

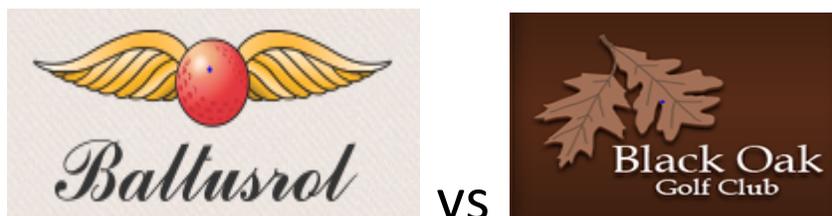


Baltusrol and Black Oak – A Rivalry for the Ages?

In any ongoing sporting event, we're all a little better off when a natural and spirited rivalry emerges between two consistently fine competitors. Think back: Lakers v Celtics, Federer v Nadal, Arnie v Jack, Georgia Bulldogs v Florida Gators . . .

Something along those lines shows signs of getting underway in the Red Hoffman Cup Matches: Baltusrol v Black Oak.

Baltusrol GC's reputation as a player's club has been well established for a century. With 36 wonderful holes over two nationally-ranked Tillinghast courses, it has two to four times as many low-handicap golfers as any other club in the Hoffman Cup, and can challenge any club in the country in that statistic. Typically, several of its players reach national-level events every year. Baltusrol assigns Hoffman Cup captains who work hard to make sure the Hoffman Cup ends up in its trophy case, which it has three of the past six years.



Then, there's Black Oak GC, a decade-old club on a quickly maturing, beautiful course in western Morris County. The club was developed and is actively led by four-time New Jersey Open champion David Glenz, and its Hoffman Cup team is captained by Brian Komline and Michael Deo – two of the finest amateurs in the State. This leadership has resulted in Black Oak becoming a hot spot for excellent local golfers. In fact, Black Oak has never finished worse than second in its five-year Hoffman Cup history.

Since Black Oak joined the Hoffman Cup in 2012, they have had four head-on meetings with Baltusrol, each one a virtual (if not literal) tie. In 2012, Baltusrol won in the Finals at home by two shots over rookie team Black Oak. There was no direct meeting of the two clubs in 2013 as Black Oak won the Hoffman Cup and Baltusrol got eliminated early, but that outcome helped set up a classic Semifinals match between the two in 2014. The parity became clear as Baltusrol and Black Oak tied 6-6 (Black Oak won the tie breaker).

In 2015, in the Finals, a very strong Arcola CC team won by four over T-2 Baltusrol and Black Oak, setting up what looked like a three-way race in 2016. As we recently saw in the 2016 Finals, Baltusrol won the Cup by a scant stroke over Black Oak.

Don't look for this rivalry to fade away. The guys on these two squads compete against each other all summer long; the Hoffman Cup was merely the season's first battle. Like Ohio State and Michigan, both teams seem to measure their success in terms of how they do relative to the other. When they tied for second in the 2015 Finals, one sensed that they were as upset about that as the fact that Arcola had just clobbered them both.

Like with all those better-known, great rivalries, Black Oak v Baltusrol also has the effect of improving some of the competitors around them – the Bulls, the Djokovics, the Gary Players and Tennessee Vols among us.

For those of us who have the fire in our bellies, this budding rivalry will be fun to be a part of!