

The Boston Tee Party

By Nico Earhart

I had already traveled to Boston once during the summer, dragging my baggage through the airport and making my way the two-thousand-miles to the East Coast from Colorado. I had my plan set out in front of me, which courses to play and when I would play them. Studying the layouts and getting filled with excitement as the departure date slowly approached. But, alas, it was not to be the trip I had wanted it to be. I had spent time with my friends while I was there and had enjoyed myself, but a back injury a few days prior to my departure would leave my golfing plans sidelined until the shooting pains in my lower back dispersed. I had even brought my clubs out there just so they could rot in the corner of the room for five days as I iced my back on my friend's lounge, straining to even slide them into the trunk of the taxi as I left Weymouth and departed for Logan International.

But I would not be denied my New England golf excursion, and as the date of my good friend's wedding on Cape Cod approached, with flights arriving and leaving from Boston, I had my second chance. I packed my golf bag gingerly, avoiding any undue strain or stress on my back, and got ready to head back out to Massachusetts for round two.

The first part of the trip would consist of two days in the city, returning to a track I had played the previous summer in Quincy, (pronounced by New Englanders as 'Quinzy') called Granite Links (\$125 w/ cart). Located only eight miles from the heart of downtown, Granite is a golf complex that consists of three 9-hole courses (Milton, Granite and Quincy) and practice facilities for both members of the semi-private club and for the public. Pulling into the parking lot of the

clubhouse, an impressive Northeastern construction cresting a gentle hill, shingled by weathered, wooden slats, you are greeted by panoramic views of the cityscape and Boston harbor to the north. I would be playing the Milton–Granite loop that winds through this hybrid links course with parkland trees coming into play on a number of the holes, but also with the general feel and look of classic, treeless European style links on the upper elevations of the course. In keeping with links tradition, the course's best defense comes from the ocean breeze, blown unobstructed up the hill from the Atlantic and the wind blew subtly all day and had to be taken into account on most shots. This being the early stages of Fall, the leaves of the ancient oak trees surrounding the course had begun their transitions into the amber and crimson colors of Fall, adding to the beauty of the course and surrounding hummocks. And despite a drought which had gripped New England for two solid months, the electric-green fescue, crosshatched with tracks weaved into the fairways, stood out against the powder blue autumn sky.

Granite Links Golf Course. Quincy, MA.



The name of the course comes from an old Granite quarry on which the course was molded and massifs of granite boulders are strewn about the land, occasionally in the middle of the fairways and coming into play. The water hazards, although dry from the absence of rain, were filled with bushy and desiccated cattails ranging out from where the fresh water had once stood. There are a number of memorably scenic holes though the majority were each granted some vista of their own, offering views of the city interspersed with the classically eastern landscapes. Par 5s elevated and descended the well-groomed fairways with waste areas beyond the rough filled with high, sinewy grasses. Numbers five and six on Milton run down a hill towards the clubhouse as the blocky shapes of downtown Boston guide you towards the fairways and provide structural aiming points in the distance. The closing hole on Granite has a tee shot whipped to a landing area in front of the clubhouse over a bottomless quarry filled with the trappings often found in such places: rusty old cars that had been destroyed in the fall, filthy equipment that sits in the soggy crater. Truly one of the best closing holes I've ever played.

In an attempt to detour the notoriously congested Friday Cape traffic leaving Boston, I headed out the isthmus to the town of Plymouth (yes, like the rock) to sever my drive in half with a round at Pinehills Golf Club (\$105 w/ cart). This is another gem of a public course that is played predominantly by the golfers who live in the surrounding community, giving it the look and feel of a private club. Your golf bag is taken from you at the drop and sent to the range as you snack on a breakfast sandwich in the clubhouse before you head out back to warm up. The facility sports two full 18-hole courses with designs by Jack Nicklaus and Reese Jones – I would be heading out on the Nicklaus

today. As I set off to the starter's shack to meet up with my partners and roll a few putts on the putting green behind the first hole, the ocean-blown mist oozed over the course in thick waves, cutting down the humidity that had been burning the side of my arm as I drove in from the city.

