

A Dream Golf Vacation

Playing a Different Course Every Day

BY EARL HEFFNER

Who would drive more than 400 miles—round trip—in one day just to play a round of golf?

The answer:

Just about any golf addict who has played at least one round on each of southern Brunswick's most spectacular courses—Marsh Harbour, Oyster Bay and Sea Trail Golf Links.

I do it a couple times each year and my only regret is that I cannot find the time to do it more often. To me, a dream golf vacation would be a week in the Calabash, Sunset Beach, Ocean Isle Beach area playing a different course every day.

Well, today you would have to visit a couple courses twice if you included Ocean Isle Beach Golf Course and Carolina Shores, as you well should, on your golfing schedule.

When I lived on Holden Beach and covered golf for The Beacon, I played Marsh Harbour every opportunity I had. I've never found a golf course with a more testing, frustrating, scenically beautiful, demanding, irritating, spectacular and satisfying hole than Marsh Harbour's No. 17, a magnificent Par 5.

Then when owners Larry and Judy

Earl Heffner



Young opened their new Oyster Bay Golf Links, I found another unforgettable hole. Make that two unforgettable holes.

The first is No. 13, a Par 4, with a green completely surrounded by woods, marsh water and the largest trap I've ever seen. That green is held in place by a giant sea wall.

The second is No. 17, a Par 3 island green with its shores lined by white oyster shells. You haven't seen it? You may have seen its more famous clone on television—No. 17 at the Tournament Players Course in Florida.

The TPC's No. 17 is more famous; Oyster Bay's is more beautiful. For purposes of play, the holes are identical twins.

Recently, I returned from my pre-

sent home in southern Mecklenburg County to Shallotte where I had some business with Dennis Crocker at NCNB.

Dennis is a very good friend.

Until we get on the golf course.

As I expected, when my business was completed, Dennis and I headed for the golf course.

He picked Sea Trail. There we met Ed Gore, one of the owners.

There was another player in our foursome, but he asked that I not tell about his score. If I can't tell you what Dean shot, I won't tell you his full name.

Had I been able to play that well, I would have taken out an ad in the Beacon to brag about my score.

Dean couldn't figure out why we were playing from the gold tees, the very back, championship tees.

"I'm not going to have Earl go back to the big city and say he played the shortest course down here," Dennis explained.

I didn't, but as those of you who know Dennis can attest, I did play with the shortest good golfer in Brunswick County.

Let me tell you something about Sea Trail Golf Links. From the gold

tees, Sea Trail measures 6,780 yards and has a U.S. Golf Association rating of 73.5.

From the blue tees, usually used only by the best amateurs, the course is 6,370 yards long and has a 71.9 rating.

The white tees generally are favored by tourists. From those tees, the course is 6,075 yards long and has a 70.5 course rating.

Ladies, Sea Trail doesn't ignore you. The course measures 5,260 yards from the ladies tees and has a 70.6 rating from those tees.

Par for the course is 72, regardless of which tees you use.

Now I'm not going to tell you what I shot. I did play in the 90's. So did Ed and he played better than I did. I also promised I wouldn't say what Dean shot, so I won't.

But I made no wild promises to Dennis.

Throughout lunch I heard how his golf game had turned soar.

He had a par on the first hole we played. I didn't. He had a par on the second hole; I had a birdie.

"We're going to have a good match," I thought to myself.

Foolish thought.

Dennis had six successive pars on the front side before capping those with a birdie. Then the clutch slipped. He had double bogies on both eight and nine. Only Dean parred them.

No. 9 is the most difficult hole on the course and No. 8 is the No. 3 handicap hole.

No need to trouble you readers with a hole-by-hole report. But you need some advice about playing Sea Trail.

Here are some tips:

1) Don't play from the gold tees unless you are a very good, low-handicap golfer and can hit the ball a long ways.

2) Don't look upon the Par 3 holes as a chance to get easy pars unless you play from the white tees.

There are not short-iron shots to these Par 3 greens from the gold tees. No. 3 is 185 yards long; No. 5 is only 180 yards long. Then they get longer. No. 11 is 195 yards and No. 17 is 210 yards.

My favorite hole on Sea Trail has to be No. 14.

It is, in truth, an optical illusion. It looks impossible; it isn't impossible. It's difficult.

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Sea Trail GOLF LINKS



Play the newest course created by noted Carolina Architect Dan Maples, designer of Oyster Bay. Located in Sunset Beach, Sea Trail Golf Links combines well-manicured bent grass greens, beautiful oak and pine trees, natural Carolina sugar sand and man made lakes into 18 holes of challenging championship golf. Sea trail also features an elegant clubhouse complete with pro shop and year-round dining in the Tavern on the Tee Restaurant and Lounge.
Come and play the course that golfers have only been able to dream about.
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