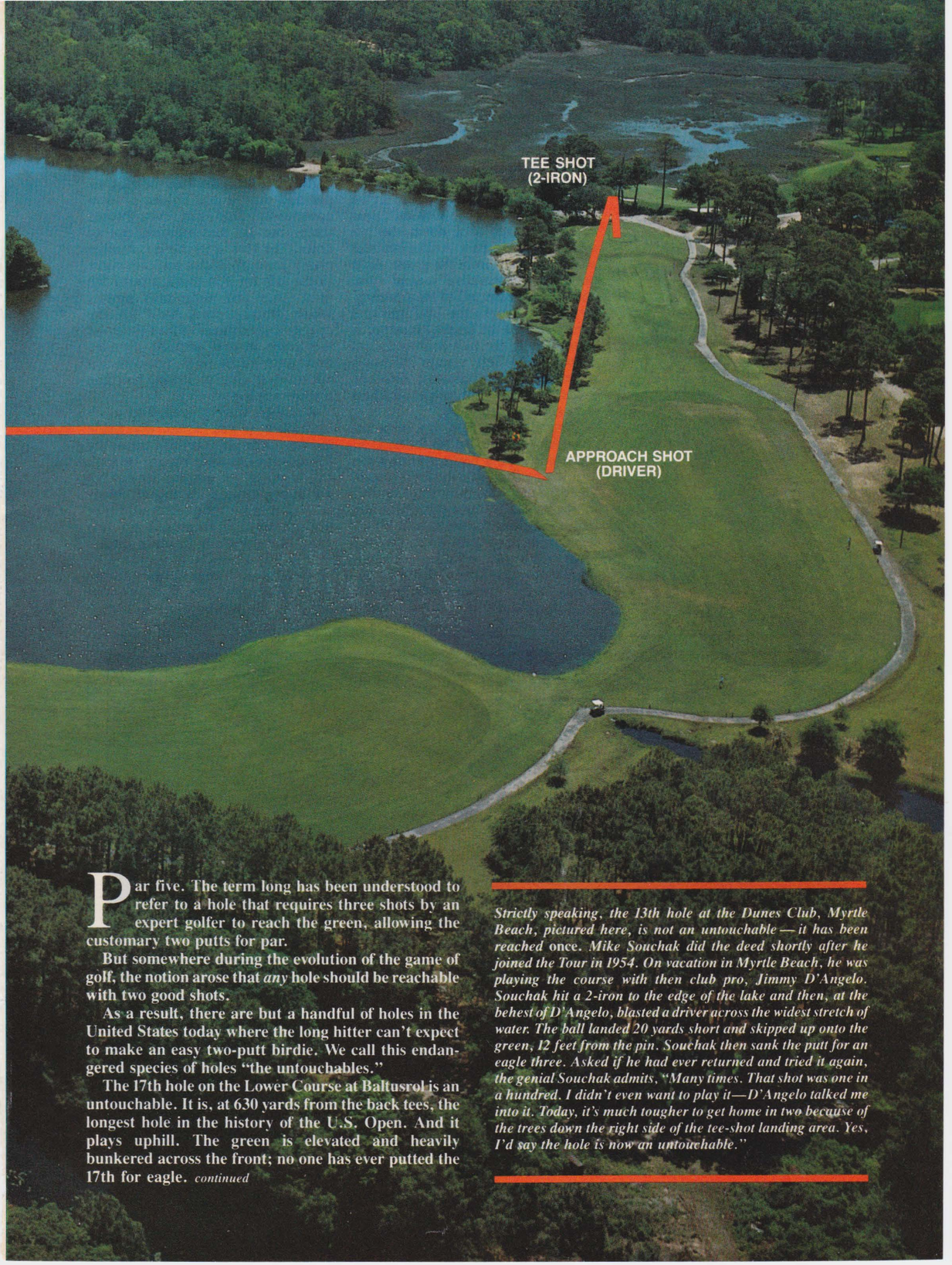
THE UNTOUCHABLES

There are thousands of par-five holes in America, but only a handful have never—never—been hit in two shots

by TOM DOAK



Par five. The term long has been understood to refer to a hole that requires three shots by an expert golfer to reach the green, allowing the customary two putts for par.

But somewhere during the evolution of the game of golf, the notion arose that *any* hole should be reachable with two good shots.

