

Longest ball may hold the edge

By Bill Parker
staff writer

The famed South Course at Oakland Hills — dubbed "The Monster" by Ben Hogan after the first round of the 1951 U.S. Open — has served up its share of exciting major golf tournaments. With the course in its best condition ever, according to Oakland Hills head pro Pat Croswell, the 1991 U.S. Senior Open, scheduled for July 25-28, could also become a classic.

"(The course) won't be a lot different than it was in '81 (the first time Oakland Hills hosted a U.S. Senior Open)," Croswell said. "The fairways are in a little better condition. The ground crews have been working real hard. Overall, I'd have to say the course is in the best condition I've seen it in during the 11 years I've been here. The roughs will be up and the greens will be fast."

"The '81 Senior Open was a great tournament. The roughs were up and the fairways were fast. (Arnold) Palmer won with a 9-over, but I don't think it will

take that (to win) this time. With good weather, even-par could be enough. If it gets windy, maybe three of four over and if it rains and the course gets soft, maybe they'll get under par a little."

UNITED STATES Golf Association rules call for the fairways to be cut from $\frac{1}{8}$ to $\frac{1}{2}$ inch with the intermediate rough at $1\frac{1}{2}$ inches and primary rough at three inches. The undulating greens will also provide a challenge with Stimpmeter readings of 10 or more across the course.

"With 18 new tees constructed in the fall of 1988, plus extensive fairway improvements and new sand in all 118 bunkers, I think the course will be as tough a challenge as it was during the 1985 U.S. Open," said Oakland Hills Golf Course Superintendent Ted Wochle.

The new tees actually make the course play shorter than it did during the '85 Open of the '81 Senior Open.

"The tee changes were made to improve the condition of the course," Croswell said. "The tees on eight,

10 and 13 are a little different. The 13th offers a new angle with a better look at the green."

The par 70, 6,718-yard "Monster" features four par-3s, 12 par-4s and two par-5s. The front nine plays 3,329 yards and the back nine plays at 3,389. Both are par 35s. The course was 6,798-yards for the '81 Senior Open and 6,996-yards for the 1985 Open.

CROSWELL FEELS the golfer who can drive the ball well will have an advantage in this year's Senior Open.

"Someone who can drive the ball could do well because of fairway bunkers that are in the 230 to 270-yard range," he said. "The guys that can drive the ball well, hit a good long iron and make the putts will be in there. The greens will also be tough. The greens here at Oakland Hills are full of undulations, contours and crowns."

The 18th hole, a 447-yard, par-4, dogleg right could provide for a thrilling finish if the scores are tight. The 18th was ranked first in the '85 Open with a scoring average of 4.470. It recorded the fewest pars and the most double-bogeys of the tournament.

Oakland Hills Country Club celebrates its 75th birthday by hosting the 1991 U.S. Senior Open, July 25-28. Competition will be held on the 6,718-yard, par-70 South Course. The shorter front nine is a 3,329-yard, par-35 while the back nine offers a 3,389-yard, par-35. Following is a brief profile of each hole as seen through the eyes of Oakland Hills Golf Professional Pat Croswell.

Hole 1 — 419 yards, par 4: Starting from an elevated tee, this hole is beautifully framed with bunkers on both sides of the driving area. The bunkers are cut into the fairway, narrowing it to 25 yards, and thus placing a premium on accuracy. The hole normally plays downwind, leaving the pro with a medium iron to a large, undulating green. The right side of the green is bowl-shaped and is an easy hole position. If the hole is positioned on the left-hand terrace or the difficult back right plateau, par will be a good score.

Hole 2 — 499 yards, par 5: This hole is a slight dogleg left with fairway bunkers from 230 to 270 yards from either tee. A good drive will put a player in position to go for the green on his second shot, but if he decides to lay up short of the four bunkers protecting the front of the green, he will be faced with a delicate pitch. The putting surface is two-tiered with the upper tier sloping away from the player. If the pro can avoid fairway bunkers, birdies will be easy to come by. In 1985, T.C. Chen scored the first known double-eagle in a U.S. Open at this hole, which yielded the most eagles (four), most birdies (153), fewest bogeys, and no double bogeys.

Hole 3 — 183 yards, par 3: This hole, the first of four great par-3s, is usually played into a headwind with a long iron. The green is angled at a right-to-left diagonal with two deep bunkers guarding the left side of the green and single bunkers right and long. The putting surface has two small crowns in the front middle and front right, and a small plateau in the back. This classic par-3 was the set-



DAN DEAN/staff photographer

Bunkers enclose the 162-yard, par-3 13th hole, the shortest on the course. Players must guard from hitting the ball long.

ting for David Graham's playoff victory over Ben Crenshaw at the 1979 PGA Championship.

Hole 4 — 423 yards, par 4: The player's key objective on this dogleg left is to avoid the series of deep bunkers and the group of trees on the left side of the fairway, which gradually slopes to the right, toward two more bunkers. The landing area is only 24 yards wide, making this a difficult driving hole. The second shot, which is downhill to a green protected by five bunkers, plays shorter than the yardage indicates. The putting surface runs from back to front with the toughest hole location being the slightly elevated po-

sition on the extreme left side.

Hole 5 — 426 yards, par 4: This hole, again, demands a very accurate drive, since the trees on the left and two bunkers on the right protect the landing area. The left side of the fairway offers the player the best location to play his second shot to the large green, which is protected by a large bunker on the left and a deep bunker on the right. The putting surface slopes from back to front with severe contours and crowns. Missing the green long or right can be fatal, as T.C. Chen discovered in the final round of the 1985 U.S. Open when he made a quadruple bogey-8.

Hole 6 — 353 yards, par 4: This is the shortest par-4 on the course. The landing area for the tee shot is protected by two bunkers on the left and a group of trees on the right. Most players will use a fairway wood or long iron to play short of the last bunker cut into the fairway. The second shot is uphill to the deepest green on the course. The putting surface is tear-shaped with two distinct levels. The narrow back position is the most difficult, forcing the player to select enough club to carry to the top tier of this deep green.

Hole 7 — 398 yards, par 4: With

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