



“The opening hole is like a good introduction to the story. We are setting the stage and giving the golfer an idea of the lay of the land.”

“Views to the hills were always on our mind as we went about restoring Peacock Gap. The views are as essential as the bunkers and the greens.”

“The hill that pops up in the middle of the course is one of the most intriguing aspects of Peacock Gap. It was our goal to celebrate this little hill and make it an integral part of the game.”

“Variation among holes was key in our work. The balancing act was to uphold many of Mr. Bell’s ideals, yet to create differentiation from hole to hole, and green to green.”

HOLE STRATEGY — *by Forrest Richardson, Golf Course Architect*

No. 1 — 404 yards, par-4 — Left Wing

The opening hole begins from the clubhouse hill, instilling a sense of confidence in the elevated tee shot. The golfer is asked to play closely to the left side, yet without becoming too comfortable with the fairway bunker set along the tree line. The wide fairway allows choice in drive placement. Contrary to popular belief, width actually plays havoc with the more skilled player — for it is always the element of choice and decision that can lead to missteps in the execution of any golf shot. Two greenside bunkers guard the large green, contoured like a potato chip in the style of William F. Bell, Peacock Gap’s original designer.

No. 2 — 393 yards, par-4 — Deer John

The original design of this longish par-4 flanked the drainage canal to the right. In the renovated design, No. 2 is bordered by native grasses to the right and the intruding hillside to the left. The tee shot must be delicately placed, ideally left of center to set up a more open approach to the diagonally set green. The lone fairway bunker is deceptively far from the tee, serving most players as a beacon to aim the drive. Bunkers at the green include a deep and meandering trap at the right, and two more shallow traps at the left. The first bunker at the left was placed in the fashion of the elder Bell (William P. Bell), who occasionally set bunkers well short of greens in order to test the perception of golfers in judging approach distances.

No. 3 — 170 yards, par-3 — Hill & Back

Perhaps the most scenic hole on the course. The elevated green causes many players to fall short from the tee. With two gaping bunkers set into the natural hillside, this par-3 can easily lead to bogey or worse. The large green accommodates many hole location options. Subtle, yet tricky, contours are at play across every inch of the putting surface. Of importance is the fact that the golfer cannot see any of the green surface from the tee.

No. 4 — 501 yards, par-5 — Potato Chip

The first of the par-5 holes takes dead aim at the Peacock Lagoon. From an elevated tee, the golfer must negotiate pockets of native grass edging the fairway. Combined with fairway bunkers, the ideal first and second shots will follow the path of least resistance — *i.e., the middle!* This green is L-shaped, and one of the deepest on the course. It is possible to leave a putt of nearly 100 feet across a pronounced ridge.

No. 5 — 381 yards, par-4 — Three to Five

“I believe it is no coincidence that the word ‘hazard’ is used to describe bunkers in golf. They need to live up to their name. A bunker stumbled upon is one that the golfer should never treat lightly again.”

“Par-3s may be the most interesting of all golf holes, for it is here that all golfers have the potential to defeat the nature of the game by striking a ball and watching it disappear into the hole in just one stroke. The mere thought of this makes the par-3 fun and exciting.”

“Accuracy should be the most crucial aspect of golf. Followed by the golfer’s ability to carry a shot over an obstacle, and then length. Unfortunately it is the latter — length — that has consumed golf in recent years.”

In its former “life,” No. 5 played longer and directly along the edge of the golf course. The current 5th is shorter, but a more strategic hole with several choices to be made en route. The golfer’s “line of charm” is a matter of personal comfort — the line of play that feels “right” on any given shot. This will vary from player to player at No. 5, for we have a hole that bends left, and yet we are encouraging a tee shot well to the right. From the right side of the fairway the green is more open — and visible on the approach. From the left the green is closer (as we have cut the corner), yet it is fronted by a series of three soldier-like bunkers. As further challenge, the green falls softly away to the golfer’s right, bringing these three soldiers into play even more.

No. 6 — 171 yards, par-3 — Water Out

Nos. 5 through 7 are new holes at Peacock Gap. This change in routing was essential for several reasons. The primary goal was to create more strategy and a unique set of golf holes. The 6th is now a picturesque one-shotter across a tranquil pond. Wind is significantly less than at the par-3, 16th — a welcome relief. The two level green is defined by a steep bank. The lower level can bring the pond into play, while the upper level rises seamlessly into the oak covered hillside. The bunkers flow with the upper and lower green levels, creating locations for hole placement that are equally challenging to those at the lower level, near the water’s edge.

