



Preparing The Golf Course At Oakmont For The U.S. Open Championship

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The 2016 U.S. Open Championship at Oakmont Country Club in Oakmont, Pennsylvania is quickly approaching. The best golfers in the world will be challenged by fast greens and firm conditions if the weather cooperates. At some golf courses, superintendents are approached by course officials and customers that wonder why their golf course, especially their greens, cannot be maintained like the courses they see on television. Preparation “inside the ropes” of the U.S. Open Championship is a massive undertaking that requires extra maintenance staff, volunteers and equipment.



Extra equipment and volunteers are imperative for daily preparations during the U.S. Open Championship.

Consider these points:

- Preparation for the U.S. Open Championship begins several years in advance of the event. Often, the frequency of aeration and topdressing is dramatically increased one to two years before hosting a U.S. Open Championship. Extra aeration and topdressing provides the best opportunity to present firm, fast conditions and promotes healthy turf. In the last two growing seasons, the putting greens at Oakmont Country Club have been double drilled-and-filled four times, core aerated five times, deep verticut five times and deep-tine aerated four times. The aeration programs implemented at Oakmont Country Club are very aggressive and represent a significant disruption to playability that most golfers would not tolerate.
- The approximately 40-person golf course maintenance staff at Oakmont Country Club will be supplemented by over 100 volunteers during the U.S. Open Championship. That equates to seven workers per hole with an additional 14 people available to tend to practice facilities and other areas. Many of the maintenance volunteers during U.S. Open Championships are superintendents, assistant superintendents, and other experienced turfgrass industry professionals. Equipment distributors also will supply additional equipment during the U.S. Open Championship, allowing maintenance tasks to be completed quicker than normal.



From daily mowing of putting greens and other playing surfaces to filling divots and raking bunkers, U.S. Open Championship preparation is a massive undertaking.

- To maintain green speeds for the U.S. Open Championship, putting greens will be mowed four times and rolled twice daily. Soil moisture levels will be constantly monitored to provide a balance between turfgrass health and desired firmness. However, the intensity of maintenance will only be sustained for the week of the championship and weather conditions will factor into maintenance decisions just as they do every day at any golf course. Maintenance intensity will be reduced to limit turf stress if excessive heat or rainfall occurs. Championship conditions push the limits of turfgrass, but the health of turfgrass is always considered when preparing for the U.S. Open Championship.
- During the week following the U.S. Open Championship, putting greens will be vented or aerated to alleviate stress. In many cases, the course will be closed to play for several days providing an opportunity for the grass to recover from the previous week's activity.

The resources required to prepare a golf course for a U.S. Open Championship makes maintaining U.S. Open Championship-level conditioning on a daily basis out of reach for most courses. The best golfers in the world are challenged by U.S. Open Championship conditions and, while the average golfer may like to experience these conditions, a steady diet of very fast, firm greens and thick, tall rough will not be enjoyable for most players and could lead to turfgrass decline.