



BUTTERNUT CREEK GOLF COURSE

Butternut Creek Golf Course was originally known as the Haralson Estate Golf Course. It began as a humble nine-hole layout built in 1962 by the Ben Carr (Haralson) family. Mr. Carr was an esteemed attorney in Blairsville. The family hired Charles Aaron, the father of pro golfer Tommy Aaron, to help with the design and two local dozer operators to begin construction. Creek gravel was used under the greens, and when the greens were sowed, elevated cheese cloth set approximately two inches above the surface kept the rain from washing away the grass seed. Golfers paid their green fees at the nearby Bonnell Akins' Milton Inn Hotel on Blue Ridge Street or at Mr. Carr's law office. When golf carts were introduced to the course they were very popular, as players had to ride approximately 1/4 mile through an old field to the first tee. This was the start of a golf revolution in Blairsville/Union County.

In 1973 the Haralson Estate Golf Course was sold to Union County for \$200,000 (72 acres). In 1977 Ben Carr sold an additional 30.8 acres of adjacent property for \$80,000 to the county. This property would become vital years later when the course was expanded to 18 holes. After the 1973 sale, Union County officials hired Mr. Junior Prince to run the course. He mowed the fairways and cut the greens while his wife managed the green fees and cart rentals. The Prince family of nine moved into a dilapidated house on the property and called it home, while an old log house on the property served as the course's clubhouse. One of Mr. Prince's sons, Kenny, grew up at the course and was likely one of the first persons in this part of the country to drive a golf ball over 300 yards when primitive equipment was still in use.

In 1984, Lamar Paris was appointed to the Union County Recreation Board. Together with Eldon Collins, then chairman, and other members, he began purchasing additional land parcels so that an additional nine holes could be added to the course. With the backing of then Commissioner Glen Gooch, in 1990 the county began to build the new nine holes while leaving the existing nine open to generate revenue. It took four years to build the course. Almost everyone in town who had grading equipment contributed to the project and agreed to reduce their prices while Union County furnished the necessary diesel fuel. Bill Watts designed the new holes, and it was a monumental task to build, especially considering that part of the new course intertwined with the existing course. Watts did an excellent job. Once the new holes were completed, it became apparent that all of the old greens would need to be re-worked and an irrigation system would need to be installed. The old greens were simply too small, and some even had to be moved. The entire cost of the new construction was \$1.5 million.

While the new holes were under construction, Union County purchased property and began building a new ball field complex, as the existing field was located in the middle

of one of the new fairways. The result was Meeks Park, one of the nicest public parks in the state.

The economic development benefit of expanding the golf course cannot be overstated. Butternut Creek Golf Course has attracted many new residents and property owners throughout the years simply because the course is beautiful, unique and fun to play. In addition to providing 120 acres of beautiful green space in the middle of Blairsville, this property will soon also be the home to a new 27,000 ft² community center/pro shop.

From 1990-93, when Butternut Creek was only a nine-hole course, its revenues increased from \$80,000-\$182,300. As an 18-hole course, its revenues from 2009 were \$720,775. The number of rounds played at the course also steadily increased with the addition of the nine holes from 6,000 in 1994 to 17,208 in 2009. Our membership also increased from 120 in 1994 to our current total of 481. Today an average round of golf at Butternut Creek Golf Course costs \$37.23. The green fees are under \$50, and memberships are under \$500.

Any surplus funds that have been generated by the course have been re-invested in its improvements. In the last five years we have reshaped several greens, reworked parts of fairways, changed and added improved tee boxes and added landscaping in several areas of the course. We currently have a new putting green and tee box under construction in preparation for our new community center/pro shop. We are also one of the few courses, private or public, in this area that feature GPS systems on all golf carts, providing accurate distances to the hole from anywhere on the course. Future improvement projects include expanding cart path widths, a new irrigation system, irrigating more rough areas and planting more buffer areas along Butternut Creek.

Butternut Creek Golf Course features a combination of rolling valley holes and challenging mountain slopes with mountain vistas visible from all 18 holes on the course. There is not a single hole that is remotely similar to another. The course is maintained by Andy Ladd, GCS and his minimal staff. Long-time course pro and recreation director, Larry Garrett, not only oversees course operations but also that of the entire County. We strive to keep the course in excellent condition at a reasonable cost for the membership. The most common compliment we receive from visiting players is, "Why did we not know about this gem in the mountains before now?"

Butternut Creek Golf Course is not a long course at 6,536 yards, but despite its short length it is a challenge. If you have not played it, you have really missed a unique golfing experience in one of the most scenic areas of the country. We invite you to come visit us in Union County today!

– Andrew Ladd, GCS



Hole #14 (Par 4, 268 yards) features a reverse change in elevation (uphill) of 70 yards. The relatively small green requires a soft lob approach shot. Once you hole out and raise up, you will see another beautiful mountain vista.