

U.S. Open chewed up best golfers

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How difficult is too difficult when it comes to golf courses?

When difficult shamelessly flirts with impossible.

I have never played Olympic Club at San Francisco. I pray I will never have to.

Watching the world's best golfers play the Alcatraz of golf courses was enough to convince me. That, and the fact I could not stuff enough golf balls in my golf bag to get me through the first six holes.

If the rough that makes the place look like a deserted field isn't enough to diminish your golf ball supply, you can always count on those golf ball-eating trees they have guarding the Olympic Club fairways.

The Big O chewed up the world's best golfers and spit them out in the Bay.

Take Tiger Woods for instance. He had two fabulous rounds and I thought: hey, he is back. Really back.

Because if there has ever been a golfer who could take control of a major tournament on Saturday, it was Woods. He called it moving day and for years he would leave the rest of the field in his dust, and Sundays were often his day to rest on the way to the trophy presentation.

But this weekend was rough on Tiger. He shot a 75 and it was good-bye Tiger. Sunday's start ensured Woods would finish out of the big money. Three straight bogeys, a double bogey, a par and another bogey put him six-over after six holes. He finished 3-over for the day, tied for 29th.

This Tiger will never catch Jack Nicklaus for winning majors. He couldn't even beat Memphis golfer Casey Wittenberg Sunday. He used to wipe the floor with Casey Wittenbergs.

Instead of a Tiger coronation, it was Webb Simpson becoming only the third America golfer to win the U. S. Open in the last nine Opens.

Webb Simpson? Sounds more like a country music star's name, no?

Actually he seemed like a most delightful chap, one who attended Wake Forest on an Arnold Palmer scholarship.

Simpson admitted on TV he had never prayed as hard as he did during his final holes, just hoping to get in the clubhouse at 1-over for the week. Let anyone who dared beat that. They would have earned it.

The final pairing of Jim Furyk and Graeme McDowell imploded coming home. Furyk is the model of consistency, a former U.S. Open winner. But his noted nerves of steel melted under the pressure a U.S. Open produces, especially on a course as unforgiving as Olympic. Furyk threw up on his shoes, lost control and began hitting shots a like a 14-handicapper.

Northern Ireland's McDowell followed suit. He is as tough as the Irish Sea.

He also was a former U.S. Open champion trying to repeat. McDowell and Furyk sparred for much of the day until the pressure turned both of them into pieces of wilted lettuce.

While watching the world's best golfers self-destruct, I did latch on to 17-year-old amateur Beau Hossler. What a story. He will be a senior in high school this fall, headed to Texas eventually.

He carries a 4.0 grade point average and for three days, his scores were one shot better than Tiger Woods.

But young Beau has bigger fish to fry. He gets his braces off this week and should have no problem getting a date for the senior prom.

Contact Sports Columnist Joe Biddle at [\[email address\]](#) This e-mail address is being protected from spambots. You need JavaScript enabled to view it .

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