



# OLYMPIA FIELDS COUNTRY CLUB



## **History**

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Olympia Fields Country Club is located approximately 25 miles south of Chicago, Illinois. The club was founded in 1915 by a group of prestigious investors from the Chicago business community, headed by Charles Beach. The first president of the club was the famous football coach Amos Alonzo Stagg.

After its inception, Olympia Fields Country Club quickly became the largest private club in America. The club originally spread over close to 700 acres of prime, rolling countryside. By 1925 the club had four golf courses. Tom Bendelow designed course #1. Tom Bendelow and William Watson designed the #2 course. William Watson designed course #3. And course #4 was designed by Willie Park Jr., a famous British Open champ. The fourth course quickly became known as one of the best courses in the world, and is currently ranked #24 in the U.S.A. by Golf Digest magazine.

During WWII, the club was forced to sell half of its land, and holes from the first 3 courses were combined to create the current South Course. The #4 course was renamed the North Course, and has held numerous elite championships during its existence.

Olympia Fields is also famous for its huge clubhouse. Built from 1923 to 1925, the half-timbered English Tudor design features an eighty-foot high, four-face clock tower that has become the trademark of the club. The clubhouse is the largest in America, maybe in the world. Its facilities include the largest men's locker room in existence, enormous dining rooms, and many private rooms where members and guests can reside.

Throughout its existence, Olympia Fields CC has been the Host to Champions. These hallowed fairways have seen the shots of legends such as Bobby Jones, Sam Snead, Ben Hogan, Arnold Palmer and Jack Nicklaus. In 1925 Olympia Fields hosted the PGA Championship, won by Walter Hagen. Olympia Fields hosted the 1928 U.S. Open, with Johnny Farrel beating Bobby Jones in a playoff. Jerry Barber took the PGA title at Olympia Fields in 1961. Prior to WWII, the Western Open was considered a major, and it has been held at Olympia Fields five times: 1920 won by Jock Hutchison, Walter Hagen in 1927, Macdonald Smith in 1933, 1968 won by Jack Nicklaus, and in 1971 won by Bruce Crampton. In 1997, the U.S. Senior Open was won by Graham Marsh with a score of even par 280.

During the summer of 2003, the golfing world watched as Olympia Fields played host the U.S. Open Championship. The best golfers in the world played a course that features "tradition with a modern face." Many of the holes are unchanged from the original Willie Park design. The course has been lengthened and the bunkers have been made deeper with steeper faces, but the course still has the look and feel of a golf course from the 1920's.

I have designed Olympia Fields CC - North Course to follow the routing presented at the 2003 U.S. Open Championship. This configuration is altered from the regular member's course played normally. Holes 1 and 10 remain the same, but holes 2-9 have been reversed with holes 11-18, i.e. holes 11-18 as played in the U.S. Open are normally played as holes 2-9. Accomodating the U.S. Open specs on the course made for a bunch of extra work.

**Ken Boltz**

## **Hole by Hole**

### **Hole 1 - Par 5, 577 Yards**

The opening hole is basically straight, although the tee shot favors a slight draw. Find the fairway and the green is reachable in two, if the wind is favorable. Finding trouble off the tee means a layup, with deep bunkers guarding the layup area. The green is fronted by two traps, the one on the right being especially deep. The green slopes from back to front and a bit left to right. This is probably the easiest birdie hole on the course.

### **Hole 2 - Par 4, 400 Yards**

Dogleg left with cavernous bunkers left and right on the fairway. The second shot will be with a short iron to a hard, windswept green. This hole is usually played with a prevailing wind at the player's back, which complicates the second shot.

### **Hole 3 - Par 4, 389 Yards**

This is an uphill, slight left to right dogleg with the creek running across the fairway about 280 yards from the tee. The tee shot must be played on a lazer line, with huge oaks lining the fairway on both sides. The presence of the creek and a large fairway bunker on the left side will take the driver out of the player's hands in favor of a long iron, leaving a 140 yard shot into a relatively shallow green with a lot of side slope. It is difficult to gauge the effect of the wind of the second shot, which may wreak havoc with some players. Second shots that are pulled or pushed slightly will find deep, sloping bunkers.

### **Hole 4 - Par 3, 164 Yards**



A truly delightful uphill par three. The green is protected by enormous bunkers in front that seem to catch their share of balls because the wind's effect is masked by the huge trees lining the left side of the green. A pulled shot winds up in the hazard, some 30 feet beneath the putting surface. The main defense to the hole is the huge, undulating green. The short pin positions, left and right, will cause most players to aim for the middle of the green. Par is definitely a good score here.

### **Hole 5 - Par 4, 443 Yards**

This is the signature hole on this nine. The creek crosses in front of the tee box about 125 yards away then takes a turn and forms the right boundary of the hole. 300 yards from the tee, it takes a sharp left and crosses the fairway again, only to take another right, ready to take any second shots that get pulled slightly. The elevated tee shot calls for a long iron or three wood, taking the creek out of play, to a narrow fairway, leaving an uphill shot over the creek to a midsize elevated green with a tremendous amount of back-to-front slope. Two shots and two putts will seem like a birdie here, but it only earns you a par.

