

on **PAR** for **SUCCESS**

WELL, THEY DID IT. THE UNIVERSITY GOLF COURSE, JIMMIE AUSTIN, SNAGGED THE 2009 U.S. AMATEUR PUBLIC LINKS CHAMPIONSHIP. WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR OUR DEAR CITY OF NORMAN? LOTS OF GOLF!

by Sarah Hill

Jimmie Austin OU Golf Club has recently earned some bragging rights. It just nabbed the honor of being the first collegiate golf course ever selected for the U.S. Amateur Public Links Championship. That's right. The United States Golf Association named Jimmie Austin Golf Club in Norman, Oklahoma, as the 2009 host for the prestigious Public Links Championship. The tournament will be held July 13-18, 2009. Although that may seem far away, the buzz and excitement around Jimmie Austin Golf Club is well deserved.

The U.S. Amateur Public Links Championship attracts the nation's top amateur golfers for competition.

"The next Tiger Woods might be playing in Norman," said JP Audas, Associate Vice President for University Development.

If you're not impressed yet, this year's Master's champion, Trevor Immelman, was a Pub Links Champion. So was his final round playing partner, Brandt Snedeker. Other winners include Billy Mayfair, Michelle Wie, Chez Reavie, and OU's Hunter Haas, one year before he turned professional.

"It's a big deal," said Haas.

Winning the Public Links Championship usually means an invitation to compete in Augusta, Georgia, for the next year's Master's Tournament.

The Public Links championship started in 1922 for amateurs with no playing privileges on private courses. Golfers can only participate if they're not a member of a private club. The Public Links Championship is still only held on public golf courses.

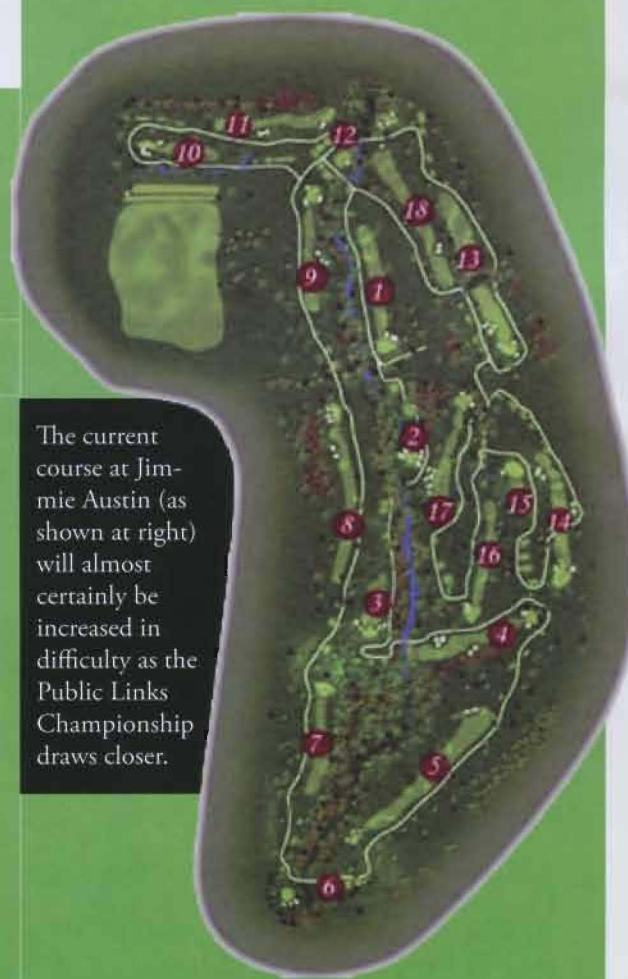
The tournament started with only 140 entrants. It reached a high of 6,300 in 1998, and had 3,629 contestants in 2008.

Criteria for entry are often compared to that of the U.S. Amateur. There is no age limit, and basically anyone who has ever earned a dollar from the golf industry is ineligible. Players must also have a USGA handicap index that doesn't exceed a 4.4.

"They're very similar. The Pub Links is like the younger brother," said Haas.

Like all other USGA championships, the original entrants are reduced by means of qualifying tourna-

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The current course at Jimmie Austin (as shown at right) will almost certainly be increased in difficulty as the Public Links Championship draws closer.

ments. The survivors then play two rounds of stroke play, with the top 64 qualifying for a single-elimination tournament held at match play. All knockout matches are held over 18 holes except for the final, which is held over 36 holes.

The significance of Jimmie Austin landing the part lies with the fact that in the tournament's 83 years, it has never once been held on a public university's golf course.

"It will give us incredible exposure. The people who will play the course will experience not only the golf course, but also the OU campus," said Audas. "The fact is, this is a huge compliment to the course, the university and the city."

The Amateur Public Links is one of thirteen national championships conducted annually by the United States Golf Association, ten of which are strictly for amateurs.

Holding the championship in Norman will automatically put the city on the worldwide golf stage. Norman will host amateurs from all over the nation, and probably all over the world. That's some intense pressure.

"With the golfing community [the way that it is], Norman will be packed. Trust me," said Haas.

Many feel that Jimmie Austin stacks up.

Jimmie Austin was rated the third-best course in the state, including private clubs, which puts it on par with the best courses in the nation. Those are the kind of courses where such prestigious championships like the Pub Links are held.

