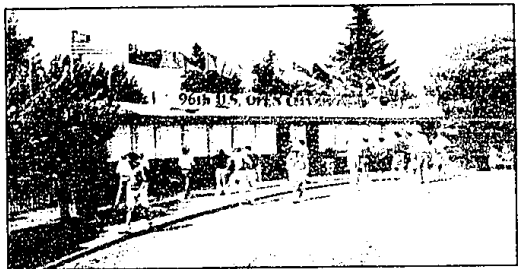


At the Open: A week of wonders



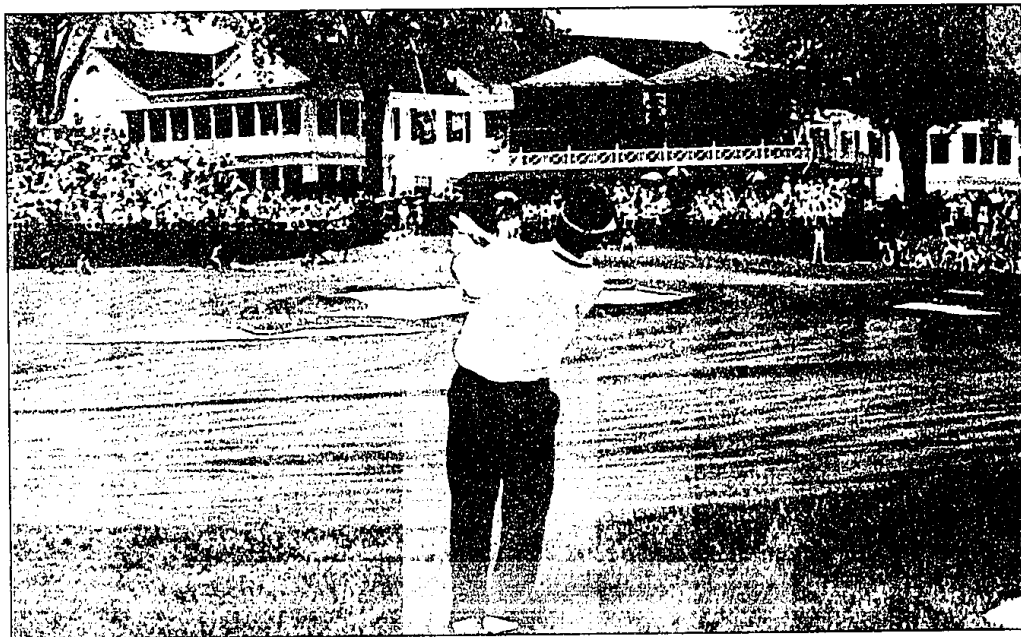
Keeping track: People crowded around the scoreboard to see how their favorites are doing in the competition.



Celebrity status: An excited youngster gets an autograph from Tiger Woods on Tuesday.



Outta my way: Todd Curie, tired of battling the crowds for a better view at the U.S. Open, uses a little ingenuity for a sneak peek at the pros at the 11th hole.



Staff photos by Stephen Cantrell and Dan Dean

A golfer's dream: A large gallery (photo at left) and the Oakland Hills clubhouse await golfers as they finish their round.



Getting the shot: Spectators armed with cameras shoot away on the group of Jack Nicklaus, Tiger Woods and Tom Watson Tuesday.



One, two, three push: Heavy rains early in the week made the going treacherous as Collin Ozmout of Bingham Farms found out when he got stuck in the mud at the 16th hole Monday.

What a week. From Monday through Sunday, the Oakland Hills Country Club in Bloomfield Township became a center of sports attention as thousands of people flocked in to see some of the best golfers in the world compete in the 96th U.S. Open.

The crowds started on Monday, as fans arrived early for the practice rounds and look for the early arriving pros. And in town, wasn't that Jack Nicklaus spotted at the 220 Restaurant?

Wednesday's torrential downpour was a heart-stopper for the club as close to three inches of rain fell in two hours, submerging part of the course and washing away bunkers. Nearly 30 volunteers from other clubs joined the Oakland Hills staff of 26 to put the course back in shape in time to tee off Thursday morning.

But rain or shine, even non-golfers were drawn into the excitement and festive atmosphere as the crowds spilled over in the surrounding community.

Maple turned into a slowly moving gridlock of cars as drivers hunted for parking spaces. And residents along the road were enthusiastically willing to accommodate them - at \$20 each for the day.

Police had vowed to keep the crush of cars off surrounding streets and maintain some sort of traffic order in the neighborhoods. But no one seemed to mind, at least not too much or for long.

This was not a week for bad feelings and frustration, except for the occasional missed shot. People came to the Open to have a good time. And they did.



Spending money: People snapped up official Open items from a 20,000-square-foot tent.