

# ONCE UPON A TIME . . . IN THE OPEN AT OAKMONT

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Someone once said history can best be enjoyed through the recall of specific instances. This is particularly true in championship golf such as will be seen at the 62nd United States Open Championship this month at Oakmont Country Club, Oakmont, Pa.

Oakmont in itself has contributed much. The tough old course appears to revel in the strong language heaped on it through three previous Open Championships, as well as three Amateurs. Some claim Oakmont picks its own favorite son.

At any rate, if the winner of the 1962 Open scores even par 284, he will have scored 10 strokes better than the average of the three past Open winners there.

In 1927 Tommy Armour and Harry Cooper tied at 301; Armour won, 76 to 79, in a play-off. Eight years later, 1935, there was no great difference in the winning score as Sam Parks, Jr., won with 299, two strokes ahead of the long-hitting Jimmy Thomson. Prior to those tournaments neither Armour nor Parks had the reputations which the Open and ensuing years were to bring.

## Along Came Hogan

Then along came Ben Hogan in 1953. Playing what he still contends to be some of his greatest shots in the course of one tournament, Hogan scored 283, five under par. His total was six ahead of Sam Snead.

Thus, in three Opens at Oakmont over 35 years, the winning average is 294.33. This is contrasted with the 282 average of the last 10 Open Champions.

Why have the scores at Oakmont been relatively high? It is not because of excessive length. In 1953 the course measured 6,916 yards and played to par 72. This year the yardage is 6,894. The first hole, 455 yards, will be a par 4 instead of 5, reducing par by a stroke to 36-35-71.



1927

Tommy Armour

But then there are the greens, bunkers and rough. One player in 1935 said the closely cropped and hard rolled greens offered an exceptional challenge, like putting down a flight of stairs and endeavoring to stop the ball on the third step from the bottom.

## Furrowed Bunkers

The furrowed bunkers of 1927 and 1935 undoubtedly contributed much to high scores. They were numerous and really "furrowed." The rake (a misnomer) had solid triangular teeth about three inches long, like a tremendous saw. It takes little imagination to picture the deep furrows this device would make. A shot into the bunker prompted the player to consider not so much where he would place his next shot but, rather, if he could get it out of the sand at all. Furrows have since been modified, and a great many bunkers have been removed. From 288 in 1934, there are now 225 bunkers at Oakmont.

The reason for furrowed bunkers is basic. The course is built on clay soil. Deep bunkers would present a drainage problem. If the bunkers were both shallow and smooth, they would offer relatively little difficulty.

Although the unusual bunkering is characteristic of Oakmont, the Club has cooperated with the USGA's Championship plans. In 1953 the furrows were modified. This year Oakmont agreed to remove two bunkers and decrease the size of three others to permit gallery passageways between several parallel holes and to provide more spectator vantage points.

A total of 400 shrubs and small trees were planted in March. Larger evergreens were planted last fall along the left side of the 292-yard par-4 17th hole. This hole has a slight dog-leg left and the trees will cause players to think twice in considering a short cut to the green.

One victim of early play at Oakmont offered this advice on procedure: "Hit a great drive for position, than a brilliant shot to the green. Now you are ready to play the hole—with your putter."

### Through the Years

Now that the Open Championship is having its 62nd holding since 1895, it has had ample time to visit and revisit most of the nation's courses with reputations as stern tests. The competitions, in many instances, have made or at least contributed to these reputations.

With three previous Opens at Oakmont, the last only nine years ago, seniors can visualize all Open play on the grand old course near Pittsburgh, which is 59 years old.

Do you remember?

**1927** — Tommy Armour tied Harry Cooper for the lead after 72 holes when he scored birdie 3 on the 460 yard 18th. He sank a 10-foot putt to do it. In the play-off Armour was two strokes behind after 12 holes but began a surge that saw him pick up five strokes over the next six holes to win, 76 to 79. At the 15th, Armour sank a 50-foot putt for 4 while Cooper scored 5. On 16, Cooper's ball was buried in a bunker. He made a great 4 but Armour was down in 3. Lighthouse

### ODE TO OAKMONT

O the dune hills in the sand  
along the sea  
Where the waves dash high  
with mighty, noisy claps  
Are as smooth as glossy silk, or  
homogenized milk,  
When compared with Oak-  
mont's furrowed traps.

