

# Why Worry About Broken Course Records?

WHAT is the price of two strokes difference in course records? Two tournaments that get much of the sharpshooting talent, the National Open at Oakmont and the Shawnee invitation affair at Shawnee-on-Delaware, Pa., recently raised this question in a way that may have some influence on greens committees anxious to make their course as "tough" as possible, considering this feature, when correctly attained, the final word in golf architecture. The lengthened and tournament-groomed Oakmont was treated to a record performance of 69 during the last day of the Open when Al Espinosa went in a low scoring spree. "Wild Bill" Melhorn, during the last eighteen, shot a marvelous 32 for the first nine. These performances were made despite the fact that Oakmont is generally conceded to be the most difficult of courses upon which American Open championships have been played.

At Shawnee, where the leading American and foreign pros have played in its annual invitation event, the course record is 67, established by John Farrell. Shawnee, nestling in the scenic Delaware Water Gap, looks to be the ordinary gently rolling terrain found at hundreds of places in the country. Of necessity it could not be a "wearing" course upon the player for it gets heavy play from the guests at the resort hotel of which it is a feature.

Now here are two courses, one upon which money and genius have been spent without stint in winning for it an international reputation as a "tough" course and the other, one that looks at first glance like any of many scores of the nation's better golf courses, built and maintained on a notably thrifty basis. Is the difference in cost worth the two strokes dif-

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During this year's National Open Oakmont again laid good claim to being one of the world's most difficult golf courses. Under the spell of the charm and fame of Oakmont many of the club presidents and greens chairmen in the National Open gallery probably resolved to make their courses eventually approximate Oakmont's "toughness" or grow gray in the attempt.

This writer expresses the opinion that it is wise to "stop, look and listen" first. To put his counsel in the words of the ad man, "There is only one Oakmont—accept no substitute."

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ference in the course records to the usual type of first class club?

From the gallery at Oakmont many greens chairmen and club presidents probably went back to their clubs with the firm determination to make their courses the Oakmonts of their respective territories. Minus the patience and genius of the Fownes, father and son, the masterly thoroughness of Loeffler, the Oakmont

greenkeeper, and the unity and affluence of the Oakmont membership, mirroring Oakmont is a well nigh hopeless task. Their clubs may not be able to boast of a corresponding number of low handicap players to match those who have developed their games on that magnificent course, with its array of situations calling for every shot in the bag, perfectly played. But what of it? Designed to furnish something besides trials and terrors for the average player whose steady play keeps the club a vigorous and flourishing enterprise, a course still can be difficult enough to maintain the dignity of a fairly high course record. This "course record" is, we think, too much of a factor in needless revamping of substantially sound designs.

## Tricky Traps

Particularly with the British players did the famed furrowed traps of Oakmont cause comment. Their general opinion was that the deep furrows allowed only one shot to be played—a "hack" to get out. Their contention was that any average player could play the one possible shot as well as the expert who could play a number of shots to suit the circumstances. The Americans had little to say their idea apparently being, "in the trap, out of luck." But all were unanimous in say-

ing that Oakmont was rich in demonstrations of the wisdom of following the "straight and narrow."

The exacting Oakmont design is meticulously correct in the detail of placing the traps, so authorities agreed, and if the right shots were played there need be no controversy about the way in which the traps were furrowed.

There was question about the par figure of 72 on the official score card. As Joe Davis, the veteran golf scribe, pointed out, on the card the eighth hole, 253 yards, had par 3; the tenth, 461, par 4; the twelfth, 621 yards, par 5; and the eighteenth, 457 yards, par 4. According to the U. S. G. A. official par measurements which, of course, shows arbitrary par measurements, the 6,965 yards of the Oakmont course would have a par of 76, not taking into consideration the eighth which is only three yards over the official limit for a par three hole.

Those factors of lengthening and trapping to make a course defy the scoring ability of a championship field, have their effect on many clubs whose active officials make it a point to never miss any of the major tournaments. It's a dangerous undertaking to attempt imitation of Oakmont in these respects for the development in this case probably has been given more time, more careful and calculating thought with the idea of championship play reconciled with that of the club's members than would be devoted to the proposition by any other golf club in the country.

If you hope to entertain tournaments with especially "classy" fields and fear the humbling of your course record, take your time in making changes.

At Shawnee they took years in getting the present trapping. Close observation of play showed where traps should be to punish wild shots. The majority of the holes were laid out as natural hazards, among them being an invulnerable rough, which would exact penalties for hooked balls, these being the most frequent misplays. The traps were so designed to have speedy

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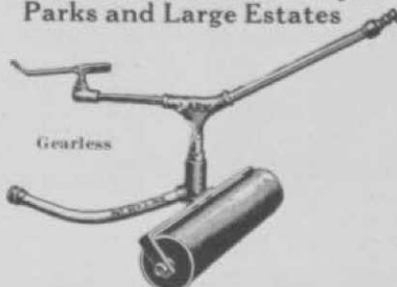
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Yardage on the Shawnee course is 3397 out and 2962 in, with 37 out and 35 in, making the course's par of 72. When you consider that the leading lights of professional golf have shot at that figure for years and only once made it bow to a five stroke humiliation, you may reflect that if you also will take your time, think it all over carefully, and then do your altering, you need not worry about your course being "burnt up" by the most brilliant field of players.

## A Pro for a Day

By "NINETY NINE"

Here is something that was sent in to Golfdom by the president of an eastern golf club. He is a nationally known sales manager so what he has to say about professional merchandising may do the boys some good.

I WOULD like to be a professional for just one day. At the end of that day I would undoubtedly be "canned," not discharged with all the nice formalities that expression implies, but promptly and firmly "canned."

But in the meanwhile I would show what could be done with a professional's shop and I also would show our members what the professional has as his due from them, the latter being the reason why I would be so quickly out of work.

Until this year I thought that being a pro was the easiest possible way of making a living. Nothing to do but play golf and take orders—not sell, because most of what I thought a pro moves out of his stock was simply that for which his members asked. The latter part, I thought, would be easy because my store would have no rent, no delivery charges and no credit risks, and what merchant could ask for a better set-up.

Then, by some curious twist of fate, I was elected president of a golf club. There was no reason for this as I am jubilant when I cut one stroke off of a hundred, but I have lived in our community for a number of years and lately have reached that happy position in life that allows me the enjoyment golf affords to the man who no longer is harrassed by business affairs.

One of the first problems that confronted me as I was ushered into the presidency of our club was the matter of helping to get a good professional. During the last five years we had three pros and none of them satisfactory. This year we were fortunate in getting a young fellow who is on his first job as a pro, having been assistant for one of the well known professionals for five years prior to making his connection with us.

The golf committee chairman, the directors and I are taking an interest in this