

Driving Tests at Oakmont

By ROBERT TRENT JONES

PAST PRESIDENT, AMERICAN SOCIETY OF GOLF-COURSE ARCHITECTS

For years I have been making tests during USGA Open and Amateur Championships on the length of the flight and the roll of the golf ball as hit by experts. These tests were made at Canterbury Golf Club in 1940 and 1946, at Medinah Country Club in 1949, at Merion Golf Club in 1950, at Oakland Hills Country Club in 1951, at Saucon Valley Country Club in 1951 and at Oakmont Country Club during the 1953 Open Championship. For each test, I tried to select a hole which would be most feasible for the purpose and which would bring out the true character of the normal hitting of the country's finest golfers.

At Oakmont, because of the rolling character of the ground, there were really no flat holes, but tests were made on the fourteenth and eighteenth holes.

The fourteenth was the nearest to flat which the course offered. However, because of the slight tilt of the fairway to the left and the very tight bunkering, players were inclined to ease up or steer their drives and so the fourteenth was more a test of accuracy than of power.

The eighteenth was not ideal, either, due to the fact that the tee is elevated about twenty feet above the target area.

The eighteenth is considered one of the two hardest on the course. It is 462 yards in length and well bunkered in the target area, although the bunkering is quite wide. The width at the landing area is 41 yards. The hole is downhill for about 300 yards, then rises slightly to the green elevation. The green is large, flank-bunkered on both sides and undulating. The wind during the test, which was made on the morning of the final

TO THE LADIES

If you can play as fast as men (or faster)
And never lose your place through any green,
Yet humbly recognize the male as master
And bid him "please come through" as soon as
seen;

If you can hit the shot that sweetly landing
Brings even birdies well within your ken,
But still preserve a proper understanding
That golf links were, of course, devised for men;

If you can make your handicap respected
And even bear off pots and other loot,
Yet never leave your sacred home neglected,
And never, never fail to feed the brute;
If you display the tact that smoothes and evens
The woes that make the golfing husband groan;
If you can hear his latest golfing grievance
And never try to bore him with your own;

If you can praise when all his shots succeeded
And comfort when his card was marked "retired"
If you can make a foursome when needed,
But fade away when females aren't required;
In short, if you can keep your proper station,
You'll be a perfect paragon, methinks—
And voted, by the Lord of all creation,
An ornament to any home or links!

From a Ladies' Bulletin Board, Bolton, Lancashire

day, varied from 3.4 miles per hour to as high as 14 miles per hour, according to the Windicator. The wind over-all was slightly helpful. Our figures indicate that the drive was helped by the wind to the extent of approximately 5 to 8 yards. The chart shows that there were exceptions: when long hitters came to the tee during gusts and high winds, they did get exceptionally long drives.

Field Averaged 261 Yards

The average length of the drive on the eighteenth hole was 240 yards carry and

261 yards carry plus roll. The test covered the whole field of fifty-nine players in one round, and so included some poor drives which were not characteristic.

It is interesting to note that one player drove more than 300 yards. Two players drove from 290 to 300 yards. Four drove from 280 to 290 yards. Nineteen drove from 260 to 270 yards. Sixteen drove from 250 to 260 yards. Only ten drove less than 250 yards.

Bill Nary, Frank Souchak and Jimmy Clark used No. 9 irons for their second shots. When you consider the size of the target and the distance of the bunkers at the sides of the green, you can see that only the contour of the putting green made it possible for this hole to defend itself against normal birdies. Of the fifty-nine players, forty-one reached the green in two, with iron seconds. Ten were short of the green, on the apron, primarily due to failure to judge the distance correctly. Three were bunkered left, and four were bunkered right. Only one ball was in the rough at the green area during the entire morning.

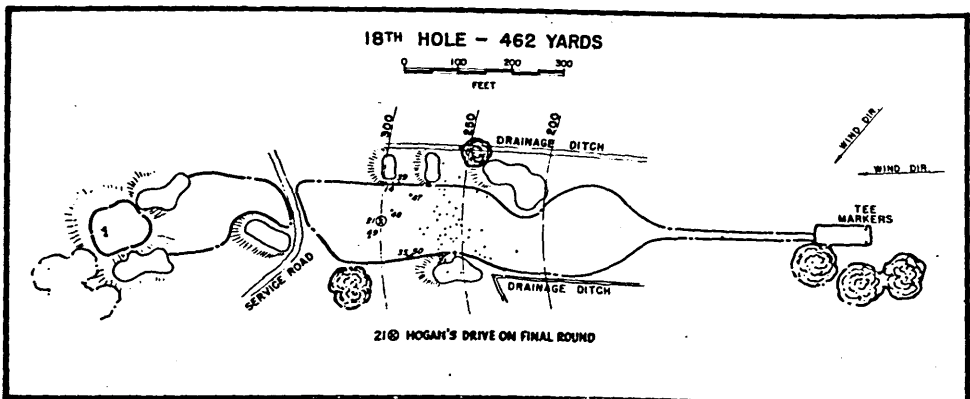
45 of 59 in Fairway

It is also interesting to note that forty-five of the fifty-nine players hit the fairway. Eight barely missed the fairway and were about three feet or less into the rough. Five missed the fairway by wide margins, but only two shots went into the bunker from the tee. The cluster of dots in the fairway on the sketch of the