For a gentlemanly bunker, give  
me those

That don't ever show on topo-  
graphic maps,

Where the soil's politely raked—  
neither carved nor sculpted  
nor faked—

But deliver me from Oak-  
mont's furrowed traps.

Now I've seen them all—from  
awesome Pebble Beach

To Pine Valley's woods—than  
which there are no punker;

But the most remote from heaven  
is when your ball lies in row  
seven

Of a plowed and disced and  
harrowed Oakmont bunker.

—Joseph C. Dey, Jr., June 1953

Harry made a gallant try at 17 for he put his approach 18 inches from the pin. Armour then made a most artistic shot when he pitched over a bunker and the ball stopped 10 inches from the cup. It was all over. Walter Hagen scored 81 the last round and finished six strokes behind. The Ryder Cup matches were played in this country for the first time that year and the British team participated in the Open; Archie Compston made the best showing, tying for seventh with 308.

#### Leading Scorers

Tommy Armour .....	78	71	76	76	301	76
Harry Cooper .....	74	76	74	77	301	79
Gene Sarazen .....	74	74	80	74	302	
Emmet French .....	75	79	77	73	304	
Bill Mehlhorn .....	75	77	80	73	305	
Walter Hagen .....	77	73	76	81	307	
Archie Compston .....	79	74	76	79	308	
Johnny Farrell .....	81	73	78	76	308	
John Golden .....	83	77	75	73	308	
Harry Hampton .....	73	78	80	77	308	

#### Low Amateur

Robert T. Jones, Jr. ..	76	77	79	77	309	
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1935  
Sam Parks, Jr.

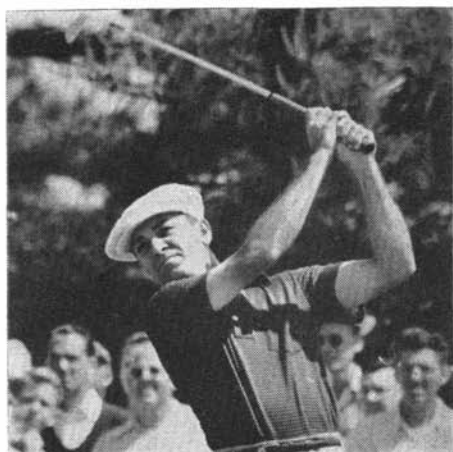
1935—Sam Parks, Jr., using local knowledge, won by two strokes over young Jimmy Thomson and three over Walter Hagen. In the last round Thomson was four strokes ahead after four holes as Parks went over par on each. Parks also staggered on the last four holes when he lost strokes to par at each and Thomson needed to par the last four to win. But Jimmy lost two strokes, finished 78 to Parks' 76, and that was that. None of the 20 leaders was able to break 75 in the last round. Parks, professional at the nearby South Hills Country Club, was the only one able to negotiate Oakmont's furrowed bunkers and lightning-like greens in less than 300.

**Leading Scorers**

Sam Parks, Jr. ....	77	73	73	76	299
Jimmy Thomson .....	73	73	77	78	301
Walter Hagen .....	77	76	73	76	302
Denny Shute .....	78	73	76	76	303
Ray Mangrum .....	76	76	72	79	303
Henry Picard .....	79	78	70	79	306
Gene Sarazen .....	75	74	78	79	306
Alvin Krueger .....	71	77	78	80	306
Horton Smith .....	73	79	79	75	306
Dick Metz .....	77	76	76	78	307
Paul Runyan .....	76	77	79	75	307

**Low Amateur**

Chris Brinke .....	80	80	81	74	315
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1953  
Ben Hogan

1953—Ben Hogan led after every round, the first to do it since Jim Barnes in 1921, and the last. It was Hogan's fourth Open Championship. The victory put him on the pedestal with Willie Anderson and Bobby Jones. The winner scored 67-72-73-71—283 to leave Sam Snead in second place by six strokes, the fourth runner-up position for Snead. A finish of 3-3-3, par-birdie-birdie, closed the door on Hogan's nearest pursuers and helped him to card five under par for the 72 holes. Hogan's margin of six strokes is the widest since Ralph Guldahl was six ahead in 1938 at Cherry Hills, Denver, Colo.

