



# A Blueprint for Success

**Expect to be amazed and challenged at Reunion  
Golf Club in Hoschton**

By Robert Rodriguez



### **Some golf clubs are destined for greatness.**

They have a combination of several things working in their favor – a mastermind determined to see his dream come true; a wonderful piece of land used to create the golf course; fantastic amenities for both residents and visitors of the golf community; a golf management firm solidifying the books and operations aspect of the club – the list goes on and on.

Such was the case for Reunion Golf Club in Hoschton. Located just past Chateau Elan Resort and minutes from The Mall of Georgia, Reunion is an impressive golf course found in a splendid John Weiland Homes and Neighborhoods community. Managed by Affiniti Golf Partners, Reunion is the sister course of Woodmont Golf Club, Weiland's first

venture at a golf course community. And it's quite evident the theme he wanted the development to embody as soon as you enter the gates.

"Weiland had the Colonial theme in mind in developing the residential community," said Jon George, Reunion Golf Club's general manager. "You definitely get the 'wow' factor driving in and seeing the town hall-like clubhouse. He wanted to tie it all in to the styles of the homes and the clubhouse."

The scene around the clubhouse looks closer to 1776 rather than 2006. A town square and several small buildings huddle around the clubhouse. But you won't find blacksmiths or boutiques in the town center; rather, those buildings house townhouses and other amenities for the residents.

But what you can take full advantage of is the outstanding Michael Riley golf course and all the wonderful golf facilities that abound at Reunion. As with most Atlanta courses, Riley was given a canvas filled with natural creeks, woodlands and stunning elevation changes to carve out his masterpiece.

And what he created was nothing short of brilliant. The course opened for play in 2001, and the accolades followed soon thereafter. *Georgia Golf News* ranked Reunion as the Best New Golf Course for 2001.

The course tips at a manageable 6,936 yards. It's a fun track for double-digit handicappers, too, as three other sets of tees are available. But Reunion is far from being a pushover; Riley incorporated several forced carries over water or gulches to reach the greens. Yet he built most fairways in such a way that your ball will bounce back toward the fairway on most wayward shots. It takes a solid mix of brains and brawn to score well at Reunion; one lapse in judgment could lead to disastrous results.

The par 5s are a thrill ride that offer both birdie opportunities and really easy chances for hockey sticks and snowmen to appear on the scorecard. Your round begins with a par-5 sweeper to the left that features bunkers at the elbow of the bend and trees on both sides. Trees continue down both sides, and bunkers are scattered throughout. But this hole is a mild opener that should get your round started off right.

The seventh hole is unique in that it's the only hole in Atlanta with two separate greens. No matter which green is in play, both are reachable in two (from tee to the right green is 515 yards, to the left green is 482 yards). But bunkers heavily guard the putting surfaces. Bunkers also are a problem off the tee, as a row of them cut across the fairway. Stay out of the sand, and red numbers are a good possibility.

The back nine begins with a 490-yard par-5 that bends to the right. The hole offers a huge landing area, so let it fly off this elevated tee box. Course knowledge is key for the second shot because it's a blind approach from the fairway. What you don't see is the water that fronts the putting surface about 75 yards out. And because this green is quite small and unreceptive to long iron or fairway wood shots, going for it in two is not the smart play. Swallow your pride, pull out an iron and lay up short of the water. That will leave a wedge shot in to a well-protected green.



## A Round at Reunion Golf Club

**Address:** 5615 Grand Reunion Drive, Hoschton, GA 30548

**Phone number:** 770-967-8300

**Web site:** reuniongolfclub.com

**Designer:** Michael Riley

**Year Opened:** 2001

**Par/Yardage:** 72/6,936 yards (Championship); 6,602 yards (Medal); 6,003 yards (Match); 5,006 yards (Forward)

**Fairways:** Bermuda 419

**Greens:** A-1 Bentgrass

**Normal rates:** Monday-Thursday, \$39; Friday, \$49; Saturday, Sunday and Holidays, \$59; Rates include shared cart, and twilight and senior rates are available.

**Toughest hole:** No. 15 – A true ball-buster no matter which tees you play. This par-4 starts out straight with houses closely lining the left, and trees and brush guarding the right side. Despite the small room for error, you must hit driver because the hole plays predominantly into the wind and takes a hard turn right at the 150-yard marker. The optimum play is to be on the left side of the 150-yard marker to avoid a gulch that cuts the hole and for an open look at the green. The approach is just as demanding. Not only must you clear the gulch, the green is perched on a hill and protected by bunkers front left.

**Best chance at birdie:** No. 11 – Put your scoring irons to good use here. This downhill, downwind par-3 features bunkers in front of the green and a dry hazard on the right. The 11th stretches to 186 yards for the scratch players, but is a manageable 142 and 121 yards from the popular medal (blue) and match (white) tees. Take full advantage here, because the 12th begins a stretch of five demanding holes.

**Most scenic hole(s):** No. 1 – A stunning opener because of the elevated tees and the fairway bending to the left.

No. 4 – Elevated tees and the fairway contours makes this hole appealing to the eye.

