Duffers and pros alike are off and driving, pitching, putting—and praising the developers of the Jimmie Austin University of Oklahoma Golf Course.

Traditionalists devoted to the University of Oklahoma Golf Course on Norman's south campus were promised by OU officials that the long-needed reconstruction and improvements would be a credit to Perry Maxwell's original design. Many were skeptical, even fearful. OU Director of Golf Stan Ball was true to his word, however. When the new course opened in 1996, even the harshest critics cheerfully admitted that this was one of the finest university golf facilities in the nation.

In 1949, when OU President George L. Cross envisioned a University golf course on the former U.S. Navy property south of the campus, he wisely enlisted the services of designer Maxwell, the late Ardmore resident who still ranks among America's greatest golf course architects. The OU Golf Course, one of Maxwell's last design projects, opened in 1951, a tribute to his ability to take the natural beauty of an area and maintain it in a golf course.

More than 40 years of heavy use, lack of an irrigation system and advances in construction methods left the OU course sadly behind the times, spurring the OU Regents to initiate a $4.5 million renovation project, more than half the cost to come from private sources. The Regents turned to Robert E. Cupp, a renowned Atlanta course designer who for many years was associated with Jack Nicklaus. Cupp's concept of offering golfers a different challenge, experience and level of difficulty on each hole meshed nicely with the Maxwell motif of caped bunkers and busy putting surfaces.

The new course bears the name of Jimmie Austin of Seminole, the project's major private contributor. Each of the 18 holes also recognizes its private donor sponsors, as do the bridges, practice range, putting green, entry gate and club house conference room.

Adjacent to the course, two features are under construction that will set this golf facility apart from its collegiate competitors—the Charlie Coe Golf Learning Center and the Practice Complex.

Continued
Each of the 18 holes on the redesigned course is known by name as well as number; each has its own story. "Cross Creek," below, is an example of the challenges awaiting Sooner golfers.

**HOLE FOUR**

"Cross Creek"

Bishop Creek snakes through the middle of this hole, posing a threat for golfers, who must also battle bunkers and hit the ball distances that are downright heroic. All golfers will be challenged to clear the creek on the second shot, particularly if a strong wind deprives them of this hole's only gift - a bit of natural roll in the area where the first shot is expected to fall. Braving the bunkers right of the second landing area beyond the creek offers the best route to the safe haven of the green.

A four-year OU letterman and 1978 business graduate, Stan Ball left a post as head professional at Oak Tree Country Club in Edmond to return to his alma mater as director of golf, lured by the course that is the realization of dreams he had as a collegiate player.

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**Par 5**

- **Competition Tee**: 615 yards
- **Medal Tee**: 573 yards
- **Regular Tee**: 514 yards
- **Forward Tee**: 483 yards

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Best angle to green is from the right.

Bunkers keep second shot honest when wind is not a factor.

The creek will be pivotal.
The indoor-outdoor learning center, named for OU's greatest golfer, will be home to the men's and women's teams, coached by Gregg Grost and Carol Ludvigson. The center's four indoor practice bays—two of which are equipped with state-of-the-art video teaching setups—open onto the outdoor range, allowing practice anytime, even after dark and in inclement weather.

The 22-acre practice complex includes a north-end practice range, suitable for golf classes and public players. On the south end, multi-use hitting areas offer limitless practice opportunities, on a variety of grass types and lengths, for pitching, chipping, putting and full iron shots in all wind conditions.

While the course is already in demand as a tournament site, the practice complex will be used for the OU teams, junior golf camps and state and national clinics for players of all ages.

- Robert E. Cupp, Stan Ball, Robyn Tower, Debbie Copp and Carol J. Burr contributed to this article.

Designer Robert E. Cupp on the University's Golf Course:

"There have been many drastic changes in the construction methods since the University golf course was originally laid out in 1950 by Perry Maxwell. Perry Maxwell was a golf course architect during a period that is referred to as the 'Golden Age of Golf Course Architecture.' He was a very active designer who was credited with more than 70 original designs as well as the remodeling of nearly 50 other golf courses. He was very innovative and actually installed the first grass greens in the state of Oklahoma at Dornick Hills (in Ardmore) in 1923.

"It gives me a great deal of satisfaction knowing that my firm is on the forefront of technology in today's era as Mr. Maxwell was during his. The University golf course is one of the few facilities in Oklahoma to use effluent water as the primary irrigation source. The irrigation system was designed to maximize the use of the effluent water. The control system is totally computerized, which will give the golf course superintendent the ability to control the application rate to the nth degree and aid in producing the finest turf possible.

"The golf course has been planted with a variety of turf grasses. The putting surfaces are a blend of two bent grasses known as Crenshaw and Cato. The roughs are U3 Bermuda grass and the fairways and tees are Midlawn Bermuda grass. The Midlawn is a new variety of Bermuda grass, which was recently developed and has proven to be the most cold tolerant of all the Bermuda grasses. The development of turf grasses has been monumental since the first grass playing surfaces were planted at Dornick Hills.

"The University golf course will be the first course in the United States to plant the primary playing surfaces with Midlawn. No doubt Perry Maxwell would take delight in knowing that the torch of innovation and willingness to experiment is still prevalent in the profession he helped to refine.

"Although turf conditions and aesthetics are important, in my opinion, the true barometer for critiquing a golf course design should be the quality of the shots, not just how well it photographs. After all, the reason golf courses are built is to play the game.

"Of all the rewards I get out of being a golf course architect, watching good players navigating their way around my courses and hearing their comments after the rounds gives me about as much pleasure as any facet of the business. I am confident that on certain days the design of this golf course will tax even the best of players."