

Teeth of the Dog
Casa de Campo, Dominican Republic

Architect: Pete Dye (1971)

	Par	Rating	Slope	Yardage
Black	72	76	135	7263
Gold	72	74.4	134	6969
Blue	72	71.2	132	6429
White	72	68.8	126	5954
Red	72	68.0	118	4827

Overview:

Early in his career Pete Dye established a beachhead in the Dominican Republic with the creation of this course at Casa de Campo. He was so enamored with the place he bought a residence next to the 7th green and spent his lifetime tinkering with this beautiful seaside course. What resulted is a distinctive seaside layout that has been chosen as the site of the prestigious Latin American Amateur Championship twice in the last five years. Because of the success of his first design Pete's fingerprints can be found on a plethora of resort and private courses on the island and as a result the Dominican presents a full treatise of the Dye design expertise.

Looking at an aerial view of the jagged coastline Pete must have noticed that it resembled the snarl of a German Shepard guard dog from a WWII prisoner of war camp. This is where the course gets it's moniker and Pete staked his reputation on the difficulty that represented. If the wind is up at 20 mph plus the reputation is well earned and all bets are off on the medal score. As I suggest to people when they play wind swept capricious links lay outs, make sure you have a match going, it is a hedge against a medal score train wreck and will insure that you have a good time no matter what transpires.

It is worth noting that with so many greens set against the seaside backdrop it gives you little depth perception which makes calculating approach carry distance a major challenge. An experienced caddie with an accurate range finder can instill some needed confidence in solving the riddle of picking approach clubs.

Having said that, in spite of the reputation as Pete's most punitive design, I think the course has a bark that is far worse then it's bite. This is very much a positional driving course where success on the approach depends on the angle of attack you are left with off the tee. If the wind is not debilitating, a player who thoughtfully positions their tee ball can, for the most part, control their own destiny.

The call of the rocks and the surf is the obvious psychological battle you must negotiate. But, as you see with Pete's most challenging tracks like TPC Sawgrass and the Ocean Course at Kiawah, it is the innovative green complexes that present the stiffest challenges and make the value of position off the tee so pivotal to scoring well. This is a relatively flat seaside piece of ground so Pete created topographical interest by raising many table top greens to create shoulders that will spill a shot without the requisite intention into low hollows or fierce collection bunkers from which full Phil antics are required for recovery. The green surfaces are often narrow irregular shapes which accentuate the difficulty in keeping an approach on the dance floor-the proper attack angle makes that much more plausible.

The greens and surrounds have Paspalum grass which is a hearty plant that survives well in hot, seaside conditions. The stuff is very grainy and affects putting pace and, equally problematic, chipping off the sticky surface of greenside surrounds. Both of these factor into your play so, in anticipation of the Paspalum effect, you should probably prepare by hitting a dozen pitches and chips in the designated short game practice area next to the driving range.

Once on the greens take notice of the angle of the shadows which will reveal the direction of the setting sun and help you anticipate the effect of the grain on all putts. This is a place where you should read the pace of the putt first and then consider the line to match up. There is sufficient swerve in the surfaces themselves that makes picking the accurate line difficult enough, but controlling the speed of your putts will have more to do with avoiding a knee-knocker above the hole or a six-footers coming back.

The bottom line is that you better carefully consider your preferred drive position on every tee and expect that a short game with a wide variety of creative recovery shots will be required if you are to shoot something within your handicap range.

As is detailed in the Hole-By-Hole descriptive below, both sides have a similar rhythm-they start with mellow inland holes before tossing your fate to the call of the Sirens on the rocky coast line. Standing on the first tee a wide fairway fans out in all directions but it is a solitary palm through the left rough that is your shot line. With a short club in your hand, a coffee table green complex that repels shots in three directions awaits your approach so it is evident early on that dexterity will matter.

The next three holes slowly ramp up the challenge before you reach the first toothy stretch of The Dog. From the fifth to the eighth it features a pair of rocky par threes and a couple of tough par fours mixed in for good measure. At only 125 yards an on-level pitch into a tiny green of the fifth seems very doable, but wind, fear, and one tree with long reach off the front right make this anything but a pushover.

This is followed by the #1 handicap hole on the course, a mid-range four par where the prevailing wind pushes your Titleist toward the rocks that snuggle the coastline. The further right you play off the tee to play safe from the sea the harder the angle into the green tucked back to the left.

Next is a signature par three that sits adjacent to the backyard of Pete's Dominican residence. This green is a much more generous target than the fifth but the sweeping contour of the putting surface can lead to serious head scratching as your ball separates from the hole and you think you can make out an audible chortle from just over the fence to your right.

