



## Shenandoah Valley Golf Club ~ All Grown Up

Nick Ciattei



Play a round at Shenandoah Valley Golf Club near Front Royal, Virginia, on a late weekday afternoon in the spring or summer and ask the folks behind the pro shop counter where you can find the owner, and they will most likely tell you he is out mowing the fairways on the White Nine. You see, Richard Runyon knows and will never forget his beginnings. He started at the golf course as a cart boy in his early teens

and has performed almost every task possible during his more than 20 years there. You could say that Runyon and Shenandoah Valley Golf Club have grown up quite nicely together. Now, he runs the show along with William "Mac" Henkel, the previous owner's son. Their combined efforts have led to many improvements and renovations that have helped Shenandoah Valley prevail as one of the most respected golf facilities in the Commonwealth.

Golf clubs succeed over a long period of time for many reasons. This writer will attest that Shenandoah Valley Golf Club can lay claim to its success and recognition through their consistency, their strongest characteristic. From the first time I walked out on this 27-hole facility in 1979 to my latest folly, Shenandoah Valley Golf Club demonstrates unwavering dedication to its product. Needed changes or improvements are executed in subtle ways as to not disturb the original design intentions. Shenandoah Valley's winning formula remains pretty simple. SVGC offers outstanding conditions on their challenging and entertaining golf course at a very nice tariff, one that surprises many when they initially play here.

The patriotic Red, White, and Blue nines make up the 27 holes at Shenandoah Valley with mature, tree-lined fairways that roll across what was once Virginia farmland. Unlike today's modern designs that tend to look unnatural or tricked-up, here the golf holes complement the area so naturally you would think they just cut holes into the earth for the flagsticks. A mixed bag of pines, willows, and tall hardwoods gracefully border a majority of the holes. The Red and White nines comprise the original eighteen, with the Blue Nine added later. You can definitely see the difference as the latter nine is noticeably longer and features more ample putting surfaces than the original nines. Famed regional golf course architect Buddy Loving's wonderful job routes comfortable buffers between each hole on these courses.



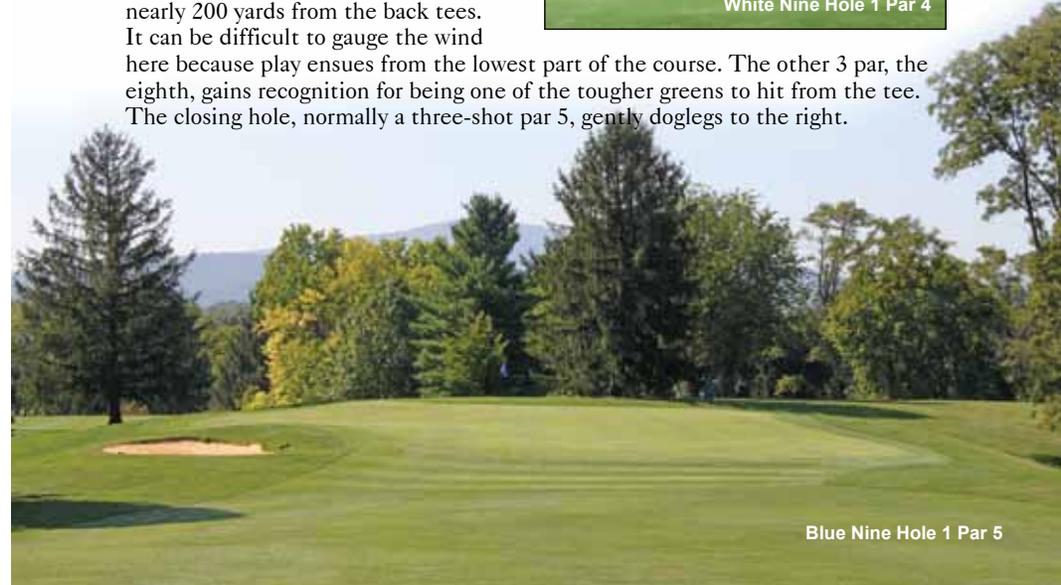
When you pair the Red Nine with the Blue Nine, you get the par-72 combo that is used for most of the plethora of big events held here. Shenandoah Valley Golf Club hosts regional fundraisers, Mid-Atlantic PGA events like the Apple Blossom Pro-Am, as well as scholastic and collegiate tournaments. Not to worry, even with the busy schedule that they keep, the bonus of having 27 holes makes plenty of open play available.



You see the par 4 first hole on the Red Nine as you walk to the pro shop. Short in stature, your approach shot here leads to a narrow, deep green. I've always found the strong par 4 second hole rather difficult because the green is positioned in a way that makes it hard to hit from the fairway. While the par 3 third hole may be the shortest hole on the entire property, a green pitched upward from front to back can lead to

some hair-raising putts. The reachable par 5 fourth requires an uphill second shot. The beautiful par 3 sixth plays over a deep culvert to an elevated green. The just plain long seventh plays uphill making par here never a given. Make up a stroke or two on the 460-yard par 5 closer where birdies and even eagles are within sight.

A shotmaker's circuit, the White Nine at Shenandoah Valley Golf Club features a couple of par 4s, the second and the seventh, drivable by the really big hitters. Mere mortals like myself look forward to the excellent scoring chances that they represent. The par 3s on the White Nine both offer plenty of challenge. The third plays all uphill nearly 200 yards from the back tees. It can be difficult to gauge the wind here because play ensues from the lowest part of the course. The other 3 par, the eighth, gains recognition for being one of the tougher greens to hit from the tee. The closing hole, normally a three-shot par 5, gently doglegs to the right.



Blue Nine Hole 1 Par 5

A 550-yard par 5 starts your journey with dramatic countryside topographical changes on the very exciting Blue Nine. The par 3 second hole on this route plays from an elevated tee that unveils the raw beauty of the region. Folks around these parts will tell you that holes 3 through 7, all par 4s at SVGC, stack up against any in the area. The most potent of the batch are the fourth and fifth. Easily the most demanding drive you face all day travels through a passageway of tall timbers from a blind tee shot on number 4. The also long and difficult fifth guides you toward six and seven, which are no cupcakes either. Both include tricky uphill approach shots. Two solid shots down the gentle dogleg right par 5 closing hole reveals a well-bunkered putting surface.



White Nine Hole 4 Par 4



Blue Nine Hole 6 Par 4



This year look for Shenandoah Valley Golf Club to begin a bunker renovation program, which will be performed one nine at a time so not to disrupt the entire course. The practice facility and teaching and fitting center allow golfers to



work on their games when they are not on the course. The club provides great membership value that is competitive with any in the region and features no initiation fees, no food minimums, and an option to pay in 4 months.

Shenandoah Valley Golf Club is also known for its beautiful clubhouse and first-rate banquet facility and is extremely popular for wedding receptions with its wrap-around deck and stunning views. The lower portion houses the pro shop, locker rooms, and Club 27 Fire Grill, all of which will see upgrades this year in the form of new flooring and lockers. The grill plans to change its menu as well.

Cultivated from the land, Shenandoah Valley Golf Club has matured into an ambassador of the sport. Their formula has been tested over the years and continues to deliver pleasurable experiences to everyone who visits.

For more information visit [shenandoahvalleygolfclub.com](http://shenandoahvalleygolfclub.com)

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