

Heron Bay's CHAMPIONSHIP HERITAGE welcomes you!



**HERON BAY
GOLF CLUB**

Last winter, I was on the first tee at Heron Bay Golf Club in Coral Springs, Fla., basking in the sun an hour after my flight from snowy Toronto touched down. I had already checked in at the Fort Lauderdale Marriott Coral Springs Hotel and Convention Center that overlooks the course. It was safe to say I had never envied ClubLink Members more.

By Tim McKay

ClubLink acquired Heron Bay last November, shortly after purchasing six courses in Sun City Center south of Tampa, and just prior to adding the 36-hole Woodlands Country Club in nearby Tamarac. Thanks to ClubLink's innovative three-tiered TravelLink program, Members from the Ontario/Quebec Region now can golf year-round. Plus they get preferred rates at the Marriott. No question: I was as green as the fairways at Heron Bay with envy.

But that aside, my task standing on the first tee was to play Heron Bay and report back to ClubLink Life readers. One of the first things I discovered, to my delight, was that the former PGA Tour venue is playable for all levels of golfers.

Fifteen years ago, 10-time PGA Tour winner Mark McCumber, who has made a name for himself as a golf course architect, was challenged to create a new home for the Honda Classic. In doing so he had to balance the demands of satisfying the best golfers in the world while creating a course that could be enjoyed by the public. When the course opened in 1996 as the TPC at Heron Bay, it was

named one of America's 10 best new public golf courses by Golf Digest. Golf Magazine ranked it one of the top 10 daily-fee courses in Florida.

For six years (1997-2002), the PGA Tour's Honda Classic called Heron Bay home, crowning champions Stuart Appleby, Mark Calcavecchia, Vijay Singh, Dudley Hart, Jesper Parnevik and Matt Kuchar. The late Payne Stewart was a fan favourite at Heron Bay and there's a plaque in the clubhouse commemorating his visits. Heron Bay's Director of Operations, Dave Salerno, said the course and its facilities were very popular with the players, who enjoyed being able to have their families stay on site, the same convenience now afforded to ClubLink Members.

Northerners could be forgiven for being a bit rusty during a mid-winter trip, but depending on the tees you choose, the course can be forgiving or very challenging. Your first move is to gauge the wind before deciding which tees to play. Five sets of tees stretch from a Tour-length 7,268 yards all the way down to a very manageable 4,961.



Photo: Pete Di Bartolomeo

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Our innovative TravelLink program provides all Members with three options to enjoy every course in the ClubLink family whether your Home Club is in our Ontario/Quebec Region or the Florida Region.

The basic option provides all Members with inter-regional access to all clubhouses and courses at preferred pricing on guest fees. TravelLink Plus provides additional privileges at an additional fee and TravelLink 2nd Home Club offers Members the opportunity to elect a second Home Club in another Region.

ClubLink Members looking for the best in “stay-and-play” receive 25 per cent off the published rate at the Fort Lauderdale Marriott Coral Springs Hotel and Convention Center adjacent to Heron Bay Golf Club and 30 per cent off at the Resort and Club at Little Harbor near our Sun City Center Clubs south of Tampa.

For more information, visit www.clublink.ca or call a membership consultant at 1-800-661-1818.

TravelLink: Connecting ClubLink’s Regions!

This, says Salerno, makes a round at Heron Bay an enjoyable experience. “The average golfer isn’t going to be reaching for another golf ball on every hole. If you’re on the right set of tees, it is a very playable course for anyone. The landing areas are very generous and if you keep the ball in play, you can score. You don’t necessarily have to hit it very far. The course definitely plays differently, based on wind conditions. It’s fairly wide open and the biggest challenge for any players here is wind and sand.” There are 98 bunkers and although there is water all the way around, it doesn’t really come into play, except on the signature finishing hole.

Salerno said that the 18th hole is “one of the best finishing holes in the area,” and has provided a lot of drama on grand stages such as the Honda Classic and Dixie Amateur championships. The 450-yard par-4 is a dogleg-right that features water down the entire right side and requires a well-placed drive to avoid the bunkers on the left. The second shot isn’t easy either, with the green guarded by water jutting in on the right side and large bunkers on the left and right. Another memorable hole is the par-4 sixth. At 455 yards, it plays into the prevailing wind, making it a great driving hole with bunkers on the left and right, leaving a long iron or fairway wood into a well-bunkered green.

Heron Bay and Woodlands Country Club will play host this year to the prestigious Dixie Amateur, one of the top amateur championships in the world. At 81 years old and going strong, Salerno said the Dixie Amateur is steeped in tradition and lore. “The list of winners of the Dixie reads like a who’s who on the PGA Tour. Twenty-three winners of the Dixie Amateur have gone on to win at least one Tour event.” The Dixie Amateur has been a steppingstone for many outstanding players on the PGA, LPGA and European tours. Past fields have included future superstars such as Tiger Woods and Sergio Garcia. Notable champions of the men’s division include Hal Sutton, Ryuji Imada, Brandt Snedeker, Andy Bean, Bruce Fleisher, Lanny Wadkins, Nolan Henke, Len Mattiace and Jesper Parnevik. The women’s division has produced great champions such as Angela Park, Vicky Hurst, Meaghan Francella and Alexis Thompson.

This year, the field of 240 of the world’s top amateurs will be trying to dethrone two-time defending champion Peter Uihlein of Orlando, Fla., formerly the No. 1 ranked amateur in the world. ClubLink recently secured the rights to the Dixie Amateur—the 12th-ranked amateur event in the world based on strength of field—and is proud to enhance its enviable reputation in the years to come. (Visit www.dixieamateur.com for details.)

Because the course hosts such top-level events, it has the best practice facility in south Florida. The lighted driving range is open until 10 p.m. and because the range is so large, the turf always is in pristine condition. And if the winter doldrums have taken their toll on your golf game, the Heron Bay Golf Academy can whip you back into shape with a lesson or a multi-day golf school. Heron Bay also offers a fully stocked golf shop, restaurant and bar in the clubhouse.

“A lot of ClubLink Members and their guests have really enjoyed coming here and many are taking multiple trips down,” Salerno said. “They love the course because it’s challenging and yet still enjoyable to play. It never plays the same, depending on the conditions. And with the Marriott right next door, it’s the ideal stay-and-play golf vacation.”

Tim McKay is a writer and editor for Sun Media/QMI Agency.