

Pinehurst #4
Pinehurst, NC

Architect: Tom Fazio (Remake-2000)

Tees	Par	Yards	Rating	Slope
Blue	72	6658	71.7	129
White	72	6214	69.5	126

Overview:

In 2000 Tom Fazio finished the replacement of Donald Ross's original #4 course with a totally new course on the site of the old #4 design. This "tribute to Pinehurst" has all of the traditional look that people have come to expect in the sandhills of Pinehurst, strategic hole designs, crowned greens, bold contouring, and about 180 silver dollar pot bunkers littered about. This new course stands tall next to #2, #8, and #7 as another of the many seminal golf challenges this resort provides.

The course is built on the ground adjacent to #2 so it shares some of the feel of it's favored sister, but the ground has much more topographical interest which gave Fazio lots of latitude to create stunningly visual holes with unique strategic character. Many of the green settings have the fall off shoulders or steep fronts but they do not really have the turtle back appearance Ross used on #2. Fazio's liberal use of small pot bunkers-especially around the greens-gives a real Scottish arbitrariness to the design that is visually delightful and strategically challenging. He also used the large shouldering sand waste areas to delineate many of the holes giving the intimidating pine barren look to many of the driving areas. The routing of the holes are defined by the trees and the waste areas-similar to what he did on #8-so there is a premium for driving accuracy to set up aggressive plays into the greens.

What I like more than anything here is the variety of the holes and the sequence of the challenges. Both sides of the course start slowly but by the time you get to the third hole the difficulty factor is ramping up quickly. You see holes that turn both ways, holes that go up, holes that go down, small greens, big greens, the whole mishpucha-but more than anything you will see one uniquely different hole after another that will demand you pause for thoughtful planning on the tee before taking on the challenge before you. To score well here you need to be tactically correct, have great execution of your intent, and a little bit of luck would not hurt either. There will be some blow up holes so being reasonably aggressive throughout makes the most sense.

Hole-by-Hole:

#1 Par 4 368/337

The course begins with a gentle challenge, a short dogear right around five pot bunkers sunk into the corner-massive waste bunker flanks the left side of the hole. Drive it to center-don't cut the corner- down in those bunkers is nowhere to begin your day. If you do not hit your drive on a wayward path, you have a short club looking around the right corner-green is raised-flanked with a school of bunkers on the left-best shot in is a draw into the slow stepping of this green. Hitting this green and two putting would be a good start.

#2 Par 5 487/471

Challenge ramps up slightly with a visually pleasing finesse par five which may have you shaking your head as you walk off the green. Drive it down the hill on the left toward the fan of bunkers 250 out. You would have to pass the bunkers to have a realistic shot at the green-more likely you have a 180 shot you want to turn over to pass the second fan of bunkers on the right- just inside 100. The pitch into this green is as hard a shot as you will hit all day-green is very narrow, steep front, and raised from the fairway. Anything landing past center is trundling off the back-anything hit wimply at the front edge will come back at you. You will just not believe how many ways you can make a bogey here-ergo the shaking of the head.

#3 Par 4 398/370

Two more click stops on the gear shifter-this one has some serious character to it. Best drive is a draw aimed at trees through the fairway and turned back to center at the top the hill. Now you have a slightly downhill mid to long club into a green that is raised sharply from the fairway with no bunkers that matter. Must strike it pure to carry to the desired part of the green and have it stay there. Green is a three sided pinwheel-with the front nose sticking right at you-each lobe is a distinct tier. There is a pitching area long and left so I would be pretty aggressive to a flag in the left lobe.

#4 Par 3 169/145

This is the picture hole from the scorecard. Backdrop for the hole has some beautiful horseshoe landscaping that really creates visual appeal. This is a full forced carry to a green arrangement below you across a yawning pond. The water fronts the entire green so there is no bailout or safe route to play-your shot must clear the front edge of the green to keep from backing into the hazard. The center of the green is a little deeper than the sides so you can err long in your club choice if you can keep it in the center. Lots of width to work with but that will work against you if you leave yourself a very long first putt. As flat as the green appears it has serious contours, pay close attention when surmising your putt.

#5 Par 4 427/405

OK now we are getting to full throttle. This is a long hole on the card and the steady uphill rise of the hole makes it even longer on the ground. From the elevated tee box you drive it hard to left center at the nest of bunkers through the fairway. If you kill it you can end up inside of 200 but you will have a long carry shot off a downslope to a green on an 8 to 2 diagonal that sits well above the hitting area. Green is 36 yards deep and has two distinct sections so you have to force your ball into the segment with the flag. Putting is pretty tame on this one so if you get it within 25 feet make a good charge at this hole.

#6 Par 3 176/160

A mid-iron to a shortish downhill three par seems like a simple task but this hole has some real facet in the green that makes it anything but a pushover. The view from the tee is very distracting in a nice sort of way-the backdrop beyond the green is very scenic as it falls off to the basin on this side of the property where all the water flows. Front left of the green has a large waste bunker that will consume your attention but it is really the two pot bunkers on the other side that will attract your ball if you get too concerned about the big one. Green banks toward the front right until just past center and then falls away to the back left. You really have to work it in with a draw to get the best reception from the putting surface. As it should be, the putting is the real challenge to making a good score-with so much going on around the green do not get distracted just read the small piece of real estate between you and the hole.

