

**Cape Cod National Golf Club
Brewster, Massachusetts**

Designer: Brian Silva (1998)

Tees	Par	Yardage	Rating	Slope
Blue	72	6954	74.0	135
White	72	6375	71.2	131
Gold	72	5829	69.4	124
Red	72	4884	70.7	125

Overview:

Cape Cod National was one of Brian Silva's first new course offerings on his watch but he came to it very schooled from the time he spent working with his mentor Geoffrey Cornish. For an early effort this course has woven into its fabric amazingly mature design concept. The course is built with lots of elbow room but, like courses built back in the Golden Age of Design, the width provides plenty of tactical choices for players with imagination. Searching for and losing golf balls should not be a problem out here which makes for fast and enjoyable play. It is very playable for the average member while it maintains intrinsic challenge for the better player at the same time. This is a private club but access to it is available to the guests of the Wequassett Resort outside of Chatham.

Generous width off the tee with parenthetical bunkering to emphasize the proper targeting line is the operating principle. In most cases the first bunker is in play for all players where the opposing bunker, which sets your target line, is only reachable by the biggest hitters. As a result there is plenty of room to play and you should not spend much time in the rough or the adjacent trees. But picking good lines is critical to having advantage angles into the green complexes.

The second principle is green complexes with bunkering on one side and bail pitching areas or grassy rough hollows on the other. Once again this is good for the broader golfing masses who can work there way around the green size bunkers without taking them on but for the low digit guy up-and-downs off the tight grass pitching areas presents a solid challenge.

The greens themselves are very clever-oddly shaped to compliment the green approach lines with plenty of slope. The specs the greens were made to allow them to reach quick green speeds which, when matched with the slopes, puts a premium on leaving even the recovery pitch below the hole to avoid the three putts. The generous setbacks of the greens from the trees makes depth perception when reading the breaks a huge challenge. Once you determine the prevailing break of the green you must pay attention to countervailing internal breaks they worked into the putting surfaces.

The first three holes give you all of this in heavy dosages. An unusual sequence of two par fives in the first three holes gives Silva an opportunity to lay out this theme early on. Setting up the lay ups on these two holes is all about finding a good line off the tee to set up an opposing line of approach to a narrowly confined lay up area from where an attack wedge can be played to the open side of the green complex. All four of the

five pars have interesting tactical options so the opportunity for scoring is there but it takes good planning melded with good shot making.

The par fours have great variety-long and short versions that smartly use the prevailing topography to feed into the strategy of the holes. Three short ones of 335 yards or less call for very articulate club selection and execution to get the ball into the attack position into the greens. On some of the longer holes, if you tee shots are not of full measure, it may be smarter to play to a lay up spot and rely on an aggressive pitch and a putt to make a par. Biting off big carries over the bunker side of the green complex can lead to big numbers if you do not pull them off. Kenny Rogers golf....you got to know when to hold them..know when to fold them.

The par threes at 178, 159, 209, and 127 cover the gamut when it comes to look and demand of approach shots. The fifteenth is the longest and probably the easiest one and the shortest is sixteen and may be the one with the trickiest green placements to get at. My favorite is the sixth where you have a full carry long iron/hybrid across an environmental area and one of the deepest hurdle bunkers you will see all day framing the carry across the full face of the green. With a little breeze this becomes a real question of how much risk you want to take on to get it in the correct third of the green.

For the most part the wide playing area prevails throughout the course but there a tight corner of the property from eleven through thirteen where you have to bear down tightly on the luge runner to stay on the track. Any towardness issues to the left of these three holes can ring up the register reading of the scorecard in a hurry.

Despite what looks like fairly hilly terrain the course is eminently walkable. Greens are close to tees, there are very few steep transitional hills to traverse, and they even provide a walkers cut from the tee to the fairway. Hand carts are available if you like to walk and I would recommend them so you get the full flavor and aroma of the golf experience.

One of the real kitchy things about this place is the prevalence of animal accent lawn art. You will see hippos, seals, pelicans, and more strewn through the course. Love the sense of humor this indicates.

As one of the greens staff said to me on the course, Cape Cod National does not have the reputation of some of the other older, more established courses on the Cape but it probably has more memorable holes on it than any of them. I would agree. Silva did a great job in creating a course that the members will enjoy playing every day or a visiting dignitary will appreciate on a one up.

Hole-By-Hole Analysis (White)

#1 Par 5 489 yards

The opening hole is fairly user friendly, hit your drive at just inside the bunkers on the right at 270. The lay up is aimed at the right green side bunker to a spot around 100 yards in the center of the fairway. This gives you a good look up the green set on a 10 to 4 angle that is tilted from back to front. Note if you are dreaming of going for this one in two the bunker on the left is a good 55 yards short of the green.

