



Playing it cool

Oregon resort gives guests the option of a round in the snow

When snow covers a golf course, play stops. Right? Not at Silvies Valley Ranch, in Oregon.

From November 2020 to March 2021, the resort set up a five-hole loop of its par-three Chief Egan course for ‘cool golf’.

Guests use high-loft clubs and brightly coloured tennis balls. It’s not the first year the resort has offered it, but they have refined the concept – from an eight-inch hole in the ground to 10-inch buckets located in front of the greens.

“You play with one club – an eight iron, nine iron or pitching wedge,” said Sean Hoolehan, course superintendent at Silvies Valley Ranch, who came up with the idea. “When you hit the bucket, you have holed out. If you hit your ball into the bucket, you subtract one stroke off your score.

“Most holes are about 80 yards long. The second is downhill about 30 feet and the conditions constantly change.

Golfers play with high-loft clubs and neon-green tennis balls and hit to 10-inch buckets

If there is fresh snow, the surface can be soft, and you get no roll. If the snow has been on the ground for a while it gets firm on top, and the ball may roll towards the hole. After a few players have made it around, the footprints become an obstacle and you are forced to play through the air more.”

Hoolehan, who proudly holds the ‘cool golf’ record of two under, notes

that most winter guests are not what he would describe as core golfers. “It’s less intimidating, and guests quickly get competitive because it’s really all about having fun,” he said. While a few players head back to the lodge after five holes, most opt for another loop. “Every player I have taken out leaves feeling like it was one of the most fun experiences they have had.” **GCA**

