

# Final Stages of Preparations For the '91 U.S. Open

By JOHN HARRIS, EDITOR  
Second of a Two-Part Series

The month of June for Minnesota Superintendents is normally a pleasant experience. School is out, and we are fully staffed. The weather is fair, and we are catching up on some unfinished business. At Hazeltine a much different picture is evolving.

Chris Hague and his staff are in the final stages of course preparation for one of golf's premier events. As the golfing nation's attention shifts to Chaska for a delightful week in June, many of us wonder "what would it be like?"

As of June the putting surface is all important. The intensity of maintaining that surface increases dramatically. Double cutting will begin in June along with a double grooming. In fact the emphasis will be on groomers attached to the greens mowers. There will be a tri-plex unit set up for grooming only. Its function will be additional grooming for those greens that require it.

For instance, double cutting and grooming takes place and stimp meter readings are taken. The goal is to have green speeds from 11.5 to 12.5 feet as conditions dictate. Also, all greens are to putt within three inches of each other.

After the initial cuttings/grooming, stimp readings will be taken and compared throughout the course. Those greens that meet the criteria will be left alone. Those that do not will receive additional groomings by the tri-plex and cut again, then stimp readings taken and so on until all greens meet the required speed and consistency. This can make cutting difficult for the operators as the lines will be non-existent. Therefore a spotter will be employed to help pinpoint the next pass.

Fairway cutting will be a daily task, with clippings disposed off-site during the actual tourney. The height of cut will be a  $\frac{1}{16}$ " bench setting. There will be no aerification of fairways as a firm surface is the desired result. However a hydro-jet will be on hand should any serious trouble spots arise.

**Tees will also receive** daily cutting at  $\frac{3}{8}$ " bench setting. The operator will repair all divots from the nearby seed and

soil box. He shouldn't have too much trouble with the tournament tee prior to the Open as they have been closed to membership play.

The practice tee has remained two-thirds closed, and only members of Hazeltine will be allowed to view the players at the practice range.

Rough will be cut at 5" in length. Here, out-front rotary decks and gull wing decks will be used. Fifteen acres of natural area will be brought back into the rough maintenance program to help accommodate the galleries.

**The gallery roping is the full responsibility** of the U.S.G.A. Roping will be placed 40-45 feet from the fairway edge. There will be one lane per hole for crossover, generally to be at the beginning of each fairway. High traffic areas on "cattle shoots" will be lined with a fabric and covered with wood chips. One week prior to the Open the rough will be seeded with a rye, bluegrass mixture and trampled in by the gallery.

Course Superintendent Chris Hague feels that the Corporate Tents are a key area for a successful tournament. Every tent has cable t.v. and phones, and it is directly linked to the Uniy-sis scoring system. Flooring and air conditioning for the ultimate in comfort is also provided. A California-based company was contracted to erect the tents two months prior as rain delays may have been a factor. Contractors are also required to clean up their own mess.

ABC will occupy four acres and be self sufficient. They will bring 350 employees in 30 semi-trailer trucks. They will be loaded with all the hardware necessary for a nationally televised event. Completely catered meals by their own mobile kitchen will keep them out of long concession lines and on the job.

Our own M.G.C.S.A. tent (not of the corporate variety) is between the pro-shop and the 1st tee. If you plan to attend, be sure to stop and say hello. Who knows, with a location of this nature you may meet some very interesting people.

## Nicklaus, Irwin Head Open Field at Hazeltine

Jack Nicklaus, winner of four U.S. Opens, and Hale Irwin, winner of three, are among 10 former champions who have entered the 91st U.S. Open Championship to be played June 13-16 at Hazeltine National Golf Club in Chaska.

Entries for this year's Open reached 6,063, the second consecutive year the figure climbed over 6,000. A group of 65 players, led by Nicklaus and Irwin, are exempt from both local and sectional qualifying. These golfers include other Open champions David Graham, Tom Watson, Larry Nelson, Fuzzy Zoeller, Andy North, Raymond Floyd, Scott Simpson and Curtis Strange.

Also fully exempt are Phil Mickelson, the 1990 U.S. Amateur champion; Nick Faldo, Sandy Lyle and Steve Ballesteros, who have won both the Masters and the British Open; Ian Woosnam, current winner of the Masters, in April; Lee Trevino, 1990 Senior Open champion; Larry Mize, winner of the 1987 Masters; Greg Norman, the 1986 British Open champion and PGA cham-

pions Payne Stewart, Jeff Sluman and Bob Tway.

Exemptions from all qualifying were granted to six foreign players not otherwise exempt: Rodger Davis, Mike Harwood, Bernhard Langer, Mark McNulty, Jumbo Ozaki and Ronan Rafferty. Woosnam had been exempt under this category before he won the Masters.

Excluding the 65 fully exempt players, the other 5,998 entrants must earn their places in the 156-player Open field through one or both stages of 36-hole qualifying.

Local qualifying rounds were conducted at 81 sites between May 31 and May 22. Sectional qualifying is scheduled at 12 sites on June 3 and 4.

At stake in sectional qualifying will be 91 places in the championship proper. Exactly 600 players, 504 local qualifiers and the 96 players who are exempt from that phase of qualifying, will compete for those places.