



Pleasant Valley Golf Club/South Riding Golf Club ~ Two for the Show

Nick Ciattei



Collectively Loudoun and Fairfax County are considered to be the heartbeat of Northern Virginia. These neighboring counties share many common traits while also differing in many ways. While Fairfax has borne the brunt of the urban sprawl, Loudoun has fought expansion many times and opted for slower, more regulated growth. Of the many golf courses in the area, two located close to Dulles airport share more than just close proximity to each other. Pleasant Valley Golf Club and South Riding Golf Club stand as partner courses since they arrived in the late 1990s. Wingfield Golf Properties in Greenville, South Carolina, currently own and manage both. Wingfield also operates three other courses in Virginia – The Club at Viniterra in New Kent, a wonderful new Rees Jones masterpiece, and Bowling Green Country Club near Front Royal, two staples of the Shenandoah Valley golf region for the past 30 years.



South Riding Hole 12 Par 4

South Riding made quite the splash when it appeared on the Commonwealth's golf map in 1997. Designed by renowned golf course architect Dan Maples and built on an old horse farm, South Riding quickly attained a must-play tag. *Golf Digest* nominated it as one of the top new courses in the U.S. At first glance, many would think the layout would be cramped and tight because the course is routed through one of the largest and most successful residential communities in the area bearing the same name. With excellent routing and playability, however, you most likely won't see other golfers except those in front of and behind you. Several large bunkers down the right side blocks progress on the front nine's sweeping par 4 closing hole. Holes twelve and thirteen, both par 4s, rate high in difficulty and beauty. General Manager Jon Fulton, who oversees both properties, said that many members wanted to cut down a Maples trademark "middle of the fairway" tree on thirteen, but nature took its course and a storm



South Riding Hole 15 Par 5



Pleasant Valley Hole 7 Par 3

brought it down several years ago. The par 5 fifteenth can normally be resolved in three shots even though cross bunkers come into play, while the par 4 closing hole commonly plays into prevailing winds. The course has plush bentgrass fairways, and Crenshaw-Bent greens yield smooth and true putting surfaces. Five generous sets of tees range from 5000 yards on the forward to more than 7100 yards from the back tees to provide South Riding players challenges at all levels.

Somewhat contrasting South Riding, Pleasant Valley Golf Club's park-like setting lacks housing. While meandering these links you may find it hard to believe that you play in Fairfax County, the most populated jurisdiction in Virginia. Pleasant Valley opened in 1998 to raving reviews, much like its predecessor. Tom Clark of Ault, Clark & Associates designed this four-and-a-half star *Golf Digest*-rated course that features a pristine landscape of rolling hills, hardwood trees, and native grass meadows. The L94 Bent greens, like its sister course, endure as some of the finest around. The par 5 fifth embodies Pleasant Valley's rolling landscape starting with an uphill tee shot that takes you to the crest of the hill, from where it plays downhill to a well-protected green. Fulton calls the par 3 seventh signature worthy. "Even though a lot of balls find the water, players really remember and enjoy this hole for its challenge." The green's large bailout area results in creative ups-and-downs. The three closing par 4s show the diversity of Clark's design. Sixteen, a short par 4, tempts the big hitters. Seventeen presents a unique split fairway with a large bunker in the middle to handle traffic cop duties. Eighteen plays back to the clubhouse with a large water element to the right that runs the entire length of the fairway right up to the green.

Both excellent outing specialists, Pleasant Valley and South Riding play host to some of the region's top charity events each year. The two courses had 70,000 rounds played between them last year, and Fulton said that they have gone to a ten minute tee time grid to provide players adequate spacing to help with pace of play. A Player's Pass that allows you to enjoy both courses is one of the most popular golf bargains in all of Northern Virginia. Either way you play it, you'll find two of the best side by side, county next to county at Pleasant Valley and South Riding golf clubs.

For more information visit pleasantvalleygc.com and southridinggc.com



Pleasant Valley Hole 17 Par 4

[Musket Ridge Golf Club](#) in Myersville, MD, has expanded their banquet hall capacity to accommodate up to 250 people at events. They also covered a pre-function area on the patio overlooking the golf course with quite remarkable vistas. In other big news from Musket Ridge, Tom Fazio alum Ed Carton designed a new short game area. Carton has made two big splashes in Virginia by designing award-winning Poplar Grove with Sam Snead and Spring Creek, which earned "Top 5 New Courses in the US" honors.



Ed Carton's first signature short game area in the US is scheduled for a summer opening at Musket Ridge. New Golf Course Superintendent Vince DiStefano, who most recently served at Blue Ridge Shadows in Front Royal, VA, is supervising the project. Vince brings agronomic experience from three top 100 US golf courses: Spyglass Hill (Monterey, CA), Shadow Creek (Las Vegas, NV), and Eagle Pointe (Wilmington, NC). "Vince's hiring demonstrates Musket's commitment to conditions," says Damon DeVito, managing director of Affinity Management that operates Musket. "We weren't happy with conditions late last summer and the crummy winter means we're still recovering but there is progress every day and Phase 2 of our bunker renovation is also starting to make a difference."

[Meadows Farms Golf Course](#) in Locust Grove, VA, has selected Billy Casper Golf to manage the 27-hole, championship layout that boasts having the longest hole in America. Local businessman Ken Dotson, owner of a longstanding construction and real estate company, recently purchased Meadows Farms Golf Course from iconic Bill "Farmer" Meadows, owner of Meadows Farms Nurseries with 22 locations in the mid-Atlantic. The course received immediate attention when Meadows put an 841-yard par 6 in the layout.



Guinness Book of World Records recognized the hole as "the longest hole in the United States." Farmer also threw in innovative design features like a baseball diamond-shaped par 3 and a hole where you drive your cart under a waterfall to get to the green. Headquartered in Vienna, VA, Billy Casper Golf will handle all facets of the daily-fee Meadows Farms operation including course and property maintenance, staffing and training, clubhouse activities, merchandising, golf instruction, marketing and public relations, special events, and financial management. "Meadows Farms is an important component of the recreation and economic stature of the Locust Grove community, so we felt it important ownership be local," says Dotson. "Billy Casper Golf is also relatively local, came highly recommended, and its commitment to personalized operations are impressive." "Billy Casper Golf is proud to manage Meadows Farms Golf Course," says Peter Hill, chairman and CEO of BGC. "The uniqueness of the layout gives golfers great thrills, and Billy Casper Golf is primed to further popularize the experience as a fun and unforgettable 'must play' to a wider audience."

The Golf Guide's own Blaine Lowery is now a representative for [Nationwide Hole-in-One](#). Lowery has handled sales and distribution duties for the magazine for the past 7 years. Nationwide is a leader in providing creative, cost effective hole-in-one coverage partnered with superior customer service. Having hole-in-one prizes certainly adds some excitement to golf tournaments. Lowery says that options are even available for tournaments that do not have large volunteer staffs. "We even have cash prizes that you can offer participants that require NO witnesses at hole locations. We also believe in rewarding those great shots that just missed going in as well, so we offer cash closest-to-the-pin contests too." Contact blaine@nationwideholeinone.com if you would like more information.

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