

# Playing From These Disney Golf Tips Will Get You In the Swing

LAKE BUENA VISTA, Fla. — With an eye on exercises and practice techniques that will prepare golfers for special challenges such as those encountered on the four Walt Disney World championship courses, Disney head professional Kevin Weickel offers a series of tips that golfers can use before they head to the links.

## Tips Inspired by Disney's 81 Holes of Golf

### Rotational stretches

Disney's Magnolia course is the longest golf course at Walt Disney World Resort and places a premium on the long game. The secret to an effective long game is making an efficient shoulder turn. One drill to get the back muscles into shape is with a simple rotational exercise:

- Take your stance, with both arms bent at the elbows — hands are up and palms open, facing away from you.
- Keeping your hands in front of your shoulders as you turn, slowly rotate your shoulders back, keeping them level.
- Feel the right knee remained flexed as the weight turns onto the right leg; the left foot should remain flat on the ground.
- Hold this position for a count of five and rotate through to the finish, keeping your shoulders level through the motion.
- At the finish: your back foot should be up with the toe pointing into the ground, your hands should still be open and in front of your shoulders.
- Hold for a count of five and start over.

### Lag putting drill

The large greens on Disney's Palm course can be maneuvered with good lag putting. One drill to develop this skill can be done on the carpet at home using five tees:

- Place the tees three feet apart in a staggered "ladder" — that is, three feet away from you, six feet, nine feet and so on.
- Starting five feet from the nearest tee, practice putting to see if you can make your ball stop against each one of the tees as you putt up the ladder.
- Move the tees further and further apart to expand your lag range feel.

### Fairway wood drill

Disney's Palm course has a few long par 4s and a couple of par 5s that could be reached in two using a fairway wood. (The hardest is No. 18, a long par 4 which has been ranked as high as 4th most difficult on the PGA TOUR.) When playing the fairway wood, be sure the club comes through the ball in a sweeping motion to maximize the loft on your wood. A drill that can help:

- Place a tee lengthways on top of the grass, with the point facing you.
- The tee is your target; sweep through the tee without taking a divot. When done correctly, the tee will fly through the air reacting in a manner similar to the way a ball would.
- Once you have been successful doing this, place a ball down and try to emulate the same sweeping motion.

### **Waste bunker practice**

Disney's Osprey Ridge course is decorated with beautiful waste bunkers that outline the fairways and provide outstanding contrast to the design of the course. Their beauty can be intimidating, as they play in a slightly different way than a normal bunker. The sand is usually harder; therefore, you can play a shot that is closer to a normal swing. To get a feel at home, practice making swings on a piece of plywood:

- Place a plastic ball on the plywood and practice "scraping" the ball off with your swing.
- Take a normal stance, with the ball toward your front foot.
- When swinging, keep your legs quiet — feel only your shoulders turning and your arms swinging.
- After impact, make a good follow-through as you normally would.
- If you swing too deep, the wood will rattle your club; your best swing will sound and feel like you are scraping the board ever so slightly with the bottom of the club.

### **Lining up the target**

Disney's Lake Buena Vista course demands accuracy on the tee shot as well as the approach. Make sure you are aligned properly to the target by using this secret from the PGA TOUR:

- Standing behind your ball, align yourself with your intended target.
- Pick a spot 12 to 18 inches in front of your ball that's in line with your target; make careful mental note of that spot.
- Address the ball with your feet parallel to this imaginary line (ball to spot in front of ball).
- Swing your club over the spot as you hit the ball. This will ensure your ball starts on line to the target.

### **Putting on an undulating green**

Remember what a phonograph record looked like if you left it out in the sun? Well, Disney courses have greens that will jog your memory. So a tip here concerns putts that break:

- Practice your breaking putts by treating every putt as a straight one!
- Identify the point at which you feel the ball will break.
- Align your feet and putter face square to this target and putt straight to this point. The ground and gravity will take care of the rest!

### **Hitting off of pine straw**

Pine straw decorates some of the rough areas on Disney courses, and practicing a shot at home can be fun. All you need is common everyday pine straw (dry pine needles) and some pine cones. The trick to hitting a golf ball off straw is the same as hitting a pine cone from the straw:

- Play the pine cone forward in your stance as if it were a fairway bunker shot.
- Make a level swing and feel like you are swinging through the middle of the ball (or pine cone) and sweeping it from the straw! (This is also a great way to clean up the yard!)
- Hit the cone and try not to take a divot.

### **Leg exercises**

Disney's Oak Trail course is a walking-only facility. To prepare those legs for the walk, one good stretch for your Achilles will prove to be beneficial:

- With arms extended in front of you, place both hands against a wall.
- Lean forward slightly, keeping your right foot on the ground and the right leg bent slightly from the knee, and your left leg extended behind you with your left foot flat on the ground.
- Slowly lean forward against the wall, keeping the left heel on the ground. You will begin to feel the stretch run through the back of your calf. Hold the stretch for a count of 10.
- Switch legs and repeat the stretch.

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## **A Golf-Lover's Guide to Walt Disney World Resort**

- Walt Disney World features four 18-hole championship courses and a 9-hole walking course. (Electric carts are required on the 18-hole courses and are included with greens fees.)

- The Disney courses were designed by top architects Joe Lee (Lake Buena Vista, Palm, Magnolia) and Tom Fazio (Osprey Ridge).
  - All the courses have achieved designation as a "Certified Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary" by the Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary System (ACSS).
  - The courses are subtly stamped with the image of the world's most famous mouse: check out the bunker fronting the green on Magnolia No. 6, and the practice putting green at Disney's Osprey Ridge Golf Club.
  - Families can visit the parks and then shoot a late afternoon/early evening round of golf for greens fees at special rates.
  - Junior Golf Camps for ages 8-15 are offered during the summer.
  - Convenient transportation to all courses is offered to guests staying in the Walt Disney World Resort hotels. Club cleaning, storage and transfer are also provided.
  - Rental clubs and shoes are available.
  - Private or group golf instruction from PGA Professionals is available.
  - Tee times can be made by calling 407/WDW-GOLF. Guests with a resort confirmation number can reserve tee times up to 90 days ahead. Day visitors can book up to 30 days ahead.
  - Top PGA TOUR players compete annually in the Children's Miracle Network Classic on Disney's Magnolia and Palm courses.
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#### **About The Disney Golf Head Professional**

- Kevin Weickel is a native Floridian who became head professional of Disney's Magnolia and Palm courses in 1993 and head professional of Walt Disney World golf in 1994.
- When he became a PGA Class A Member in 1992, at age 24, he was the youngest member with a teaching professional classification in the Florida Section of the PGA.
- He has created a golf apprentice training program that develops aspiring pros into management candidates, and he is working on golf-development programs.
- He travels through the country as a faculty member for the PGA of America education department, teaching their Golf Professional Training Program.
- Kevin has a degree in sports administration from Stetson University in Deland, Fla.

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