

# Tom Turtle Plays Nine



Heigh-ho, tis I, Tom Turtle, with more tales of derring-do from the snipped grasslands. Golf that is, for those still adjusting their headsets or rising from a nap. [My last report](#) from the fairways was donkey's years ago, and so much has changed since then, not least of all me. My game has improved vastly since that time, I no longer needing professional hypnosis before each round or emergency acupuncture and a Jarritos transfusion after.

That being the case, I wanted to share with you a quick nine-hole tour, as the kids now do on Youtube. But since I can't manage any modern contraption more complex than an avocado pitter, video is right out of the question. We will have to make do with the printed word.

I have a large fashionable mud-and-tile home on the verge of a golf course/swamp, which will go unnamed here. All you need to know is that the course is one of those newest designs, being a collaboration of all the top architects of the recent past, including Nicklaus, Watson, Dye, all the biggies. Each guy designed one hole on the course, so it is like a Sadean buffet or museum of tortures. To give you an example, the cart girl is dressed in black rubber and carries a whip.

The first hole was designed by Tom Watson: a 600-yard par three. But the novelty is, it is steeply downhill and the fairway is all cart path, so you can still hit it with a mid-iron—with the proper bounce ratio. It is sort of like kid's bowling with the walls up. But there is no backstop behind the green, so if you over-club or mis-time the bounces, you may end up 600 yards *past* the green hitting back, and this time uphill. Clever, you have to admit.

After holing out with a neat twelve, I needed some refreshment, so whistled to the cart girl. She knew me from previous feasts and had my usual on-hand: a carafe of earthworms, a box of frosted mini-donuts, and a magnum of Bud Light. That would tide me through the next fifteen minutes.

The second hole is the Pete Dye job, a 450-yard par 4, again with no fairway, the rolling green starting right off the front lip of the tee-box. You would think I could hit the green in that situation, but no, I shanked the drive 100 yards column right, beyond the edge of the gigantic green, in a patch of bush so dark, dense, and primordial no PhD in botany could ever identify it. I heard noises coming from within I would swear were the mating calls of orangutans. My ball was nestled in a tangle of dankest creeper, and I almost feared to fish it out with my putter lest Shelob should shoot out a hairy leg and drag me

within for lunch. But I got the ball out of there and with a couple of tricky over-the-shoulder drops off the back of my heel, I found myself on the green putting for a nine.

But the problem with the second hole—beyond the long roller-coaster putts—is the cats. To trick this up even more, Pete decided to add cats to his endless greens. I had lined up my putt and was just getting ready to swag it, when a fat tabby decided to take a nap on my feet, his tail laying across the top of my putter. Cute, sure, but distracting to say the least.



I finally lured him away with a plate of liver and got my putt on its way, when—after about fifty yards of rolling up and down—a tuxedo tom appeared out of nowhere, thinking my ball was a mouse. He diverted my putt to a far corner of the green, under a canopy of live oaks, and sat on the ball like a chicken hatching an egg. I had to give him a live gopher to get my ball back.

All that was so exhausting it was time to call the cart girl again, who on this occasion arrived dressed in nothing but chartreuse yoga pants and black lipstick. I ordered a cricket burrito and Dom Perignon in a two-liter styrofoam cup.

The third hole is a Jack Nicklaus production: a 510-yard dog-leg up. That's right, *up*. You lay up with a gap wedge, then hit a lob wedge straight up 50 yards to a truly elevated fairway you can only reach by a glass elevator. Once there, you have another 350 yards of sand traps, water traps, and alligator traps. If you can successfully navigate that circus, you light up the bonus light, a bell rings, and a clown presents you with a plush doll of your choice. Unfortunately for me, some cats had migrated over from the second hole, and they stole my ball in the Sahara-sized bunker in the front of the green, which they were using as a litter box. One of them took it up a bamboo tree and the koala got it. So I took an X and moved on. I don't really need another plush doll.



What I did need is more refreshment, and now being at altitude I wanted something to take the edge off the dizziness. So enter the cart girl again, who had changed into a skin-tight bat outfit, complete with pointed ears and fangs. Do bats even have pointed ears? Beats me. I have never met one on the hoof, as it were. I ordered a gross of chocolate-covered ants, a stingray salad, and a large fishbowl of RedBull with a silly straw.

The fourth hole is a doozy dreamed up by George Fazio. They don't call him Fazio for nothing (I don't even know what that means, but if you are smoking enough of the right thing it won't matter). It's a 170-yard par five, but you can't reach it on the drive since it is blocked completely from the tee-box by a screen of five impenetrable pines and a board fence. The trees are of a height that you can get over them only with a wedge, so you have to lay up to the fence and then open your club face all the way up, swinging as hard as you can. Those who still don't have that shot have to go around to one side or the other. And even if you get over in two and on the green, you find a moveable screen on one side of the hole or the other, and you can't see that second screen from the fairway. So it is 50/50 on whether you then have a straight putt at the whole. Half the time you have to go around again, taking three putts, hence the par of five.

