

Traditions Are Important At Baltusrol

Baltusrol Golf Club in Springfield, N. J., site of the 1980 U.S. Open, is steeped in history and has hosted more championships of the United States Golf Association than any other club. The 1980 Open marks the sixth time the prestigious event has been contested at Baltusrol.

Additionally, three U.S. Amateur Championships, two Women's Championships and one Women's Open have been played on outstanding Baltusrol courses.

Little wonder, then, that there is tradition in the background of the Golf Course Superintendent, Joseph R. Flaherty, CGCS. Flaherty grew up in the area. His father was superintendent of Manasquan River Golf Club, Brielle, N. J. for more than 30 years prior to his death in 1973. Baltusrol's long time Golf Course Superintendent, Ed Casey, hired Flaherty as an assistant in 1964 right after he had received his B.S. degree in plant science from nearby Rutgers University. When Casey retired on January 1, 1963, Flaherty was promoted to the position of Golf Course Superintendent.

While there have been no U.S.G.A. championships at Baltusrol since 1967, maintaining the course to championship standards is not new to Flaherty. That is just another Baltusrol tradition. Club members expect championship conditions at all times. They are proud of the reputation which the Club has received from hosting so many U.S.G.A. championships.

"We are not doing anything differently to prepare for the Open," says Flaherty. "Our members and I want the course to be in peak condition for the Open. If the weather continues to cooperate, we are sure Baltusrol will live up to its reputation as a fair but challenging test of golf."

The only changes in regular maintenance procedures for the Open will be double-cutting of the greens. Baltusrol's greens are regularly cut at 3/16" and fairways at 5/8" heights, and that is about what they will be during the Open. Double-cutting immediately prior to and during the Open will assure the fast but true greens that are a trademark of USGA competitions. The large greens have subtle contours and three putts will not be uncommon.

Baltusrol is located just 22 miles from New York City and but minutes away from U.S.G.A. headquarters, Golf House, in Far Hills, N. J. It has an Upper Course and a Lower Course and both are considered excellent enough for U.S.G.A. championship standards, a rare tribute to the club. To many, they represent the ultimate of the many outstanding courses designed by the renowned golf course architect, A. W. Tillinghast. The Lower Course, which stretches 7,000 yards through heavily wooded terrain, will provide the test for the 1980 Open as it did in 1954 and 1967, and for the Women's Open in 1961. Robert Trent Jones redesigned several holes on the Lower Course in preparation for the 1954 Open.

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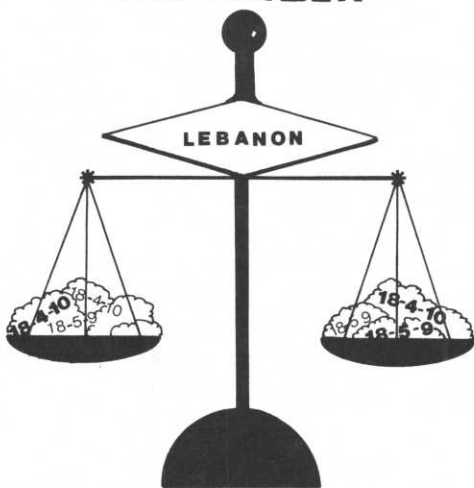
The course will be much the same as when Jack Nicklaus set the U.S. Open scoring record of 275 in Baltusrol in 1967. His closing 65 is considered one of the great rounds in Open history. Several championship tees have been enlarged, but players will not notice any great difference. "About the only change golfers will notice will be the practice area. We have made significant improvements there and have a new 30-foot x 180-foot, two level practice tee," says Flaherty.

The Golf Course Superintendents Association of America is another tradition important to Flaherty. His father was a long-time member of the Association. Ed Casey, a former national director, has been a G.C.S.A.A. member for nearly 40 years. Baltusrol's Superintendent himself joined G.C.S.A.A. in 1965, achieved Class A status in 1971 after serving as Golf Course Superintendent the required three years, and became a Certified Golf Course Superintendent in 1975.

In order to become certified, Flaherty had to pass a rigorous six-hour exam testing his knowledge of the rules of golf, practical turf management, and the history, purposes and procedures of G.C.S.A.A. and his profession. He is one of more than 500 members of G.C.S.A.A. who are entitled to use the letters "CGCS" after their names.

G.C.S.A.A. is a professional association of Golf Course Superintendents, founded in 1926 to promote the art and science of golf course management. Its 4,700 members are located in the United States, Canada, Mexico and 17 other countries. Headquarters for the Association is in Lawrence, Kansas.

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HOW TO REPAIR BALL MARKS

THE TROUBLE WITH BALL MARKS: The ball landed with a thud. The green was soft and as the ball bounced forward it left a deep little crater in the turf exposing brown earth at the back and grass blades pushed together at the front. Ignoring the little crater, the golfer walked up to his ball, cleaned it, holed his putt and glowed with self-satisfaction. Some hours later after the exposed earth in the ball mark had dried out, another golfer found the damaged area in his line of putt. He attempted repairs, but the result was not very satisfactory. An unflattened bit of turf twisted his putt off line. Next morning an inexperienced greenkeeper mowed the putting surface without repairing ball marks. The result was a putting surface pocked-marked, untrue and covered with bare spots where the mower scalped the grass from the turf.

WHAT HAPPENS: What actually happens when a ball mark is not promptly and properly repaired? 1) Soil is exposed and so the area immediately surrounding the ball dries up faster than it would if the ball marks were repaired; and thus a blemish is left on the green. 2) There is a chance that the raised turf caused by the ball will dry quickly and may die out. 3) The open soil invites weed invasion, such as crabgrass, silver crabgrass, POA ANNUA, dandelion, plantain or Pearlwort..seed of which could be brought in on the shoes of golfers, caddies or workers or on mowing equipment. 4) The improperly repaired or neglected ball marks leaves a bumpy spot in the green. If not corrected before cutting the next day, then the spot is scalped by the mower and the bruise mark remains for several days.