

Introduction to the The Challenge Course At Monarch Dunes

By Damian Pascuzzo, ASGCA
Pascuzzo & Pate Golf Course Design

The second of the three planned golf courses at Monarch Dunes is unique to the Central Coast. Named "The Challenge Course" it is a collection of 12 par-three holes that will appeal to both the veteran player and the golfing newcomer. Our goal as designers was to create a golf experience that would compliment The Old Course. A great place to get in a little more golf after you have played The Old Course, or when you are short on time and just want a taste of golf. We think it will also have great appeal to novices who want to get comfortable with their game before taking on a regulation length course.

After much study and discussion, we decided on 12 holes because it was the best utilization of the land available. Had we squeezed 18 holes into the same space, the holes would have all been about the same length. The 12 holes on The Challenge course range in length from 65 yards to 205 yards. Players will get to hit a wide variety of clubs when they tee it up in The Challenge. We like the fact that 12 holes can be divided into so many subsets (i.e. 2-6 hole groups, 4-3 hole groups, etc.) because it makes for lots of interesting matches and games between players.

Each hole has the tees arranged to vary the angle of attack. Players teeing off from the back tees will face the most difficult shot, while those playing from the front tees will have a far easier line to the green. Each hole has at least 5000 square feet of tee space and we will have set out three sets of tee markers giving players plenty of choice.

The greens may be the most memorable features on the golf course. Our idea from the first day of design was to create very large, very undulating greens that are rarely found on modern courses. Players will encounter ridges and swales running through the green that may change 3-4 feet in elevation. To accommodate this type of movement, the greens are about 8000 square feet (or about 30% larger than normal greens). We have consulted with the superintendent and he has agreed to keep green speeds a little more modest so that these undulating greens stay fun and playable. Designing that much movement in the greens let us create some areas on the green that are quite challenging when approached from the back tees. Players will have to think hard about how they want to attack the hole. By carefully examining where the flag is located, they may choose to play a lofted shot to a well defended section of green, or they may find it better to take one club less

and play to the front of the green so that the ball will “release” back to the flag. Playing strategy will change every time out depending on where the flag is that particular day and what the wind is doing. Ultimately, Steve and I would like to see the use of two flags on every hole; one set up in an easier location for the novice players and the other placed in a tougher local for the experienced players.

The golf course has a natural, rugged appearance, which is enhanced by the dunes that were shaped throughout the fairways and around the greens. The golf course was completely constructed by shaping the native sand into the desired features. There were no outside materials imported to build the greens or bunkers as is done on most golf courses.

The course weaves within the next phase of residential development and part of our mission was to create real estate value by enhancing view from the lots to greens tees and lakes.

There are five lakes which come into play. The lakes are on holes 3,4,5,8 and 9. The residential development uses these golf course lakes to handle 100% of the project's storm water. Extra capacity was designed into the lakes so that the storm water can be stored and then dissipated back into that ground to recharge the aquifer.

The golf course uses the same turf grass as found on The Old Course. The fairways and roughs are planted in a blend of fine fescues. The greens have been seeded in velvet bentgrass.