

(2008 MASTERS PREVIEW)

Golf Digest

SWING
EASY,
HIT
HARD

BY
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COUPLES



+

CHIPPING
KNOCK IT
CLOSE FROM
ANY LIE

BREAKING 80
GET YOUR
GAME IN
SHAPE NOW!

PUTTING
SINK 'EM
EVERY TIME

The course

Why is every hole at Augusta National listed in increments of five yards? It goes back to co-founder Clifford Roberts, who thought that because tee and flagstick locations vary from day to day, it was ludicrous to list a hole at, say, 351 yards.

HOLE	YARDAGE	PAR
1	455	4
2	575	5
3	350	4
4	240	3
5	455	4
6	180	3
7	450	4
8	570	5
9	460	4
OUT	3,735	36
10	495	4
11	505	4
12	155	3
13	510	5
14	440	4
15	530	5
16	170	3
17	440	4
18	465	4
IN	3,710	36
TOTAL	7,445	72



BRIDGES TURN 50

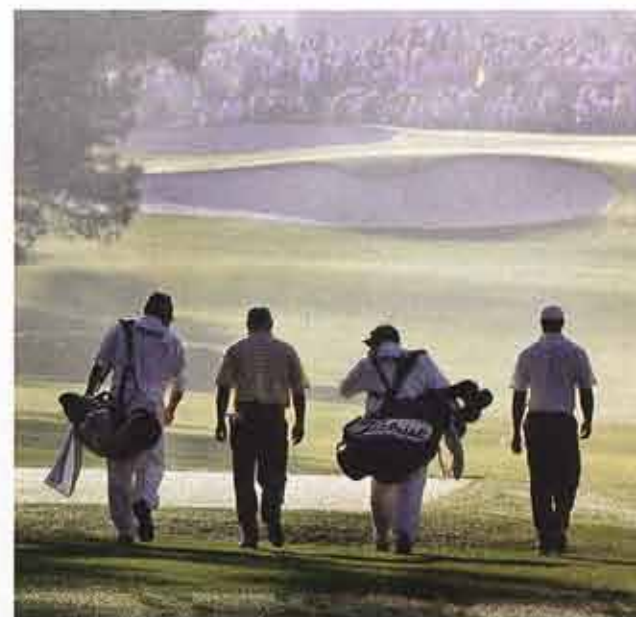
It's difficult to picture Amen Corner without the Hogan Bridge, which connects the fairway to the green on the 12th hole; or the Nelson Bridge, which connects the 13th tee box to the fairway. But the two Masters icons, named for Ben Hogan and Byron Nelson, didn't exist when the course opened in 1933. The stone-arch bridges that cross Rae's Creek weren't erected until 1958. Before that, golfers walked over flat, wood bridges (see photos, below).

The Hogan Bridge was dedicated in honor of Hogan's then-record score of 274 (14 under par) in 1953. The Nelson Bridge was built in honor of his birdie-eagle performance on the 12th and 13th to win the 1937 Masters.

Actually, the 12th hole used to have three bridges. At one time Rae's Creek forked, and golfers had to cross the stream twice before reaching the green. The fork was eventually filled. *a.x.*



THEN & NOW



Winners need No. 7

Since unveiling the famous "second cut" of rough in 1999 and gradually lengthening the course from 6,985 yards in 1999 to 7,445 this year, Augusta National has revealed some statistical trends among its recent Masters champions. We've crunched the numbers and come up with some interesting axioms that could be a game plan for winning the tournament.

OWN THE SEVENTH HOLE

The last nine Masters winners have played the par-4 seventh in even par or better—the only par 4 or par 3 on the course where they've done this. Furthermore, the stroke average for the winners on No. 7 is 3.639 compared to 4.119 for everyone else—representing the largest margin the winners have over the field.

NO DOUBLE BOGEYS

Only one of the last nine winners has made a double or worse. (Phil Mickelson made a double-bogey 5 on No. 16 in 2004.)

BEAR DOWN ON THE HARDEST HOLES

Nos. 1, 4, 5, 6, 10, 12 and 17 have been among the nine hardest holes for the field since 1999. And yet a third or more of the winners have played them in even par for the week, and seven played the opening hole in even par.

MAKE A STRONG TURN

Four times the winner has played the ninth and 10th holes in even par, no doubt a psychological pick-me-up to make the turn in good shape.

GO LOW ON A PAR 5

Five champions have been the most under par on the par-5 second, two on the eighth, four on 13 and three on 15. That's mainly to keep pace with the field—the four par 5s rank among the easiest holes since 1999. *CLIFF SCHROCK*

DID YOU KNOW?

Before 1999, there was little noticeable difference between the height of the fairway grass and the rough, which was $\frac{3}{4}$ of an inch. But that year a "second cut" was grown to $1\frac{1}{2}$ inches and remains today.



TWO HIGH-PRICED OPTIONS FOR GOING

If you really want to go to the Masters, there's always the big-bucks route. Two companies are offering Masters packages that include more than just entry into the event. VIP Sports Marketing, a Chicago-based hospitality company, packages Masters badges with hotel accommodations

and hospitality (food and beverage). One four-person package includes lodging, entry into the Masters for three days (two practice rounds and one tournament round), plus food and beverage. Total cost is \$10,000.

VIP also offers tournament badges a la carte for \$1,500 a person

for each round. "It's a lot to shell out," says Corbett Nichter, who entertained clients of his construction company using VIP's packages last year. "But they did a good job."

In an e-mail to select cardholders, Visa Signature offered a Masters package. For \$13,600 (you have

to charge it to your card), Visa Signature will provide Masters badges for two people Friday through Sunday, three nights at the Ritz-Carlton Lodge at the Reynolds Plantation resort in Greensboro, Ga., meals and alcohol and transportation from the hotel to Augusta. *a.x.*

VIP OFFERS TOURNAMENT BADGES A LA CARTE FOR \$1,500 A PERSON FOR EACH ROUND.