No. 7 — 287 yards, par-4 — Shorty

The short par-4 is often forgotten in golf. Peacock sports four holes of this variety; Nos. 7, 9, 15 and 17. At the 7th the tee shot can be played a number of ways — short, leaving a full wedge; long and bold, perhaps reaching the green or its surrounds; or with foresight, to the left or right, setting up a better view to the hidden putting surface. Indeed, it is the “dell” that fronts the wide and shallow green that defines No. 7. For this landform seems to be placed in exactly the most inopportune location — directly at the front of the green and with only a glimpse of the green possible at either side. The green itself is a puzzle. In the middle is a low swale, and to either side are upper decks. What appears on the scorecard to be a passive, low-yardage hole, is actually one of Peacock’s most demanding and thought-provoking.

No. 8 — 472 yards, par-5 — Frog Nap

“Classic golf course architecture is defined by greens that creep beyond where the golfer thinks they end. This is part of what gives classic designs such interest — large greens that flow outward and appear as one with their surroundings.”

“Peacock Gap’s transformation involved the removal of a great expanse of turf. Not only does this save water, but it creates a more natural and indigenous environment.”

“The thumbprint at the 10th green is a new feature at Peacock Gap. It surprises such as this that makes golf so fun.”

“We play more than half of the game to greens — or on greens. Variation in greens is such a rich part of the game. It has become a trademark of my work.”

The shortest of the par-5s, weighing in at a distance that is reachable in two by many players. The idea of a hole playing short compared to its assigned par is not uncommon. The open fairway at No. 8 allows a bold drive. This is by design. The strategy is to lure the player into the green at the second shot, bringing about the obstacle course of bunkers and a small pond to the right. It is this small pond, barely as large as a swimming pool, that will gather shots and turn long, heroic second shots into — at best — salvaged pars or bogies.

No. 9 — 348 yards, par-4 — Dare Devil

An “elbow hole,” No. 9 bends right along the canal. All the way to the green is the threat of water, a spot from which recovery is all but impossible. With a wide and expansive fairway, the golfer — not the designer — chooses the degree of rightward aim. Too far and it is, well, too bad. As has been said before, “Come as close to the hazard as you dare...”

No. 10 — 133 yards, par-3 — Tom Thumb

What is more alluring than a short par-3 that is on display for everyone to watch? Certainly it can be reasoned that the par-3, 10th is both easy and at the same time a terrifying adventure. The golfer knows he or she may have a gallery of players putting on the nearby practice green or loitering before their tee times. And then there is the triumph of overcoming the penal bunker that stands guard to the entrance. And — not to be forgotten — is one of Peacock Gap’s most charming features, the “thumbprint” that sits innocently within the plateau green at its namesake, “Tom Thumb.” The design roots of No. 10 can be traced to the famous 6th Hole at Riviera in Southern California. At Riviera, however, the green is intruded by a sand bunker set nearly in the middle. It was William P. Bell, father of William F. Bell, who assisted George Thomas, Jr. in the design of Riviera. Is the 10th at Peacock any easier? Not much. For here the golfer must work to avoid the depression, but a shot failing this test may often need to be putted through this shallow pit.

No. 11 — 386 yards, par-4 — Bottle

Rather long and also narrow. The fairway bends left around the hill. The approach is to an hour-glass shaped green, wider at the front and back with a constricted torso. Bunkers guard the front and must be avoided to be able to play the short game, be it putting or chipping. The third shot that must be pitched here is evidence of something gone wrong. “Execution” at the 11th can be taken to have more than one meaning.

No. 12 — 546 yards, par-5 — Hide & Seek

“The bunkers at Peacock Gap are inspired by William P. Bell, the father of William F. Bell and design partner of George Thomas, Jr., golf architect of many famous California courses. They are wild, full of vinegar and many of them may as well be armed with knives.”

“Bell was a master at routing courses. His designs ebb and flow, bringing golfers back and forth to views and to the interesting areas of the property he was given.”

“I cannot say exactly what inspired the 14th green at Peacock Gap. To be certain, it is the only one of its kind that I have ever created. Those uncomfortable with it will eventually master it. It really is quite simple when you step back to study it.”

“Twice the golfer heads toward the Bay. The journey at Peacock Gap is always influenced by the afternoon wind — or that eerie stillness that causes the golfer to second guess even the easiest of shots.”

