

Emerald Dunes
West Palm Beach, Florida

Architect: Tom Fazio, 1989

Tees	Par	Rating	Slope	Yardage
Green	72	72	132	6507
White	72	70.1	125	6062

Overview:

This golf course is a quiet jewel in the middle of the east coast "strip" of Florida it stands out as one of the best tracks I have played in this region. They spared no expense in presenting first class practice facilities, superb design esthetics, wonderful conditioning, and great support features. It took guts and vision to put this much into a public course and my hat is off to the developer.

The practice facilities are top shelf-as good as you will find anywhere. The double sided driving range has over 8 acres of grass hitting surface in the same 419 Bermuda Grass found on the course. There are five target greens flanked with bunkers as well as a practice fairway bunker adjacent to the main teeing ground. Fazio developed a separate short game area adjacent to the clubhouse. It has a 9500 practice putting green as well as bunkered practice pitching greens with Ultradwarf Bermuda built to full USGA spec just like the course. There is even a 19th hole par three that can be played from 85 to 135 yards. This area alone is worth the price of admission.

As with most Florida courses Tom Fazio has generously appointed this one with water-it is in play on 15 out of 18 holes- and sand-there are over 100 bunkers- but it is not so punitive as to be unplayable. As Tom is apt to do he often buffers the water with long sand hazards to keep you in play-though not out of trouble-and keep up the pace of play. The strategy required on every hole is not evident at first blush. There is plenty of visual misdirection going on so you need to take in the information in the yardage book or the deluxe on board computer and think your way around this course.

An enormous amount of attention, and money, was spent on the presentation of the holes. Earth was moved to create visual and tactical interest and the plumes of sage grass, floral plantings, and stonework throughout enhance the beauty of the holes creating holes that will grab your attention. This is not your typical Florida experience it has a very natural dunes style feeling about it.

The conditioning of the course is superb-lush fairways and some of the best rolling firm greens I have played in Florida. They even paint the top inside edge of the hole cut to match the cup itself-very professional. You will have to really pay attention to speed on these greens or you will end up with lots of eight and ten footers coming back.

This course is worth going out of your way to arrange to play. It is a great test of golf and a wonderful visual experience as well. Fazio was at his best when he did the design work here.

Hole-By-Hole Analysis:

#1 Par 5 478/459

The opening hole is a gentle par 5 that should give you an easy scoring opportunity early in the round. The hole bends slightly to the right around a series of lakes and buffering bunkers. The drive is to left center followed by a midiron layup to about 100 yards on the left. Now you get a good look up a generous green set 7-11 which is very accepting to a high shot. Get it close and take a run at the hole.

#2 Par 4 385/379

This is another gentle right leaning par 4 which again puts a premium on position off the tee to get an angle up the green. Drive it to left center and you will be looking at an upsweeping green moving away from you to the right. The right front has a bunker and a bottlebrush tree that will make approaches from the right a problem. You should be no worse than even at this point.

#3 Par 4 360/342

You do have to adjust your game up one notch right here because this hole is a bit narrow and can provide a challenge if you do not keep it in play. The best drive is right center off the tee though there is clearly bail out room on the left. The banked green is set right to left with a deep bunker in the left front so right center gives you the best approach angle and most receptive landing line. This green is not terribly wide so having a short iron in your hand is an advantage.

#4 Par 3 152/141

This is one of the most magnificent green settings you are ever going to see even if it hits a bit of a Disney World contrivance. It is nothing more than a short iron across the hazard to a rolling green raised above the water with a bunker set in the front right. The back and right of the green are a beautiful compilation of mounds, grasses, rocks, and stream that you must stay out of. The right pin position is pure 100% Florida sucker. Hit your tee ball to center and putt to the hole. This is a breathtaking short hole.

#5 Par 5 548/498

This is now getting exciting in a hurry. This hole was originally named "Waterloo"-Napoleon might have persevered here if he had layed up instead of going for it in two. This is a typical Fazio sucker par 5 that makes people of modest ability blow out their chest and try to do what they are incapable of doing. The water is on your left the entire length of the hole and you will have to traverse it on the last shot. Drive to right center and avoid the two bunkers on the right. Now you must carefully select your layup club to 115-beware on this second a hook a wet hook. Now you must elevate a short iron to a very shallow target across the hazard perched on a hill. The back left piece of the green is about 5x5 so do not take that bait. The fattest part of the green is center so that is probably the safest approach area. I like this hole a lot-very demanding on all three shots-not a hole for the timid at heart.

#6 Par 4 394/356

This dogleg right is demanding-it is the number one handicap hole on the course. You must drive at the palm plume on the left center line of the fairway. From the left you get a look up a small narrow green set 7 to 1-flanked by a huge waste bunker on the left all the way to the green. This is a difficult technical hole.

#7 Par 4 380/370

This is a wild and wonderful "cape style" hole if you can ignore the mall and twenty-two screen cineplex over your right shoulder. This one plays like two par threes with a very precise iron play off the tee to get into the right piece of fairway to take a shot at the perched green. The water flanks you tightly along the left from tee to green and is most definitely in play. Your 3 hybrid at the 150 stake on the lower level is the best drive position-the upper level to the right leaves a longer shot across to the green. Now your short iron has to be very precise to a small circular green set behind a bunker and against the water. There really is no bail out areas on this hole so take dead aim and go for it.

