

**We-Ko-Pa Golf Club-Saguaro Course
Fountain Hills, Arizona**

Architect: Bill Coore-Ben Crenshaw (2006)

	Par	Rating	Slope	Yardage
Saguaro	71	72	137	6966
Purple	71	70.2	132	6603
White	71	68.8	125	6252
Composite (L)	71	72.0	128	5786

Overview:

In my experience when you venture out to play a Coore-Crenshaw course you are not likely to be bowled over by the dramatics of the design, rather you are going to be nudged and tugged by the subtlety of the presentation. Guys like this from what is now coined the “Minimalist School” impress you with their eyes not their shovels. It is the composition of the holes, what they saw in the ground and chose to draw out and emphasize, not manufactured features to stun your senses and distract your attention from the real task at hand.

The Saguaro Course at We-Ko-Pa is about flow and feel and how it engages your golf decision making while allowing you to appreciate the marvelous setting within which it lies. Driving up to this location from the flats of Scottsdale you realize that you are engaging the mountains not just seeing them as a backdrop canvas. Taking in the surroundings as you pull up to the clubhouse you sense that the topography will have influence on how the ball responds once on the ground, the minimalists will make sure of that, and so your strategic choices will require proper weight to consequence of one position or one route over another in playing each hole. As Ben said, “This old boney ground has some ‘sting’ to it” and they found it without having to produce a swarm to prove it.

The width of the long Par 4 opening hole sets a tone for the day-you think you can hit it just about anywhere and have a look at the green. Yet as you can read in the hole-by-hole detail in the link below the shape of your tee ball can determine how to get up the fairway and give yourself the best approach line to a perched green complex still a ways away. Oh, did I mention they drew in a dry creek bed traversing the fairway which may put some doubt in your mind whether you can reach at all if you don’t hit the drive with enough intent.

Step on the tee of the quasi-drivable second and it is full desert static with scrub to carry off the tee and sand and more wilderness encroaching your playing path. Throw in a dramatic backdrop of an entire mountain range in the near distance and it becomes pretty hard just to sort out your choices for proper play. The course they present defies playing script or sequential rhythm. Each hole presents choices and requires your reaction. How you choose to react on one challenge drastically changes the next one.

As you get into the middle of the outward half the topography gets more severe and the ground influence on your shot making grows accordingly. Now you feel the mountains start to hover above the course rather than just frame the target. The sixth is a good example of this, you drive from teeing pods set in the hill over a high ridge in the fairway that completely masks the landing area. Standing next to your tee ball in the fairway

the influence of the promontory peak of Superstition Mountain just beyond the green complex is firmly in your mind before hitting the approach or making your first putt. The coolest part about this minimalist thing is that everything matters. If it comes into your minds eye then it is worth considering.

Coming off the long and serpentine Par 5 eighth, the front side finishes with a short uphill pitch into a green with the playing width of a two-lane country road. The contrast in shots required in a two-hole stretch is not lost on those with proper awareness. Don't miss the tuna or turkey sandwich with the home made kettle chips at the turn. It will refill the tank and make the challenges that come next all the more manageable.

With only one five par on the inward half, three Par 4's over 400 yards, and a one-shotter well over 200 yards the scoring opportunities will be few and far between. The stretch of big holes from twelve to fifteen give this side it's distinct character.

The back-to-back long Par 4's at twelve and thirteen give you wide scale driving areas with greens with minimal bunker coverage. Yet both require precise driving to get the best angle to manage the long approach beyond the single greenside bunker. Good news is they provided wide expanses of short grass around these greens so recovery with a crafty short game can still keep par in play.

The closest thing to design shock is the view off the tee on Bill and Ben's risk-and-reward testimony to the Lido Hole on the long Par 5 fourteenth. You are offered two different fairways to which to impart your drive-the narrow one on the right shortens the hole considerably so for the long baller this will be tempting. The more sensible play is a wide berth on the left fairway which will still leave you with two kitchy plays as the hole doglegs sharply to the right. Even a well place lay-up into the narrowing area at about 100 yards out leaves a very challenging pitch into a long and narrow putting surface perched in a corner to the right. Your plays on this hole will revisit you in bed at night between sheep counts.

As you wend your way back to the house the short sixteenth will tempt your boldness off the tee but the best scores here are likely with a wedge and a putt. Seventeen is a serene tumbling affair, very soothing to the eye after all the mishugas of the last five holes. The home hole is a monstrously long Par 4 with a full desert buffet yet kindly it somehow plays much shorter and less harrowing than it appears from the tee.

As you settle in for an Arnold Palmer in the clubhouse bar after play you are going to be struck by how fatigued you are from the day's golf decisions. There were no single challenges that seemed overwhelming but the relentless requirement to think two shots ahead has a way of wearing on you. Coore and Crenshaw's design approach got this one right-they made a bold statement without raising their voices.

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

#1 Par 4 443/426 yards

Long opening hole has wide fairway presentation but your best line is up the left since the green is guarded by a single sprawling bunker carved below the green on the right. Dry bed stream crosses the fairway at 75 yards and the green sits above that on the hill. Green has some back-to-front stepping in it so it should hold a long club coming in.