My swing speed only being 40mph, I had to go around both times, and was unlucky again since one of Pete Dye's cats had stowed away in the cart without my knowledge, then riding to the green on my shell. I have no nerve endings up there, you know, and cats weigh next to nothing, so I was none the wiser until she crawled down and started kneading my head, as they will do. I was understandably startled and karoomed the ball off the little second screen, hitting my playing partner Randy in the knee. Taking a penalty for that and three from there, I carded a flabby fourteen, Randy nipping me by one and winning that hole and the first-half bet—a carton of commemorative Bonanza trading cards.

Peckish again after all that rigmarole, I flagged down the cart girl once again, who had traded in her cart for a jet-ski pulling a trailer of grub. The fifth hole is on the swamp, so you see how it goes there. Randy and I split a grasshopper pizza, and I added a key lime pie, ten Zagnut bars, some Sugar Babies, and a 72-ounce Orange Crush. Amazing I'm not diabetic, right, but I can't feel my feet anyway through those scales.

By then the sugar high was so intense I don't remember holes numbers five through seven, though I do

remember the cart girl seemed to have begun floating on a cloud of froth. She was naked and surrounded by a chorus of flying cats, all of them singing about marmalade cakes or diamond swizzle sticks or something.

On the eighth tee the pretty dream faded and I found myself sipping a Jolt Cola and giving CPR to Randy, who had freaked out and tried to eat a wasp's nest. The cart girl, who it turns out was a nurse in real life (or was that part of the dream, too?), forced some aloe vera down his throat until he began breathing again, and we valiantly trudged on. Randy's head soon swelled up like the Great Pumpkin, but I think it actually helped his game, since with the pain and itching he couldn't properly obsess about his swing. He played flawlessly from there on in, winning the second half bet and \$50, although he immediately spent it all in the pro shop on Benadryl, ice packs, and eucalyptus lozenges.

I don't want to skip the eighth, a Robert Trent Jones, Jr., masterpiece, so it is good I have some memory left. It is a circular hole, with the green the same as the tee-box, and vice versa. So you have to be careful not to hit yourself in the back of the head with your drive. Just kidding about that last thing, though it *is* circular. The fairway doglegs left, then doglegs left, then doglegs left again, and you are back where you started. Instead of a hole, you leave your tee in the ground and have to hit that with your putt at the end.

You will say, what about the foursome behind you? Don't you get into some sort of *Planet of the Apes* time loop here? Hey, don't get all technical on me, I am just telling you how it is. I am an American, so I don't have to understand how it works.

Randy didn't order anything from the cart girl after eight, understandably, but I wasn't going to miss an opportunity to score, so I went for the cherry snowcones, a box of Lucky Charms, and a mocha froth, heavy on the whipcream. By that time the cart girl was dressed in a Bubblicious Bikini, so I had trouble concentrating on the golf, but I will say that number nine is a monster. Designed by Johnny Miller, it is complete with a roast track, piped in by Johnny himself from the 19<sup>th</sup> hole. There are big speakers mounted on trees all along the hole, like air-raid horns, and Johnny and his octogenarian pals give you snide tips while playing gin-rummy. Sort of like those old farts in the balcony of the *Muppet Show*, you know. You'd think it would be funny, but after a billion milligrams of sucrose it lost its charm for me. Johnny told me I needed to stand further away from the ball. . . *after* I hit it. Things like that. When I took a big divot, he told me I had just lopsided the world.

The hole is a straight-away, flat expanse, with no bunkers or water, but the massive old trees overhang the fairway to such an extent you can't get the ball more than about ten feet off the ground without snagging a branch. Members carry a one-iron just for this hole, but most of us can't hit it without topping it, so it is a bloodbath. And in the rare case anyone tags a one-iron, it invariably goes into the trees anyway, knocking down two or three cats. Johnny likes to recommend a driver off the ground, nudging his pals the while, but no normal person can do that, either, so they just yuk it up at our expense. Before long they were all singing "woodsman, woodsman, spare that tree!" and "I'm a lumberjack and I'm OK".

But I got the last laugh when the round ended and I walked into the 19<sup>th</sup> hole with the cart girl on my arm and a posse of cats not prepared to take any guff from the likes of Johnny Miller. And of course Randy, who could have scared anyone off at that point, with his huge glowing head. I ordered a round of FancyFeast on me, and TootsieRolls and HawaiianPunch for the cart girl. Johnny and his friends were *so* jealous.

In a pile  
Upon a log  
Over the water  
Third from the bottom  
Secreting my own hard shell  
Tom Turtle

To read more from Tom Turtle, [go here](#).