

## **Pinehurst Number #2 Pinehurst, NC**

Architect: Donald Ross (1907)

Tees	Par	Yardage	Rating	Slope
Blue	72	6767	73.1	133
White	72	6298	70.9	126

### *Overview:*

Pinehurst is one of the true meccas of golf in America and Donald Ross's Pinehurst #2 is the signature hood mount for this place. He stands as one of the most heralded American golf course architects of his time and this course is the one all point to when they try to characterize the style of course design Ross ascribed to. Having played a number of his courses I can only agree that in this one he seemed to best orchestrate the subtle brilliance he brought to golf course design. The course is playable, challenging, and thought provoking-what more can you ask for in an afternoon's walk.

The main facility here is also a treasure-take the time to walk the hallways and peruse the memorabilia hanging throughout. Over the last century there have been countless men's and women's championships played on Pinehurst #2-the North/South Amateurs, North/South Opens, PGA Championship, Ryder Cup, Tour Championship, and the U.S. Amateurs to name a few. The greatest players in play the game have won here and the plaques in the hallway outside the Donald Ross grill include names like Francis Ouimet, Walter Hagen, Ben Hogan, Sam Snead, Jack Nicklaus, Davis Love III, Curtis Strange, Glenna Collett Vare, Dorothy Campbell Hurd, Louise Suggs, Babe Zaharias, Hollis Stacy and Morgan Pressel.

The course has recently hosted two men's U.S. Open's with great resolve-the iconic victory by Payne Stewart in 1999 and the Michael Campbell's win in 2005-the winning scores were one under and even par respectively. Both the men's and women's U.S. Open will be played on this course in 2014 in a rare major doubleheader. In preparation for that event they hired Ben Crenshaw's design team and have spent considerable dollars bringing back the original Donald Ross character of sand and scrub rough throughout course that had been replaced by thick Bermuda rough for the previous majors. This reversion gives the course a more signature look and probably plays just as difficult for most of us.

When it comes to the course itself, probably the most distinctive thing I can say is that the course is really lacks any visual distinction. Other than the crowned greens that everybody talks about, it is just another pine needle haven in the sandhills of North Carolina. There are very few holes that visually stand out-in fact, in thinking back over the round, it is often difficult to sort the holes out from one another in your mind. There is only one water hazard on the course and it is barely in play and very little out of bounds that is close to the playing area. You are likely to play the entire round with the same ball but it is likely to take plenty it's share of verbal abuse. The brilliance of this layout is it's stunning subtlety. It never threatens you with the overt disaster but rather lulls you into submission like those Sirens whose voices seem so sweet but always lead you to dire consequences you never expected. If you do not pay attention to every detail-heed every piece of advice in the

yardage book or from the caddies knowledge base you will continually pay the price and be dope slapping yourself all the way around this place.

You do get the full measure of the Donald Ross formula here-once he completed the original in 1907 he spent much of the next 50 years tinkering with it so it truly represents his tactical thinking in course architecture. The driving areas adequate but not overly generous-usually flanked by fairway bunkers you want to avoid or that combination of tall pines and sand and scrub rough. Positioning off the tee is critical-on almost every hole there is a position from which playing the shot into the green is much easier. Being macho will get you nowhere out here-being tactical will derive rewards.

The green complexes are what really hold people's attention-raised turtle back greens with falloff shoulders tightly guarded by deep bunkering or grassy hollows below the putting surface. What makes this so unusual is that the green contours and shouldering really decrease the target area of the green considerably so you approach shots have to be very precise to stay on the putting surface. If you miss the green, that is when the real fun begins. One overall suggestion is leave the L-club in the trunk. Most of your affective plays around the green will be made with lower loft clubs keeping the ball close to the ground. Be open minded to the shots you hit around the greens because you will be amazed how creative thinking can get you much better results than the obvious one third in the air-two thirds on the ground formula. It will take a few holes to get used to this approach but by the middle of the round you should get it and you will find your percentages of up and downs improve as a result. When you get back home and pull off one of these shots in front of friends you can brag that it was just a piece of memorabilia you brought back from Number Two.

This is a course that must be walked to be totally appreciated-plus the caddie's insight will make the course much more playable. It is well worth the premium to take this one in on the ground. Once you have played this you may not remember the details of the holes but you will never forget the Pinehurst #2 experience. Once Donald Ross gets into you head and he never leaves.

### *Hole-By-Hole Description:*

#### #1 Par 4 391/375

The opening hole is very straight from tee to green-place your drive on the side of the fairway with the best angle at the flag. Not much trouble here except the folds short and right of the green. As with almost every green out here, this one is raised slightly and set on a diagonal from the fairway and balls not struck with precision either miss or roll off the table top to the adjacent areas below.

#### #2 Par 4 437/410

Well it is getting interesting fast out here. He ratchets you up one with the length and turns the hole slightly right at the end to put a premium on your approach angle. Your best drive is on the left next to the bunkers to get a full look at the green and to give you an angle around the greenside bunker on the right. This bunker is about twenty yards short of the green so do not be deceived into thinking it is snug up against your target. Back right position is a bear.

#3 Par 4 327/317

A nice short placement par four which should give you a scoring chance. Payne Stewart birdied the hole three times in winning the Open in 1999. But he looked much better in knickers than you do and probably hit his approach irons higher as well. Hit your tee shot to left center at about 120 for the best angle at a green tucked around the corner. Waste bunker on the right is a no-no. Now you have to hit a precise one into a smallish green-toughest pin is front right near the bunker. Over this green can be trouble as well.