Much like the sixth, the eighth profiles right-to-left around the coastline but it actually plays a half a stroke harder to me because the green complex has much more immediate peril associated with it. This puts a premium on the distance control and accuracy of the second shot. The outward half ends with a three-shot par 5 where you drive it over remnant of the runway of the old Casa airport. In the old days you had to sequence your drive with arrival and departure of jets servicing the resort. Once in the fairway show sine restraint on the layup to get into position for a short pitch to get one more birdie chance on this side.

Relatively tame inland holes start out the second nine but the wake up calls begins at a very kitchy Par 3 at the 13th hole. The descriptive below tells the story, this is a tough par if you miss the elusive putting surface. The sobering Par 5 that follows brings you back to the sea and it is definitely a hole where you must keep your

wits about you. Pete sets you up for a sucker punch baiting you to go for the green in two but you have to resist that temptation because the green is set on a tight angle to the hazard and it is very shallow to your approach. There are bad results lurking on missing in any direction.

From 15 through 17 you are back in the jowls of the dog and it takes sound strategy and great shot making to get through this sequence without serious scorecard carnage. Both par fours have green complexes hanging over the Atlantic so the wind influence is at it's maximum. The par three in between is probably the hardest hole you will play all day. Pay close attention to the pin position which will dictate the proper intended flight line for your approach.

Turning back inland the day ends with a solid four par which once again calls for articulate shot placement off the tee and conservative line on the approach since a watery grave is hovering below the left front of the green. There is plenty of room right of the green complex and, with the right shot shape, the contours in that landing area can feed your ball onto the putting surface.

When you are done make sure to enjoy a post game buffet lunch in the Lago Restaurant that overlooks the finishing hole of the Dog and a long view of the shoreline. The food is excellent and the atmosphere is perfect for decompression after the round.

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

#1 Par 4 371/332 yards

The course opens with a fairly rudimentary Par 4 which gives you a chance to establish your balance. A wide open driving area, aim to the palm tree through the fairway to the left to set up an approach to a green tucked to the right, perched on top of a mound. There is a shoulder fall off long left that you need to beware of or you are playing a tricky pitch to save par. For all pins here aim at the dead center of the green and putt the spokes to the day's hole location.

#2 Par 4 357/346

This one has a very innovative Pete Dye look in that he accessorized the hole with reclaimed driftwood planks along the dry bed waste area that defines the dogleg left and a waste area short and right of the green. Looks almost like a picket fence from the tee and it frames the needed right to left drive nicely. The approach favors a slight fade into a narrow green that slopes toward you so a ball landing on the front edge feeding up the putting surface is the best approach.

#3 Par 5 453/427

This short five par presents your best scoring opportunity on the outward nine so make it worth it. Drive straight away off the bunker on the left which should put you into an attack position in the center of the fairway. Depending on the wind direction this might be reachable but, like the first, the green is set up on a knob so managing a long club up the opening and getting it to stay on the narrow green is a tall order. If you lay up to 75 yards you should have a manageable pitch with spin that can give you a birdie chance. Front left bunker is the main no-no on this one.

#4 Par 4 371/340

This dogear right brings you to the doorstep of the seaside holes on the outward half. Drive to left center to get an open look at a green that sits high above the “bunker from hell” on the right. Aim front left on all pins and try to feed it to center. Only acceptable misses here are left. Make a par and you are in the right frame of mind for the upcoming coastal challenges.

#5 Par 3 137/122

The seaside holes on the front are tantalizing because they are not long but, depending on the wind direction, they are really no easier than those on the back. This is a short pitch across the corner of the sea into a narrow green working away from you shaped like a throw rug. The lone tree reaching across the front right corner of the green will bat down balls and put them in some unpredictable places. There is no safe line on that side. The only shot here is a cut off the ocean into the center of the green. Walk off here with a par and you are in the distinct minority of players having played today.

#6 Par 4 402/388

Considered the #1 handicap hole on the card but I am not sure why-unless you are playing the Gold or Black Tees under Coast Guard jurisdiction. Aim at the bunkers on the right of the fairway, there is plenty of room there to avoid the corner of the ocean. You are left with a very manageable mid-range iron to a green set at a 5 to 11 angle without much trouble. A draw approach can use the right shoulder mound to feed a ball into the center and back of the green.