#7 Par 4 410/380

Much like the previous par four this one has lots of length and lots of teeth. Waste area runs the full length of the hole on the right so your natural inclination is to play away from it up the left. Two problems with that thinking-one, it makes the hole considerably longer and two, there are lots of trees and scrub up the left that can lead to a chip out. Best drive would be a power fade that followed the general line of the hole. The second shot will have to take on a piece of the back end of the waste area since the green is set slightly behind it. Best second is another fade aimed at the left greenside pitching area and working back. I would not be embarrassed with a chip and a two putt for a bogie here.

#8 Par 4 382/353

This one looks nothing like anything you have seen so far-mid-length par four ramps up from the tee to a perched green at the top of the gentle hill. Another cluster of silver dollar bunkers on the right of the driving area-no place to be. Drive to center and you have less than 150 up the hill to a green protected by another nest of pancakes short and left of the green. A bit of a false front on the green so you have to carry it into the first third to be on-if you do that the putting is tame enough to have a run at a good score.

#9 Par 5 507/477

Finally a bit of a respite-relatively normal three shot five par until you get to the green. Hit a draw to center off the pots on the right at about 200. The layup is to just outside 90 yards to avoid the first of 15 flapjacks that lie between you and the green the last 100 yards. The green is perched behind the last of these and has a bit of a turtle back shape to it but not real severe. Hit the approach to the fat side of the green relative to the pin and putt across. Presence in any of the hyphenated line of bunkers is a sure prescription for double.

#10 Par 4 388/363

Much as you saw at the beginning of the round, this side begins with a technical hole that provides you a scoring opportunity if you are careful. A bit of a serpentine downhill par four-drive it to R/C for the best look up the angle of the green. A draw working up the shape of the green is the correct approach-pin on the left behind the pot bunkers that flank the left middle of the green is very dicey. Pause for a refreshment at the hut next to this green-you have things that will dry the roof of your mouth coming up shortly.

#11 Par 4 401/370

The driving area on this hole is massive-completely out of character to everything you have seen so far. But don't be fooled, the center of the driving area is where you want to land-wayward left or right may still be on short grass but it makes the next shot much more difficult. Take note of the "hotel residence" left of the trees-some rich dude and a trophy wife my bet. The green is now tucked back to the left around some trees-perched up from the fairway that ramps steeply right in front. This is a deep green that will hold the long approach club you are using-just don't be timid.

#12 Par 3 186/164

This is a three par that is not dissimilar to #6-downhill visual hole where the green sets up to an angle for a draw. Pots left of the bunker are deep-big heel print in the front right section of the green that will collect balls.

#13 Par 5 500/487

Take a swig and a deep breath when you step on to this tee-dry mouth is coming. The visual alone is disarming and you cannot even see the real danger from the tee box. The driving area is flanked the first 250 yards on the left by a huge waste area-you want to drive to center without fear of the sand. From there you can see the hole turns like a question mark around a massive body of water and the green is tucked back and to the left behind the hazard. Your lay up is a draw that starts on the right edge of the fairway and turns back to a receptive area about 110 from the green. Shortish iron now has to take on the edge of the water-green is slightly raised so carry your shot into the putting surface. The green actually widens at the back but you have to play smart and work it up the narrower front to minimize your exposure to the water.

#14 Par 3 189/160

If you finished thirteen with your skin in tact you now are playing the hardest par three in the state. This is a "no backoff" hole-there is no bail out room, no safe way to play-just hitch up your britches and hit the shot you see. Long 46 yard shoe tongue green steps toward you on a 5 to 11 angle to the tee and the same ocean you just played over on the last is on your left. Start it at the bunker just right of the center of the green and turn it fearlessly toward the center of the green and the hazard. Long is actually fine as long as it is not long and left. A four on this hole is a gift from the golf gods.

#15 Par 4 367/345

This hole is very intriguing because it really challenges you twice if you are looking for a scoring opportunity. Slight leaner to the right off the tee-best drive is actually taking on the left edge of the nest of bunkers on the right-about a 215 yard carry to clear on the longest angle. If you have negotiated this and have a center fairway lie you now are hitting off a downslope into that same green set you have seen all day-tightly perched green above a school of flapjacks-this one actually looks like an Ocean City Skee-ball ramp to me. The front left of this kidney shaped green is very steep-sharp fall off just off the front right will collect meek shots. Best play is probably to the center of the bean and deal with the downhill putt if the pin is up front.

#16 Par 4 368/331

A bit of TPC Sawgrass here-dogear swinging to the left after the driving area around a huge waste area that was probably a pond in pre-historic times. Drive it straight away to about 125 just off the right of the beginning of the old dinosaur wading pool. Green is now set back to the left behind a bunch of pot bunkers-surprise it is raised from the fairway, so elevate your approach all the way to the flag position.

#17 Par 5 535/506

Similar to #2 but longer-bowling alley straight away five par that can lull you to sleep if you are not careful. Drive it right to left to end up in the center adjacent to a couple of nests of potties. Hit a long club to lay up to a wavy landing area slightly below you at about 110. This green is 50 yards long and rather slender so a precise distancing decision is important. Back of the green falls off in the last 20 feet but you can pitch back from there without much incident.

#18 Par 4 400/390

This is about as difficult of a hole as you have played all day-nice of him to save a little challenge for the end. Waste area all the way up the left side of the hole until it cuts across the fairway at about 110 to finish up the right side of the green. Solid drive to right center will leave a long shot across the waste transition to a slightly raised green that has three sandcakes front left and the remainder of the waste area on the right. Deep green so use it-the short shots will have a way of being magnetized like iron filings into the wasteland. This green has serious contour to it-you have to be very careful to avoid a depressing three jack to finish.