

RED TAIL MOUNTAIN – *Quintessential mountain resort*

by Sam Smith

As the showcase piece of a spectacular 5,200 acre tract of land that stretches along the Tennessee/North Carolina border of the High Country, Red Tail Mountain Resort and Golf Club has become the



quintessential mountain golf resort just 20 minutes north of Boone. The Red Tail Mountain financial storm before 2013 is just a distant memory now with the aggressive forward thinking of the Lyle Habermehl family from Ontario, Canada. Lyle and wife Kendall purchased the property with the intent of providing the missing pieces and making it a polished jewel for golfers to enjoy as a true resort destination.

“In this part of the High Country the lake is spectacular. The mountains are spectacular. This area has a lot going for it. It has great people. It has all the beauty that God blessed it with. Our mission is to bring the people here and expose them to this beauty, and hopefully impact the entire community, not just Red Tail Mountain.”

With Red Tail’s addition of a new pro shop, enlarged driving range and putting green, a swimming pool, fitness center, tennis courts, hiking trails, Augusta National type sand in the bunkers along with future plans for water sports on Watauga Lake and equestrian trails - the outstanding 72-hole championship golf course has more of an appeal for individual, family and group getaways than ever before.

Designed by the father-son team of Ellis and Dan Maples, both Hall of Fame golf architects, scenic Red Tail Mountain features almost 500 feet

of spectacular elevation changes. On several holes with elevated tees, it seems like your tee shots will fly forever against the dramatic backdrop of neighboring peaks.

After flip-flopping their front and back nine holes, the first five holes and the last five holes are now routed through the Blue Ridge Mountains. The middle eight holes will play in the valley (2,500 feet elevation) in view of the spacious 20,000 square-foot clubhouse.

“Before the change golfers started and finished in the valley on holes you can find anywhere,” said owner Habermehl. “Now they get into real mountain golf in the first five holes, and finish with excellent elevation changes on the final five holes, including a beautiful 18th hole that climbs uphill to the new pro shop.”

The downhill par-5, 495-yard 3rd hole could be called one of their signature holes with a sharp dogleg right at the end that must be set up with two well-positioned fairway shots. The solid rock backdrop, fronted by rock outcroppings, truly sets this hole apart from any other hole in the High Country.



Signature hole at Red Tail - par-5 #3 guarded by giant rock wall

The stout up-hill par-5, 481-yard 9th hole finishes the front side in the valley, and after the par-3, 118-yard 13th hole you start the climb back into the mountain with the No.1 handicap, 346-yard straight away 14th hole, with an uphill approach to an elevated green. Miss hit here and you find the ball coming right back at you.

The three finishing holes, none particularly long, can make or break a good round with elevation changes and side hill stances testing even the best of the golfers.

Number 17 stretches 484-yards with the final 125-yards looking up at a tight green that reveals only half a flag giving you a target to aim your approach shot. Get out of that hole safely, and the No. 3 handicap par-4, 366-yard 18th hole calls for another accurate iron shot into a well bunkered undulating bent-grass green to finish your round.

“Golfers are commenting that Red Tail is in the best shape in many years,” said Habermehl. “We have added new equipment to make sure that the conditions match the challenge of the course to please customers. There seems to be a ‘sense of community’ between the golf course personnel and our visitors enjoying the improvements and renovations we have made.”

The resort has a mobile app that gives yardages, weather and even golf tips from long-time pro Sam Adams, a former PGA Tour winner.

As we mentioned earlier, not all of the improvements or renovations have taken place on the golf course. Vistas Restaurant has been renovated, and now serves lunch daily, including a terrific pasta bar on Mondays, and one of their specialty menu items is the organic hormone-free bison burger. The Sunday Brunch, back by popular demand, has drawn rave reviews from High Country locals as well as mountain visitors. For a little bite, the new pro shop has a snack bar area.



New hill-top pro shop now convenient to No. 1 tee and 18th green

In the Lodges at Red Tail Mountain, seven three-bedroom condominiums near the clubhouse have been converted into 14 one and two bedroom units into rental lodging. They can be used as part of golf packages or rented individually. They feature well-appointed comfortable furnishings, fireplaces and large windows offer views of the golf course and surrounding mountains. Condo guests are invited to a complimentary



Red Tail's new swimming pool with spectacular mountain views

continental breakfast in the Main Clubhouse as part of their stay. Groups and families may also make reservations for breakfast cooked to order.

For more information on a trip to the High Country mountains call 423-727-7600 or visit RedTailMountain.com.

Tips for playing mountain golf

UPHILL LIE:

Match your shoulders with the slope
Swing “up” the slope
Use more club to reduce loft

DOWNHILL LIE:

Match your shoulders with the slope
Swing “down” the slope
Use less club to add loft

BALL ABOVE YOUR FEET:

Choke up on the club
Weight more on your toes
Stand tall
Ball position normal
Use less loft to reduce the hook

BALL BELOW YOUR FEET:

Grip at the end of the club
Weight more on the heels
Add more knee flex
Ball position normal
Use more loft to reduce the slice

Always remember when attempting to hit an uneven lie:

Take several practice swings to get a feel for the slope
Swing at 75% tempo
Use a $\frac{3}{4}$ length swing