#7 Par 3 186/122

A beautiful sight from the tee, this is the most photographed 3-par on this course, mostly because it sits below Pete’s vacation home backyard from where he could witness player folly first hand. Much like the last it is a very generous green that slopes away from the side bunkers. Any shot that works right to left up the green should find a reasonable putt to the day’s flag. Unlike the fifth hole, you should walk away from here with a 3 every time.

#8 Par 4 399/335

As the #3 handicap hole I found this hole much harder than it’s sister #7. Similar to the strategy there aim at the bunker on the right to open up an iron shot into the green set below and to the left against the seashore rocks. The approach must carry a large bunker directly in front of the green, a manageable task if you are playing from the fairway. It seems tempting to play the approach from the right but there is a culvert depression over there that may gather a ball rather than release it onto the green. This approach requires the courage to play at the center of the green no right-to-left drift that would bring the rocks into play.

#9 Par 5 535/526

Heading back inland this is a very playable three-shot hole to end the front nine. Drive to right center off the bunker jutting in from the left. Your lay up is at a large tree through the fairway on the left which will give you a short iron approach back up the hill where the green complex is perched to the right. The bunkers fronting the

green on the right make the right pins very hard to get at, recovery from there is by no means easy. An approach into the center of the green for all pins seems logical.

#10 Par 4 378/352

Much like the front nine the back nine starts inland from the club house and therefore the first four holes are quite scoreable before you get back to the sea. This hole is a hard swinging dogleg left but you want to aim to the wide open area right center off the tee to get the best look back at the green. The second shot is to a well guarded green set slightly below you that seems to favor a right-to-left draw. Missing left leaves a dicey bunker recovery so aim front right and work the ball up the center of the green.

#11 Par 5 551/536

Probably the most routine hole on this side, drive it to right center off the bunker on the left. Your lay up is at the bunker through the fairway on the left, this opens up access to the green set right. The putting surface is raised slightly with the Dye fall offs on either side. You should have an attack yardage on your third so use it boldly.

#12 Par 4 397/388

This hole bends to the right on the second so get your tee ball to left center. Green access is open to a fade but a ball without sufficient enthusiasm will fall short and right into the bunker. If you are on a problematic approach line aim at the front left of the green and pitch up the throat of the green on your third to try and save a par.

#13 Par 3 168/137

On all Pete Dye tracks there is a hidden gem of a hole that lacks popular fanfare. This that gem on The Dog. A simple appearing middle range Par 3 this table top green is long, narrow, and particularly problematic to hold. The fall offs right and left to the waste bunkers are pronounced and up-and-down recoveries from either side are extremely unlikely. Only shot is a tight draw honing on the front center of the green that feeds up the narrow putting surface. A par here would get you a well deserved high five from Pete.

#14 Par 5 490/454

One last very testing five-par before you get to the German Shepard's molars again. Drive is simple-hit it left center off the sprawling waste area on the right. The second shot has to take on varying amounts of the water hazard on the right depending on how you decide to approach this cape style green set to the right. Even if you are within range, attacking the green in two is a double in the making since the green is raised and hard to hold with anything but a Jack Nicklaus towering fade. Lay up is left at the bunkers short of the green which leaves a very doable pitch up the length of the green. Best score here is probably accomplished taking the conservative route.

#15 Par 4 322/302

Buckle your safety belt low and tight across your lap because the next four holes, which have the three lowest handicap ratings on this side, will challenge your full skill set. Just remember that the carries across the Teeth of the Dog chasms are usually more substantial than they look. A seaside wind will have its way with your ball. I like three wood here at the bunker through the fairway on the left to give you a look over some land at the green set well to the right above the ocean. Your approach line is at the front third, left edge of the green. A pitch and a putt to save par is no embarrassment here.

#16 Par 3 154/142

Far and away the hardest of the one-shot holes on The Dog, this one has a huge diagonally set green complex with a narrow boardwalk of short grass between the front and back sections. If the pin is on the left it is a routine high fade at the left edge. If the pin is on the right it is simply an Arnie hitch-up-your-pants courageous play right at the flag. Missing short left on this back pin does not take the double bogey chance away so throw caution, and your Pro-V, to the wind and go for the glory.

#17 Par 4 369/330

One more rocky dogleg across the jaws of the dog. A bit longer than 15, out left once again to the open area leaves a death defying approach back into the green perched above the ocean. If the approach shot looks too precarious lay up and pitch up the green.

#18 Par 4 389/375

The finishing hole brings you back inland but it has plenty of risk if you are trying to finish with a par. Drive it strong to right center and you have a right-to-left carry shot around a water hazard into a green set up into the hill. The landing area of the green feeds from the right, so use it as such to delimit the chance of taking on too much water or the front left bunker constellation.