

Grayhawk-Talon Course Scottsdale, Arizona

Architect: Gary Panks/David Graham (1994)

	Par	Rating	Slope	Yardage
Talon	72	73.3	146	6973
Palo Verde	72	70.8	134	6430
Terra Cotta	72	68.3	122	5867
Heather	72	69.3	118	5143

Overview:

Grayhawk Golf Club has been the home many prestigious events including the PGA's Waste Management Open and the Anderson Consulting Match Play and will be the site of the Men's and Women's NCAA Championships from 2020 through 2022. The Raptor and the Talon Courses, laid out in the flat terrain of the Sonoran Desert with the stunning backdrop of the McDowell Mountains in the distance, are the epitome of desert golf in the American Southwest.

The Talon Course, a Gary Panks/David Graham creation from the 1990's, gives you a particular narrow driving theater on almost every hole. Many drives are over sand and scrub which mask the landing area of your tee balls and the adjacent desert in its natural state obviates the need for rough at all. Get yourself a yardage book in the golf shop, you are going to need some corroborating visuals to find your way around here.

To me this makes for corridor golf so you must control your driving and approach lines to stay out of the snake and scorpion retreats. The tightness of the track and the unrelenting penalty of the desert's encroachment make a good medal score hard to come by. Make sure you set up a match with your buds if you want to enjoy this golf experience.

The back nine in particular winds around and through a series of canyons making for unexpected elevation changes and severe drop-offs into sand wilderness for wayward shots. The sprawling fairway and greenside bunkering works well with the desert scrub helping to define the strategic lines of the holes. These bunkers present some intimidating challenges but with careful planning it is possible to negotiate your way about relatively unfettered. The bunkers are deep with ash tray sand but very playable to a normal escape if you avoid the bad thoughts.

Green complexes throughout the course are very varied and make for some significant tactical choices on approach lines. Many of them are large, multi-tiered surfaces set in a dell depression for effect. There are considerable short grass scapes adjacent to these putting surfaces so your pitch and run save game will get a good workout today. The scale of the green complexes puts an onus on making approaches into the flag section of the day or you will be constantly battling to avoid the three putts.

Talon's most memorable feature is the combination of the natural desert floral set against the backdrop of the towering grey mountains in the distance. Often times through the round you will find it hard to

concentrate on a target dwarfed by the scale of the back drop. Bring your camera for the Kodak moments-some of your most lasting memories of the day will be in those landscapes.

Hole-By-Hole Analysis: (Palo Verde/Terra Cotta)

#1 Par 4 385/357 Farrview

The first hole at Talon is named in memory of Heather Farr who was a LPGA ambassador for the course and a beloved member of this community. The narrow corridor of this opening hole will set the tone for the day. Drive to center to get a look at a large accessible green stepped up to the back right. One bunker shades the front right of the green and there are a series of grass depressions on the left.

#2 Par 4 309/284 Bogle

This is a short hard dogear right with a massive bunker/desert combination all the way up the right side. Best play is at the wide area on the left side which leaves a shortish club into a coffee table steeply tiered green protected by a pot bunker in front left and a wrap-around bunker on the right.

#3 Par 5 465/426 Three Sisters

A short five par offers the opportunity to reach in two if you can hit an articulate drive hugging the left side before the hole turns to the left. There is a grove of mesquite trees that can capture a ball not hit with sufficient intention on that side. Otherwise the safer drive is right center at the right utility tower in the distance. The approach to the green is protected by a stunning architectural feature that gives the hole its name-three-deep layered bunkers with railroad tie accents that must be avoided. This is not a time to mess with the family members.

#4 Par 4 402/329 Ironwood

This longish Par 4 you want to drive to center between the fairway bunker on the right and the fairway swales on the left. The green, slightly raised from the fairway, has one bunker and a series of large mounds on the left and a collection area to the right. Putting surface has a stepped pitch from 10 to 4 that will accept a right-to-left approach line smartly.

#5 Par 3 133/117 Sentinel

First of the three-pars is a short club across a mass of sand to a green set on the diagonal with a fall off to the back right. You often see this arrangement on parkland courses with a fronting pond, the more you play to the right the longer your carry over the hazard. They placed one more bunker adjacent frames the left side of the green and you want to work your shot away from that. I love the entire composition of this green complex, the

way this left bunker orients to the diagonal setting of the green makes for a thoughtful approach to be successful.

