

Blackwolf Run-River Course
Kohler, Wisconsin

Architect: Pete Dye (1993)

	Par	Rating	Slope	Yardage
Black	72	74.4	148	7011
Blue	72	72.6	139	6607
White	72	70.2	129	6110
Red	72	70.1	124	5115

Overview:

This was the first of the championship layouts created by the Kohler people in this remote area of Wisconsin that have helped define this place as a major golf destination resort. Pete Dye put the full force of his creative juices to work in creating this parkland gem that weaves among the tributaries of the Sheboygan River. For three years (1995-97) the World Championships Match Play was played here and in 1998 the USGA held the Women's U.S. Open on this course which was won by Si Re Pak in a memorable playoff over an unheralded amateur Jenny Chuasiriporn in a 20 hole playoff on Monday. The Women's U.S. Open will return here in 2012. Truth needs to be told-the course for these championships was made up of nine holes from the River Course and nine holes from the Meadows Course that shares this property.

As with all the courses at Kohler it is extremely important for each player to play at a tee length that is comfortable to them otherwise the task at hand becomes impossible. The Blue Tee works nicely for a 6 to 14 handicap who can carry their drive over 200 yards. Par is 35-37-72-only one par 3 on the front which makes for an odd sequence rhythm. If the wind is blowing this course will be incrementally more difficult.

In typical Pete Dye fashion lots of psychological havoc being presented-but a very playable and definable line of play on each hole if you pay attention and can ignore his attempts to intimidate you. You will have to be on your game to score well but a reasonable score is attainable with proper restraint from trying to do more than you are capable. Put your ego away-there are doubles and triples that will appear on your card-but the satisfaction of good scores on particular holes should be enough gratification to make this a golfing experience to remember. As we do on links courses-play a match-that way no matter how bad your medal score you can still have success out there in beating your opponent.

The greens are very undulating and quick-you have to carefully consider where on the green to hit your approach or you will be three-putting you score away. Driving areas are often confined by hazard on one side or by harrowing topography so it will take some articulate driving-with a bit of bravado to get the best angle of approach to some very challenging green settings. The bunkers are deep-deep so you have to have real trust in your 60 degree and play for the putting surface not the flag out of the greenside bunkers.

There are major distances between greens and tees but they do provide shuttle service in season. I think this is a course to walk if for no other reason to take in the full flavor of the aesthetics of the course and have proper time to plot the strategy of your next shot.

Hole-by-hole (Blue/White tees):

#1 Snake Par 5 534/493 yards

The course begins with a relatively tame set of holes-this five par is flanked by the river on the left but it only comes into play on the tee shot. A drive to right center adjacent to the fairway bunker on the right will provide a middle iron to a layup area across the two fairway bunkers on the right and an advantage angle to the putting surface that opens up from that side. The fairway bunkers on the left from 200 yards in are a good place not to visit. This green has some serious undulation-get used to it-you will see lots of this all day.

#2 Burial Mounds Par 4 370/350 yards

Named for the series of mounds that skirt the right side of this hole, it is not as dire as it sounds. Drive to left center to get a clear peek at the opening to the green on the left. Green is tightly bunkered and set on the 8 to 2 angle so it favors an approach from the left or a fade in if the pin is set up into the middle or the back of the putting surface. You should make two pars by now and feel pretty good about yourself.

#3 Gotcha Par 4 410/389 yards

Here is his first example of bait and sting-you have to resist being bold off this tee or the high score can attack your card early in this round. This dog-ear right has a beautiful driving look from the tee-tall trees frame the right behind a fairway bunker you do not want to visit. Best drive is left center to get a look up the hole. Now a massive fairway bunker skirts the right side from 150 yard in so you again have to approach from the left or set up a fade to avoid bringing this into play on your approach. Front pin is accessible but the middle and back become more problematic to attack. If your drive is off line you have to consider a layup to a wedge distance to limit your damage here.

