

## ON COURSE

With the '06 U.S. Open going to Winged Foot, players will be forced to deal with the diabolical 10th. Measuring 190 yards, Winged Foot's 10th, known to members as "the Pulpit," is a Tillinghast classic that's considered one of the best short holes in championship golf.





# one-shot wonders

## SHORT ON YARDAGE, LONG ON CHARACTER

The ancient Greek poet Homer told the story of Odysseus and the Sirens. The Sirens used sweet singing to lure sailors close to the shoreline and onto the rocks. To avoid this fate, Odysseus in his wisdom instructed his sailors to plug their ears so as not to be tempted by the beauty of the music. In many ways, the seemingly innocent par-3 is golf course architecture's version of this timeless morality play. Just a simple iron shot from a perfect lie, the green so tantalizingly near. You set your sights on birdie and fire. Five shots later you're shaking your head and wondering exactly what happened. Maybe you got a little greedy and played to a sucker pin. Or maybe you misjudged the wind or elevation change and paid the price for a lack of distance control. One way or another, you fell victim to the short hole's Siren song.

When the world's top golfers gather at Winged Foot Golf Club in New York for the U.S. Open Championship this month, they will face brutal par-4s, impossibly long par-5s and rough thick enough to bury the hopes of those who fail to hit their intended target. They will also face one of the strongest collections of one-shot holes in the world. Golfers may be tempted to try to overpower the short holes, but they had best beware. A.W. Tillinghast, who designed Winged Foot in 1922, fully expected the par-3s to be decisive factors in championship play.

"The short holes on championship courses should be the most feared," Tillinghast wrote in 1931. "Any player who cracks 70 should face fear and conquer it if his performance is to be rated a truly great one."

When Winged Foot hosted its first U.S. Open in 1929, Bobby Jones remarked that his goal for the week was to play the one-shot holes in even par. His focus and his restraint paid off. Jones was the only player to manage a sub-70 round in the tournament and won in a 36-hole playoff. Thirty years later, Billy Casper took the unusual step of laying up in every round on the 215-yard 3rd hole. While the rest of the field struggled with the dramatically sloping green, Casper played safely from below the hole to make par each day.

If any par-3 demonstrates Tillinghast's view—and that of many golf course architects—on short holes, however, it's the famous 10th at Winged Foot. Known to the golf world as "the Pulpit," the 190-yard hole—no more than a 6- or 7-iron for today's players—is one of the most challenging in golf. It's also the case study for architects to this day.

"Short holes may be scenically beautiful and inspiring enough ordinarily," Tillinghast writes, "but if they do not show teeth that will bite and hurt they are rather held in contempt."

The 10th plays to an elevated, pear-shaped green set at a left-to-right

angle from the tee box and defended by a gaping bunker to the right and a smaller one to the left. A deception bunker short of the green adds another level of discomfort to the tee shot. Now the golfer begins to think about where *not* to go rather than playing with confidence and taking full advantage of the short shot. To further compound the golfer's dilemma, Tillinghast employed a change of direction. The 10th is the only hole at Winged Foot to move along an east-west axis. All the other holes flow north and south. Therefore, the player must adjust to a brand-new wind direction on this most dangerous shot. And merely hitting the green doesn't solve the problem. The Pulpit is the most severe putting surface on the golf course, punishing the mediocre iron shot that may find the green but stray from the intended line.

As the Pulpit so perfectly illustrates, the par-3 is a true one-on-one battle between architect and golfer. It's the only hole where golfers hit shots to a green from a defined point. Unlike longer holes, which must accommodate shots from a variety of positions and angles, everyone plays from roughly the same place on a par-3. Since the designer knows the starting point, he can be much more testing with his hazards. It's also the only approach shot hit from a perfect lie each and every time. You can bet that the crafty architect is going to try to take those advantages away from the player with dangerous hazards, deceptive elevation changes and severe greens.

Ironically, the best players often fear short par-3s more than long ones, because golf course designers tend to avoid overtly beating a player up. When they create long one-shotters, they often allow for run-ups or even layups. George C. Thomas, for instance, provides a helpful kick slope on the 240-yard 4th at Riviera. Alister MacKenzie originally dismissed the idea of making the famed 16th at Cypress Valley a par-3 at all. He felt that few would be able to carry the tumultuous ocean cove in a single shot. In the end, he built a layup area out to

the left so that shorter hitters could play for a bogey four, softening the advantage of longer players. When it comes to short par-3 holes, however, we're all in the same boat.

The great short par-3s are classic do-or-die holes. The 7th at Pebble Beach in California measures just 120 yards from the tips, but its location at the windy tip of a rocky peninsula, its tiny green and its exposure to the elements makes it a test of nerves that yields birdies and extracts double-bogeys indiscriminately. Each year, the 17th at the TPC Stadium Course at Sawgrass, with its famed island green, vexes not only the thousands of tourist golfers who line up to take a crack at it but also the 144 best professional golfers who compete in The Players Championship. And, of course, how many Masters titles slunk off to die in the turquoise waters of Rae's Creek on the 155-yard 12th at Augusta National? The short par-3 is unique in all of sports in that virtually any player can potentially play the hole as well as the top Tour professionals. Regardless, if you make three on these benign little monsters or the many that embody these principles, you simply sigh in relief and make it onto the next tee.

So, how will the competitors at this year's U.S. Open try to tame the short holes and contend for the title? The same way you should approach the one-shotters at your own course—by granting danger as wide a berth as possible. Start by utilizing the entire teeing ground, based on distance, hole location and your preferred shot shape. Beware of sucker hole locations tucked behind deep bunkers or at the sides of the green. Finally, be aware of the slope of the green itself. At the U.S. Open, as at most courses, below the pin is better than above.

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