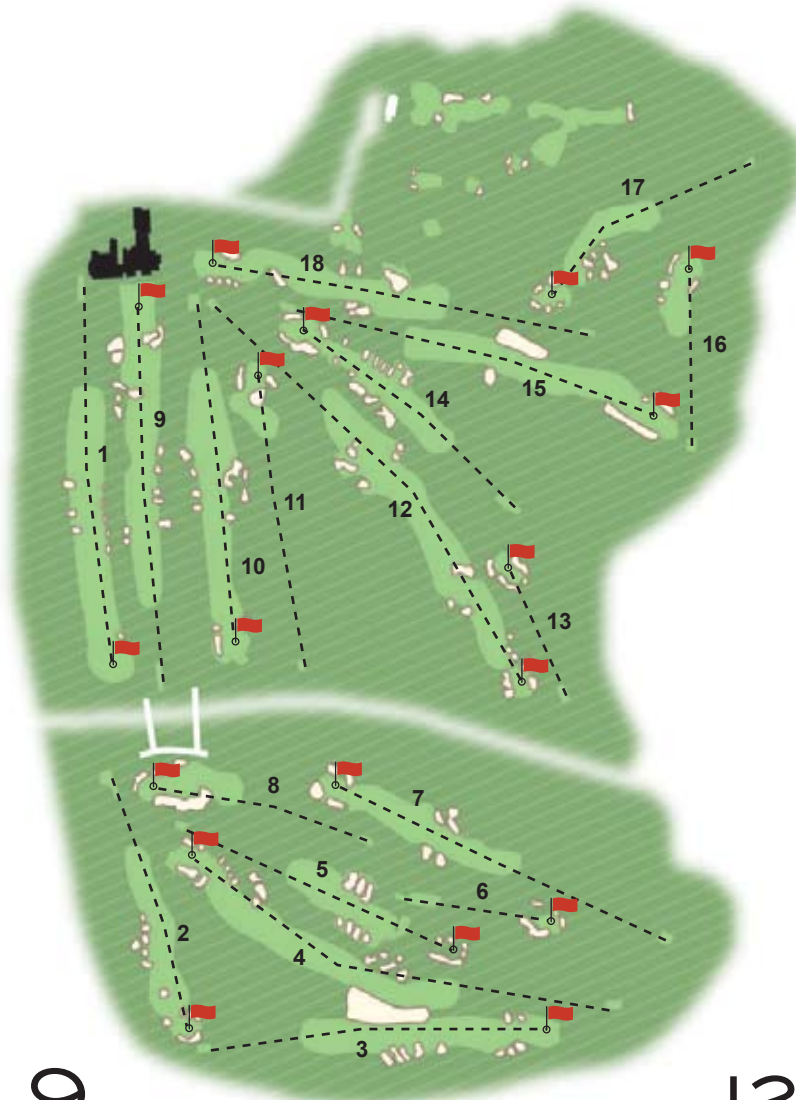


Common ground

The course at Oakmont Country Club in Oakmont, Pa., will set a record for hosting U.S. Opens this year. It will be the eighth U.S. Open at the 7,230-yard, par 70 course. No other club has hosted more than seven. Last year, Tiger Woods didn't make the cut — the first time he had missed doing so in a major championship in his professional career.

Purse: To be determined (\$6.8 million in 2006)
Length: 7,230 yards
Par: 35-35 – 70
Defending champion: Geoff Ogilvy



1 Par 4
Yards 482



One of the toughest opening holes in championship golf, the tee shot leaves little room for error with the bunkers squeezing the fairway on both sides, and a ditch marked as a hazard separating the first and ninth fairways. The second shot is blind to a green at the base of a hill, and the green slopes severely from front to back.

2 Par 4
Yards 341



Some players might be tempted to drive the green, but it comes with great risk. The proper shot is a long iron off the tee to avoid the ditch on the left and bunkers on the right. A short iron to the green must be precise. It is protected by bunkers right and left, and a long, shallow bunker behind it. The green is severely contoured. Three putts from above the hole are common.

3 Par 4
Yards 428



Another tight driving area up the hill with the famous Church Pew bunkers to the left, and four bunkers staggered down the right side. The approach is a short iron to an elevated green that is relatively flat, but it's another one that runs slightly away and could send balls off the back down a slope.

Despite its length and the Church Pew bunkers again on the left side of the fairway, this should be a good birdie opportunity with a good tee shot. The drive should bend right to left over three bunkers to keep the ball in the fairway. The green is partially hidden and protected by deep rough and bunkers.

4 Par 5
Yards 609

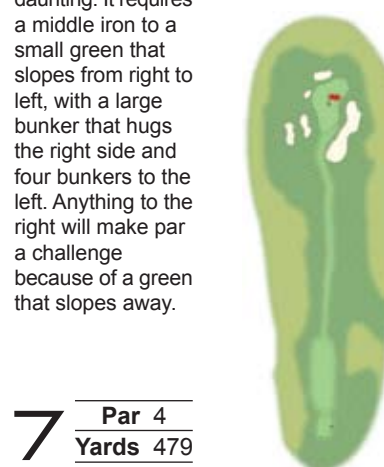


5 Par 4
Yards 382



Another short hole that demands supreme accuracy. It starts with a long iron off the tee that must avoid a row of bunkers on both sides of the fairway. The green is long, narrowed and slopes severely to the left, protected on all sides by various shapes of bunkers. Two precise shots should allow for a good birdie chance.

