

# Oakmont and the Open

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The Oakmont Country Club, 15 miles northeast of Pittsburgh, is entertaining the Open Championship this month for the third time, but there have been many changes in the eighteen years since the last Open there, in 1935.

Tommy Armour, the Scottish iron master, won the 1927 Open at Oakmont, beating Harry Cooper in a play-off, 76 to 79, after they had tied at 301, thirteen over par, for 72 holes.

Sam Parks, Jr., a Pittsburgh professional of 25, pulled a major surprise by winning the 1935 Open at Oakmont with a score of 299, eleven over par. Excellent putting on lightning-fast greens, plus a chip shot into the hole for an eagle, helped him to edge Jimmy Thomson, who was second with 301.

Oakmont is not so tough now as it was for the two previous Opens because there is more grass on the greens and there are not so many bunkers now. Where formerly there were 180 bunkers, now there are 158. However, the course now measures 6,916 yards.

The course was fairly easy for scoring in the 1951 PGA Championship. Sam Snead, the winner, and all the others could shoot for the pins with bravado because the course had been drenched with rain.

However, the comparatively easy first hole, a par 5 of 483 yards, the last 100 downhill, has since been lengthened ten yards by a new tee. It calls for a second shot with a long iron or short wood to a green which slopes away. The second hole also has been lengthened by more than 10 yards, to 355 yards, and the tee faces left across a big bunker, calling for a long carry to a narrow fairway with a ditch and heavy rough to the left.

The Pennsylvania Turnpike, which now bisects the course, has forced construc-

tion of a new green on the eighth hole, a difficult par 3. This 253-yarder has a more level green but it is nearly surrounded by bunkers.

The back nine is a stiff par 35 to offset the milder 37 going out.

The club is celebrating the fiftieth anniversary of its founding by the late William C. Fownes and a group from several other clubs in 1903. Mr. Fownes was president until his death in 1935, or 32 years. His son, the late W. C. Fownes, Jr., was president from then until 1946, and he died in 1950.

After the 1925 Amateur Championship, Oakmont recommended to the USGA that entertaining clubs provide all caddies for events henceforth, a policy which has since been in effect. Ten years later, at the 1935 Open, it started the practice of using an alarm to stop Championship play during a lightning storm.

For twenty years, from 1927 to 1947, the late Emil (Dutch) Loeffler served as both professional and greenkeeper at Oakmont. Loeffler shares with Pete O'Hara and Harry Cooper the competitive record of 68 for 18 holes, and he alone holds the 36-hole record of 141. The 72-hole record is the 294 scored by Willie Macfarlane in winning the 1934 Pennsylvania Open.

Bobby Loeffler, Emil's brother and longtime assistant, is now the greenkeeper and has absorbed much of his late brother's knowledge.

Oakmont and the nearby Pittsburgh Field Club are sharing the role of hosts in the Championship Qualifying Rounds on the two days prior to the Championship proper at Oakmont.

The entry for the sectional qualifying rounds was approximately 1,682, second only to the record of 1,688, established in 1952.