Past Amateur Public Links Championship hosts include Gold Mountain Golf Club in Bremerton, Washington; Cantigny Golf Club in Wheaton, Ill.; and Murphy Creek Golf Course in Aurora, Colorado. The 2010 host will be the Bryan Park Golf and Conference Center in Greensboro, North Carolina.

Former champion Haas played the course in April.

"Jimmie Austin far outweighed expectations. They've adequately prepared themselves to host a national championship. They've spent numerous amounts of money fixing the course," he said.

Director of Golf Rodney Young was asked why their location was chosen.

"The Oklahoma metro area is a great site with lots of local support. People always support events, whether it's golf, football, or basketball," Young said.

Young also referenced the enormous amount of commitment that went into making this tournament happen.

The tournament expects 156 players. With six days of competition, Jimmie Austin hopes to get a gallery crowd of about 6,000 people. There is not an entry charge to watch the event. However, the championship is costing a pretty penny. The course must raise \$200,000 for enhancements.

"The course will be in championship condition," said Audas. "No doubt we will get the money to make the course more challenging and aesthetically pleasing. They've already done a great job out there with landscape and maintenance."

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The course enhancements will include lengthening and conditioning the course, an improved practice area, a USGA scoreboard and other USGA requirements.

As reported in a press release, a fundraising campaign was launched by the family of the late Jimmie Austin. The family pledged \$100,000 as a challenge grant. This means that OU alumni and friends who donate to the 2009 U.S. Amateur Public Links Campaign between now and March 31, 2009, will have their donation matched by the Austin family.

Speaking on behalf of the family, Jimmie Lynn Austin and former OU Regent Paul D. Austin were quoted, "Our dad was proud of Jimmie Austin OU Golf Club, and he was thrilled when the U.S. Golf Association awarded the 2009 Public Links Championship to OU. The nation's top amateur golfers will come to OU for this event, and we want to make sure they have a first-class experience."

They may have a first-class experience, but it won't be an easy one. Jimmie Austin has a notorious first hole: a 470-yard par 4 into the wind, with a native area and a creek to each side. It is predicted to provide a great starting point for the championship.

The final four holes are mighty as well as impressive. They should determine who is clutch and who isn't. Each hole has its own unique challenges, so it's no wonder this



Hunter Haas (1999)
Fort Worth, Texas
University of Oklahoma
Current Earnings: \$1,258,092



Brandt Snedeker (2003)
Nashville, Tennessee
Vanderbilt University
Current Earnings: \$4,984,594
** Tied for 3rd in 2008
Masters



Trevor Immelman (1998)
Cape Town, South Africa
Current Earnings:
\$13,585,384
** Won 2008 Masters

Notable Past U.S. Amateur Public Links Championship Winners



course was chosen.

"Continuing its longtime support of the course, the Jimmie Austin family has stepped forward again to assist OU in this opportunity to host the nation's top amateur golfers and those who will attend this national competition," OU President David Boren commented.

Beside the Austin family's generous donation, Jimmie Austin Golf Club will hold the "Sooners in the Desert" celebrity golf event in February in hopes of raising money. Oklahoma celebrities will participate in the event, which will take place in California. Bob Stoops has been a past participant.

If that doesn't cover all the expenses, Young says they have already had some commitments from people.

"We have great donors, many people here understand championships," Young said.

Many accommodations will be made in order to make sure the players,

their families and the media receive first-class service.

If you've never been to Jimmie Austin, *Boyd Street* recommends it.

The course was designed by Perry Maxwell and opened in 1951. Renovations by Bob Cupp were completed in 1996.

Named after the OU golfer and two-time U.S. Amateur champion, the Charlie Coe Golf Center is at the south end of the course. It features chipping areas, bunkers and Bent and Bermuda grass putting greens.

After the '96 renovations, the course hosted the '97 NCAA regionals, the '97 Oklahoma Amateur, and the '98 Big 12 Women's Championship. It's been a while since the course has seen some real action. But no one at the clubhouse seems worried.

After talking to the guys over at Jimmie Austin, the enthusiasm for the tournament is overwhelming.

"People are getting excited about it. Although it's many months away, we're beginning to hear some buzz," said Audas.

"We're proud and honored. Everyone really has this great excitement," he added.

What does this mean for the future of Jimmie Austin OU Golf Club?

"To be able to host a tournament like this is great on our resume. It gives us the opportunity to continue to grow," said Young. "Expectations will be higher and maybe our demand from customers, but that's a challenge we look forward to."

Young also hopes the tournament will improve golf's reputation in Norman and attract future events and championships to the course.

"This is a great opportunity to showcase the city," said Young.

Norman city council workers are also pleased to host the event. Past cities have raked in \$150,000 dollars worth of tax revenue during the event.

Overall, the tournament seems to be a win-win situation for everyone. If you're looking to get in, the course is looking for 300+ volunteers for the tourney. For more information on the tournament or ways to get involved, call the Jimmie Austin office at 405-325-6716. If phones aren't for you, as of October 1 you can register as a volunteer online at www.ougolfclub.com.



Alumni Association OU-Texas Weekend 2008

Want to stay downtown for OU/TX Weekend?

Stay at the OU Alumni Association's downtown hotel, the Westin City Center! The OU Alumni Association has a special rate of \$199.00 per night (plus tax) for alumni and friends who would like to stay in downtown Dallas. The Westin City Center is on Pearl Street located next to the DART light rail station for convenient transportation to the game.

To make a reservation, please call (214) 979-9000 and ask for the OU Alumni Association rate or book online at <http://www.starwoodmeeting.com/>.