As a result, there are but a handful of holes in the United States today where the long hitter can't expect to make an easy two-putt birdie. We call this endangered species of holes "the untouchables."

The 17th hole on the Lower Course at Baltusrol is an untouchable. It is, at 630 yards from the back tees, the longest hole in the history of the U.S. Open. And it plays uphill. The green is elevated and heavily bunkered across the front; no one has ever putted the 17th for eagle. *continued*

Strictly speaking, the 13th hole at the Dunes Club, Myrtle Beach, pictured here, is not an untouchable — it has been reached once. Mike Souchak did the deed shortly after he joined the Tour in 1954. On vacation in Myrtle Beach, he was playing the course with then club pro, Jimmy D'Angelo. Souchak hit a 2-iron to the edge of the lake and then, at the behest of D'Angelo, blasted a driver across the widest stretch of water. The ball landed 20 yards short and skipped up onto the green, 12 feet from the pin. Souchak then sank the putt for an eagle three. Asked if he had ever returned and tried it again, the genial Souchak admits, "Many times. That shot was one in a hundred. I didn't even want to play it—D'Angelo talked me into it. Today, it's much tougher to get home in two because of the trees down the right side of the tee-shot landing area. Yes, I'd say the hole is now an untouchable."

''I think there is room for these extra long holes but there is also a place for the par five that can be hit in two by a gambling player.''
—Arnold Palmer

On the third day of the 1980 U.S. Open, Jack Nicklaus came to the 17th with a two-shot lead over playing partner Isao Aoki. Nicklaus had bogeyed the previous two holes and was anxious to pick up a stroke on the shorter hitter. The Golden Bear crushed his tee shot down the left side, 50 yards past Aoki, but still some 300 yards from the green. Aoki played a conservative second shot, and Nicklaus elected to hit a fairway wood. He caught the ball thin and barely cleared the fairway bunkers in front of him, the ball coming to rest deep in the left rough. Nicklaus scrambled to save par while Aoki one putted for birdie and caught Nicklaus with another bird at 18.

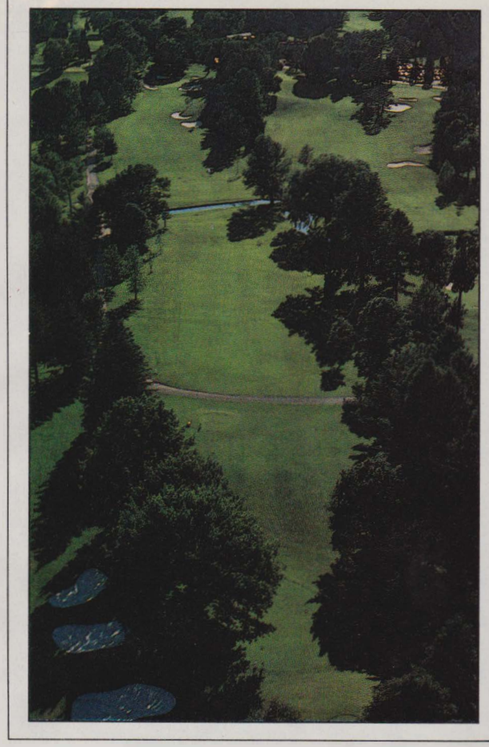
Ironically, the next day Nicklaus came back and sealed his fourth U.S. Open title with a birdie on this same 17th hole. But Aoki had proven on that third day what most amateurs fail to realize—the ''untouchable'' can be the equalizer for the shorter hitter. It is the one par five on which the long hitter cannot gain a stroke by pounding out two good shots. On the contrary, his killer instinct may actually work against him if he tries to overpower the hole.