#4 Swan Lake Par 3 185/144 yards

As you can probably tell by now Pete is upping the challenge incrementally fairly early in the round and this next hole follows that script pretty carefully. A mid range par three the green is tightly flanked diagonally by the water so there are no bunkers necessary to increase this challenge. He provides a generous bail out area to the left but it is undulating and mounded recover shots from there are playable but not easy. You have to make a choice on this tee to aim at the center and left of the green but the choice is really how you get there. The tilt of the green sets up for a nice draw over the water but if your curve fails to develop that is risky. As hard as this looks to the eye-it is probably the easiest par 3 challenge of the day.

#5 Made In Heaven Par 4 388/376 yards

The length of the cart ride to the next tee will make it seem like you have traveled to heaven and the view from the tee will confirm it. This looks like a hole from Dorado Beach in Puerto Rico-high tee box with a drive across the river to a generous landing area about level to the tee. Watching this drive drop out of the sky-especially if you avoid the massive fairway bunker on the right-is a beautiful sight. The green is set up on a ledge above you-diagonally set 8 to 2 up in the right corner. Real problem here is the green is deep and slanted

away on the back third. Putting to the back is a major challenge-a flag back there requires a shot to the middle distance no further. The hole is equally beautiful to the eye looking from the green back to the tee.

#6 Jackknife Par 4 343/308 yards

A bit of a heart attack climb to this next tee so catch your breath before taking in what is required next. This is a short hole-made even shorter by the severe bend from right to left once you cross the flex point of the dogear right. Pay close attention to the aiming point off the tee-you can easily mistake or overthinking the bend of the hole. Three metal to left center with a slight lean back to the right could set up an attack short iron to a green set 8:30 to 2:30 way back up the right. You have a nice feed mound short left that can be used to shove the approach onto a front pin. If the pin is middle or back you have to fly it back there and be very controlled on your distance to not roll through the angled set green. You will kick yourself if you do not get a good scoring opportunity here.

#7 Glencary Par 4 374/352 yards

Very challenging dogleg left-you drive to right center in the turn of the dogleg at the top of the hill of a wide landing area. The no-no here is a hook off the tee which will end up in a cavernous abyss that flanks 125 yards on the left of the landing area. If you end up there you are pitching out because you cannot see the green for the depth of the pit and the corner of the dogleg. Green is 28 feet deep but carved off front right as it falls into a very deep bunker-this will catch all leaky right approaches. Back of the green is pitched away so you have to play the middle of the green on most shots in.

#8 Hell's Gate Par 5 512/484 yards

This one is a bit out of character for the day but it is very challenging none the less. The tee box is a precipice at the top of the hill and the landing area is a good 100 feet below you and turning hard to the right around a forest of no-good. You aim a cut at the single tree through the fairway just off the fairway bunker. As bad as right is off the tee left is not much better because there are individual trees which will block you layup and make it into a four shot hole. If you drive successfully you will have two choices to make. One-do you go for the green which is wedged in between deep bunkers front left and trees behind right. Two-if you choose to layup which fairway do you lay up to-the accessible one low on the left that leaves you an elevation pitch over the deep bunkers to a very shallow target from that angle or the tighter upper fairway on the right that gives you a very accessible look right up the angle of the green from 100 yards. One is unlikely and two the latter is preferred if you have a decent look at it from your drive location.

#9 Cathedral Spires Par 4 316/297 yards

Now this is a hole to behold. Tee box is wedged between a lake and the Sheboygan and it creates a chute effect to the drive. You can be Greg Norman and try to drive the green across the river right of a stand of trees that divides the split fairway. More sensible approach is 3 wood to the left between high ground on the left and the stand of trees. The bunker just beyond the trees is reachable with driver, but if you put your drive just in front of that and clear the trees you have a great look at a very small green saddled around a bunker. If

the pin is on the front you can tumble one short and onto the green-otherwise hit a high one in to the middle or back pin positions. A very delightful hole-scenic-challenging-doable.

