Camas Meadows debuts in Northwest

BY JAY FINEGAN

CAMAS, Wash. — Situated in the wooded hills between the Cascade Mountains and the mighty Columbia River, the new Camas Meadows Golf Club offers players a choice combination—a strategically challenging layout, exquisite scenery and the charm of the Pacific Northwest. All this, plus complementary carts equipped with ParView’s new GPS system, which does everything for you except swing the clubs.

"I think it’s turned out to be a darned good golf course," said designer Andy Raugust, formerly a course architect with Jack Nicklaus’ Golden Bear Golf and Ronald Fream Design Group. "It had been layed out by another architect several years before I got involved. Things didn’t go so well, so they stopped, and then hired me to finish it off."

The par-72 layout plays to 6,518 yards, but accuracy is more important than length here. "It’s not a long course, but it’s a tough course," Raugust said. "We designed it for the thinking player. The line at which you choose to play is as important as the distance you hit the shot."

A diverse landscape that ranges from meadows to dense forest of Douglas fir to extensive wetlands provides plenty of trouble for errant shots. "If you miss the fairway even slightly, you’re probably going to be in jail," said Raugust. "Rod Nelson is the superintendent, and his goal this winter is to remove a lot of the weedy undergrowth around the trees. It still won’t give you a great shot, but you’ll be able to find your ball and punch it out."

AMENITIES NOT SHABBY

The course lies only about 20 minutes from the Portland, Ore., airport, but the area is vibrant with wildlife. Several points on the course offer views of Lacamas Lake and Mt. Hood.

For a public course, the amenities aren’t too shabby, either. The club features a full-service pro shop, a first-class restaurant and banquet facilities. One of the most unusual features at Camas Meadows is the complimentary cart, with ParView’s GPS technology.

WETLANDS CHALLENGE

For architect Raugust, the toughest problems centered on the 60 or 70 acres of wetlands and marshes. Part of the project is in the city of Camas, and part is in Clark County. "We had to deal with two different regulatory agencies," Raugust said, "and each one had a different way to handle things."

"They disagreed on the size of the nutrient-control ponds, which is where we have to hold the water for a set period of time before it can drain back into a wetland," he said. "Also, we have to run it across what’s called an upland, and turf grass acts like a filter that gives the water enough purity to enter a wetland."

"One jurisdiction wanted reasonably sized ponds, and one wanted ponds three or four times the size they needed to be," Raugust said. "Even our engineering consultant couldn’t believe the size of them. But we fit them in."

The owner—Tom Shipler—superintendent Nelson and Raugust spent nearly two years in construction—identifying, delineating and avoiding environmentally sensitive areas so the course would have minimal impact on wetland sections.