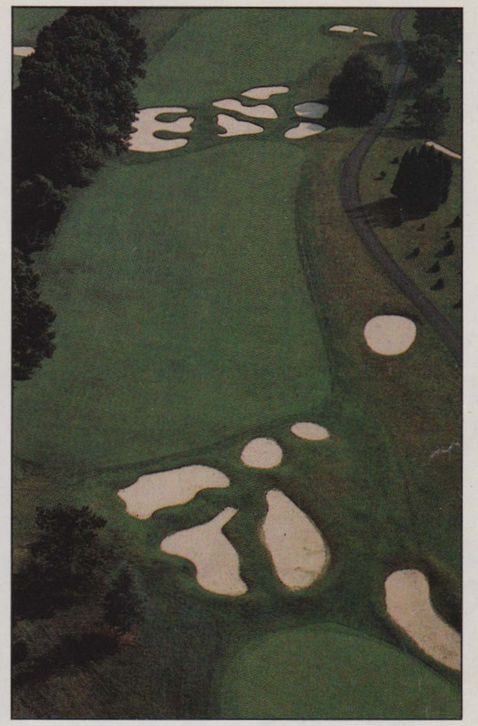
Billy Casper put this knowledge to good use in the 1966 U.S. Open at San Francisco's Olympic Club. Coming to the 16th in the final round, Casper had cut Arnold Palmer's once-commanding lead from seven shots to three, but he was running out of holes. The 16th at Olympic is another classic untouchable: a constant curve to the left for 604 yards around the thick pine and eucalyptus jungle, which frames every hole on the course. Bobby Jones in his heyday hit this green in two, playing over the tops of the young trees, but now that left side will yield to nothing less than a perfect drive.

Although Casper needed to make up strokes, it was Palmer who made the desperate play, driving down the left side into the deep rough. He took two shots to get out and he put his fourth into a greenside bunker. Palmer later called it ''the finest six I ever made,'' as Casper picked up two more shots with a flawless birdie.

A 617-yard double dogleg to the right, the seventh hole at Butler National (below) is one of two untouchables on that course.







This was the pivotal hole, as Casper went on to defeat Palmer in a playoff.

Still, Palmer does not reject the idea of an untouchable, nor does Nicklaus.

Arnie claims he likes the idea of a pure three-shot hole from time to time. ''It tends to give the medium hitter a more equal shot at making birdie,'' he says, adding that he attempts to balance the par fives on the courses he designs.

''I think there is room in golf for these ultra long holes, but there also is a place for the par five, that can be hit in two by a gambling player. So when we are forced to build a shortish par five we raise the element of risk accordingly.''

Tom Weiskopf goes so far as to claim that every golf course with four par fives should have at least one hole that is unreachable in two shots by anybody.

