

Schoolhouse Nine: A tough and true-to-Rappahannock oasis

Staff/Contributed Reports

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Schoolhouse Nine Golf Course [opened last weekend](#) in Sperryville. How refreshing. First you are greeted with a practice-green in good old Rappahannock County fashion — up, down, rolling, no mercy for the weak. There is no pro-shop, no gimmickry, no marketing of souvenirs, no tee times, just a scorecard, a pencil and a divot tool and some really handsome antique golf clubs and bags lounging in the foyer. You should stop in and take a look at them. There really are some “woods” in those bags. Most of us have not seen such as those in many a year. Then you just go to the bar, pay your fee and walk out to the first tee box.

There is an old expression among golfers: “Drive for show, putt for dough.” Most of us agree but it surely does feel good to take a long, hard swing and watch that ball spring off the tee and go straight and long. “Hey, did you see that?” That’s the *show* part.

But then comes the “short game,” otherwise known as the “dough” part. For some of us, those really great drives are followed by five or six really lousy short shots. It is the short game that is so difficult. There is little room for error. It takes a really good short game to win.

Schoolhouse is a good course to work on that short game — short rolling fairways with awesome, mean-as-snakes roughs that are filled with gorgeous wildflowers that gobble up your ball, never to be seen again. Waterholes are more forgiving; sometimes you can fish your ball from the water, but not from these roughs. Be glad there are no waterholes on this course!

At the end of each fairway is a tricky, rolling green with a tiny hole somewhere in the middle that seems to move left or right just after you have stroked that putt. What could be simpler, you say. Ha! Two-putts may be a thing of the past at Schoolhouse Nine.

Don’t let this pretty little oasis fool you. Up close you will find that it is not a grossly over-manicured course, as has now become so popular. The player does not get to hit off perfect fairways where the playing area is smooth, even and predictable. This golf is the way old golf use to be played — tough and true to the country standards we like to hang onto here in Rappahannock County.

Last but not least, you should know that it is safe to drive along U.S. 211 and Water Street, both of which run adjacent to the course. This course has been so well-designed it is unlikely that any ball will ever get close to either of those roads. Do not feel frightened to drive by Schoolhouse Nine; you will be safe, but better yet, don’t drive by.

Stop in, play a round or two, enjoy the wildflowers and by all means check out the Headmaster’s Pub for . . . well, for pub food and refreshments, and be certain to say hi to Cindy, the most pleasant bartender you will ever meet.

Diane Bruce
Sperryville



Abby Hopper

The roughs at Schoolhouse Nine Golf Course are gorgeous, but they live up to their name.