

**Rhode Island Country Club  
Barrington, Rhode Island**

Architect: Donald Ross (1911)

	Par	Rating	Slope	Yardage
Blue	71	71.1	130	6396
White	71	70.1	127	6117
Red (L)	71	68.6	124	5786
Gold	71	65.5	116	5259

Overview:

It is really cool when you walk into the bar area of a classic old course like this and see the names Brad Faxon, Billy Andrade, and Brett Quigly on the club championship plaques. These are the favorite sons of the state who grew up playing there and later won on to a career on the PGA Tour. This place has tradition seeping out of every pore and you cannot help but anticipate the experience of playing a course where players of this caliber honed their skill before making it on the big stage.

What is even more enticing is the informality of the place, nothing is overstated it all just feels comfortably in its own skin. You might note that the logo features a muskrat, a critter that made its presence known as they were excavating the holes close to the shore line holes a century ago. A visit to the golf shop will give you the opportunity to by a cute muskrat hat as a piece of memorabilia.

Donald Ross routed this track in 1911 and very little has changed since. Like so many of his designs that populate this part of the country, Ross simply took what the ground was offering and found hole sequencing and strategic challenges there to be unveiled. Green complexes are the jewels here, plenty of challenging bunkering to deal with, but, as was custom in the hickory club age of the time, access to most of the greens can be handled using the ground as your friend.

The course plays to a par 71 with only three par threes and two par fives so you have a large inventory of four pars to encounter along the way. The low handicap holes are very long par fours that establish the challenge of the day but there are a number of short ones that require more tactical decisions and precise shot execution to help balance your scorecard.

The day begins with a simple downhill par four that introduces you to the first of two inverted bunkers on the course. These are nothing but large turtle back bunkers that present you with a sand shot below your feet. Both the one here and on the ninth are really not a factor in the playing strategy of the hole. What you do get on the first is the typical corridor of bunkers leading up to an accessible green complex with plenty of contour. This is a formula you will see throughout the day.

The next two holes start to define the character of this charming Ross creation. Driving the ball in the fairway is a premium for playing aggressively into the green complexes. The sloped ledged green setting on the

second will challenge you keep your approach in the area of the day's flag. The uphill third has a domed green that repels balls in all directions so a sharp short game is needed here to make a par.

The fourth is the first harrowing visual statement you will encounter as the hole presents itself as a slippery downhill par four into a tiered green across a meandering creek. This is where paying attention to landing areas off the tee makes a huge difference in getting playable approaches into the greens. You will find full detail on a strategic approach to play in the printable Hole-by-Hole analysis through the link at the bottom of the posting.

Two short, scoreable holes follow in a technical par three and a theoretically reachable par four. One of the things I really like about this course is the opportunity to hit precise short irons into small sloped targets to help your scorecard.

The balance of the outward nine is a series of long holes where you just have to hitch up your pants and drive the ball solidly to have a prayer of reaching the greens in regulation. Don't be surprised if you are hitting a 60-yard pitch and a putt on the longer holes in an effort to save a par.

When you make the turn take a moment to visit the halfway house next to ten tee for a hearty snack before you attack the second nine. Very old school looking structure with real character.

By now you have probably noticed that you have only played one par five and one par three so far. The odd sequencing of the non-par fours continues on the back nine. The tenth is a strong par three with a sweeping contoured putting surface that requires precision with a longer fairway club to get a reasonable two-putt opportunity for par.

The last par five of the day is next, a sweeping dogear left with a panoramic view of the clubhouse on the horizon. Scoring on this one and the short twelfth is a must because there are a couple of hearty par fours that follow before you cross the road and head to the four bayside holes that define the challenging finish.

As you cross the road to the fifteenth you cannot help but be a bit overwhelmed by the site of the lighthouse and the bay that will overlook your play on the last four. The wind now becomes a major factor in club selection and line so there is a strategy change at hand to control trajectory and mitigate wind effect from here to the house.

The short three par 17<sup>th</sup> is a Kodak moment for sure and probably the place where the muskrats made their last stand before becoming part of the lore of this place. A beautiful and challenging finishing hole with a green majestically set into a hill behind presents a tantalizing finish to this classic old course.

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

### #1 Par 4 380/364 yards

Easy on the eyes, this opening hole plays slightly down hill to a wide landing area. Line is to right center to avoid the bunkers on the left. First of the two meaningless inverted bunkers is out of reach on the left. As you will see throughout the day, an array of bunkers greets the green complex so you feel you have to shape it to find the opening. Green slopes back to front and is set on a 7 to 1 diagonal with a distinct false front on the front right.

### #2 Par 4 375/372

This one travels back up the slope you just sauntered down on the first. Drive is to center right of the inverted bunker which sets up a one club longer approach across a crescent shaped bunker on the left well short of the green. The dramatic ledged green complex tucked right has a fairly big swoop in the green trails balls to the right.

### #3 Par 4 348/320

Challenging short par 4 with an uphill drive over a chasm. Obscured from view, there is a slot on the left of the driving area collared by fescue. From the center of the driving area it is an uphill approach to a crowned bowl of a green that sheds approach shots to all directions. Good chance you are left with an up and down pitch to save a par.