### **Hole 6 - Par 5, 555 Yards**

This is a long sweeping left to right hole with a big hazard framing the right side of the hole. This will be a three-shot hole for most players, because the fairway turns sharply to the right about 275 yards from the green. The fairway is quite narrow, with 2 bunkers on the left side in the first landing area. Many players will use a long iron or fairway wood off the tee, leaving a long iron shot to set up a wedge shot to a smallish green with plenty of undulation. This may prove to be a most rare species: a par five that isn't a guaranteed birdie.

### **Hole 7 - Par 3, 212 Yards**

The tee shot is from an elevated perch to a small green protected front and right by a creek. Bunkers left and right will catch the slight mis-hits. Pulled shots may be unplayable and shots that just miss the putting surface on the right will bound into Butterfield Creek. Take your par and head to the next tee.



### **Hole 8 - Par 4, 433 Yards**

The creek, again, looms large along the right side of the fairway, ready to catch any missed fades. The fairway is quite narrow at the landing area, with a large, horizontal bunker occupying the left third of the fairway. The adventurous player can gamble and take out the driver, leaving a wedge to an elevated, firm green that slopes front to back with a reverse pitch. As always, large bunkers left and right protect the green. A birdie possibility for most players, despite the natural hazards.

### **Hole 9 - Par 4, 496 Yards**

This huge, dramatic right-to-left dogleg will result in plenty of bogeys and "other". The tee shot must be on the left side of the fairway to avoid the bunker that occupies a substantial portion of the fairway on the right side in the landing area. But too far left or too short will leave you blocked by large oak trees. This will leave most players with a long iron shot to a huge, tilted green with a big hogback on the right side. There is a pond along the right side of the fairway that juts back into the fairway about twenty yards short of the green. This hole calls for two long and preside shots and two very good putts.

### **Hole 10 - Par 4, 444 Yards**

A slight dogleg left with bunkers on both sides of the fairway. The best play is to flirt with the left fairway bunker, leaving a mid to short iron to a deep green with moderate slope. The green is well protected with two bunkers right and one bunker left. We should see some birdies, but par is a good score here.

### **Hole 11 - Par 4, 467 Yards**

A big left to right dogleg that calls for a tee ball very close to the fairway bunkers, leaving a mid-to-short iron to a large, sloping green. A small collection area has been built at the left rear of the green, which could create some complications for shots that go through the green. A huge stand of oak trees is located behind the green. This will cause most players to aim for the middle of the green and take their chances with the flat stick. Four is a good score here.



### **Hole 12 - Par 4, 460 Yards**

This is the signature hole for this nine. It requires a blind tee shot over a hill to a narrow fairway that shifts to the left of the teeing area. The tee shot must be hit left or the player will not have a shot into the small, elevated and well-protected green. Most players will have a mid-iron shot which will be hard to keep on the green. This hole should provide plenty of drama on the putting green as well, because the slope of the surface is one of the most severe on the golf course.

### **Hole 13 - Par 4, 397 Yards**

At 400 yards, this might seem like a shorty, but the fairway is quite narrow, with a big ridge splitting it at about 275 yards from the tee box. Most players will opt for a long iron, leaving a short iron, blind, uphill shot into a heavily bunkered, small green with plenty of slope. A well-placed tee shot should make this a good birdie opportunity.

### **Hole 14 - Par 4, 414 Yards**

Another tough, narrow hole, with an eyelet-wide fairway, protected by a bunker on the left side. The tee shot comes through a chute and huge oak trees also guard the fairway. If the tee ball winds up in the fairway, the player is confronted with a short iron to a shallow green with a hogback in the back left portion. The greenside bunkers will also lead the way to the occasional bogey or “other”.

### **Hole 15 - Par 3, 187 Yards**

An elevated tee shot to a well-guarded putting surface. The front right and back left pin placements will be the most difficult locations. This hole penalizes players who miss the green, as it is a tough “up and down”.

### **Hole 16 - Par 4, 451 Yards**

Another elevated tee shot to a fairway that moves slightly to the left. The preferred tee shot is over the right corner of the left fairway bunker, leaving a short-to-mid iron shot to a huge green with multiple, tough pin placements. Par is a good score here but this is your last good chance at birdie.

### **Hole 17 - Par 3, 247 Yards**

This tee shot is uphill and into the prevailing southwest wind. The green is well-protected left and right with big, deep bunkers. Most players will hit fairway woods into the center of the green and hope to two putt. The putting surface has numerous undulations that will lead to many 3 putts.

### **Hole 18 - Par 4, 460 Yards**

Another big par 4 played into the wind on most days. The tee shot must split two fairway bunkers, leaving a mid-to-long iron into the huge, sloping green. The best play here is a drive between the two fairway bunkers that lands short of the third bunker. The green itself is the most sinister on the golf course with tough-to-read breaks. Even the best players in the world will three putt this green from time to time.