The longest of the par-5s will not yield many eagles. Not only is there length at play, but also the element of the unknown with a green hidden behind bunkers and mounds. The smart play is to pace the first and second shot, leaving the ideal distance that matches the player's ability to hit it close on the third shot. For some this may be a 7-iron, so the need to hit strong at the second shot is not warranted. Trouble lurks to those who fight temptation and try and out-pace the length at all cost, for there is a price to pay the nearer one gets to the green.

No. 13 — 190 yards, par-3 — Drop In

This par-3 (there are five in all) plays slightly uphill to an undulating green surrounded by bunkers. At the rear is a chocolate drop mound covered with shaggy grass. Hole location is critical to know before club selection. Equally important is the golfer's choice to fly a ball all the way to the green, or to attempt a partially running shot between the narrow opening of the sand hazards. The green falls away at the back.

No. 14 — 484 yards, par-5 — The Groove

Named for its green, The Groove is a harmless par-5 that strikes fear only because it ends at a putting surface that appears so dastardly. In reality this green is only dressed the part. What appears troublesome is the deep swale that extends through the middle, yet this can be a comforting trough to guide a ball to the back. Or, it can even funnel a ball to the middle, where a hole is quite often set. In the few days when we find a hole to either the left or right, we must recall that we are playing a short length par-5. If our approach is well planned — that is, it is not from a bunker, under a tree or behind a knoll — there should be no problem setting a short iron close to the target. And, even when we might miss these occasional lateral hole locations, we will always have a few putts to mess with and the ability to still make our par.

No. 15 — 356 yards, par-4 — Ghirardelli

Inspired by the classic “chocolate drops” of Myopia Hunt Club near Boston, this medium-length par-4 is dotted with hillocks of native grass and a lone bunker at the leading edge of the boomerang green. The contrasting grasses of these hillocks form “inverted bunkers” with no sand, but plenty of power. The tee shot must be wisely planned and wisely placed. One without the other is plain lucky — or unlucky. The green is canted toward the golfer with a small, pot-like bunker forming two distinct entrances; left or right.

“Water can be a great asset to the challenge of a golf course. The trick is to allow the golfer a way around the water, or at least a choice in how to overcome it.”

“Trees had overtaken much of Peacock Gap. We worked very carefully, preserving and thinning. Always siding with the idea to keep the species that belong in this part of California as opposed to the varieties that were brought here from somewhere else.”

“Playing a ball along the ground, rather than high and soft, is among the vanishing shots in American golf. How sad, for it is the roll of the ball before it reaches the green than allows the most creativity of all golf shots. The ground game is evident here for we have planned for it as much as possible.”

No. 16 — 155 yards, par-3 — Water In

As the course turns to head back home, the Peacock Lagoon is again in view. But here, much more than view awaits. A huge green cascades down to the water's edge. Hole locations at the front can be much more demanding than those toward the middle or all the way to the back. A bunker sits at the leading edge, dividing the green into a back portion to the left and a forward area to the right. A smaller, deeper and more difficult sand pit sits to the right of the green. From here, the lagoon can come into play when a hole is set toward the front of the green. That recovery shot must be delicate and not too strong, else it will roll all the way to the water where all sorts of thoughts — and comments — are bound to appear.

No. 17 — 320 yards, par-4 — On the Edge

In the effort to restore and renovate Peacock Gap, the water canals that were once in play were returned to duty. At No. 17, the green was remodeled to sit precariously on the edge of the waterway. It is either “do or die” to coin a phrase. The tee shot must avoid a diagonal bunker at the left. A ball coming to rest in this trap is — to coin another phrase — “trapped.” A puzzlement of the green is how it is angled to the line of play. This angle can make a two to three club difference in the approach shot. A large tree was kept in place after discussions with members. This tree, now a great influence to the hole, can easily turn an otherwise good drive into a completely different story.

No. 18 — 429 yards, par-4 — Right Wing

The finishing hole is played left of the bunker in the middle of the fairway, short of it, or right of it. The longer player can elect to carry this bunker, but will require 260-yards or more before any roll. The left side sets up an awkward approach over bunkers. The right side leads to a more open approach — but comes with the danger of the canal to the right of the fairway. The short shot is almost certain to lead to the first putt being for par. No. 18 is full of choice, risk and reward. It is, without much doubt, the most demanding of the holes at Peacock Gap.