



## The Links at Challedon ~ And Down the Stretch They Come

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At the height of the upscale golf revolution that hit in the 1990s, the mid-Atlantic area saw dozens of new facilities dot the map. The area was in desperate need of additional golf courses. I remember that statistics showed that the per capita golfer to golf hole ratio was one of the highest in the nation. Since that time, many of these courses have redefined and rediscovered themselves. Such is the case at The Links at Challedon located in Mount Airy, Maryland. Upon its opening in 1996, this Carroll County golf community, named after the Maryland-bred horse that won the 1939 Preakness, immediately garnered recognition as one of the top courses in the metro area. Architect Brian Ault of Ault, Clark and Associates created a masterful design here. Unlike some golf course neighborhoods that visually cramp your game, beautiful houses come along with the property and are mostly built on bluffs overlooking the course at the Links. They almost become an afterthought as you canter your way around the layout. The clubhouse and surrounding buildings look like they came from a southern thoroughbred plantation.

Playing to a par 72, The Links at Challedon measures in at just over 6700 yards from the tips. Even with the modest length by today's standards, the course carries plenty of clout as evidenced by their strong slope rating. There's just the right mix of water and fairway bunkering on this traditional links design to challenge players of all levels of ability. While the putting surfaces are ample in size with moderate undulations, the par 5 opener features an uphill tee shot that plays down to one of the front nine's smallest greens. Both the par 4 second and par 5 third have elevated tee boxes high above the



Hole 4 Par 4



Hole 12 Par 3

fairways, with the latter pinched in by a large pond protecting the right side of the turf. The sharpest dogleg at The Links at Challedon can be found on the par 4 fourth. Your second shot plays over a creek to a green perched on a hillside. At just 130 yards, the short par 3 fifth is all about hitting the green. The tree-lined sixth is considered the most difficult par 4 on the outward side where a solid drive is needed to mount the elevated fairway. Beginning at the par 3 seventh, the surrounding community uses uniformed split rail white fencing that is aesthetically pleasing while complementing the course's character. The picturesque eighth that lies to the right of the facility's entrance is a par 4 stallion. Your second shot is played uphill over

another pond to a four-bunker green complex. The par 4 ninth is a good chance at birdie if you can master the sloping kidney-shaped putting surface.



Hole 17 Par 5

After putting on the feed bag at The Links at Challedon's super efficient snack bar, you are ready for the back stretch. The tenth hole is a flowing par 5 that doglegs gently to the right. Try to place your lay-up shot for the best angle to attack the green. The eleventh is a short par 4, played around a lake that provides options. You can jockey for position from the tee with a fairway wood or hybrid, but there's plenty of room for those wanting to get as close to the well bunkered green as possible. The par 3 twelfth is best noted for a two tiered green that warrants proper club selection. The next two holes play through a lovely wooded part of the property. Your second shot on the par 4 thirteenth will play uphill. Sand traps frame the beautiful par 3 fourteenth, which is totally surrounded by hardwoods. Fifteen is a gentle dogleg right with a fairway bunker ready to gobble up shots pulled left. Reaching the top of the plateau landing area on the sixteenth gives you the best visual to attack this abridged par 4. As you head for the finish line, the last par 5, seventeen, has risk/reward all over it. The stakes are high if you are going to go for the green in two, because anything short is either wet or on the beach. The closer, a straight-away par 4 bestowed with fairway bunkers plays to a deep, narrow green.

Since The Links at Challedon's opening, several ownership and management changes have occurred. The facility went through a lean period as the regional golf course field broadened. Troon Golf entered the picture in 2005 and the course revival included a new irrigation system, bunker renovation, planting nearly 200 new trees, and a fresh clubhouse makeover. The improvements have continued with Traditional Golf Properties, who hopped into the starting gate in 2008. Other courses in the stable of Traditional Golf include three exciting courses in Williamsburg, Virginia. Both Royal New Kent and Stonehouse were creations by the late golf design visionary Mike Strantz. Kiskiak is a long time favorite for travelers to that historical city. The Links at Challedon continues to be a sure bet in the Baltimore-Washington golf field.



Hole 8 Par 4

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