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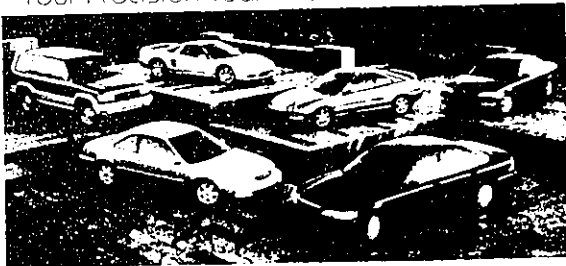
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STAFF PHOTO BY DAN DEAN

Signature hole: The most picturesque - and the signature hole - at Oakland Hills is the par-4, 463-yard 16th. The Oakland Hills caddies are well aware of the hole's dangers.

Caddys hope to bag some work

BY BILL PARKER
STAFF WRITER

With the world's best golfers teeing it up at Oakland Hills Country Club, June 13-16, in the 96th United States Open golf championship, local caddys can't help but fantasize a little. The opportunity to carry a bag for one of the best golfers on earth is certainly what dreams are made of. Just imagine:

Corey Pavin hits the green on 18 in two and needs a birdie putt to repeat as champion. With a look of concern on his face, he turns to his caddy, a local kid who knows the course like the back of his hand, and asks about the break of the green. Taking the advice to heart, Pavin adjusts his shot, sinks the 24-footer and wins the coveted U.S. Open Championship Cup.

Back to reality.

While the opportunity to get such a call is relatively slim, it does exist and a couple lucky local caddys will undoubtedly get a chance to work the tournament, although it likely won't be for a Corey Pavin, a Phil Mickelson

or a Greg Norman.

"It doesn't happen very often anymore because most of the top golfers have their own caddys, but I'll be surprised if a couple of our caddys don't get a bag," explained Oakland Hills caddy master Mike Betts. "The sectional qualifiers, that's when we'll likely get a call. It'll be very disappointing if a couple of our caddys don't get a bag."

With approximately 450 caddys working at Oakland Hills, when such a call comes the chance of getting a bag is still very slim. Based on such criteria as longevity, caddying potential and tournament experience, Oakland Hills rates its caddys. If a participating golfer needs a caddy, Betts will start issuing bags to the top-ranked caddy and work on down from there.

For those select few who get a chance, the opportunity to caddy in a major event, for a world-class golfer, is something they'll remember forever. Just ask Betts.

See caddys, 19