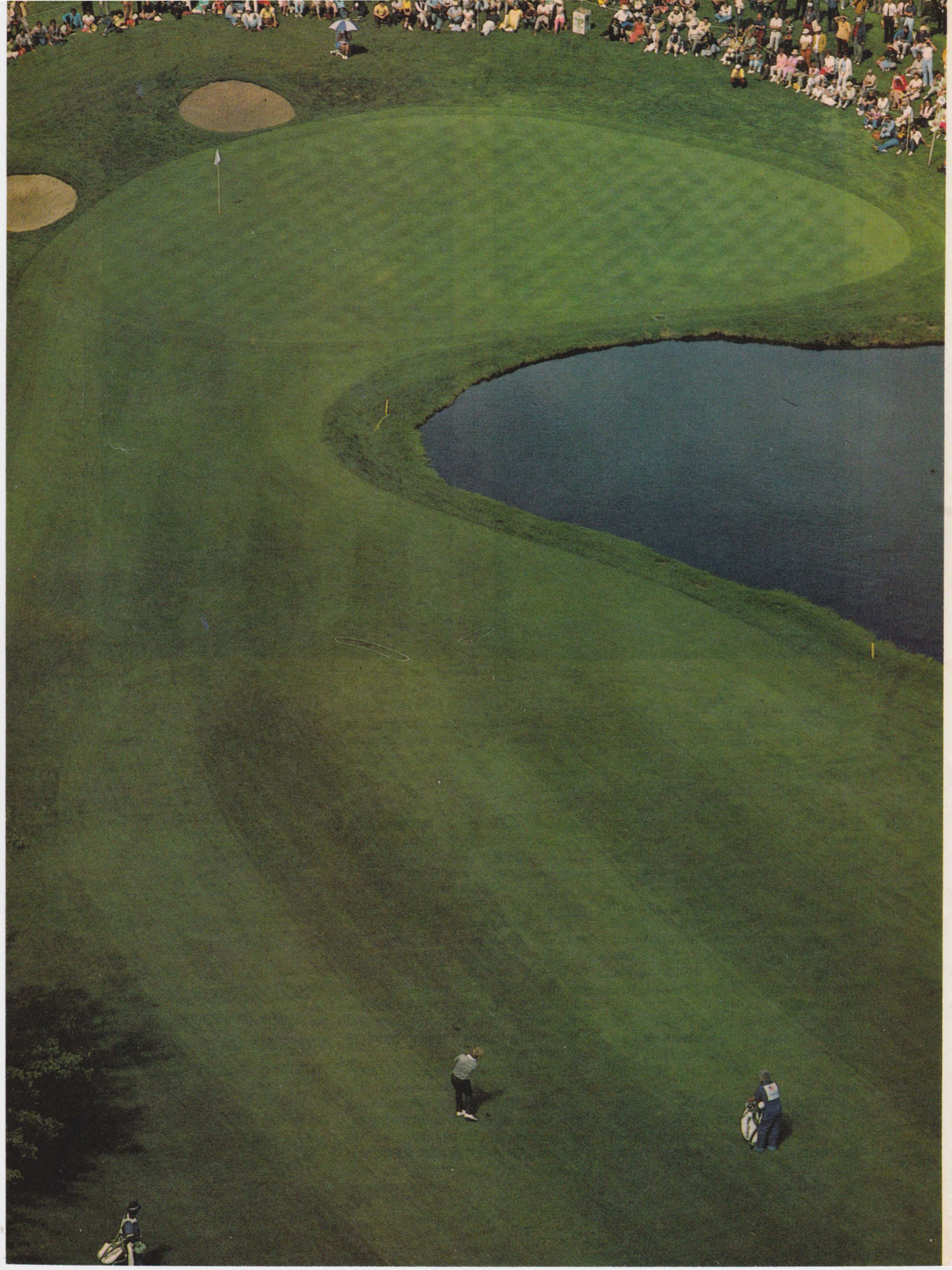
Nicklaus is not quite as adamant. As Bob Cupp, senior designer in the Nicklaus architectural firm, claims, the existing land and terrain is the determining factor as far as Jack is concerned. ''He will go along with an unreachable par five if that is the type of hole which fits the land,'' says Cupp, alluding to a hole of this type Jack recently designed for the Highlands Course in Scottsdale, Arizona. ''The 17th hole will be 630-650 yards from the back tees. But we don't make that type of hole for the sake of having an 'untouchable.' In fact the way it is planned at present, the ladies' tees will be 130 yards in front. You must take the average golfer and women into account when building any course.''

Perhaps no man is more of a threat to the untouchables than Evan ''Big Cat'' Williams, twice a national long drive champion and a fine player. Williams claims he has never seen a par five that under decent conditions was absolutely unreachable in two.

continued

The 13th at Rochester's Oak Hill is 596 yards, uphill, with the fairway narrowing near the green. The first man to reach the 17th at Baltusrol (right) must carry two sets of bunkers with his second shot.

''With today's 280-yard driving averages, a 500-yard par five has been made a mockery of by the pros. The holes have to measure better than 600 yards.''
—Robert Trent Jones



Strong words, but Williams can back them up. Williams claims he has been over the green in two on Baltusrol's 17th, but readily admits the hole was playing at ''only'' 580 yards that day. ''The Cat'' was in the front bunker in two, on Olympic's 16th, the only time he played the hole. And holes such as the 13th at Rochester's Oak Hill course—596 yards, uphill—somehow present less of a challenge if you can fly your drive over the stream that crosses the fairway 290 yards from the tee.

Williams thinks the ''most untouchable'' hole he has played is the fourth on the Monster course at the Concord resort in Kiamesha Lake, New York—615 yards, with an uphill tee shot. A pond on the left and dense woods on the right discourage the long hitter from letting it fly off the tee. Yet without crunching the driver, there's very little chance of carrying the water hazard and greenside bunker, which come into play on the second shot.

Pete Dye, who designed Harbour Town and the Tournament Players Club, agrees with Williams' brash statement. ''It's impossible to build a completely unreachable par five. I don't care how long you build a hole, under certain conditions it becomes reachable,'' he contends.

''For my part, I don't think I've ever built a 600-yard hole; even the 15th at Harbour Town was meant to be reachable. But the trees along the left side have grown to the extent that now it's virtually impossible to hit in two.''

Basically, though, Dye's theory is similar to Palmer's. Dye wants the good player to have to think a few times before pulling out a 3-wood and whaling away. ''I don't want them going for the green all the time, but I don't want them laying up consistently either,'' he notes.

