



## Heritage Oaks Golf Course ~ Harrisonburg's Field of Dreams

Nick Ciattei

*"If You Build It, He Will Come"* –Sholess Joe Jackson



Hole 2 Par 4

Divine intervention by a spirit from the past and a corn field like in the movie may or may not have been involved, still the timeline of how Heritage Oaks Golf Course came to be could make an interesting film. When the City of Harrisonburg decided to get into the golf business, it created quite a stir. Much like those baseball players from the past in Iowa, present day golfers in Virginia can emerge from their own

crops to play a round at this wonderful Bill Love design. We need to give credit to those who persevered and pushed through with the Heritage Oaks project. The city has been the watchful owners of a recreational investment for not only the city but also for golfers who reside in the county and all across the valley.

Heritage Oaks offers all the ingredients to make a perfect day on the links. Playing to a par 70, golfers can choose the set of tees that fits them best with distances ranging from 4500 to 6325 yards on this 18-hole championship golf course. The recipe includes beautiful scenery since Heritage Oaks spreads out over an undisturbed park setting with nary a house in sight. Add an abundant variety of holes with both links style and tree lined ones appearing throughout. I always tout the playability of this course that conjures up plenty of challenge for skilled golfers.

Heritage Oaks starts out with a very Scottish feel as the links style heavily influences the first four holes, and you will need to avoid the occasional heather grass found on some holes. The 424-yard par 4 first plays off a slightly elevated tee with bunkers guarding the right side of the fairway that slopes back up toward the green. The second hole, also a par 4, along with the former make up the two longest par 4s on the course. Make your pars here to get your round off to a proper start. I have found the unique feature of passing the Heritage Oaks clubhouse again before playing the par 3 third useful on more than one occasion. Sometimes the need arises to revisit this spot if duties or purchases were forgotten. Avoid several fairway bunkers on your tee shot on the sweeping par 4 fourth to set yourself up for a good score. The links-style vibe changes at the 385-yard par 4 fifth. Mostly oak hardwoods frame the fairway presenting the most challenging tee shot to face thus far. At over 200 yards from the tips, six can be a demanding par 3 because it plays slightly uphill normally into



Hole 3 Par 3

prevailing winds. The first par 5, the seventh, extends a real birdie possibility if you can avoid a creek that runs throughout the hole. The par 3 eighth (pictured on the cover) puts one of the splendors at Heritage Oaks on display. A well placed shot must carry a pond to a narrow green that is protected by a bunker to the right. The front nine closes with a testy uphill dogleg-right par 4. An extra stick from the fairway plays a key role in reaching the putting surface.



Hole 6 Par 3

The back nine at Heritage Oaks opens with a pair of par 4s. Ten delights drivers as it plays downhill from an elevated tee. Keep the driver hot because you need a well struck ball on the ascending eleventh. The theme changes drastically on holes twelve through fifteen. Fairways and sightlines are tighter as you play through some of the course's namesakes. The par 4 twelfth plays from an elevated tee and plenty of tall oaks rise up on each side of the fairway to avoid. A hybrid or long iron offers the best option off the tee, leaving you a level lie for your approach shot. Thirteen is one of my favorite holes at Heritage Oaks. This simple straight-forward par 3 is completely surrounded by an amphitheater of towering hardwoods. Its natural setting makes it look like it has been there forever. The 386-yard par 4 fourteenth may be the toughest hole on the inward nine with plenty of trees protecting each side of the landing area. A lateral hazard waste area gathers up wayward balls to the left and more wetlands must be carried to reach the green. Fifteen, no cupcake par 4 either, has no water hazards. The risk-reward par 5 sixteenth gratifies players with options galore. The sharp dogleg right asks for plenty of decisions to be made on the second shot. A fairway wood over an



Hole 12 Par 4

environmental area could lead to a possible eagle putt or a crooked number in the other direction. The short par 3 seventeenth has one of the largest greens so avoid the dreaded three-putt. Eighteen is another reachable par 5 although a tight, dogleg left fairway needs to be handled for any chance at glory to close out the back nine at Heritage Oaks.



Hole 16 Par 5



Hole 14 Par 4

The First Tee of Harrisonburg, a youth program that develops both golf and life skills, also operates here and is well used by the youngsters of the Harrisonburg area and beyond. A top-notch practice facility can assist players of all ages. Heritage Oaks Golf Course has been voted “Best in the Valley” again in 2018 by readers of the Daily News Record. I have almost run out of fingers when counting the many times

this facility has won this honor. In the clubhouse many plaques from high schools and colleges acknowledge the course as their home playing field. Heritage Oaks also hosts several high school state, region, and conference championships and was the site of the VSGA Intercollegiate Championship in 2015.

Since day one of operation, Head Professional David Johns has watched over this field of dreams. Johns reminds us to check the Heritage Oaks website to keep tabs on upcoming events including a night golf experience that they hope to offer once or twice a month. This course easily counts among the top courses for value and fun in the entire Shenandoah Valley.

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

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Hole 13 Par 3

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