

Westchester Country Club
Rye, New York

Architect: Walter Travis (1922) Tom Fazio/Tom Marzolf (2020)

	Par	Rating	Slope	Yardage
Blue/Black	72	73.1	144	6718
Blue	72	72.4	142	6505
White	72	70.9	136	6143
White/Green	75	73.3	141	5544

Overview:

In the early 1920's John McEntee Bowman, the owner of the Biltmore Hotel Group, decided to build a destination sporting resort close to Manhattan that could accommodate the members and guests with the finest sporting facilities and services for their recreation. It came to include 45 holes of golf, tennis, polo, swimming, boating, skating, skiing, and shooting as well as a race track, casino, beach club, and a private lagoon. His idea was members could come for long stays in the hotel or their private homes and have all services provided by the hotel staff. He spent over \$6 million bringing this ambitious project to fruition and 1200 members joined in his first round of solicitations.

Walter Travis did the design of the championship West Course in 1922 and it came to be the site of an annual PGA Tour event from 1963 to 2006. In 2007 it was home to the Barclays Classic in the Fedex Playoffs and hosted Senior Tour and LPGA Tour championships in 2011 and 2015 respectively. As the Westchester and Buick Classic this was a favored stop by the tour pros each year because of the hospitality offered and the old school challenge of the layout. The list of winners is a who's who of the greatest champions of multiple generations.

The West Course is truly a challenge to the most skilled player because the extreme topography and forced carries make it play much longer than its posted distance. They do not even bother to put out a forward tee for the membership on this course encouraging the shorter hitters to play on the more user friendly South Course.

A recent renovation by Tom Fazio and Tom Marzolf in 2020 has cleared out a huge number of trees opening up panoramic vistas from high teeing areas throughout the course. The renovation added width to the driving areas bringing back original strategy to a thoughtful player navigating the course. The hilly terrain with many green complexes set up on high plateaus makes for blind approach shots that require absolute trust in your caddy's advice for proper club selection. I must say that Travis did a brilliant job finding a playable routing given the extreme terrain so do not succumb to visual intimidation when you step on the first tee.

The full course descriptive of the hole-by-hole strategy can be found in link at the bottom of this posting.

The opening hole from the foot of the hotel gives you a drop dead look at a green setting three stories down.

Par four second is your first forced carry off the tee setting up a wrap-around draw approach into a green setting well to the left.

The third is a perfect example of add-on yardage. The steepness of the incline to the green adds 50 yards to the number on the scorecard.

First on-level hole is a forced carry par three at number four that looks easier then it plays.

The eighth is another par four that climbs a steep hill on the drive and a steeper hill on approach to the green.

The blind shot on the thirteenth is off the tee but what waits on the other side is a visual look up the hill to a beautiful green setting.

The tumbling par five fourteenth wraps around the corner and presents a good scoring opportunity.

The next hole is one of the most beguiling one-shot holes of the day. Not more then a short iron but very little room to miss on any side.

Seventeen has the only forced carry over water on your approach shot you will see today.

The final hole is a death march back up the hill you came down on the first and it plays much longer as a result.

All I can say is that this course is a big boy challenge but if you play from the appropriate tee and listen carefully to your caddy's advice it is a memorable and enjoyable golfing experience.

Hole-By-Hole Analysis: (Blue/White)

#1 Par 4 300/285 yards

Gentle start. Opening hole starts from a area at the foot of the clubhouse looking down an eight story drop to the fairway below. This hole is driveable by big hitters. Drive it on a string to center and you are left with a short pitch to a green with plenty of contour.

#2 Par 4 424/414

Difficulty ramps up in a hurry on this long dogear left par 4. Once again an elevated tee box where you want to drive to right center to get the best look at the opening of the green. Green is on level to the approach area.

#3 Par 5 460/435

This five par plays much longer than the number on the card because of the steep ramp you must traverse the last 150 yards. Drive to center and then choose how far to lay up into the ramp. The third is a short iron pitch into a blind green complex with as much elevation change as the fairway approach. Be aggressive on the third shot to make sure you get the ball into the section where the pin is today.

#4 Par 4 379/357

This is a hole that plays much shorter than it seems. Drive is a bit of an intimidating carry off a high teeing ground into a semi-blind landing area. Split the bunkers you see in the distance. The second is up the face of a grass wall to a blind small green perched on top of the hill. This green has a trough in the center that makes for some interesting lag putts.