#2 Par 4 415

The first of the long par fours your drive here is up the right to avoid death by sand in the gaping bunkers on the left. They are only 165 and 212 from the tee. From there you elevate a cut shot over a cross bunker on the left at 90 yards into a green set behind a pair of penal bunkers on the right. He has provided a bail out closely mown chipping area left of the green which can be very handy.

#3 Par 5 521

The pressure ratchets up a notch on this next five par. The drive needs to be right center of this generous driving area because shots up the left take on the interference of the tree line on the left trying to advance the second shot to the lay up area. The lay up shot is toward a narrowing area haunted by the water on the right, at the left bunker just inside 100 yards. The closer you can get to that spot the better your approach line is into the green. The green is perched atop a hill overlooking a massive bunker constellation and the lake. Anyone who thinks about going for this in two needs a full psychiatric work up. The slope of this green is draped across the hill with a spine from 5 to 11 bisecting the green. The left side and the pitching area behind is always the aiming line on the approach.

#4 Par 4 335

Though the measurement of this one puts it in the short par four category the uphill landing area for the drive mitigates the effect. The big hitters are tempted to carry it 220 over the corner bunkers of the dogleg left but for most guys it is three wood or driver with a right to left curve aimed at the bunker on the right turning into the uphill of the fairway landing area is best. What remains is a short club into a steeply sloped green set behind a very nasty pot bunker. The two bunkers on the right at 70 and 45 yards respectively do not seem likely to get much action. The front half of the bunker has almost a false front effect so if you hit a high approach into this section do not be surprised if it feeds moves back towards you. The miss is left here because there is a short grass bail out area on this side.

#5 Par 4 409

This is a difficult par four, the fourth handicap hole, mostly because it plays a good 25 yards longer due to the uphill elevation change of the drive. A right to left strong one starting at the bunker on the right should end up just inside 200 yards looking down the hill toward the green. A couple of deep bunkers are below and right of the 40 yard deep green that has an almost tiered ramp effect from 1 to 7. Balls landing in the first third of this green can feed all the way back to the front edge.

#6 Par 3 178

You probably have been wondering where the par threes are on this course but you will play two really exhilarating ones in the next three holes....it was worth the wait. This one has a camouflaged Redan setup to it with a dangling shelf green set on the diagonal, the surface leaning left and away from you, and clearly most

receptive to a right-to-left approach. Two of the deepest bunkers on the course are buried across the full face of the hill below the green across the pond. The correct Redan play is a draw iron into the first third of the green that can then work it's way to center. Back pin is a sucker so don't bite on a straight line to it.

#7 Par 4 275

This second of the short par fours is in the drivable category one for the truly cool holes you see all day. It takes steely nerve and a 225 carry to take that line over the top of the three stacked bunkers on the left as the hole is draped over the hill above you like your members only jacket tossed over the back of a chair. 190 with a slight draw bias is the alternative and it will leave you a short pitch over a mounded knob to a green set on a 4 to 10 angle with a left surface curve to match. Long or left is no option so it is probably best to negotiate this approach with a low trajectory bounce into the hill just short of the green and let the ground have it's way.

#8 Par 3 159

Another very cool par three plays a club or so shorter than the last. The green sprawls left to right behind a huge face bunker with another hidden bunker back left behind the green. The hole plays slightly uphill and if the wind is at you it is a club more for sure. It sets up almost like a reverse Redan where the only shot is a left to right play at the front left third of the green that can work it's way to the right. The back right pin is another sucker punch so don't be flying anything directly at that part of the green.

#9 Par 4 363

The front nine finishes with another wide driving area on a left-to-right hole that works around a deep bunker protecting the corner of the dog leg. With the green set to the right I see no advantage in cutting the corner. It is a full 220 carry to the aiming bunkers through the fairway on the left so I would aim a slight fade at the first one and let the ball feed up the hole to right center.. If you end up too far left your approach must carry across the edge of the three bunkers defining the left side into a technical green with a small shelf back left behind a false front and a distinct retention section back right. The front right bunker is a big no so use the green to feed a shot into a pin in that area.