hole shows that most players were within 10 yards of the center of fairway with their tee shots, an amazing display of the accuracy with which these modern players hit the golf ball.

These statistics show why the eighteenth hole at Oakmont, which once was a fearful hole and required a wood second shot into its green, is no longer a hole of terror for the modern expert. With expert golfers averaging 261 yards and playing iron second shots, the hole has become a comfortable par 4, whereas it used to be a fearful par 4. You can see from the accompanying sketch of the hole that the bunkering is fairly well placed, although it could be slightly tighter. One bunker, however, from 200 to 235 yards from the tee, was completely out of play during this particular round. This bunker would, during normal play, catch primarily the average golfer. The tee markers were at the very back of the tee. The fairway bunkering, such as that across the service road, is of no value whatsoever as far as the big hitters are concerned and presents a problem only to average golfers and to women.

These tests have now been carried over the years. They have proved that the strategy and the hazards of golf holes must be conceived by the architect in such a manner that there will be a problem for experts in modern play and that those shots that are missed will be punished accordingly.



18th HOLE

53rd OPEN CHAMPIONSHIP OF U.S.G.A.

OAKMONT COUNTRY CLUB • OAKMONT, PENNSYLVANIA

3rd ROUND - JUNE 13, 1953

Compiled by Robert Trent Jones, Golf Course Architect

NO.	NAME	YARDS	190	200	210	220	230	240	250	260	270	280	290	300	310	2 nd CLUB	SHOT POSITION
1	BUCK WHITE															W	TRAP RIGHT
2	JACK FLECK																GREEN
3	MICHAEL HOMA																APRON
4	ROBT. A. ROOS, JR.																GREEN
5	CHICK HARBERT																GREEN
6	A.L. DOERING, JR.																TRAP RIGHT
7	MARTY FURGOL																GREEN
8	BILL OGDEN																GREEN
9	FRED WAMPLER																GREEN
10	CLAYTON HEAFNER																GREEN
11	GEORGE FAZIO																SHORT
12	JULIUS BOROS																TRAP LEFT
13	ROBT. R. ROSBURG																SHORT
14	JIMMY CLARK																GREEN
15	E. J. HARRISON																GREEN
16	LOU BARBARO																SHORT
17	AL MENGERT																LEFT ROUGH
18	JACK BURKE																GREEN
19	TOBY LYONS															W	SHORT
20	CLARENCE DOSER																APRON
21	BEN HOGAN																GREEN
22	DICK METZ																TRAP LEFT
23	DENNY LAVENDER																GREEN
24	JOHNNY BULLA																TRAP LEFT
25	JAY HEBERT																GREEN
26	TED KROLL																SHORT
27	GARDNER DICKINSON, JR.																GREEN
28	ERRIE BALL																GREEN
29	LLOYD MANGRUM																GREEN
30	JERRY BARBER																GREEN
31	H. HAVERSTICK, JR.																GREEN
32	ART WALL, JR.																GREEN
33	FELICE TORZA																SHORT
34	SAM URZETTA																GREEN
35	ED OLIVER, JR.																GREEN
36	JIM TURNESA																SHORT
37	WILLIE GOGGIN															W	TRAP RIGHT
38	SHELLEY MAYFIELD																GREEN
39	SAM SNEAD																GREEN
40	JIMMY DEMARET																GREEN
41	RAY GAFFORD															W	GREEN
42	JOHN GARRISON																GREEN
43	FRED HAAS																GREEN
44	LAWSON LITTLE																GREEN
45	J.B. McHALE JR.																GREEN
46	DICK MAYER																TRAP LEFT
47	BOBBY LOCKE																GREEN
48	FRANK SOUCHAK																GREEN
49	BILL NARY																GREEN
50	FRANK STRANAHAN																GREEN
51	PETER THOMPSON																GREEN
52	J.D. BRADLEY																SHORT
53	WALTER BURKEMO																GREEN
54	LIONEL P. HERBERT																GREEN
55	DOUG FORD																GREEN
56	PETE COOPER																GREEN
57	WM. J. PATTON																GREEN
58	CHAS. BASSLER																GREEN
59	HARRY TODD																GREEN