#5 Par 3 145/139

In contrast to all the up hill approaches you have seen so far this on level short Par 3 seems like it should be a breeze. Problem is you have to judge your club selection carefully considering wind on this exposed high ground of the property. Big yawning bunker haunts the front and high balls that land just short can end up with plugged lies in the face. Green is actually quite generous so the error is middle to back of the putting surface.

#6 Par 4 455/415

Number 1 handicap hole and they mean it. Big sweeping dipsy doodle dogear right. Drive to left center to get a clear line at the front of the green you cannot see. Second is over the top of the hill blocking your vision of the green to a complex sitting at the bottom. Green is slightly raised from the fairway with a significant false front. Pars are likely made here with a pitch and a putt.

#7 Par 3 202/180

What follows is a steep downhill three par with a high visual factor. This is a breathtaking shot to watch in flight as it drops to the green well below. Interestingly there is no club adjustment for the downhill. It may be because of the updraft coming up the hill. Green sprawls to the back left and drops off back there as well so I like aiming at the center no matter the pin position.

#8 Par 4 352/342

You now climb back up the hill from whence you came. Middle length Par 4 that plays 40 yards longer because the drive into the upslope suffers from retarded roll out. Blind table top green complex sits above and a very deep green protected by a fierce deep bunker in front. A par here gains one on the field.

#9 Par 5 520/503

Good scoring opportunity closes out the front nine. Sharp dog leg left around a corner so drive it strong to center to get a clear view of the green. This is not reachable without a howitzer so I like a lay up to around 100 at the bunkers of the right. The green sits above you and has three distinct tiers, so you must club properly to reach the tier with today's flag to get a birdie chance.

#10 Par 3 180/170

The second nine begins with a vanilla-esque on-level Par 3. Plays the distance into the center of a green that has lots of internal movement. You should make par here.

#11 Par 4 367/345

This is a kitchie shortish Par 4 with another green that will test your nerves. Drive straight away at the flag pole in the distance and you have a short iron into a green slightly raised from the fairway. The green has a huge wall on the back left but do not get greedy because long is death. Lots of slope throughout this green. I like a shot to center and putt from there no matter the pin location of the day.

#12 Par 4 400/371

Drive here is downhill so it will get good roll out. The second is up a steep hill to a plateau arrangement with a long fairway ramp leading to a green with open access. Use the ramp to your advantage to roll one under the hole. There is a sharp drop off right middle of the green that can result in an up-and-down opportunity.

#13 Par 4 410/386

Super cool hole. Drive to center is over a blind bluff to a run out area which leaves a look up a ramp to a green setting above. This is no easy par.

#14 Par 5 548/531

In the same spirit as the last but a long Par 5. Drive off a high tee box across the corner into a downhill landing area of this hard swinging dogear left. Lay up to a good yardage at the right bunker of the green sitting well below. From there it is a flat pitch into green leaning toward you. Another very good scoring opportunity.

#15 Par 3 123/123

Possibly the hardest of the one-shotters all day. This is nothing but a 120 yard pitch into a green canted sharply towards you. Super penal bunkers front and right there is no where to miss on any side so aim at the green center to avoid any scoring infarctions.

#16 Par 4 330/307

This is probably the most technical hole of the day and the tour pros hated it. A boomerang left par four that challenges you to keep the ball on the playable area on both shots. Best drive is a draw that works into the hill and chases the line of the hole. Second is a shortish iron into a green set of a bluff. Lots of native grass to carry on the approach so club strongly.

#17 Par 4 435/400

This dogleg left has great visual feature on both shots. Like you saw on #9 drive it hard to center at the lagoon in the distance to get a good look at the green around the corner. Your second is across a piece of the lagoon but the green is set well away from it and is slightly raised from the fairway. Balls hit without requisite purpose can repel off the front edge. But the green is steep back to front and anything past the flag is a real challenge.

#18 Par 5 475/440

The only silly hole of the day this finishing Par 5 is a death march up the steepest incline on the property. Do not over swing at any shot on this hole trying to hit it further or you will be playing from the left rough which will make the hole incrementally harder. Drive to center and lay up on the same line. Approach is a club and a half more for the hill and you must clear the front bunker so err on the long side.