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Golf Course Graveyards Part 1

By
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What Club Would You Hit?

For this week's column, I'm doing something a bit different. Over the years I've had the opportunity to play and photograph many golf courses. As a contributing writer for Washington Golf Monthly and later GolfStyles, Washington, I published several "Play the Game" features on golf courses that have since closed.

Editor's Note: I'm sure many more golf courses have closed for multiple reasons. This list is of the golf courses I have photographed that are now closed. Because several golf courses have closed, I have split this week's column into two parts.

Virginia Oaks in Gainesville, VA



9th Hole Virginia Oaks Golf Course

Opened in 1999, Virginia Oaks Golf Course was the centerpiece of Virginia Oaks, an upscale development of more than 500 homes near Gainesville, VA. The 167-acre, 18-hole parkland-style layout, designed by famed golf course designer Pete Dye's son, P.B. Dye, features scenic views along Lake Manassas. During the late 90's and early 2000, it was rated one of the top golf courses in Northern Virginia.



Virginia Oaks Golf Course

Unfortunately, Virginia Oaks Golf Course was a casualty of the 2008 economic downturn – when people stopped playing golf. With the lack of play, what really destroyed Virginia Oaks was a heat wave and drought in the summer of 2012 that killed the grass. The following winter, Northern Virginia had to contend with back-to-back winter storms. The golf course never recovered, and players stopped playing. With the lack of play, there was not enough money to cover the maintenance. In 2015, another company took over golf course operations. They put all the money into the clubhouse and not the course itself. In fact, it appears they ran out of money. With no maintenance, conditions suffered, and golfers stopped coming to the golf course. In 2017, Virginia Oaks closed, though the surrounding residential community remains.

Cannon Ridge, Fredericksburg, VA



5th Hole Cannon Ridge Golf Course

Cannon Ridge Golf Club in Fredericksburg, VA, was the centerpiece of Celebrate Virginia North housing development. The 18-hole championship golf course sprawls across 200 acres of rolling countryside situated along the shores of the Rappahannock River.

Opened in 2003, Cannon Ridge was named No. 3 in Golf Digest's "Best New Public Courses." Designed by former PGA Tour Commissioner Deane Beman and course architect

Bobby Weed, Cannon Ridge is located on what was once a Civil War battle site; cannon emplacements accent the course. The diverse layout, known for its dramatic elevation changes, wanders through dense woodlands and across bluffs and deep ravines. The scenic wetlands come into play on a few holes. At the time, the golf course was considered one of the toughest public courses in the state.



8th Hole Cannon Ridge Golf Course

Cannon Ridge was another victim of the 2008 economic downturn. It struggled until it closed for the first time in 2012, when the operator at the time, Washington National Golf, declined to renew its lease. In 2016, Don Long purchased the semi-private golf course and reopened it in June. It didn't survive. Golfers complained about the lack of maintenance on the golf course. Cannon Ridge ceased operations at the end of 2017 to redevelop the land for housing.

These columns, digital paintings, and photographs were adapted from a chapter 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 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 in the series based on photographed golf holes.

Give me a like and leave a comment. Let me know what you think about the series.

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