The set-up is of a parkland course with healthy oaks, pines and bushes, all beginning their transitions into the Fall colors. Natural water hazards, formed as the sea perforated the land and sloshed inland, littered Pinehills and sets of deep bunkers lining either side of the fairways formed the sand hazards found around the property. The cover from the trees equates to a muted feel on the course. Even though there are players in front and behind you, you still feel as though you're alone on a private track with only a few other members scattered amongst the trees. The narrow fairways and healthy rough of the place stresses the importance of holding the fairways and first cuts – get too far into the pines or deep stuff and you'll be wedging back out to the fairway. This was also the home course of the father of the groom, whose house I passed on the back nine, which added a degree of nostalgia to the game even though the two of them were already out on the Cape. The greens were well-maintained although a bit slow with the ocean moisture that hung on the grass.

As we made the turn and began the second half, the mist that had been floating in heavily all day, began to subside and reveal the true beauty of the place as the sunlight tinged its nooks and crannies, exposing the scenery. The three-hole stretch between fourteen, fifteen and sixteen was a beautiful example of New England golf by scenery and played enjoyably to boot. Number Fourteen, a short Par 4 with a series of center-cut bunkers guarding against distance, bushes both left and right and a bowed fairway sunk into a valley of trees and sandy waste

area. Fifteen, a Par 3 over a cut in the land, the tops of pine trees sticking out of the valley and a thin, hourglass green across the rift. And the sixteenth, a downhill, left dog-legging Par 5 with an ominous set of three bunkers on the left to deter golfers from cutting the corner of the hole. All of these holes had me pondering a replay but I knew I had to get out to the end of Cape Cod for the start of the wedding festivities.



The Ocean Edge Golf Course. Brewster, MA.

The wedding was to be held at Ocean Edge Resort in Brewster, MA, in a beautiful ceremony overlooking the ocean. An amazing time had by all, but in the interest of keeping with the theme, I will fast forward to the Monday after the wedding when I made it out to the resort's namesake course, Ocean Edge Golf Course (\$105 w/ cart). The hotel property is subdivided into different villas and estates separated from the mansion at the beach where the restaurants and bars are to be found. My room was perfectly placed next to the clubhouse and practice area, which

sits four miles inland from Cape Cod Bay. This was the second Nicklaus design I played, and the pro shop and restaurant are adorned with classic pictures from the Golden Bear's career (including a great shot of him receiving \$50 from Arnold Palmer). Ocean Edge wound among the oaks and pines and brackish marshland, heavily influence by the sea despite its inland feel. A sea-blown breeze whipped through the spires of the trees and made this course more challenging than it appeared, compared to other placid resort courses that are found in destination golf courses. Nicklaus took no prisoners in designing the course, and along with the narrow fairways found throughout there are sets of deep bunkers on each of the holes, especially on the Par 3s, with sand matted by dampness.

This is also not a track where fast play is the norm, given that many of the players are on vacation and could care less about pace of play, but the far from serious atmosphere appealed to me after getting off two stuffy semi-private clubs. Like the other Nicklaus course, Ocean Edge featured myriad double-tiered greens with emphasized breaks but well-maintained enough that putts rolled true and could be counted on to hold their lines. I particularly enjoyed the set of Par 3s that were all short but well-guarded by the bunkers and aesthetically pleasing to the eye; if you got even a foot or two off your line, you would be headed to the bottom of the sand where double and triple bogies loomed large. The fourth, a long Par 5 with a ninety-degree left dogleg, was one of the only Par 5s reachable in two, assuming you managed to clear the set of bunkers on the left guarding the cut-off. Number eight, a Par 3 with an extended carry over a stagnated pond and number nine, a Par 5 with a shrubby ravine to cross on your third shot to the elevated green guarded on three sides by bunkers, highlighted the front nine.

The layout of the back nine was interesting to say the least – all Par 4s until the sixteen and seventeenth holes, which are Par 3, Par 5, respectively – but I would hardly call it ‘quirky’ as the holes seem to flow together flawlessly. The Par 5 seventeenth, a 600-yard number with a hard and uphill curve to the left, brings you back towards the clubhouse where you wrap the round up with the last Par 4 that will tempt you to cut off distance by clearing a deep set of bunkers. The farther right you aim, the more you can cut off, but get in those bunkers and you’ll be headed to the bar shortly thereafter to drown the sorrow of a closing +4.

So if you ever find yourself in New England, rays of sun beaming down on the slopes of this historic place, make your way out to the course. Yes, it is a substantial distance out the Cape to reach Pinehills and Ocean Edge, but they are certainly worth the drive if you are looking for a day trip out of the city. And, of course, if you’re in the city and don’t play Granite Links, you’ll be kicking yourself for missing out on the opportunity.