#2 Par 4 299/288

Short leaner left to right, hit the tee ball at the second bunker through the rolling fairway to get best angle for approach back into the green on the right. Green has a wavy contour and once again is bunkered only on the right.

#3 Par 4 383/362

Mid-size flat sharp dogear left par 4. Drive with a right to left curve placed center should give a straight view up between the staggered green side bunkers. Heel print on the front should help hold a shot into a front pin.

#4 Par 5 609/595

Number 1 handicap hole-this is a long three-shotter that plays straight away into an upslope, best drive is left center between the bunkers. Your lay-up is over the edge of the bunker on the left at 230 into a tumbling downslope that steers to the right. This leaves a short club into a green sitting on a 7 to 1 diagonal to the left.

#5 Par 3 159/146

Unusual green presentation from the tee-two eyeball bunkers in front makes it look like the Green Lantern's mask. Carry short club across the scrub to a green with a bit of a false front. The green is fairly wide so you have to be precise on the approach to give yourself a reasonable putting chance.

#6 Par 4 406/380

Stunning look at Superstition Mountain on the horizon. Right edge of it is your driving line off the tee over the uphill that hides the landing area. Your approach is downhill across a fairway ravine into a bunkerless green complex with a huge short grass surround. This lack of framing has to present a visual challenge on the approach shot into a green tucked to the left.

#7 Par 4 305/290

This short Par 4 has some deception in it. There is a centerline pot bunker at 75 yards in a super wide driving theater you cannot see from the tee. Hit the driver to right center and you are a short sand iron from an anvil shaped green that sits on a 10 to 4 angle. Front pins are very tight but the middle and back of the green is very generous.

#8 Par 5 498/482

This is a roller coaster shortish five-par that dogears to the left. Best drive position is right center at the right bunker through the fairway. No hooks on this tee because death lurks left of the fairway. Lay up is to the right beyond the bunker at 125 on the right which leaves an attack angle back into the green. Green sits on a 10 to 4 diagonal slightly up and it's bunkering orient to that approach line.

#9 Par 3 130/121

Short pitch into a kidney shaped green squeezed by bunkers on both sides. Best shot is to center no matter where the pin is. Given it's length this green has it's putting challenges.

#10 Par 4 322/306

Another enticing short Par 4 dogears to the right somewhat similar to the challenge of the second hole. You can cut off a chunk by aiming at the bunker through the fairway on the left and taking it over the sand/desert edge on the right. The green envelopes a pot bunker dead in the center the front edge and is stepped back to front making it a challenge to get the approach on the correct level.

#11 Par 3 194/176

This will be a long club uphill over a bunker on the left that is set well back from the tiered green. There is 270 degrees of short grass wrapping the green on the left and some deep desert bunkering below the green on the right.

#12 Par 4 461/423

A long straight Par 4 this will take two mighty blows to reach in regulation. Drive at the centerline bunker just short of the green and you will have to work your approach to one side or the other. Again massive sprawl of short grass surrounds the slightly raised green that is offset to the left.

#13 Par 4 457/417

Second man-size Par 4 in a row. This has a huge driving area with a lone bunker in the center of it. Drive should go up the left at the left edge of the fairway bunker in the distance. The hole bends slightly left on the next one, and with one bunker knifed into the right of the green, it is best to approach from the left. Sizeable short grass surrounds once again so creative pitching and chipping will come into play here.

#14 Par 5 527/513

The only five par on this side is a cool rendition of the Lido hole. Truncated fairway gives you a choice of hitting a drive up the right segment with the thought of shortening the hole enough to go for it in two. Desert on both sides of that segment and the lean of the ground to the left mitigate the logic of this. Drive up the left side makes it into its natural dogleg right. Lay up just past the bunker on the left and you have a slightly elevated approach into a green set up with one bunker flanking the right. The bunker on the left should not come into play as it is well short of the putting surface. Probably there to gather a pulled second shot at the green from the right fairway. There is one more bunker on the left adjacent to the back third of the green.

#15 Par 3 233/209

Monster long Par 3 off a high tee to a sprawling green with no bunkers past the front edge. Requires a draw using the canted hill on the right to feed the ball into the green at 5 o'clock. Waste bunkers on the left leading up to the green are a disaster to be in.

#16 Par 4 315/290

Short 90 degree dogear right straight up a huge hill. Looks like you aim at the fat area left and leave yourself a high spinning wedge into a perched green fronted by bunkers. Those tempted to try to drive the green must be aware that anything missing right will end up in a sand haven that is a death sentence.

#17 Par 4 372/358

Gently turning uphill dogleg left with lots of fairway contour. Kind of a tumbling affair. Only one bunker front left so I like the tee ball out to the right with a bit of a draw. This is a very scenic hole from the tee.

#18 Par 4 490/470

Long, long Par 4...almost a zig-zag move. Drive is a draw at the right side and let it flow down the hole. The approach that follows is a fade since the only greenside bunker is on the right.