6 Par 3
Yards 194



The first par 3 at Oakmont is not particularly daunting. It requires a middle iron to a small green that slopes from right to left, with a large bunker that hugs the right side and four bunkers to the left. Anything to the right will make par a challenge because of a green that slopes away.

7 Par 4
Yards 479



Another tough par 4 that bends slightly to the right, with bunkers on both sides of the fairway. There used to be only two bunkers on the right until Sam Snead easily cleared them in the 1935 U.S. Open. W.C. Fownes, the founder's son, was so irritated he had a third bunker installed. The green slopes severely from left to right, and this is one of the toughest up-and-downs.

8 Par 3
Yards 288



This is not the signature hole at Oakmont, but it will be the topic of conversation as the longest par 3 in major championship history when played from the tips. Some short hitters might have to hit driver. A bunker called Sahara is 100 yards long and sits left of the green, making the tee shot even more intimidating. But a well-struck club, probably a 3-wood for most players, will be rewarded. The green is large without too much undulation.

9 Par 4
Yards 477



This plays as a par 5 for members and will be as tough as any hole at Oakmont. The drive is uphill with a series of bunkers to the right and the ditch to the left. The green is severely contoured, and looks enormous for a reason. The back half of the green is the practice green. Some players will see a dozen or so of their peers practicing at the back of the green. Arnold Palmer had a two-shot lead in 1962 until he flubbed a chip and took bogey, and Jack Nicklaus forced a playoff.

This hole is not particularly long, but still troublesome. The driving area is narrow because of severe bunkers on the left and the right, and a short iron down the hill leads to a green that slopes severely from front to back, and from right to left. Three putts are likely if they land on the wrong side of the hole.

10 Par 4
Yards 435



11 Par 4
Yards 379



A fairway metal or long iron will be the club of choice on this uphill tee shot to avoid the bunkers on the left and a small ravine that crosses the fairway. A short iron is left to a relatively flat green that slopes from back to front, and is protected by a deep bunker on the right side.

The longest hole in major championship golf, which should play as a three-shot hole even for the biggest hitters. The key is getting in position for the third shot. There are bunkers left and right, though the left bunkers might come more into play because the fairway pitches sharply to the right. The green slopes severely from front to back, requiring a crisp wedge to gauge the right distance, and making birdie putts scary.

13 Par 3
Yards 183



The shortest hole at Oakmont, but still no picnic. The green is shaped like an hourglass and guarded by bunkers on every side. Any miss long or to the right makes par unlikely. The key is to stay below the hole.

With the wind at their back, some players might consider giving this a crack with the driver. The more prudent choice is a long iron that avoids the bunkers on both sides of the fairway, leaving a short iron to a large, narrow green with a lot of subtle contours. The green slopes from right to left, and it will be important to stay below the hole.

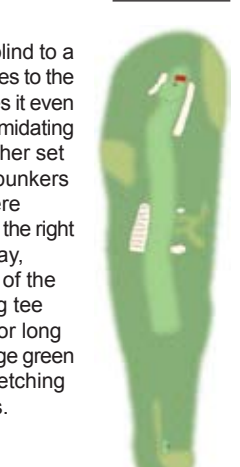
12 Par 5
Yards 667



14 Par 4
Yards 358



15 Par 4
Yards 500



The tee shot is blind to a fairway that pitches to the right, and it makes it even more visually intimidating because of another set of Church Pew bunkers on the left. Severe ditches are down the right side of the fairway, making this one of the more demanding tee shots. A middle or long iron is left to a large green with bunkers stretching along both sides.

16 Par 3
Yards 231



The pivotal closing holes begin on this long par 3, which has a fairly large green that slopes from left to right and is guarded by bunkers on both sides. The easier up-and-down is short or to the right. This is where Larry Nelson holed a 60-foot birdie putt when the final round resumed Monday morning in 1983, sending him to victory in the U.S. Open.

17 Par 4
Yards 313



The adventurous players will try to drive the green, and most of them did during the U.S. Amateur in 2003. But the five bunkers surrounding the green are severe, and a half-dozen bunkers short and left of the green are intimidating. The safe play is a long iron off the tee and a wedge to the green. This figures to be the most exciting hole in the championship.

18 Par 4
Yards 484



A demanding closing hole from tee to green, starting with a drive that must avoid a large bunker to the right and two smaller bunkers to the left, all of them so severe that it is unlikely anyone can reach the green. A middle iron is left uphill to a severely contoured green, with four bunkers on the left and a large bunker on the right.

Drawings are schematic

TV coverage
First- and second-round coverage (all times EDT)
 June 14-15, 10 a.m. to 3 p.m., ESPN; 3-5 p.m. NBC Sports; 5-7 p.m. ESPN
Third- and fourth round coverage
 June 16-17, 1 to 7 p.m., NBC Sports
 Playoff, June 18 (if necessary)
 Noon-2 p.m., ESPN; 2 p.m.-conclusion, NBC Sports