#10 Par 5 483

The inward nine starts in similar fashion to the outward half with a very interesting double move par five. Drive over the environmental watering hole at the bunker through the fairway a solid 270 out where the first turn is to the right. Taking on the bunker on the right corner is a 225 carry and brings the trees on the right into play. Lay up is to right center short of the bunker at 75 yards. The green is tucked up to the left atop a hill and has trees cordoning the left which makes an approach from the left of the fairway problematic. Going for this green in two would take a right to left curve and have to hold a table top green with fall offs on all sides. Even a short iron approach needs considerable roll out control to stay on. There is an opportunity to use the face hill in front to slow down a low trajectory approach.

#11 Par 4 432

The challenge again jumps precipitously with the number 1 handicap hole next in a bear of a long Par 4. The hole turns left so it will do to hit a strong draw off the tee turning away from the second fairway on the right about 225 out. The second shot needs to be a long one with an accompanying seeing eye dog. The last 140 yards in is narrowed by 70 yard long sand coffin that will make you hit it left where the green side bunkers await. A good chance you may choose to lay up which is no bargain either in that it needs to be up the right side past the casket to get a look up the line of the green set on a 5 to 11 angle. A bogey is a par here.

#12 Par 4 364

As mentioned in the Overview the next three holes are the technical part of the course-power means nothing finesse is everything. When Silva told his design assistants that they were going to fit a playable par four into this corner of the property it must have raised some eye brows. But the resulting hole is brilliant configuration of angle and space that will make players really think hard about how to take advantage of it. A tee ball around 210 with a draw curve to hug the long bunker on the corner is the ticket. The problem of any ball hit too far is that it can be blocked out by a lone Christmas Tree they planted about 65 yards from the green in the right center of the fairway. From the prime drive location it is still a semi-blind approach across a sea of low foliage to a shallow green wedged into a corner tightly ensconced by tall trees. You are going to have to trust your ground reading off the sprinkler head and hit a shot with spin into the center of the green. You give yourself a good birdie opportunity here and you have executed two very good shot to get there.

#13 Par 3 209

This one will grab your full attention when you look at the yardage on the card but it is actually the least problematic of the three pars in spite of the distance. Your main issue here are the shish-link fairway bunkers and wilderness beyond if you go left off the tee. A strong fade into the prevailing pitch of the fairway right to left will trundle it's way toward the front of the 40 yard long green which is slightly above the tee level. It is going to take a pitch and a putt to make a par here but you should get out without major damage to the card if you control your driving line. Look back at the tees from the green it is a beautiful sight especially if you are about to play your second shot.

#14 Par 4 313

The third of the technical troika in a very short par four that beckons you to hit the big stick but that is just a siren call you must ignore. Your vision of the driving area is obscured by a mound in front of the tee. A steep hill frames the hole on the right and the encroaching wilderness on the left makes it evident that you need a dead straight tee ball to have a chance to make a par here. From 125 in the hole gets really narrow so it is probably a 190 shot off the tee to center to creep inside the 150 marker to playable ground. The look into the narrow and shallow green is stunning framed by bunkers left and tall trees right.

#15 Par 5 501

This five par is the slightly more mellow twin sister to #3 as it runs the same line, shares the full carry lake on the approach, but bends the other way. Drive is to center off the bunker on the left. The layup is into a very narrow area where the water starts to pinch at about 165. The lay up area fattens inside 150 yards to about 100 so you can try an aggressive lay up aimed at the bunker through the fairway if you dare. Now the approach is a diagonal shot across the hazard to a very narrow ribbon of a green draped across the back of the hazard. They have provided a chipping area long which may incline you to hedge with a bit more club coming in.

#16 Par 3 127

My favorite of the short holes this is nothing but a little pitch from an elevated tee box to a diagonally set green perched on a hill below. A lawn dart is in order but be prepared that the green slopes away the back two-thirds so balls may move away from the flag once touched down. The front pin is by far the most difficult to me, just very little room in that part of the green pinched between bunkers.

#17 Par 4 425

Two very strong par fours between you and the house. Drive is across fronting bunkers at the beginning of the fairway, you probably want it left center for the best angle to the green set to the right. This is a full carry to a shallow green draped across a deep depression with plenty of long grass in it so if you are in doubt you can make it aim left of the green to about 50 yards and play an up and down pitch to try to save par. Once again a bogey is par here so do not be too ambitious.

#18 Par 4 377

Drive is the key on this very fair finishing hole-the driving area is buffered on the right by a deep 40-yard long bunker. Your best line is a draw over the front left corner of the bunker into a generous landing area at about 150 yards out from the green. The green setting is eye candy as it sits slightly below you with the clubhouse behind and a nasty school of bunkers right of the green. This green is set 4 to 10 and somewhat crowned so you need an approach with spin to hold and give you a scoring chance. You par this one and the draft beer will be refreshing.