

Host pro predicts Littler to win

Gene Littler will win the 1981 U.S. Senior Open — at least that's Al Mengert's opinion.

"It's Gene Littler with a 284," said Mengert, head professional of the prestigious golf club in Bloomfield Township. "He (Littler) won the U.S. Open here at Oakland Hills in 1961 — can he win a Senior Open 20 years later?"

Mengert said Littler's closest challengers should be Miller Barber, Arnold Palmer, Bob Goalby and defending champion Roberto DeVicenzo.

"Many will remember Arnold at his peak in the 1964 Carling Open at Oakland Hills," said Mengert. "He hit the pin with his second shot at the final hole, but lost the championship by two shots to Bobby Nichols."

"Everyone remembers the controversy at the Masters (1968) when Roberto DeVicenzo signed an incorrect scorecard and lost to Bob Goalby. It would be something if they tied again."

ALTHOUGH OAKLAND HILLS' famed South Course will play somewhat shorter this year than it did in 1979 for the PGA championship, it may be more difficult.

"During the PGA, the course played as easily as it ever has for a major championship," said Mengert, who won the 1980 Michigan PGA championship.

"The weather was ideal, and the course was groomed for low scoring. The greens were 'member' speed, allowing the players to charge for birdies without the fear of the



Oakland Hills Country Club Pro Al Mengert predicts Gene Littler (pictured) will capture this year's U.S. Senior Open with a four-over-par 284.

ball getting away from the hole.

"The greens were soft and held every iron shot, so the players could go right to the flag. The rough was very light, and reaching the green from the rough presented no problems."

The course will play 6,798 yards — compared to 7,014 for the '79 PGA — with a par of 70. The greens will be fast, the fairways narrow, and the roughs deep.

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