

# Oakland Hills' New Look for the Open

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It was at Oakland Hills Country Club, 20 miles north of Detroit and just west of Birmingham, that Cyril Walker won the USGA Open Championship in 1924 with a score of 297, Ralph Guldahl set a record of 281 (since broken by Ben Hogan) in 1937 and Miss Glenna Collett won the Women's Amateur in 1929. But that same club will offer a course for the Open, June 14-16, quite different from that over which those titles were won.

Oakland Hills is still big and expansive, with pleasantly rolling fairways. But no longer is it the sluggers' paradise it was known as for years.

A modernization designed and supervised by Robert Trent Jones, well known golf architect, has changed it considerably. It has been transformed into a course putting a premium on accuracy and position play. Those who learned their lessons in these important essentials at Merion a year ago and have not

forgotten them should do well at Oakland Hills.

"I think the Open at Merion proved that players as well as spectators enjoy a course that is a real test of golf, where every shot must be well thought out and properly executed or there will be a justified penalty," said Mr. Jones. "Such a course, as proved at Merion, will produce a real champion."

## Meets Changed Conditions

Mr. Jones explained his purpose was to remodel the course to meet the standards of modern playing conditions. The ball and equipment have changed radically; obviously the course values have changed.

"We have attempted to match these changes with new features at strategic locations, creating hazards and pitfalls to make the current Open a test of intelligence and playing skill," he said.

"Recent tests I made during Open Championships proved that the average

## Where Open Champion Will Be Crowned



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The tightly-trapped 18th green at Oakland Hills Country Club, Birmingham, Michigan, with rambling clubhouse in background. Here is where a Champion will emerge at the USGA Open Championship, to be played June 14-16.

carry of the entire field is about 240 yards. Better than ten players carry 250 yards and scarcely anyone in the field carries less than 230 yards, illustrating that features outside these limits are of no penal value."

Accordingly, the trapping Mr. Jones placed at Oakland Hills begins at the 230-yard distance. Traps flank both sides of the fairways except where natural features made that unnecessary. There are also occasional positional or strategic traps in the center or just off center, which demand that a golfer position his tee shot.

There's always a target area with plenty of room in which to park a drive if the player doesn't want to risk the carry of the trap.

Despite the accent on accuracy, which carries all the way to the putting greens, ability to power the ball will not be without its reward—if the hitting is controlled. Proof of this is the fact that the course, with a revised par of 35-35-70, will measure 6,927 yards. Par at the eighth and 18th has been reduced from 5 to 4 through use of middle tees. There are now only two par 5 holes, the second and 12th.

#### Long Hitters Take Risks

Under favorable conditions, the longer

hitters can get home in two on the second and it could happen rarely at the 12th — if the hitters are willing to risk the traps guarding the elevated green. But it is not all to the siege gun, Mr. Jones has made sure.

"The topography of Oakland Hills was almost ideal for the development of our plan," he said. "The green contouring, while rugged in certain parts, was extremely adaptable for the new tongue or pin areas we have attached to them. New trapping was placed to protect certain pin areas that were open or unprotected, so missed shots will be penalized and well-played ones rewarded.

"The green contours will play a part in offsetting to some extent the benefit of the wedge and the pitching wedge, which have no doubt made the game somewhat less difficult, particularly in the hands of modern first class professionals."

There will be four testing one-shotters ranging from the 169-yard 13th to the 216-yard ninth, which will be played from a tee gouged out of the hillside below the old elevated tee.

The real length will show up on the 12 par-4 holes. Not more than four of these will be of the drive-and-pitch variety. On the others, the second will be

### A Tight One-Shotter for Title Aspirants



Detroit News Photo

The well-guarded 13th hole, Par 3, 169 yards, showing some of trapping put in by Robert Trent Jones to emphasize accuracy.

## Emphasis on Position Play at Oakland Hills



Detroit News Photo

**A view of the rolling and well protected terrain which must be traversed on the way to the 11th hole, 407 yards, par 4.**

played with a medium or long iron, or sometimes a wood.

The eighth, where Ralph Guldahl coasted in a 40-foot putt for an eagle 3 that started him on the way to the 1937 Championship, will measure 458 yards with the last stages uphill. The 18th, with a sharp dogleg to the right after the drive, measures 459 yards from the tee to be used this time, and the green is well trapped.

Oakland Hills' most famous hole is the 405-yard 16th, with a big lake which extends to the very edge of the green and which must be crossed with the second shot. It was here Walker made the birdie 3 that virtually sewed up his 1924 Championship. It will no longer be possible to bee-line a drive directly toward the green as he could and as others did then and in 1937. The green was enlarged by building out into the lake while the rough now swings well in from the right, changing the line from the tee. And the rough will be rugged.

### 10th Costly to Bob Jones

It will interest Bob Jones to learn that two more traps have been added at the 443-yard tenth, one of the best par-4 holes anywhere, as Jones can attest. This hole cost him the 1924 Open when it exacted

two 5's and two 6's from him and caused him to finish second, three strokes back of Walker.

This Open will mark Sam Snead's return to the course on which he played in the classic for the first time. When the West Virginian chipped close to the pin on the last hole for what then was a birdie 4, he took the lead with a score of 283. But Sam barely had time to reach the clubhouse before a mighty roar from out on the course signaled the eagle 3 with which Guldahl opened his winning spurt. Ralph followed with a 2 on the ninth, made the turn in 33 and came down the last nine in 36 for his second 69 of the tournament, beating Snead by two strokes.

"We have tried to eliminate anything that could be considered tricky," said Mr. Jones. "Al Watrous, the club's popular pro, has hit hundreds of balls to prove the values are testing but just.

"In a nutshell, Oakland Hills has been re-designed with target areas to be hit from the tee and by second shots on long holes and pin areas to be aimed for at the green. The truly great and accurate shots will earn their just rewards. The slightest miss or badly executed shot will be punished. A great champion should emerge."