



Musket Ridge Golf Club ~ Passion Play

Nick Ciattei

As I make my way each year going from golf course to golf course to play and review, I chat randomly with many players of this great game. It never ceases to amaze me how passionate some people are for the game of golf. That infatuation infects not only those who play but also those who work in the game.

Renowned architect Joe Lee enjoyed real enthusiasm for the game, and Musket Ridge Golf Club served as his curtain call design. A beautiful romp carved into the foothills of the Catoctin Mountains, Musket Ridge opened in 2001, and since then has been a favorite for many Baltimore–Washington metro residents as well as travelers from abroad. Recognized as one of the top courses in Maryland, Musket Ridge combines playability and challenge. Undulating greens, strategically located visible hazards from elevated tee boxes, and unique bunkering brand this superbly conditioned golf course.



Hole 1 Par 7



Hole 9 Par 5

Musket Ridge, located just west of Frederick in Myersville, sits just below the mountain skyline. Faint semblances of communication towers may remind you of the nearby retreat called Camp David. The tee box sits at the top of a ridge on the par 4 first hole, and the view of the Free State's countryside rivals any scenic overlook you may come across in your travels. First

concentrate on hitting the fairway below and then clearing the course's lone lake on your second shot. This water hazard must also be negotiated on the par 3 second and the dogleg right, par 4 third. Several holes stand out on the front side as terrific ones including the first par 5, the sixth. Your drive plays from an elevated tee that must favor the right side of the fairway. Anything too far to the left falls from a steep bank and maximizes your score. The green complex lays below the hole's contour, and deep drop-offs surround the putting surface. The outward nine ends with a trio of holes thought to be the stiffest stretch at Musket Ridge. A 448-yard par

4, the longest par 3, and the demanding uphill par 5 ninth raises even the best player's intensity.



Hole 10 Par 5

The back nine opens with three of my favorite holes at Musket Ridge. The fury of excitement continues on the tenth, a sweeping par 5 famous for the nearly 100-yard bunker that protects the left side. Deciding whether to lay-up or go for it in two requires strategy. Although a visual treat, the short par 4 eleventh can be just as treacherous. Sculpted grass mounds

and splashy bunkering create a runway to the green that gets increasingly smaller at the nook of the fairway. I've seen players drive this hole (not me), and I've also seen triple bogies (me). The par 5 twelfth's double dogleg contains several corners to cut or carry plus a team of ten bunkers to overcome. One of the more dramatic holes at Musket Ridge, the par 4 sixteenth plays downhill through a chute of trees to a split-level fairway. The inviting, bunker-less green rests comfortably among hardwoods. The closing holes offer a couple of birdie chances, and the par 4 eighteenth plays to a multi-tiered green with the clubhouse in the background.

This spring, Musket Ridge Golf Club will unveil an elaborate dedicated short game area designed by Ed Carton formerly of Tom Fazio design group. Carton's designs in Virginia at Poplar Grove with Sam Snead and at Spring Creek (*Golf Digest's* 2007 Best New Affordable Public Course) won national acclaim, and Musket Ridge will be his first Signature short game area. "The new short game area will be a great addition for golfers," said Damon DeVito, owner of Affinity Management, the company that operates the course. "The target green with bunkers and practice fairway



Hole 2 Par 3

will be perfect for experienced players to hone their skills as well as for beginners who want to encounter real situations beyond what the range can provide. Ed is an amazing architect on the rise and we are excited to be working with him.”

Musket Ridge’s clubhouse and banquet facilities are second to none for daily fee golf courses in the mid-Atlantic. First, both structures are situated on a bluff overlooking the course and the Middletown valley. The facility continues to grow its events areas. To give outings and events more flexibility, the already stunning Catoctin Hall, hailed as “Maryland’s Best New Event Venue,” will be expanded to accommodate up to 260 guests by March 2014. Additionally the club plans to cover the deck to offer outdoor event space protected from the elements. Musket Ridge offers more than a great golf game. Its top-notch cuisine has been called the best of any golf course in Maryland. The staff creates an unforgettable experience



Hole 16 Par 4



Hole 17 Par 3

that goes beyond golf with extraordinary food and attentive service. I can hardly imagine a more majestic setting for a wedding or reception. Musket Ridge’s unique zero food waste initiative (the first event venue to do so in the United States) keeps more than an estimated 8,000 pounds of food waste out of landfills annually.



The folks who operate Musket Ridge Golf Club really do understand hospitality. They show real fervor for what they do whether catering to a reception crowd or just a weekday foursome. It’s almost contagious when entering the clubhouse to get ready to play there. Maybe that’s why many return again and again. Golfers really do love their game, and enjoy feeling that same passion reflected at this course. 🏌️‍♂️

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