

Weekend Golfer Magazine

The Emerald Dunes Club - New Ownership and a Renovated Golf Course

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With new ownership and a golf course renovated by its legendary designer Tom Fazio, The Emerald Dunes Club in West Palm Beach, FL, is again one of the top private golf clubs in Palm Beach County, an area resplendent with high-end private clubs.

The Emerald Dunes Club has been a private facility for more than seven years, but it's probably best still known as Florida's 1,000th golf course in 1990. At that time, Emerald Dunes was among Fazio's more anticipated layouts – a course that was anticipated to the standard for high-end, daily fee golf. Twenty years ago, remember, high-end daily fee was all the rage as the so-called “golf boom” was approaching its apex.

In 2005, Emerald Dunes was acquired for \$20 million and taken private by a group led by legendary TV golf producer Frank Chirkinian. It seemed like a good fit – the “Ayatollah” of CBS-TV golf and a private course in golf-happy South Florida.

Trouble was, the club was a little bit too private. Emerald Dunes basically became a playground for Chirkinian's friends, some of who paid and some who didn't. The club never had a “private” feel and seemingly had more dues structures than your neighborhood gym.

When the economy crashed in 2008, so did Emerald Dunes. The club was purchased out of bankruptcy court in 2010 for \$15 million (Donald Trump bid \$12 million) and set up rebuilding its facilities and its reputation.

“Before all the work, there weren't a lot of people talking about Emerald Dunes,” said Director of Golf Lee Rinker. “They knew about it, but it was like, ‘Is that still there?’ Now people are beginning to talk about Emerald Dunes again.”

Indeed. Now the “private” feel is back at Emerald Dunes Club. The club is closing on 100 members – twice the number it had two years ago – and the 7,101-yard, par 72 course looks better than it did 20 years ago. New championship back tees have been added, other tees were expanded and redesigned, fairways were widened on several holes, some new greens were created and others reshaped, bunkers were added to increase their number to more than 100, two holes were reconfigured and a new irrigation system was installed.

Among the more noticeable changes: a championship tee was added on the par-five first adjacent to the new practice green and new trees were added to the approach to the green on the right side of the hole for improved screening of the adjacent condominiums; on the par-four 13th, the fairway landing area has been widened down the right side and the low area where the cart path was previously has been filled. The fairway bunker on the right side of the hole has been removed creating a better approach into the green; the 16th hole - one of the better par-3's in South Florida - has a new green that is wider on the right side towards the lake. The area left of the green was reshaped and improved to better hold a missed shot.

