



Water Left, Water Right, Waterlefe— From Golf to Gulf

When you enter the Waterlefe community in Bradenton, Florida you really have no idea of the unique nature of this “Golf and River Club”. It’s rare to find a community that makes it easy to play a round of golf and then within minutes of putting the flag in the hole on the 18th green, find yourself cruising down the Manatee River. At Waterlefe, you have that and so much more. This is a golf magazine, so we will take the time to give you the low-down on the Ted McAnlis designed golf course that has hosted a U.S. Open Qualifier an unprecedented six times.

I don’t know if I coined the phrase, “Water left, Water right, Waterlefe”, but I’m going to act like I did. The course is a natural beauty, I’ve found it to be always in great shape, and with new bunkers, there’s a certain sparkle that’s been added. The natural vegetation, wildlife and water features that adorn the course make it challenging and visually stunning (especially at sunrise and sunset). From the tips the course plays 6,897 yards, but with six tee boxes there’s a distance that will fit your game.

I’m trying to remember if there’s a single golf hole at Waterlefe that isn’t adorned with water. There are a couple that have small ravines that have a small trickle in front of the greens (#2 and #13), but the rest of the course has water that provides a definitive border to every hole. Some of you may wonder, do I need to bring



an extra box of golf balls with me when I play Waterlefe. The answer is “No”. Don’t get me wrong, if you wander too far from the fairway, you will dunk a ball or two, but the water is more of a frame, for a beautiful work of art.

The front nine has a myriad of doglegs that carefully guide you through and around the water that borders the fairways and greens. Depending upon what set of tees you play, you may find that driver isn’t the club of choice from the tee. Hole #8 is a good example of water left, water right. Your tee shot carries a pond to the right, with the goal of landing within 150 yards of the green. Your second shot will carry over another pond, to a green that is tilted toward you and back-lit by the Manatee River. Finishing the front 9 with a par 3 is different than most courses and in this case, from the tips, it’s 230 yards over a marsh (a must carry of 210). A recent tour of the course with Head Pro - Matt Hill required me to “give it a go” from the tips. I made it with a 3-wood, but only by the hair of my chinny-chin-chin.

The back nine starts with a challenging par 5, with (guess again) water down the left and trees down the right. I find the back nine really gets fun at

the 14th hole. A par 5, the 14th teases you with the opportunity to get there in two, but beware, if the wind is in your face, you may want to lay up to within 130-150 yards before trying to fly the marsh that runs in front of the green.

The par 3 15th gives you an opportunity to wave at the passing jet skis and boats that are cruising down the Manatee River. The right side of the hole is bordered by the River, with the green leaving very little room for error. The 16th-18th holes are beautifully designed doglegs that use water and topography to shape your eye and your shots.

As I mentioned before, rarely can you play 18 holes and quickly jump in your boat and cruise the Manatee River, ultimately finding yourself in the gulf, after golf. The River Club at Waterlefe is the hub of social activity for dining and enjoying beautiful sunsets. With a state-of-the-art fitness center, saltwater lap pool, Tiki Bar and children’s playground, the River Club is a great combination for residents and members. Behind the Club is the Waterlefe Marina, which has 59 slips, ranging in size from 20 to 29 feet.

Waterlefe is a semi-private golf course, which means anyone can enjoy an opportunity to play. Memberships come in a variety of shapes and sizes and there are incentives to join for 2019. To make a tee time, or for more information about memberships, call (941)-744-9771, or visit www.waterlefegolfandriverriverclub.com. 🏌️