#8 Par 3 182/165

A gem it is-a visual gem of a par 3. You will hit a middle iron to an eggplant shaped-narrow but deep target set on a 5 to 11 angle to the tee banked back to front. The front positions are sandwiched between bunkers-the back left is a carry over a huge amoebae like sand bunker. Generally play to center and putt down to the front or up to the back. These first two par threes are really spectacular to look at-Fazio spent a considerable amount of money on the esthetics on these.

#9 Par 4 415/365

This is the number three handicap hole on the course though it only plays that way if you ignore the huge sucker sign hanging over the right corner of the driving area. The water on the right begs you to be daring but don't, hit a driver at the big mound and the 150 stake. Now you should have a short to mid club across the hazard to a deep and generous green from front to back. If you play the hole articulately it is a par-any wavering is a double or worse. Hit the take out lunch carry for a dog-you will need renewed strength for the back nine.

#10 Par 4 401/372

This may be one of the most subtle, interesting, and challenging holes on this course. It is a slight dog ear right that is quite narrow from tee to green. It looks like you should drive it to left of the right grass bunker you see from the tee but the problem is that if you slip below that line the rough falls off sharply to the right and you are gone. I like driving it right at the 150 stake left center and then looking up the hole at the elevated green. This green is sharply above you and protected on the left by a series of deep bunkers you do not want to visit. The iron shot up the hill is very tight as a result and will play one club more because of the elevation. This green is very difficult-a saddle shape from 12 to 6 which makes the putting quite a challenge. This is a very difficult hole-demanding drive and even more demanding approach shot.

#11 Par 5 467/447

Another Fazio 5-not near as easy as it looks-requires alot of thought in planning your shot sequence. In spite of the eye appeal to drive over the right bunker it is really a center drive since the hole actually goes slightly left. Now you can hit a three wood at the green since you must drive it past 80 yards to clear the bunker on the left. There is a generous landing area down there so if you miss reaching the green it is a simple L club up into a small raised green. This pitch is to a narrow green that pitches back to front. You should get a good birdie opp here.

#12 Par 4 326/301

This is a cute short hole that is not as technically demanding as you might expect for its distance. The drive is to left center at the 4/5 palm clump-you will find it a very generous landing area. Now you hit a wedge or sand wedge over a big bunker from 80 yards to green side to a diagonal green arrangement 7 to 1. If you drive in the right fairway bunker the green is still reachable. The green is quite deep so you can actually play deep and putt back. Birdie is a possibility here.

#13 Par 4 362/328

This is another left turning dogear around the water with bunker buffering to keep you out of the drink. You want to drive straight ahead at the 150 stake to a generous landing area-do not try to cut the corner at all-no gain all pain. Now you have a 6 or 7 to a deep green that leans to the right.

#14 Par 3 170/158

This is a hole that looks alot meaner than it really plays. You hit a mid to long iron over the hazard to a green set above you. You really have to hit a bad slice to engage the water. The green is set back from the front bunkers on the right so keep this in mind when you are taking perspective of the tee shot. There is plenty of room to miss short and right as a result of this gap. The place you do not want to miss is left. The green banks sharply left to right so pitching up from the bailout area on the right is actually a very playable shot. You have to make a pretty horrendous mistake here to get a high score.

#15 Par 4 385/364

This hole is pure Fazio visual deception. Everything about this dog leaner right says play up the right side of the hole-yet the hole is virtually unplayable from that side. Drive it to left to get a good look up the hole at a narrow really long putting surface that is sloped away from you 5 to 11. There is a deep grass ledge along the entire front right that you need to avoid. Approaching from the left takes that out of play and gives you a good look at the flag stick position. This green setting is quite unusual-it has a bit of a scottish linksy feel to it. This is a great hole.

#16 Par 3 150/133

This is a very punitive par 3-probably the hardest you will play all day. From the tee you must carry a short iron all the way across the hazard to a raised green that is bordered by huge boulders all across the green face. This is very psychologically intimidating and a real extra challenge. The green is sharply contoured in a pear shape with a tier from 10 to 4. The bail out area is long and right though the pitch back from here is right down the slope of the green toward the boulders and water. This is a real difficult hole that if you finish with your butt in tact you are doing well.

#17 Par 5 527/492

This may be one of his most creative holes on this course-it is kind of an S-Shaped long par five that takes superb shot positioning just to make the hole playable. You drive to center from where you will notice that the green is barely visible behind a major strand of oak trees that cut across the playing area. Your layup must be to just about 100 yards off the right side of the clump of trees. Now if you end up in this position you will have a short shot to a most steeply banked green from 11 to 5. Do not pitch past the cup or you will have to grow fuzz on your Titlest to get it to stop putting down the slope. The water on the right on the approach is clearly in play so do not wander. This is a hole that demands absolute accuracy on each shot otherwise you should be playing for 6.

#18 Par 4 425/392

This may be one of the most picturesque tee settings and driving area looks you have ever seen anywhere. The tee is set up on a man-made super dune that looks likes something out of an arboretum or a nature reserve. The drive is across a formidable abyss to a generous landing area in left center field. Make sure to take the time to appreciate this tee setting as you amble down the hole and look back. From the landing area you now have a mid to long iron up a narrow approach that is bordered on the right by a long buffering sand area. This green is narrow and super deep-almost 60 yards so hit enough club to reach the pin or you can have a 200 foot putt. There really is little wandering space on this approach so be long enough and accurate. A two putt and a par will be a very gratifying finish to this wonderful golfing experience.