#10 River and Marsh Par 3 204/175 yards

If played at its full length of 200+ this can be a difficult hole. The green sits across a hazard that is really not that much in play but the diagonal set of the green to the tee angle does not give you a whole lot to shoot at if you have a fairway metal or hybrid in hand. This green has a lot of slope in it as well so even a pitch up and down to save par is lots of work.

#11 Rise and Fall Par 5 542/522

This is a boom-a-rang three shotter that hugs the Sheboygan all the way around. Any misses to the right are a sure double. Drive straight away at the fairway bunker through the driving area. Now be aggressive with your layup and try to drop it between the clump of trees on the edge of the water and the bunker just inside 100 yards. This gives you an aggressive angle to a long and narrow green tucked behind a grass bunker and the water's edge. You should get a good scoring opportunity here.

#12 Long Lagoon Par 4 433/372

Second handicap hole and it deserves the moniker. You have to make a choice off this tee to drive straight over the lagoon and the collaring bunker, a carry of a good 220, or a shorter carry to the fat fairway to the right. The second choice will leave you a very difficult angle if you are trying to reach the green on your second. Ideal drive would be center of the right fairway turning over back toward the pot bunker at 250. If you do not have a good look at the green just layup across the cart path that splits the fairway to about 75 yards. This green is tightly collared by the river on the right so don't be careless with your shot at the green.

#13 Tall Timber Par 3 192/140 yards

This is the most unrelenting challenge of the day. The ramped green is almost 50 yards deep so the hole can play a good 220 to a back flag. Green is fronted and skirted on the right by the river and the stand of trees on the left make the only shot on this hole a draw that starts out over the hazard and turns up the S-shaped green. Any fades here are wet-just focus and hit the draw that is in your mind's eye.

#14 Blind Alley Par 4 310/294 yards

This hole has a similar shape and challenge as 14 at Avenel. The proper shot off the tee is 200 yards-no more to lay up to 110 in the center. Anything longer and the mound at 75 yards will block your vision of the green on your approach. Green is similar to #4-hugs the hazard tightly on the right, but with a short club you should be able to negotiate this. Another scoring opportunity for sure.

#15 The Sand Pit Par 4 346/329 yards

Another modest four par probably calls for a 220 shot off the tee at the left edge of the bunker you see through the fairway on the right. Big bunker up the left of the driving area means a bogey for sure. Now you

have a shortish iron across the edge of another 75 yard bunker front left of the green to a deep round green set into a dell. With a decent drive this makes for another good scoring chance.

#16 Unter Der Linden Par 5 540/511 yards

Named for the Linden tree that obscures your third shot into this cool par S-shaped par 5, you will have to hit three really controlled shots here to be successful. Drive straight away to center and you get a peek around the first elbow in the esses to a lay-up area below. Best tactic would be to leave it around 110 yards between the 150 marker and the river's edge. From there you get a good peek at the center and back of the green between Linden and the wood members that delineate the river on the left of the green. 44 yard green means you must try to get the approach near the pin to avoid a three-jack.

#17 Snapping Turtle Par 3 168/153 yards

Relatively simple par three with a middle iron requirement-you do have to avoid the wet hook and negotiate the 5 to 11 angle of the green to the teeing area. Missing right you are down in some deep grass depressions-up and downs from there are difficult. Just hit a solid shot into the middle of the green-that is what is required.

#18 Dyehard Par 4 440/421 yards

A very difficult finishing hole if you need par to make a good score. This is a long dogear left that wraps around a sand/scrub waste area all the way up the left. Feel fortunate, in that this waste area is flooded for the tournament events which would make the hole incrementally more difficult. If you manage a tight draw that follows the line of the fairway you will have a fairway wood across the remainder of the waste area to a long presentation of the double green this hole shares with the 18th of the Meadows. Another draw would follow the line of the hole up the putting surface. A par here is a heroic score.

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