

Bay Hill Charger Nine

One of the hidden gems at Bay Hill is the nine hole Charger Course. Call it an intramural, warm-up, settle-the-bets, or happy-hour nine, but this is a well thought out strand of holes that replicates the challenges of the championship course and stands on it's own as well as a quality test of your golfing skills. Find a way to slip this one into the itinerary, your trip to Bay Hill is incomplete without the Charger experience.

Starts out simple enough with a shortish four par looking for about 220 off the tee straight down the pike. As you stare at the green you think you are seeing double, which you in fact are since one and eight share a double green in Arnold's apparent nod to this common sight at St. Andrews. The green complex is typical of what you see throughout, tiny green raised up from the fairway tightly wedged in between collaring deep bunkers. Aside from the size of the surface this is in full character with the big course.

The second is a cold splash of water to the face, a forced carry short par three to a sliver of a green draped across a shoulder of water and sand. Pins on the left are pure suckers, aiming spot is center over the bunker to the crown point of the green. The technical theme continues with a hopscotch target par four where reason must prevail over temptation or you stand to send your match into arrears. Something 200 to 220 at the aiming bunker though the fairway will bring your ball to rest left center and take the first water experience on the hole out of play. The second is a short pitch into a clever green arrangement collared by sand left and the second water experience on the right. Like the previous hole all pins call for a deep play to the center and putt back from there. If you walk to the fourth tee one over or better you are in command of your game today.

The next par five is the least interesting offering of the nine. This plays as a straight three-shotter into another tight green complex squeezed by sand. The green is deep so it should contain an aggressive long club that successfully negotiates the narrow opening in the front of the green.

The par five that follows is pure thrill ride and may be the pivotal decision making hole of your match. A strong draw will follow the shape of the hole and leave you adjacent to the fairway bunkers that define the left corner of this dogleg. From well above the target you are looking down at a stunning green complex. A long kidney shaped green lies between a hillside left and boulder trimmed water on the right. This hole shares the distinctive wharf style look of the sixth from the championship course just to it's left. If you choose to take a poke at it on your second aim at the left edge of the green because the contour in front will feed the ball the right. Taking on the flag directly will leave you a Flintstone lie in the rocks. Even a lay up needs to favor the left edge of the fairway for a clean look up the angle of the green. A good score here is great fodder for post round conversations in the bar.

The sixth is one of those innocuous looking par fours that will have you scratching your head walking off the green wondering what went awry if you don't maintain focus. Approach angle is important so hoist a hard one to right center and you leave a short club to a sand nestled green slightly above you. This green is fairly long by Charger standards but there is a rise in the center that demands a full carry to the back pin positions. Two controlled shots and this is a routine par, anything wandering brings lots of possibilities to your scorecard.

If they had a postcard hole for this nine this next dramatic par three would be it. Depending on the tee you play it can be a short pitch to stiff long club from a high tee to an appetizing green arrangement below. Full forced carry over more boulders and water to a green stuffed into the foot of the slope behind. You have to play the back third of this green to hedge the carry and any putt back down to the pin will be a ripper. If the wind is blowing at all the club selection is a Donald Trump crap shoot with a significant elevation change just complicating the formula. Once you send your ball on its way just sit back, relax, and enjoy the IMAX view of what will result. This is as fine of a three par as there is on the property.

The run to the house is a pair of wonderful par fours that continue to emphasize line and distance control. Tee ball on eight is semi-blind into a landing area above. Right center off the tee gives the best attack angle into this green. Double vision again prevails as you may remember that the eighth is a continuation of the first green bisected by a separating bunker. The approach sets up for a soft draw working at the pin on the left.

The final hole shadows and replicates to some degree the ninth on the championship course. As you will find on its big brother, you have to turn it over off this tee to follow the line of the hole. The second is a long shot into a very deep green narrowed by shading bunkers on either side. The green falls off gently back and right so you can use the ground to assist a low trundling shot to get to a back right pin.

When you finally settle in for the beer and Bay Chips at the bar with your buds or the wife, you will take great pleasure in replaying in your mind this bonus nine and the shots it required.

Orlando, Florida

Tee	Par	Yardage	Rating	Slope
Blue	36	3085	35.2	125
Yellow	36	2867	34.1	115
White (L)	36	2278	33.8	118