#6 Par 4 422/392 The Ridge

The #1 handicap hole this is a long one with a slight bend right-to-left. The name comes from a ridge that runs up the left side of the plateau landing area that can suck weaker shots to a deep swale below the fairway on that side. The receptive green has no bunkers but there are a series of grass depressions short right. The front face of approach to the green is very steep and will reject shots that do not clear the front edge.

#7 Par 4 366/323 Flash Flood

This is a technical hole with a bit of tree bother on the right of the driving area which would suggest a drive to left center. The green is massive with two distinct levels. A large bunker is short and left of the surface and some mogully mounds frame the right side of the approach.

#8 Par 3 189/172 Desert Burn

This is a very interesting long Par 3 in that your tee shot has to carry a large desert wasteland to reach a bunkerless green with multiple levels. The grass run up to the green is very steep and you must carry that to get into the middle of the green. The lack of definition around the green makes it really important to focus on this tee shot.

#9 Par 5 507/473 Grady's Lair

The outward half ends with a long and straight Par 5. Drive to center to avoid the bunker on the left and desert on the right off the tee. Lay-up wisely to avoid a grass swale and pot bunker on the left at 75 yards. A green protected by a steep faced railroad tie bunker on the right will be much easier to avoid with a short club in your hand.

#10 Par 4 422/401 Reflection

Second nine opens with a long, stiff challenge. Drive down the left if you have the nerve. The first box canyon looms below so do not overcook a draw here. What remains is a long second into a green that has a bunker between you and the canyon box.

#11 Par 3 161/137 Swinging Bridge

Here is a Kodak Moment with a superb mountain backdrop view off the tee-looks like Palm Desert. The canyon surrounds this teeing area so watch your step heading back to the cart. The carry off the tee is over the same canyon so short is a disaster. Two-tiered green leans at you and to the front left, so you can use the slope

to aid a right-to-left shot and get to a front left flag. The back flags on so much. A footnote is that the hole gets it's name for the suspension bridge that provides access to the back tee.

#12 Par 4 405/376 Double Cross

As the name suggests you have to cross the rugged wilderness twice in the next 400 yards. Drive to center and then you have to decide if you can comfortably carry the second cross about 60 yards from the green. If you are in doubt lay up, the expression discretion is the better part of valor may be appropriate here. Pear shape green has no bunkers.

#13 Par 4 277/254 Heaven or Hell

What a choice? You may be able to reach this green but do not miss to the right because that is where the second alternative awaits. If you lay up with a shorter club left-center it leaves a short iron across an array of fairway sand disturbances into a multi-level green surface that slopes hard toward the front. This hole feels a bit goofy standing on the tee but once you have played it that feeling will subside.

#14 Par 5 519/487 Phantom Point

Straight away five-par you want to drive to center between the bunker on the left and mounds right. You can either hit as much as you can just short of the green or lay-up just left of the shish-link of bunkers working up the right. One bunker on the left guards this very large, flat green.

#15 Par 4 419/393 North Rim

The driving area looks like a half-pipe from the Extreme Games. Drive to center and you have a longish shot into a fortress green complex perched above a canyon on the right. Multi-level putting surface requires a close look at the pin placement of day on the provided sheet.

#16 Par 4 383/322 Deception

As the name indicates there is lots of static in front of you on this tee-the best drive is to center. If the pin is on the bottom tier you can use the transition as a backstop. If it is on the top the club selection has to be perfect to avoid not reaching the flag or going over. Large bunker haunts short left of the putting surface and grass depressions on the right. For good measure there is also a grass hollow back left that is a difficult up and down.

#17 Par 3 114/102 Devil's Drink

Very much the 17th at Sawgrass with the sand short left instead of short right. Stepped green makes the front pin area very small. By contrast the back portion is very generous. Short club-simple shot-Just Do It!

#18 Par 5 552/522 Five Falls

A full length three-shot five par to finish. Drive left of the giant bunker constellation that protects the dogleg right. Lay up to set up an approach into a stunning green complex with a prominent boulder strewn water feature left and one bunker deep right. From 100 yards out it is a straight forward pitch to the day's pin for a final moment of glory.