

AN INHOSPITABLE HOLE?

Nicklaus' laundry list of changes in recent years added about 330 yards and a bunch of bunkers while reworking the sixth, eighth, 11th and 16th greens. The most radical change was pushing No. 6 green back to create a 200-yard approach shot across muddy Floyds Fork. Visually, though, television execs will salivate over pretty pictures created by transforming the quarry-esque waste between No. 7's split fairway into a dyed-blue lake sectioned by burbling waterfalls (think: mall courtyard). All well and good, until the PGA positions a string of corporate tents almost on the main fairway. Memo to: Phil Mickelson
Re: 2006 U.S. Open memories
At the 282-yard sprinkler head it's 13 paces from the fairway's edge to the cart path, 16 paces to the tent platform. Fore!

HOLD IT RIGHT THERE, FELLAS

The 1996 PGA's first round was marred by six-hour rounds in clear weather that resulted in six groups returning the next morning to complete play. The second hole was offered as the first culprit, so shortening this to a par 4 could diminish an early stop-and-go quality to each match.

OPENED in 1986 as a golf-only club by local kitchen-cabinet company owner Dwight Gahm, Valhalla fits the mold of several big-name projects Jack Nicklaus designed that decade. A sprawling 430-acre tract of pastures and dense woods, the sweeping holes (every fairway doglegs, many around various water ornaments) lead to tiered, well-bunkered greens. Valhalla's meteoric rise was goosed by the PGA of America's buying a minority interest in the course and awarding it the 1996 PGA Championship; Mark Brooks won two weeks before Tiger Woods earned a third straight U.S. Amateur. The PGA bought the facility entirely after the 2000 PGA, which became Woods' fifth career major title. The 2004 PGA was scheduled here, too, but shifted to another little-known site created by a household fixtures magnate, Whistling Straits in Wisconsin, the pet project of Herb Kohler.
Text by Brett Avery • Map by bestapproach.com



2008 Ryder			2000 PGA			
Hole	Par	Yards	Par	Yards	Avg.	Rank
1	4	448	4	446	4.158	6
2	4	505	5	535	4.684	18
3	3	206	3	208	3.147	8
4	4	375	4	350	3.950	14
5	4	463	4	465	4.229	3
6	4	500	4	421	4.147	9
7	5	601	5	597	4.734	17
8	3	180	3	166	3.086	11
9	4	416	4	418	4.020	12
Out	35	3,694	36	3,606	36.154	
10	5	594	5	551	4.864	15
11	3	208	3	168	3.088	10
12	4	464	4	467	4.297	1
13	4	352	4	348	3.987	13
14	3	215	3	217	3.152	7
15	4	434	4	402	4.176	4
16	4	511	4	444	4.235	2
17	4	477	4	422	4.165	5
18	5	547	5	542	4.861	16
In	36	3,802	36	3,561	36.824	
Total	71	7,496	72	7,167	72.978	

THE REQUISITE ITEM ON THAT ABSENT GUY

When he snatched the 2000 PGA from the hands of journeyman Bob May, Tiger Woods played the last 15 holes in eight under par and prevailed in the championship's first three-hole playoff. That year he covered 291 holes in major championships in 53 under par with just four rounds in the 70s.

TRISKAIDE(AZINGER)KAPHOBIA

One hot-stove topic early in the week will be how captain Paul Azinger and the PGA present Nos. 4 and 13, both potentially reachable from a forward tee. Drives at No. 4 would cross a mass of bunkers and rough fronting the green—no sweat for these players. But the 13th, called "The Island"? The elevated tee (70 feet above the fairway from the tips) looks down to a green resembling a seven-layer cake ringed by blocks of granite, all plopped into Brush Run. Zero margin of error, rampant peer pressure into taking a rip when it measures 290, total fear of the number 13 (triskaidekaphobia). Good luck, boys.