

The Ocean Course
Kiawah Island
South Carolina

December 29, 1992

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While visiting the in-laws in Greenville, during Christmas 1992, we also stayed on Kiawah Island, which is about 45 minutes south of Charleston, in the Atlantic Ocean. We used a cottage owned by Scott's wife's parents, for free, except for a cleaning fee. I played golf 3 days: Sunday the 27th at Turtle Point, a Jack Nicklaus design, in 40 degree, rain and windy weather, shooting 91, playing terrible; Monday the 28th at Marsh Point, a Gary Player design, in 45 degree and windy weather, shooting 92, but playing better; and Tuesday the 29th at The Ocean Course with Scott Campbell, Robin's brother, a Pete Dye design, host course of the 1991 Ryder Cup, in 60 degree weather, and light winds blowing from the island to the ocean.

Golf Digest rates the Ocean Course as the 3rd best resort course in the U.S., judging with their 7 point criteria, behind Pebble Beach in California, and Pinehurst No. 2 in North Carolina. But the magazine has also dubbed the course as "the most feared" course in the U.S., especially after what the course did to the world's best players in the Ryder Cup matches. On one of the par 3's Seve Ballesteros carded an 11 - without losing a ball.

The main factor is the wind. Normally blowing at about 25 knots, it can change direction at any time. This links course is the closest thing in the U.S. to English/Scottish course and conditions. Constructed amongst the dunes, with views of the Atlantic from every hole, and 11 of the holes border the ocean. However, the distance to the ocean takes it out of play, but it is nice to look at. All the fairways are very wide, and they have to be because of the wind. When we played there was just a 5-10 knot breeze, but with no trees to block it, it still was a factor in every shot. Some shots starting

on the left side of the fairway barely stayed on the fairway on the right side. Many of the waste areas had deep drops from the fairway. The dunes are all natural fine beach sand and very difficult to get out of. Water hazards are mostly man-made and strategically placed. If you get in trouble on this course you stay in trouble.

With light winds, and playing the best golf I had on the vacation (at least twice as good as I did on Turtle Point), I managed 7 pars, hitting some very good shots along the way, and still shot 98! Without exaggerating, if the wind had been just normal I could have easily shot 110. And I was satisfied with the way I played. Scott said that every hole, put on another course, would be the toughest hole on the course. The 13th hole is just plain scary, and the 17th, with a left to right wind, is the most intimidating par 3 I've ever played. Every shot must be placed properly and long, or the next shot is just miserable. Lots of long iron or fairway woods to greens in regulation (at least from the blue tees). Also, on the score card the gold tees show 7,371 yards, but on most holes there is another tee behind that, making the total possible length over 7,700 yards! This could very well be America's toughest course.

The numbers on the 2nd score card show where each numbered photo was taken from.



1. A view of the Clubhouse from the practice tee, looking over the putting green, on the ocean side. At first the Clubhouse seemed inadequate, but upon reflection it fits right in.



2. The first tee (we played the blues) and the easiest hole on the course. I carded an 8 by teeing off into the water way to the right. Scott was in the dunes to the left.



3. The 2nd tee shot is a long carry over stuff. Having sliced my first tee shot I naturally hit the 2nd straight - to the left into the marsh.



4. My 4th shot view. I hit a 7 iron out of the waste area (you play all shots, no OB) short from 130 yards. Ended up with my 2nd straight snowman.



5. Finally, a good tee shot puts me in good shape for the approach. I had a six iron onto the green, about 20 feet away, and 2-putt for par!



6. This view of the 3rd green is from the sixth tee. It is a platform green and tough to hold.



7. The engineering on this course is awesome and best seen from the 4th tee boxes. Another long carry (most of them are) to big fairway. I scored another par! This course is easy!



8. The 185 yard, par 3 fifth hole is the only hole not parallel to the ocean. All carry over waste to the green. Huge green across, and tiered; must be on correct part.



9. A long par 4, I had a decent drive.



10. The 2nd shot is straight in between waste areas on either side. Got my approach on the green and 2-putted for my 3rd par. My last cocky thought for the day.



11. Reality check on the par 5, 505 yard 7th. Too busy trying to play to worry about photos until it was over - 7. This is the left bunker at the green, about 6 feet deep.



12. This par 3 has waste areas on both sides, with the right one about 12 feet deep. I hit a good 5 iron on the green, but about 50 feet away and 3-putted.



13. I pulled my tee shot on the ninth into the waste on the left and spent the next 3 shots getting out. I finally got on in 5 and 2-putt. Finished the front with an even 50.



14. The 10th tee shot is a real puckerer. The fairway is about 180 yards away, and the waste area on the right is at least 15 feet below all the way to the green.



15. The 10th green, showing the bunker with the patches of rough that would have been very nasty. Fortunately, I made my 4th par.



16. The 11th hole, a 562 yard par 5, has the usual long carry and stuff on both sides. The 2nd shot has water on the right side.



17. The approach shot on the 11th. No way to reach in 2 unless wind is directly behind, which it wasn't. Deep bunkers on both sides of the green.



18. The 12th hole, the 2nd toughest hole on the back, with water all the way down the right side, which I found off the tee. This was the approach shot I faced.



19. The 13th, toughest hole on the course, is the most frightening hole I've seen. The 10th tee shot made you shake your head...this one makes you shake. We hit into dunes left.



20. After punching out of the dunes I had this for my 3rd shot, from about 130 yards. I hit this one left, short of the trap. I blew the chip and 2-putted for a 6.



21. The 13th green. My 3rd shot was just short of this bunker. The house is on the road to the course, looked about 6,000 feet. Nice house.



22. The 14th, a long but fairly easy par 3. Unless the wind blows you into the waste areas.



23. The 15th tee shot can be really nasty, again long carries from all tees. Winding waste area on left makes placement critical, because the 2nd shot is tough.



24. The 2nd shot, from the left side, is very intimidating, with waste area jutting into the fairway, and deep.



25. A view from the edge above the waste area on the 15th. Hidden is a very deep bunker that will swallow you if your shot is too long.



26. The 16th tee. Big fairway is needed for wind conditions that could take your shot left into the water or right onto the beach.



27. After a good tee shot I hit my 3-wood off the toe onto the beach and OB. This was my next shot to the green. I went for the green, a mistake.



28. Scott's approach shot plugged in the bermuda grass on the side of the hill!



29. The obvious result of trying to get to the green from 125 yards away while in another waste area. This is my first attempt to extricate my golf ball from this green-side trap. This shot was short. In fact, this ball is on the bermuda just before it rolled back to my feet. The 2nd shot was long and in the fringe on the other side of the green. I chipped past the hole to the other fringe and 2-putted for a nine. You get in trouble on this course and you stay in trouble.



30. The most intimidating shot, and toughest par 3 I've ever played. We teed off from the gold tee, 197 yards, where they played from during the Ryder Cup. Scott hit 2 draws that the wind still took into the water, and a 3rd that stayed on the back right of the green. I hit left of the green.

31. My approach shot just missed this bunker and the dunes behind. Some choices: 197 windblown yards to green, water, or dunes. You might get lucky along the way. I had a 6.





32. The 18th hole plays long with most wind directions. The only permanent distraction on the whole course was this water pump in the waste. My shot was to the right.



33. I had this shot to the green, from the bermuda over this bunker. I got lucky and parred the hole. The only criticism of the course: the 18th didn't feel like a finishing hole