

Strategy & Tactics: Firestone: Back Nine

by Douglas Hempel

Hole #10 - Par 4

403 yards - 390 yards - 335 yards

6th handicap

Firestone's back nine starts innocently enough. Number ten is a straightforward par-4. There are fairway bunkers on the right and left. The green is elevated and also features bunkers front-left and front-right. The tournament pin is right in the center of the green which slopes gently from back to front.

Strategy: This one is simple. Hit a good drive and pick the right club for the uphill second shot. The green slopes gently, so anything close to the pin should be very makeable.

Hole #11 - Par 4

364 yards - 349 yards - 337 yards

16th handicap

umber eleven is the shortest par-4 on the course. It plays a little longer than the yardage shown, however, because the pin is about 30' uphill. Bunkers guard the front-left and -right of the kidney-shaped green. The green is bumpy, with no general overall slope.

Strategy: Eleven is another basic hole. A good drive and a solid second shot should leave you in good position for a birdie.

Hole #12 - Par 3

180 yards - 168 yards - 154 yards

10th handicap

uch like number five, the twelvth hole is a fairly long par-3 with a bunker directly in front of the green. The pin is about 20' above the tee, and this makes club selection critical, because you need to hit enough club to clear the front bunker. Two bunkers also protect the left and right sides of the green. The tournament pin is in the front-middle of the green, and the green slopes away from the pin in almost all directions.

Strategy: Club selection is the most important thing. Pick enough club to clear the front bunker and compensate for the elevated green. You've probably got a better chance of birdie or par if you're on the green putting than you'd have if you try to get up-and-down from the front bunker.

Hole #13 - Par 4

450 yards - 430 yards - 421 yards
2nd handicap

umber thirteen is a long dogleg right and is rated the toughest hole on the back side. The hole is flat and there are no fairway bunkers, but the fairway is tight and requires an accurate drive. As with the rest of the hole, the green is relatively flat, with a slight back to front and right to left slope. Bunkers surround the green.

Strategy: The most important shot here is the drive. Too strong and at the wrong angle, and you can drive through the fairway, leaving a long-iron shot from the rough. You might want to aim the ball tight down the right hand side. A fade shot on this hole can also work very effectively. Avoid the bunkers on the second shot and you've got a birdie chance.

Hole #14 - Par 4
410 yards - 360 yards - 353 yards
14th handicap

ourteen is a slight dogleg right. Two fairway bunkers protect the right side of the fairway and one guards the left. Like the last hole, number fourteen is also flat. The tournament pin is in the front-center of the green. The green is generally flat around the hole with a slight back to front slope and is protected front-left and front-right by traps.

Strategy: Drive the ball down the right hand side to cut the distance for the second shot. With an accurate drive, the second shot should only be medium iron. The front-right trap can come into play for the second shot.

Hole #15 - Par 3

216 yards - 161 yards - 154 yards

18th handicap

umber fifteen is a very long par-3. Nearly 220 yards from the blue tees, this hole is a bit easier than the yardage might lead you to believe. A 2-iron is the perfect club here. Make sure you avoid the bunkers front-right, front-left, and right of the green. The tournament pin is in the center of the green which slopes from right to left and back to front.

Strategy: If you've got the 2-iron in the bag, it's the perfect club. Aim right at the hole and go for it. A 5-wood might also do the trick. The green's slope is pretty steep, especially towards the back, so the ball should hold well under most playing conditions.

Hole #16 - Par 5

615 yards - 557 yards - 355 yards

12th handicap

From both the blue and white tees, sixteen is titanic. You've got to decide right away whether you want to go for the green in two, because you need at least a 300-yard drive to even be able to consider it. The hole doglegs right first and then left up near the green. The fairway also slopes a bit - first from right to left and then left to right. The green is fairly small for a par-5 of this length and doesn't make the second shot attempt any easier. The tournament pin is back-center, and the green slopes dramatically from back to front. There are two bunkers on the back-right of the green.

Strategy: Decide first whether you want to go for the green in two. If you do, you need to really rip the drive. With a 330-yard drive, it's still a full driver or 2-wood to the green on the second shot. Aiming the drive just to the left of the fairway bunkers can give you a little more roll. The hole is also mostly downhill which helps a lot on the second shot. If you don't want to go for the green on the second shot, aim down the left hand side to keep the ball out of the pond. Remember, the fairway slopes toward the water, so the ball is going to bounce right. Don't try to cut the corner too much or you could bounce into the pond inadvertently.

Hole #17 - Par 4

389 yards - 368 yards - 332 yards

8th handicap

Number seventeen is a tricky hole. It doglegs right and you need to position the drive well to avoid the fairway bunkers on either side. The second shot is the most critical, however, and it's imperative to avoid the bunker in front of the elevated green. The tournament pin is in the center of the green and the green slopes from back to front and from right to left.

Strategy: Aim the drive just to the left of the right side bunkers. The green will be about 20' above the hole for the second shot after an average drive. The most important thing here is to pick enough club to clear the front bunker, because once you're in the trap, you may not get out because of the huge lip in the front. The pin sits on a bit of a ridge and it's better to be below the hole. It's more important to just be on the green, though, so don't risk the bunker just to be below the hole.

Hole #18 - Par 4

456 yards - 428 yards - 418 yards

4th handicap

umber eighteen is similar in many ways to the ninth hole. Downhill, dogleg left, with a tight fairway and fairway bunkers, it's a great finishing hole. The pin is over 50' below the tee in the front-center of the green. There are two bunkers front left and two behind the green. The green is relatively flat, especially near the pin.

Strategy: Drive the ball down the right side. This'll give you a better angle at the pin and keeps the trees up near the green from coming into play as much. With an average drive, the green will be about 10' below the ball, so figure this into your club selection. If your second shot is close, this is an easy green to putt on.

N.B. As always with this kind of article, the opinions expressed are my own, based on many hours of both real and simulated golfing. In general, these strategies are based on someone playing at the professional level from the blue tees. Although yardages are given from all tees, specific driving and second shot strategies will usually only be accurate when playing under the "pro/blue" conditions.

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