



from the designer's desk

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focus on u.s. major championships

For almost forty years I've attended The Masters. This springtime ritual celebrates golf, set in a profusion of azaleas, dogwood and wisteria among stately Georgia pines that fell this year on both the Roman and Eastern Easter holidays - an unusual alignment of the moon calendars concluding on April 11, 2004. There have also been realignments to Augusta National since 1999. The course has always been a 'work in progress' since first designed by Dr. Mackenzie and Robert Tyre Jones, Jr. in the 1930's. My father redesigned Holes #11, #13 and #16, adding ponds and framing the contoured greens with dramatic white-faced bunkers looking back at the golfers. Recently the course has been lengthened and tightened with rough and new trees, thwarting the athleticism of the world's best young "order of merit" golfers and the proven masters of the game.

Augusta National is a paradigm of the American parkland golf course, but the recently added trees, with the appearance of an artificial, mounded grove, protrude beyond the natural enchanted forest and nursery land of its origins, especially in the target areas of Holes #5, #15, #17 and now, most obviously, Hole #11. These changes, while reducing scoring opportunities, have also subdued some of the exhilarating tournament dramas, accompanied by the roars of an appreciative gallery throughout the course.



Shinnecock Hills

It is a truism that the Masters Tournament really begins on the back nine on Sunday afternoon. Anything can and does happen - a great charge by Arnold Palmer, a collapse by Greg Norman, a stunning and joyful run by Phil Mickelson. Yet has Augusta National lost something of the sportiness that made it unique, partly because it is now set up more like a U.S. Open course?

Remarkably, this year's upcoming U.S. Open venue, Shinnecock Hills, will resemble the British Open, because the windswept Long Island sea breezes scurry across the mostly open, sandy heathland. It's odd that the long, slow slog along the corridor fairways, surrounded by deep rough, is no longer the U.S. Open paradigm. Shinnecock Hills' main defense is the invisible hazard - the wind. The spectators should bring their binoculars to view the broad windswept landscape. Some binoculars are so powerful they can almost see the players change their minds on club selection in the ever-varying winds of Shinnecock Hills! ■

à propos de majeurs

Depuis 40 ans, le parcours du Masters est plus ou moins retouché à chaque édition. Récemment, on l'a rallongé et rétréci en largeur par l'ajout d'arbres et de rough contrariant les vellétés des meilleurs. Augusta National est un modèle de parcours, mais ceci va bien au-delà de la nature de son terrain, surtout aux 5, 15, 17 et, maintenant, au 11. En limitant les bons scores, on nuit aussi à la qualité de la dramaturgie du tournoi à chaque coin du parcours.

On le sait, le Masters commence vraiment au 10 le dimanche venu. Tout peut y arriver. Une attaque de Palmer, un effondrement de Norman, une envolée de Mickelson... Mais, avec ses altérations, Augusta National a perdu de sa personnalité unique, en étant un peu dressé à la façon d'un US Open dont longueur, fairways étroits, rough profond ne sont plus la marque réservée. Mais à Shinnecock Hills, l'US Open 2004 ressemblera cette fois à un British à cause d'un vent très présent obligeant d'abord les joueurs à constamment jongler avec leurs clubs. Une défense bien plus naturelle!