**Leading Scorers**

Ben Hogan .....	67	72	73	71	283
Sam Snead .....	72	69	72	76	289
Lloyd Mangrum .....	73	70	74	75	292
Pete Cooper .....	78	75	71	70	294
George Fazio .....	70	71	77	76	294
Jimmy Demaret .....	71	76	71	76	294
Ted Kroll .....	76	71	74	74	295
Dick Metz .....	75	70	74	76	295
Jay Hebert .....	72	72	74	78	296
Marty Furgol .....	73	74	76	73	296

**Low Amateur**

Frank S. Souchak .....	70	76	76	74	296
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**Purse, Entries Grow**

After the 1927 Open one writer said, "There is no question but that (the Open) was one of the best thus far recorded. From what can be learned it is safe to say that more than \$20,000 was

taken in. The Open has surely become a big attraction." And there were 898 entries. In 1927 Armour won \$500 plus a gold medal. Parks got \$1,000 in 1935 (1,125 entries) and Hogan \$5,000 when the total purse rose to \$20,400 in 1953. Entries that year totaled 1,669.

This year the professional pot will be approximately \$70,000 plus \$7,800 in Sectional Qualifying, which raise the total to \$77,800. The winner will receive \$15,000 and the runner-up \$8,000. Had Bob Jones played as a professional, he would have won only \$4,366.25 for his record of four Open titles and four runner-up finishes in nine consecutive Open Championships.

Gene A. Littler collected \$14,000 last year. He was the only player to break par of 70 twice, winning by a stroke over Bob Goalby and Doug Sanders. Goalby had finished at 282. Then came Littler who, despite 5 on the par-4 18th registered his second 68 to score 281 at Oakland Hills Country Club, Birmingham, Mich. Sanders came to the 18th needing birdie 3 to tie and just missed the cup with a chip shot. Littler became the eighth player in history to win both the Open and the Amateur championships; he took the Amateur in 1953 and turned professional the next year.

If Littler repeats this year he will join a group of five who have won consecutive titles. The last was Ben Hogan, 1950-51. In order to participate this year Hogan was to enter Sectional Qualifying June 5 in Pittsburgh. It marked the first time since 1940 that Hogan was required to qualify.

### Records in 1962?

Oakmont's Open Championship Committee, under the Chairmanship of Jack Mahaffey, is preparing to cope with a record attendance this year. The high mark of 47,975 for the three days of the Championship was set last year at Oakland Hills Country Club; the single-day record of 20,439 also was made at Oakland Hills, on the last day.

There already has been one record set in conjunction with the 1962 Open Championship. The number of entries accepted for the competition reached a final count of 2,502, compared with the former record of 2,453 set two years ago.

In Local Qualifying this tremendous field was reduced to 452 then Sectional

Qualifying eliminated all but 131. The 131 who survived were to join with 19 others exempt from all qualifying to form the Championship field of 150 at Oakmont.

Besides the record of 2,502 accepted entries, the Association received 115 other applications for a grand total of 2,617. Of this 115 there were 74 who were rejected because they arrived late, 32 were not acceptable for other reasons such as faulty handicaps of amateurs and 9 withdrew. Late entrants included Julius Boros, the 1952 Open Champion, and Paul Runyan, the PGA Senior Champion.

The number of players in Sectional Qualifying meant there was one place in the Championship for every 3.8 players.

The 19 totally exempt players included the last five individuals to win the Open, headed by Champion Gene Littler and including Arnold Palmer, Bill Casper, Jr., Tommy Bolt and Dick Mayer. The others are Jerry Barber, the PGA Champion; Bob Goalby, Doug Sanders, Jack Nicklaus, Mike Souchak, Dow Finsterwald, Doug Ford, Eric Monti, Jacky Cupit, Gardner Dickinson, Jr., Gary Player, Billy Maxwell, Gay Brewer and Johnny Pott.

### It's A Squirrel

Mahaffey figured this year's Championship needed a symbol. After all, he reasoned, Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer has its roaring lion, and doesn't RCA have a listening dog? Mahaffey hit on a squirrel as symbolic since so many are in Oakmont's Oaks. He substituted the golf ball for an acorn.

The significance of the bushy-tailed tree-climber was derived from two dictionary definitions and a little imagination:

1. gol'fer, n. One whose object is to strike a small, resilient ball and in so doing put the ball in each hole in as few strokes as possible.
2. squir'el, n. Any of numerous arboreal forms having a long bushy tail and strong hind legs, who gather nuts and store them in small holes.

With imagination, they become "golf nut."