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11th Hole Drapper Valley Golf Course
By
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What Club Would You Hit?



Today's golf hole is the 11th Hole Drapper Valley Golf Course, located in the southwest part of Virginia along the I-81 corridor. There, you find a wonderful golf course located in the valley between two of the Blue Ridge mountain ranges. The mountain ranges provide wonderful backdrops for the more than 7,000 yards from the tips of natural rolling hills that make up this golf course. Even at that length, this is still a course designed and priced for the weekend golfer.

Designed by Harold Louthen, a retired land surveyor who helped design the Washington Capital Beltway. He has built a solid test of golf that is both difficult and fair. The length makes it difficult, but he purposely built the course so there are no real blind shots. Hazards are all clearly visible, and every fairway on the golf course is the exact same width.

As with much of the land in this area, the property was once a working farm before being purchased by Louthen and two brothers, Bob and Gene James, in 1990. Since Louthen was a certified land surveyor, it was decided he would try his hand at designing the golf course. Although he was used to building roads for the city of Falls Church, building a golf course is quite different. Still using his civil engineer training and reading a few books on golf course design, he slowly learned what it took to be a golf course designer.

Since the land was laid out so naturally, it's perfect for a golf course. As a self-taught designer, he created a course routing by walking the land and working with a topographical map for about 6 months. After he staked out the course, they turned the actual shaping of the golf course over to Lee Baker. Baker, who had worked with many golf course designers, including Arnold Palmer and Jack Nickalas, built the greens, fairways, and tees.

The 11th hole is a perfect example of fitting a golf hole into the natural landscape. According to the yardage book, the 11th hole plays 245 yards from the tips. With a pond guarding the front, you're hitting your tee shot uphill to a green that is cut into the hillside.

I played the hole from the middle teeing ground at a much more reasonable distance of 162 yards. Because it's more uphill than I thought, I didn't pick the right club and landed in the middle of the bunker in front of the green. Although I hit a decent trap shot, my golf ball rolled past the pin to 15 feet. I missed the par putt and ended up with a bogey.

This misty morning photograph is used as an illustration in my book, "Golf a la Cart Version 2," now available on Amazon or by contacting me. It's also available as a digital print at my Etsy Store. To purchase a print, go to the pbsstudios.com Golf Photography Gallery Section of pbsstudios.com

I hope you like my weekly series of columns about golf holes I have played and photographed. The series includes original photographs or digital paintings based on golf holes I have played.

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