### #4 Par 4 354/339

The visual from the tee will make you feel slightly uncomfortable with the crossing hazard in the distance but is actually much further away then it seems. Bunker flanking the right of the fairway is definitely a concern since the second is a carry over the creek 50 yards short of the green complex. Green sits into an uphill ramp and has two distinct tiers, so if the pin is on the back it is an extra club to get up there.

### #5 Par 3 165/133

A beautiful look to the only three par on the outward nine. Green surrounded by sand is on level to the tee so it does not require a club adjustment unless the wind is an influence. Another stepped putting surface so pick your club carefully to reach the flag of the day.

### #6 Par 4 303/266

A very enigmatic driveable four par. Kind of a short cape hole format without the water, the tiny moated green is tightly encircled by sand seems to mitigate going for the green. Favor a tee shot of about 200 to right center to get a square angle back to the green set to the left. You must have a club in your hand you can spin on if you want a ball to rest near the day's flag position. The green has a discernible slant to the left and a fall off back left so plan accordingly.

#7 Par 4 458/424

Number one handicap hole this is the first of a sequence to two long and difficult holes. Aim to center off the pair of bunkers about 200 on the left side of the uphill driving area. They give you a short grass run up ramp with framing bunkers on either side well short of the putting surface. Good chance you have a pitch and a putt if you want to make a par here.

#8 Par 5 494/445

The yardage indicates a shortish Par 5 but the truncation of the hole makes it a three-shot hole for most. From the top of the hill in the high driving area you look across a sprawling cross bunker at your feet to a bifurcated fairway area with the water hazard carving out from the left. A tall directional pole that defines the right corner of the water. You must choose between a short club lay up in front of the penalty area that leaves 160ish into the open green set on a plateau above or a longer shot to the second section of the fairway aimed at the bunker on the right to give you a short pitch in.

#9 Par 4 433/400

Long uphill par four with a road and OB on the left and a hazard on the right ends the outward nine. It could be a three shot hole if you don't get your drive far enough up the hill. The second inverted bunker on the left about 80 yards from the green is not in play. The green sets well above you on the approach and requires an extra club to reach the center of the green. Very contoured putting surface with a prominent ridge through the middle and a shelf on the back third. A bogey here is an acceptable result.

#10 Par 3 193/183

At last, another par 3, the second nine begins with an on level middle length one that sprawls in front of you. The long contoured green with flanking bunkers favors a right-to-left approach is accessible from the front. Once on the green the internal contour can funnel balls toward the pin.

#11 Par 5 510/472

The second of the two five pars of the day, this is a beautiful look from the tee with the clubhouse perched on the hill in the background. Centerline bunker frames the drive which is best placed to the right as the hole turns with the green complex tucked well to the left. Lay up is to the right short of the creek which leaves you with a short iron into a green complex with a nasty bunker set into the left face. The short iron approach should set up a scoring opportunity.

#12 Par 4 320/302

An appetizing short par four with an array of bunkers flanking the left and a piece of a marsh on the right. Drive it straight over the fairway bunker on the right and you have a short club into a green on level necklaced by bunkers. Another good scoring opportunity here if the drive is in play.

#13 Par 4 445/422

The long par fours really establish the challenge on this course and as the #2 handicap hole this one fills that bill. This is a long hard par four where the driving area is flanked by the marsh on the left and trees and fescue on the right. Best drive position is right center to get a look at the opening of the green well into the distance. Very good chance that once again you will need a tidy 60 yard pitch and a putt to steal a par here. Bunkers surround the green complex with green steeply banked back to front so keep your approach shot below the hole.

#14 Par 4 378/365

Now headed up the hill toward the shore front holes so you may be some wind influence in your face coming from behind the green. Trees and a road border the left off the tee and there is a hazard on the right. It is an uphill climb to the elevated green set 50 yards behind the bunker on the left. There is a false front to consider on this approach and the green slopes severely left to right.

#15 Par 4 375/348

Once you cross the road the view of the ocean is distracting as your mindset changes dramatically now that you are entering the windy bayside part of the course. Driving area is tight with trees and the OB of the road on the right and a string of shared fairway bunkers with the next hole down the left. Hit a disciplined right-to-left drive to offset the wind and you have an on level approach to a long green protected by a deep bunker front left. Green surface falls away and turns right to left off because of the hill influence and this can bring the back bunker into play if you get too greedy to a back pin.

#16 Par 4 405/382

A smidge longer than the last and the driving area shares bunkers with the last hole. The marsh borders the right so there is no room to miss on that side. On the approach there are bunkers on either side about 60 yards from the green that frame the target. This is a two-tiered green with a plateau on the left third and greenside bunkers squeezing the roll out of this approach.

#17 Par 3 138/123

Quite a look with the ocean and lighthouse as a backdrop this short pitch three par is something to behold. Green is a raised tabletop totally encircled by bunkers. Task is simple, pick the right club in the wind condition and throw a lawn dart at the flag.

#18 Par 4 392/342

The finishing hole is a pretty still life painting with the green benched into the side and back hill. Simple drive across the marsh should be aimed at the fairway bunker on the right with a gentle turn to center. Leaves you a mid-iron to the green complex with a fierce bunker below and left of the green you need to avoid. I like a right to left curve working up the green to the day's pin position.