#4 Par 5 503/482

Donald Ross gives you a tactical five par here-a slowly sweeping uphill hole that gently wraps its way around to the left as it approaches the green. Drive to right center and then hit a long one up to about 100. Now you have a pitch into a small green banked right to left that is masked above you-it is hard to get close because you cannot see the bottom of the stick. Front right is again the toughest spot for the flag. This is an opportunity hole but like all uphill holes you must strike each shot with conviction or you will be short of your target.

#5 Par 4 442/431

This is the most awesome hole on the front nine-you will wake up at night in a cold sweat thinking about this hole. If there was ever a par four and a three-quarters this is it. The landing area off the tee is blind but you want to hit a fade to right center since the hole cants pretty hard to the left. Now you have an uphill long shot into a narrow but deep green that is set up on a hill above a nasty area of bunkers and depressions on the left that must be avoided. You want to miss right coming in here but that is hard to do off the side hill lie you will be hitting your approach from. Green actually falls away from you so again a fade into the hill is the shot of choice. Back left is a sucker. Take five and go quietly.

#6 Par 3 194/179

This is a pretty straight forward par three-long iron/hybrid to a long narrow green that is set diagonal to the tee. Big bunkers flank both sides of the putting surface and the crowned green makes this tough to hold the long club you are playing.

#7 Par 4 387/377

To the eye, this looks remarkably like three just longer-it plays considerably different though. Sharp dog ear right where the corner is protected by a mass of bunkers and mounds. Drive it into the pinch short of the mounds on the left at about 240. Now you must carry a short iron across the edge of the fronting bunker to a green set from 8 to 2. Real easy to miss this long but that is not a bad place to chip from.

#8 Par 5 487/457

This is a reachable par five so drive it solid to left center of the landing area below you. Not much trouble up the left so you can either go for it or layup to a pitching wedge range up the ramp. The bunker you

see on the left of the green is about forty yards short of the surface but there are other mounds and hollows protecting on that side. Green is very small so keeping it on the green is a challenge. Pros play this as a four par in the U.S. Open.

#9 Par 3 165/151

Easily the most difficult and interesting par three on the course-this hole has teeth. A short to mid iron from the hot dog palace to a plateau green set on an 4 to 10 diagonal. Very well guarded by deep bunkers on all sides-this green has tiers as well so hitting the green is only the first challenge on the hole. The pins on the left bring the full ferocity of the greenside bunkers into play. Watch the wind here because it can shorten this shot a bit.

#10 Par 5 569/469

Longest par five of the day-a true three shot hole for mortals. The hole has a bit of a zig and a zag to it so position your shots carefully. Drive to left center to get a good angle at the the layup area that narrows sharply from the left at 175 yards-you want to end up at about 110 off the cross bunker on the left. From that tight landing position you now have to look back to your left again to a green that is on the diagonal and has a high lipped bunker masking its front edge. This is a good finesse long hole.

#11 Par 4 434/368

Another hole that lacks much distinction in appearance but it is a wonderful strategy hole nonetheless. Drive is to center between the left bunker and the scrub on the right-if you pass the bunker the landing area narrows considerably but that is really where you want to be for the best angle back at the green and the shorter club in hand. Now you must negotiate a somewhat restricted opening to the green that is much better approached from the left. Bunkers in front on the right and left are deep and sunk below the green-there is a lonely bunker through long on the right side. No pushover this hole.

#12 Par 4 368/351

Medium length slight dogear right. Drive to center but watch out for the bunkers that flank the right side. From there it is a short iron across some cross bunkers well short of the green to a very difficult green with lots of contour. Big dip in the center left that makes the back left pin positions very difficult.

#13 Par 4 365/356

This is a cool hole. Medium length par four that is very demanding on the second shot into the sharply elevated green. Driver just left of the nest of bunkers on the right of the landing area. From there the approach angle at the green is the best. The green is raised considerably from the fairway so you have to loft it all the way in-bunkers protect on all sides-slight miss room back center.

#14 Par 4 417/400

This one is long and straight-all the challenges are clearly visible from the elevated tee. Drive to left center near the lone bunker on the left. The first bunker you see on the front right of the green is about 25 yards

short of the surface-some swales in between. Big bunker on the short left and a small flanking the right middle of the green. This green drops off dramatically behind so do not be long.

#15 Par 3 183/169

The true meaning of Ross crowned greens is exemplified here. You are hitting a precise longish iron with teeth into this small narrow green that is skirted by a bunker on the right. The other two bunkers are more for show. The hard part here is keeping it on the green-truth is rolling through is no disaster it is a straight pitch back up to the green.

#16 Par 5 16/469

This one is reachable if the wind is helping. Drive must carry the only pond you will see all day to right center off the bunker on the left. If you are far up enough take a poke at it between the bunkers. If not lay up right center-there is a hidden mean bunker on the left at 110. This green is well protected by sand and as with all of the greens you will see balls roll away from the hole. The birdie opp here is with a pitch and a putt.

#17 Par 3 165/155

The last two holes will get your attention and stick with you through dinner. This is a straightforward short one to the eye but very technical. Tightly bunkered green slightly below you-so it makes club selection a bit tricky. Slight pinch to the front of the green so the toughest flag is front right. Major face bunker in front that seems like something you have seen in a WWI movie. This green fairly deep and has serious contour to it, so hitting the surface means the challenge is far from over.

#18 Par 4 417/382

A wonderful finishing hole that ramps uphill tee to green. The drive is key here-do not overswing but hit it into the fairway. Draw to left center at the tallest chimney on the clubhouse to give the best look at the green above. Front bunker is set well off the green so do not be deceived. Green has a big swale in the right center so there are serious transitional putts on this hole.

11/17/2009