No. 5 – The rocky water feature near the green make for a visually impressive, and intimidating, scene.

No. 8 – Once again, thank the rocks and water for making this hole a picturesque setting.

No. 18 – The view off this tee is similar to that of No. 1 in terms of playability and beauty.

**What could use some work:** The third green. From the tips, the hole plays 204 yards over a gulch to a large green. But landing on the green doesn't guarantee a two putt – far from it – especially if the pin is on a back shelf. Coming from any side of the hole, getting the ball to a pin on that shelf is nearly impossible. You should be rewarded for making it on this green, not punished.

**Colonials never had it like this:** Besides a lavish clubhouse, Reunion offers an expansive, plush driving range and a halfway house just off the eighth tee box (the course does not return to the main clubhouse after nine holes) that's as good as it gets. Come hungry to the eighth hole, as the snack bar features delicious hot dogs, Goodyear-size hamburgers and other tasty treats for your enjoyment. And the service here is impeccable from the moment you drop off the bag to the moment you head back to your car.

**Ammo needed:** Four balls. Reunion is surprisingly difficult. Not only must you steer your drives down the middle, you must carry over several water hazards and gulches to reach the green.

**Tip from Pro:** "Put the male ego aside. When in doubt with your approach shots, take an extra club."

— Jon George, general manager

What you see is what you get on the 12th hole, although it plays longer than 523 yards because of the wind. A creek that cuts this hole is another major factor here, but only on the second shot.

The final par-5 you encounter is a beauty, and also happens to be the final hole at Reunion. Just like the first hole, No. 18 veers to the left off this tee with trees and red stakes on the left, and bunkers at the elbow of the bend. At 579 yards, it's extremely difficult to reach this green in two, and even the second shot is a doozy. The safe play is to aim for the right side of the fairway, let the hills on that side kick the ball back toward a safe spot, and attack the green with a wedge in your hand. Bunkers are littered around the green, but if played smartly, No. 18 will have you leaving with a smile on your face.

"My favorite hole is No. 18," George said. "It's a great finishing hole, and it's scenic coming in. It's a tough but fair par-5."

Each par-4 at Reunion is unique in its own special way, whether it's the elevation changes, a peculiar characteristic of the hole or just the challenge of the layout. The second hole is tough as nails and features a skyscraper-like cell phone tower that is your aiming point on your drive. The fourth hole offers a breathtaking view off the tee, but can create an eyesore on your scorecard.

It takes a solid mix of brains and brawn to score well at Reunion; one lapse in judgment could lead to disastrous results.

Reunion Clubhouse





“The best idea on No. 4 is to take a long iron or fairway wood and punch it out to the top of the hill about 140 yards out,” George said. “Then you can knock a little 9-iron or wedge on the green. Get your par and get out of there.”

The fifth and sixth holes both measure less than 400 yards, but they can be problematic in different ways. Water hugs the green on the fifth, making for a scenic, but tough, approach shot. Off the sixth tee, you must favor the left side and carry over the water on this dogleg-right for the best look at the green. You can try and scale over the hill on the right side of the fairway, but the hill could careen your ball into another water hazard lurking on the left in front of the green. Trying to get it close on the sixth green is difficult because of a steep drop-off on the left and a bunker in front. And use the fairway contours effectively on No. 9 to help you on this difficult par-4.

On the back nine, the first par-4 you encounter is No. 13, a devilish 455-yarder that plays into the wind. Driver is OK off this tee, as long as you steer clear of the brush on the left and don't carry it past the 150-yard marker. Why? A creek cuts the hole just beyond the marker. The 15th will give you fits from tee to green (see sidebar), while the 17th might give back that stroke you lost on No. 15.

What makes Reunion stand out from other courses are the par 3s. They are tougher than a Waffle House steak, but as pleasing to the eye as a Southern Belle. The third hole is

a demanding 204 yards that is all carry over a gulch. Once you reach the green, the work doesn't stop there. Putting prowess is vital in order to walk off here with a reasonable score. The eighth hole is breathtaking because of the pond and the rock wall lining the green. But make sure you factor the wind here.

The back nine offers three par 3s, the first of which is No. 11, a birdie hole (see sidebar). The 14th hole is all you can handle at 222 yards. The hole plays slightly uphill and requires a forced carry over a gulch. Bunkers are situated right and behind the green should your tee shot go astray. The final par-3 at Reunion, No. 16, measures 183 yards and plays downhill. Bunkers are your main adversaries on both sides of the green.

A round of golf isn't complete without a stop inside the clubhouse. Once inside, you have the option of relaxing and settling the bets at the grill, or dining in a quieter setting in the banquet room in back. Although it looks like a small town hall, the clubhouse is actually quite roomy and inviting.

Simply put, Reunion Golf Club will dazzle you with its charm, wow you with its beauty and bully you with its mite – that's what makes it such a treat to play. And with greens fees at \$39 on weekdays and \$59 on weekends, it's definitely one of the best bargains in Atlanta.

Not only is Reunion Golf Club destined for greatness, most would say it's already achieved that honor. **AG**