

Course Review: Kinzua Golf Club

We can't emphasize how much we want to tell you that our visit to the Kinzua Golf Club was a "can't miss" experience. It sounded so intriguing. There's the funny name (pronounced kin-zoo). There's the location. Kinzua is a "suburb" of Fossil, for crying out loud. And this: the Kinzua Golf Course has only six holes.

We had already conquered both China Creek in Arlington and the municipal track in Condon on Day 1 of Golf Week 2009 as we headed to Kinzua, located directly east of Fossil in northern Wheeler County. Kinzua warrants a quick history lesson. Technically now a ghost town, it was once a "company town" for the Kinzua Pine Mills Company. In 1965, Kinzua included 125 homes, a community hall, church, library, store and the golf course. When the mill closed in 1978, the buildings were removed and the townsite was planted with trees.

Just getting there was an experience. Kinzua doesn't officially exist, but the Internet lists a Kinzua address for the course. That's the address we plugged into "Emma," Don's GPS unit (which didn't have Kinzua among its downloaded golf courses). It turns out the road the course is on has a similar name to road near Fossil, so the Emma took us off the highway west of Fossil proper, down a skinny two-lane road that turned into a dirt road that turned into basically a goat trail and, ultimately, wanted us to drive off a cliff Thelma and Louise style. We're not exaggerating.

Eventually we found the course, which sits as part of a remote, mostly undeveloped camp area. There were a handful of RVs there, and a few tents. Honestly, it seems a questionable place to spend your vacation; there are zero amenities. The guy running the place was off doing something else when we arrived, and the "pro shop" doubles as a small store. No logo balls, which was not a surprise.

Kinzua's six holes are sort of located in a bowl. The holes go back and forth, and there's a lot of crossfire that could be dangerous if the course were crowded, though we suspect that's a rare occasion. The course turf is a combination of regular grass, clo-



ver, various crabgrasses and weeds. There are no tee boxes proper; basically, the tee boxes and the greens are just the same grass mowed a little lower. Apparently there are actually three sets of tees so you can go around thrice and "play 18," though we never saw more than one tee box per hole. They had thrown a little water around the greens, but again, it was just the same grass mowed lower.

Now, all of this could have been a quaint little experience if it weren't for the bees. Yellowjackets, to be exact, and lots of them — approximately 3 billion (we lost track after a while). Two billion of them thought the gel in Don's hair was just the most tantalizing thing ever. Don has an admittedly unnatural, over-reactive aversion to yellowjackets, especially considering he is less allergic to bee stings than most of the population — literally, mosquito bites swell up far more on him than bee stings do. But Don hate bees, and it's hard to play golf one-handed while one is constantly swatting bees away from one's head. Hair-gel-less Pete didn't have quite the same experience as Don did, but basically we both just wanted to get the six holes done and mark Kinzua off the list.

Unfortunately, this is the bottom line: play Kinzua only if, like us, you're trying to play every course in Oregon. Otherwise, alas, it's just not worth the effort.