

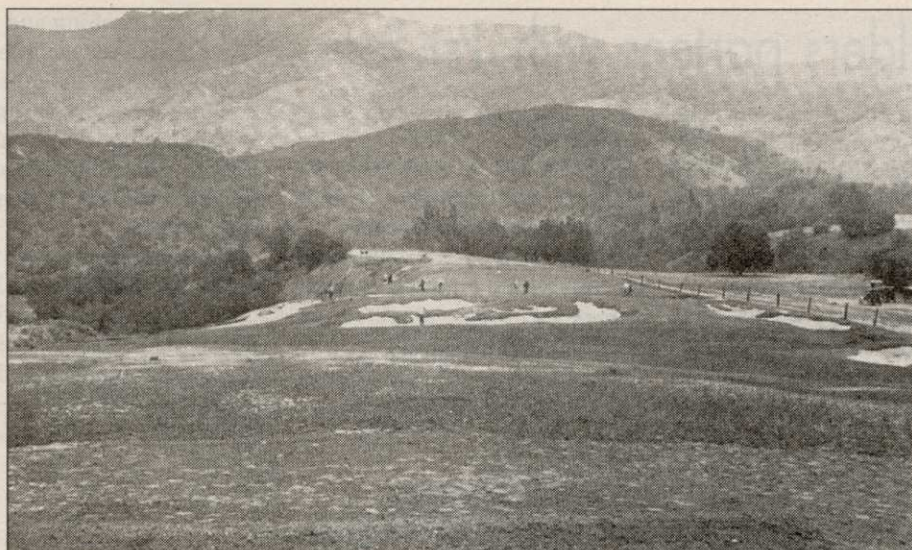
# Ojai Valley reclaiming great Thomas par-3

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Built in 1923 by the legendary Thomas, the Ojai course was immediately hailed as "the cream of Southern California golf courses." During World War II, the U.S. Army took over the resort as a training camp, stationing 1,000 troops here from 1942-44. The U.S. Navy occupied the resort as an "R&R" facility for officers from 1944-45.

Before returning the property to private ownership at the end of the war, the government sold off the last of the Quonset huts and platform tents that had occupied the front nine of the course, and attempted to restore the links.

Unfortunately, it did not rebuild it according to Thomas' original design. Today's holes No. 2 and 5 replaced two holes originally positioned along the edges of the property. One of these holes, the original 3rd, was known to be one of Thomas' favorite par-3s and was built to resemble the famous 3rd hole at Pine



Ojai Valley Golf Club's famous 190-yard 3rd hole is being reclaimed. The semi-punch-bowl green has a deep ravine at the left and out of bounds at the immediate right.

Valley Golf Club.

The Ojai hole was featured in three golf course architecture books: *Golf Architecture in America* by Thomas, *The Captain* by Geoff Shakelford, and *The Links* by Thomas Hunter.

Today, more than 50 years since these holes were lost and forgotten, careful research by Greenslit has brought them once again to light. Using old photographs in Thomas' book, he found the

precise location of the original 3rd and 4th holes.

Ben Crenshaw and Greenslit agree on the merits of re-introducing the "lost holes."

Reconstruction on the two lost holes (which will become Nos. 7 and 8) has begun, and an opening date is planned for late fall. Ultimately, the front and back nines will be switched, improving the overall balance of the course.

## O'Meara excited, searching for personal style

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courses. Also, in golf tournaments and pro-ams I get to play with amateurs quite often, so I get to see what would work on a golf course for different players. That experience is invaluable to being able to design courses that everyone enjoys playing. If anything I will probably lean that way because the majority of the tourna-

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ments that I've won have been pro-ams, like the Disney and AT&T. I enjoy the company of my amateur partners I would definitely want the golf course to be playable for all handicaps.

GCN: Which architects have provided you with inspiration?

O'Meara: When you look at the greats in the game when it comes to architectural work—Tillinghast, Mackenzie—the things that were great is that they got to work with really tremendous pieces of property. As we go along, land is more expensive and some of the sites today are not as dramatic and nice as they used to be.

Into the modern era, Tom Fazio, Pete Dye, Jack Nicklaus and Arnold Palmer have all done wonderful courses and are the people that I have learned the most from. At Augusta this year, I saw Tom Fazio and he told me that if I needed any help that I could feel free to call him. He is a class individual. If it wasn't me and I was doing a development, Tom Fazio would be the first on my list.

GCN: How do you respond to the animosity of other designers towards signature designs?

O'Meara: There is a lot of competition out there. For me, it is not my only form of making a living, it is more of a childhood dream. I'm a golf course architect, more so from the knowledge that I've got from playing courses. Let's face it, I don't have an architectural degree. But people that know me know that I'm an organized person. I know that it is a big business and that it isn't easy. That's why I'm taking it slowly and making sure that the Grandview course will be very special.

GCN: Will there be an "O'Meara" style?

O'Meara: That is something that will develop over time. As a new designer, I have to first look at the site and look at the character of the site. Then I have to make it fit by asking myself, what kind of course could this be? But I haven't gotten to the point where I have one fixed idea of a direction that I want to go in. I'd rather go and work with the land and see how to get the best 18 holes in. When I play golf, I like to play a course that has unique and distinct holes, and is yet still playable. So when I get done playing the holes, they stick in your mind. Golfers are going to spend 4-5 hours out there, so they should be able to take in the aesthetic beauty.

GCN: What are you working with at the Grandview site?

O'Meara: They gave us the option of building on some of the best places on the 850-acre site. You have a lot of foliage, a tremendous amount of rock, some water and dramatic elevation changes. There will be some great waterfalls and other water features.

GCN: What kind of challenges will the site present?

O'Meara: We will be doing some blast-

ing, but we are going to try and work around it. We will also have to work around marshland to keep all that environmentally intact. The site is good, there is no reason to disturb it.

GCN: What kind of design team have you put together?

O'Meara: I'll be working with Brit Stenson, who has been in the business for about 25 years. With his knowledge

*'There is a lot of [course design] competition out there. For me, it is not my only form of making a living, it is more of a childhood dream.'*

and my eye we are going to do something good together.

GCN: How will you fit design work in with your playing schedule?

O'Meara: Brit and I are going to talk as much as possible and I am going to try and visit the site as often as possible in each part of construction to make sure that we are going in the right direction. I go through Toronto a lot this year playing in different events. I will be up there five to eight times at least. If I am anywhere near the place I am going to stop in and see what's going on.

GCN: In ten years, how many O'Meara design courses will be out there?

O'Meara: In the next two years I will compete at a good clip and then I'll be 44 years old and my playing commitments will start to taper off. Then, I will get more into design, but right now I will take on two to three per year. I will balance it right now to make sure that this is something that I really want to do. Internationally, I'm looking at doing some courses in Ireland, and new designs may be materializing in California, Florida and Utah.

### RYANGOLF BUSY ON PROJECTS

BONITA SPRINGS, Fla. — RyanGolf is renovating the greens for Bonita Bay Properties on its Marsh Course here. The renovation and original layout was designed by Arthur Hills. Plans call for construction to be completed in late summer. Meanwhile, RyanGolf has been awarded the construction and site development for US Home Golf Course Community's Cedar Hammock in Naples. Designed by Paul Azinger and Gordon Lewis, the 18-hole course will be the centerpiece of a new community. Construction started in April, with completion scheduled for November.

Photo courtesy of Sleeping Bear Press

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