

Disney's Palm Course: Water, Woods Swallow Up 'Mistakes'

LAKE BUENA VISTA, Fla. — Elevated greens and tees and an abundance of water await golfers at the 7,015-yard Palm course.

Like "sister courses" Magnolia and Lake Buena Vista, Palm requires careful club selection.

More than the other Joe Lee-designed courses at Walt Disney World Resort, however, Palm uses water hazards as a penalty to errant shots. Water comes into play on nine holes. Flamboyant Chi Chi Rodriguez, upon tumbling from the lead of an early Disney PGA TOUR event when play moved to Palm, announced, "I'm allergic to water."

The water challenge is nowhere more evident than at No. 6. This 412-yard par 4 requires avoiding water left off the tee, and water fronting the green on approach. Meanwhile, thick Florida forest on the right requires players to tread lightly along the water's edge.

Palm is shorter, but tighter, than its neighbor, Magnolia, and overall is characterized as a precise layout carved from dense woods.

Opinions about the toughest holes vary. No. 6 carries the No. 1 handicap rating. No. 18, a long par 4 to a small, forward-sloping green, has been a nemesis for PGA TOUR players, ranking among the 10 toughest holes on the entire TOUR four times since 1986. It is the No. 2 handicap hole.

Larry Nelson, winner of the PGA TOUR's fall stop at Disney in 1984 and 1987, rated No. 4 toughest. It's a 422-yard par 4 that oddly enough has no water hazards. "For me it's hard to find a driving spot," Nelson said. "It's hard to drive it in the fairway."

Another toughie, Nelson said, is the 450-yard No. 10 — "especially as a starting hole."

And then there is No. 18, a par 4 that measures 454 yards from the tips. Trees to the right and a hazard to the left swallow tee shots that stray from the fairway. Then it's a long approach over water to the green.

There is also water to the right of the green, water behind the green, and a series of sand bunkers hugging the fringe of the green on three sides.

The Palm has been listed by *Golf Digest* in the nation's top 25 resort courses and rates as a 'classic' Florida course.

Facts and Figures about the Palm Course

- Course opened in 1971
- Par is 72
- Course record: 60 (Justin Rose)
- Length ranges from 7,015 (pro yardage) to 5,311 (forward tees); men's yardage: 6,461
- Course rating from the men's tees is 71.6
- Slope index from the men's tees is 130
- Water figures in the design of nine holes
- Greens are TifEagle
- Fairways are Tifway 419
- Palm is one of three Walt Disney World courses designed by Joe Lee; others: Lake Buena Vista and Magnolia
- The Palm course shares clubhouse facilities — including a pro shop and locker rooms — with the Magnolia course

- Among the prestigious events that have called the course "home": the PGA TOUR fall Classic (1972-) — currently the Children's Miracle Network Classic; the Bryant Gumbel/Walt Disney World Celebrity Tournament benefiting the United Negro College Fund (1989-91); and the AJGA/Polo Golf Junior Classic (1995-2003)
- Palm No. 18 has ranked among the toughest 50 holes on the PGA TOUR eight times since 1983
- Palm is part of a 99-hole Walt Disney World golf resort complex honored as one of America's Gold Medal Resorts by *Golf Magazine* (2004 biennial survey)