



## Where you want to tee, in Manatee

**Located within ten minutes** off the intersection of I-75 and Route 64 in Manatee County, the Waterlefe Golf & River Club is one of Central Florida's hidden gems. The name says it all, "Golf & River Club".

I've had the opportunity to play Waterlefe several times and am glad to review it for our readers this issue. In some ways you may wonder if the name shouldn't be Waterleft, or Water-right, since nearly every hole has water included as a hazard, or an aesthetic feature. Of all of the courses in Central Florida, this is one of my favorites.

The course was designed by Ted McAnlis, who must have quite an imagination as he used the natural fauna, paired with a variety of water features to create one of Central Florida's most naturally beautiful courses. The course is set along the Manatee River and is comprised of a collection of signature golf holes. The layout represents a challenge for golfers of all skill levels. There are five sets of tees ranging in length from 4700 to 6908 yards. There are five holes that touch or border the scenic Manatee River.

The first hole gives you a glimpse of what you can expect throughout your round...water. From the Blue Tees (measuring 6462) the first hole is a dog leg left par 5, with water to the right that comes into play off the tee and water on the left, which can provide a watery grave for wayward second shots. Hole #6 is another challenging par 5, water isn't the challenge as much as the placement of your second

shot. The hole doglegs at the very end, and if you aren't far enough left you better be able to hit a medium iron high enough to clear the tree at the corner and stop it on a dime. The front 9 ends with a daunting par 3. From the tips #9 plays 231 yards, from the blues it's 198, both of which become even more challenging if the wind is in your face. As if the distance wasn't enough, your shot is hit over a water and plant engulfed chasm. Making par on this hole is a hard earned trophy.

Those of you that are baby boomers may remember the "Why did the chicken cross the road" litany of jokes, but the basic answer, "To get to the other side" is an understatement at Waterlefe. When you cross the road and get to the other side, or the back nine, you are instantly met with a 542 yard (from the blues) par 5 with woods lining the right side of the fairway and homes with beautiful boats "out back" on the left. The designer's creativity really comes into play on holes 14 through 18.

A rather short par 5, #14 measures only 462 from the blues. But what you don't know is how the 462 yards is set up and chopped up. Your tee shot better be accurate, since there's water on the left and the right. Just because you find the fairway off the tee, doesn't mean you're off the hook. The second shot requires some thought. Lay-up short of the "junk" and hit a 135-150 yard shot into the green, or hope you catch your second shot flush and fly it over. I learned the hard-way, lay-up and assure yourself of at least par.

Although I have hit my second shot on the green and had an eagle putt (missed it, but got the birdie).

The Par 3, 15<sup>th</sup> hole runs parallel to the Manatee River, is only 161 yards long, but there's something about the water all the way down the right hand side of the hole and having to hit it 150 dead straight into a constant headwind, or crosswind that makes this hole much tougher than it looks on paper. Hole #16 is a fun dogleg left par 4, don't even think about hitting driver here. There's no room for error. Hole #17 is has a "chain" of tee boxes that range from 391 to 291 for the ladies. From the tips you feel like you are hitting your drive from somewhere in the middle of the Manatee River.

The #18<sup>th</sup> hole is a dogleg right, with water down the right hand side. The biggest challenge for me is hitting a draw down the line of palms that border the water, without hitting one of them. I'd like to say the most fun I've ever had playing the 18<sup>th</sup> was making par, which I've done. But the real fun was helping a boat owner lift their \$100,000+ boat out of the water, over the locks and into the river. That made me more nervous than a 6 footer to break 80.

After a fun 18, stop in the Grille Room for a sandwich and soda (or beer). The food is great and the service friendly.

For more information about the Waterlefe Golf & River Club, visit [www.waterlefeclub.com](http://www.waterlefeclub.com), or call the Pro Shop at (941) 744-0393, and tell them Duffer Dan sent you. 🏌️