhill second shot. The short par 4 second is one of my favorites. The tee box and the green are about eye level, with the fairway set below. Because of the slope, it makes for a tricky pitch shot to the putting surface. Number three is also a par 5 and requires




target golf shots because the hole is dissected by a creek. The 383-yard fourth is rated the hardest hole at Meadowcreek with a hazard down the left side and an uphill second shot. To testify just how tough the par 3's are here, three of the five are rated the seventh, ninth, and tenth most difficult holes. That's a rarity in most conventional golf course layouts. The first of the strong set is number six, which plays longer than the publicized 171 yards because it's straight uphill. Shots that fall just short have a chance to roll back down to the fairway. The par 4 seventh is noted for its beauty with views of the Rivanna River and Pantops Mountain prevalent from the elevated fairway. That river and a large pond make the par 3 eighth one of the toughest in Albemarle County. The front nine closes with a flowing par 4 that also plays slightly uphill. Hmmmm. Seems like we have a theme here. One of the challenges that makes Meadowcreek such a good test of golf is that many approach shots are played uphill. So, club selection is crucial.



Hole 10 Par 3

Every course should have an "Amen Corner." The first three holes on the back nine at Meadowcreek bring me to my knees. The par 3 tenth plays from an elevated tee box to a lake, creek, and bunker with a green in the middle of them all. It's an excellent hole that you will not likely soon forget. The par 4 eleventh plays over 440 yards from the tips, easily qualifying it as one of best holes on the inward nine. The par 5 twelfth plays uphill with trees up both sides of the fairway landing area. To complicate matters, out of bounds runs down the entire left side just outside the treeline, creating a mighty fine three-shot hole for most. You can exhale now and play the short par 3 that follows. All par 4's, holes fourteen thru seventeen are diversified with several doglegs and a straight one thrown in for good measure. Sixteen is another of the signature uphill holes at Meadowcreek. A large elm to the left and bunkers protect a large flat green. After the sharp dogleg right seventeenth, you close your round on a par 3 that may just be the flattest hole on the entire course. I enjoy courses that close with short holes. It gives us all a final shot at glory.

Meadowcreek Golf Course is home of The First Tee of Charlottesville. They are proud to be part of what has become a landmark, value-added educational opportunity for the game of golf. The course also plays host annually to the Charlottesville championships for men, women, seniors, and juniors. Since 1974, Meadowcreek has been a staple in the central Virginia golf community and with 40,000 rounds played there annually, proving that the golf course at Pen Park is mightier than the sword. 

For more information visit meadowcreekgolf.org



Hole 8 Par 3