

Play at Bukit Pandawa, a unique, challenging but pleasing golf course

WORDS RIYADI SUPARNO

PHOTOS AHSIN ARSADI/GOLF DIGEST INDONESIA

Have you golf players ever imagined playing 18 holes but all par-3? How would it feel? Some say it's less challenging and passes too quickly. But this is not the case if you play at Bukit Pandawa Golf Course & Country Club in South Kuta, Bali.

The 18 championship-caliber, par-3, holes Bukit Pandawa offers are challenging. Although they are all par-3, they are not easy to conquer, especially several long holes with a plethora of bunkers.

As its name indicates – Bukit Pandawa means Pandawa Hill – the course lies in a hilly area between the increasingly popular Pandawa and Gunung Payung beaches. It sits on the top of the cliff, with strong winds blowing in from the Indian Ocean that will complicate your game.

When I was informed that I would play on an all par-3 golf course, I considered bringing only my short iron clubs and a putter, but then decided to bring all 13 clubs, complete with woods and driver.

It turned out I used most of my clubs, including my driver especially on the second hole, 223 meters from the tee – as I'm not a long hitter.

The course proved to be sufficiently challenging, especially with the stiff sea breeze, the hilly nature of the course and the bunkers spread about several holes.

Despite the wind and some holes that are longer than the usual par-3, this course is still manageable for most golfers. If you don't play too badly, you will never lose your ball or ever hit the ball to the next-door fairway.

Indeed it's a relatively pleasing golf course to play on. You will feel good playing at Bukit Pandawa, especially if you play in the early morning when the wind is not so strong.

You have a good chance of landing your ball on the green, most of the time. However, don't get too complacent, as most of the greens are too large to putt. So, you can easily end up with a bogie or even double bogies.

However, if you are good at short games, you will enjoy playing at Bukit Pandawa. It is well-suited for short-gamers.

In addition to playing a good game at Bukit Pandawa, you will also be mesmerized by its stunning view of the Indian Ocean – you can see the blue ocean from half of the holes – as well as the beauty of the golf course itself, designed by Bob Moore of JMW, which is also responsible for the design of Royale Jakarta Golf Club.

Moore accommodated the hilly nature of the landscape into his design, with some greens lying behind cropped limestone hills, making a contrast between the greens and the white rocky outcroppings.

Moore's golf design is nicely blended with Balinese touches by tropical landscape designer Made Wijaya,

who placed Balinese-style gates at a number of tees and created his unique Balinese-style rest corners. Wijaya's signature creation at the golf course is the towering Balinese *kul-kul* structure, which is visible from many corners of the course.

Although Bukit Pandawa is a relatively new golf course, with a soft opening in May and grand opening in October, the surroundings are already in good shape, with big trees scattered around. Moore in fact replanted 90 percent of the trees from the site when the course was developed.

Golfers, however, have to bear with some construction work going on around the golf course, where PT Bali Ragawistata – the owner of the golf course – is building five-star properties to be operated by global brands such as Mandarin Oriental, Waldorf Astoria and Swissotel.

When all these properties are ready, the golf course will be a perfect place to play, especially if you are staying at one of the five-star hotels or residences.

Even if you are not staying there, the golf course will still be worth playing when you are in Bali, either with family or on business. You don't need to spend a whole half day playing there. This golf course is a time saver. With a par-54 layout, you can finish playing your whole game in two-and-a-half hours.

So, if you are with your family, you can wake up early, play golf for two-and-a-half hours and then get back to your hotel to join your family for a late breakfast. Or, if you are in Bali for business, you can enjoy your free time playing golf at Bukit Pandawa.

Experience for yourself the sensation of playing golf at an all par-3 golf course.



MADE WIJAYA GIVES BALINESE CHARACTER TO BUKIT PANDAWA

WORDS **RIYADI SUPARNO**
PHOTOS **AHSIN ARSADI/GOLF DIGEST INDONESIA**



What happens if a golf course adopts local arts and culture into its operation? There are two possibilities: It would become a not-so-proper golf course, or it would become a unique course to play on. Bukit Pandawa Golf and Country Club in South Kuta provides an example of the latter.

Designed by Bob Moore of California-based JMP Golf Design Group, the Bukit Pandawa golf course successfully incorporates some Balinese elements into its beauty.

Golfers would notice a Balinese *kul-kul* tower standing tall on a hill at hole 13 and some Balinese-style gates placed seemingly at random, but nicely in

certain corners near teeing grounds.

They are all the works of renowned tropical garden designer Made Wijaya, who passed away last August. Born Michael White, Made Wijaya designed hundreds of tropical gardens in prominent properties in Bali, Indonesia and across Asia.

"I many times quarreled with Made Wijaya over his design, but at the end I was the one who succumbed to his strong will about his works and where to place them," said Djie Tjian An, president director of PT Bali Ragawisata, which owns Bukit Pandawa.

Wijaya also designed the rest areas on the tees, which he termed *terus tumbuh* (continues to grow), where the four pillars are made from live trees.

Another Wijaya creation in the golf course is the terrace waterfall, where water flows down terraces, creating a beautiful scene and sounds as the backdrop for hole 8.

"What I like about Made Wijaya is that he never repeated his works. The *kul-kul*, the gates and the waterfall that he built for us are one-and-only," he added.

Another Balinese element in the golf course is found in its clubhouse, designed by Indonesian architects Antony Liu and Ferry Ridwan.

The design of the clubhouse blends with its Balinese surroundings through the implementation of local materials such as stone, wood, native grasses and water, which runs through many of the building's spaces, including the locker rooms and the reception area.

According to its creators, the

3,000-square-meter clubhouse, with a twin-block structure resembling Balinese temples, was indeed inspired by the ancient temples and towers of central Bali.

"It perfectly harnesses what's so great about the location – the views – and it has so much character," said Antony Liu.







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