''If I am building four par fives on a given course, I'll attempt to have two that are reachable given two excellent shots and two where it may not be worth the gamble. And I move my tees accordingly, so that players of every level have the opportunity to go for a couple of par fives, if they can hit two precise shots.''

Another hole that requires the type of thought, which Dye speaks of, is the seventh at Butler National, home of the Western Open. A 617-yard, double-dogleg to the right, with a creek all along the right, from tee to green, and dense woods to discourage shortcuts, this hole has even the longest hitters on the PGA Tour playing defensively. One novel approach recently advanced was to hit two one-irons, and then a 6-iron into the green, indicating that there are as many methods of attack as there are players. Many of these same Tour pros, however, consider this type of hole as some sort of insult to their masculinity, the standard criticism being that ''any idiot could build such a hole.''

In fact, two fine, strong young PGA Tour pros, such as Curtis Strange and Wayne Levi, recognize these untouchables as a false mask of good design.

''I don't care how you build a hole, under certain conditions it becomes reachable.'' —Pete Dye

''I think on many of the courses the Tour plays, we are moving away from the par-five hole which affords the gambling player an opportunity to go for the green, something like the 13th at Augusta,'' says Strange, who admittedly would like to see the layouts offer more opportunity for shotmaking and course management with less of a premium placed on length. ''More thinking and club selection than just having to go out there and bust your tail to get home on a par four,'' he adds implying the latter is an evolutionary trend in golf course design.

Levi claims he doesn't mind the unreachable par fives, but that some of the courses the PGA Tour plays, may have holes that are just downright unreasonable.

''If you can get to the green with a wedge for your third shot, I think it is all right, at least fair. I don't like those holes where you have to hit a full 7 or 8-iron approach shot.''

So GOLF MAGAZINE asked members of the American Society of Golf Course Architects to describe the qualities of fair yet untouchable par fives.

First of all, as Nicklaus states, the ''untouchable'' should be built only on land suited to it. Furthermore, there should be some type of severe natural hazard in front of the green to force those players attempting to reach the green in two to do so on pure carry; there also should be a hazard behind the green, penalizing the long, errant shots equally. The green should be fairly small and well contoured to reward the player who gets closer to the green on his second shot with a bit easier pitch. And there should be no one lay-up area for the third shot, because it would cheapen the value of the first two shots.

According to GOLF MAGAZINE's playing editor Ken Venturi, too many divot holes concentrated in a small area constitute a sure sign of weakness. Since the approach shot will be relatively short, it allows the architect some freedom in designing the green for a running shot or a tricky short pitch.

The hole mentioned as the ultimate most often by the architects was the 14th at Pebble Beach, a 565-yard dogleg right, which should play an important role in next month's U.S. Open. The key to this hole lies in the two-tiered green, with the higher left-hand side guarded by a deep bunker in front, encouraging the player to favor the right side with his second shot, where he must flirt with out-of-bounds and a sentinel of Monterey pines. There were two trees at one point but during one Crosby Clambake, Arnold Palmer, going for the green in two, caromed a couple of shots off one of the trees. The tree blew down in a storm that night.

It must be noted, however, that under ideal conditions the 14th at Pebble Beach is reachable; Venturi hit the green in two en route to his Crosby triumph in 1960. Certainly, he had a gale wind with him as evidenced by the fact that on the 110-yard seventh, which plays the opposite direction, Venturi needed a 3-iron.

An ''untouchable'' also must fit the flow of the course. For example, a layout should not have three 500-yard par fives, then a 600-yard monster. It would simply be out of place. The accepted formula usually is to vary the lengths of the par fives so that every level of player has a chance to hit one of them with two good shots and almost no one can reach the longest one.

continued

The monster 16th hole at the Firestone Country Club South course has been hit only once in the last 18 World Series.

A classic example of this is the Harbour Town course, where Dye built three par fives, each progressively more difficult. The second, 490 yards, is reachable in two; the fifth, 520 yards, is less so; and the 15th, at 560 yards, is virtually untouchable. The hole is straightaway for two long shots, with the green set off to the left behind a large lake.

A pine tree at the lake's edge threatens the third-shot approach and virtually stymies any attempt to reach the green in two. To top it off, the green is one of the smallest anywhere, having been designed using the precision iron game of Nicklaus, who helped Dye design Harbour Town, as a standard.

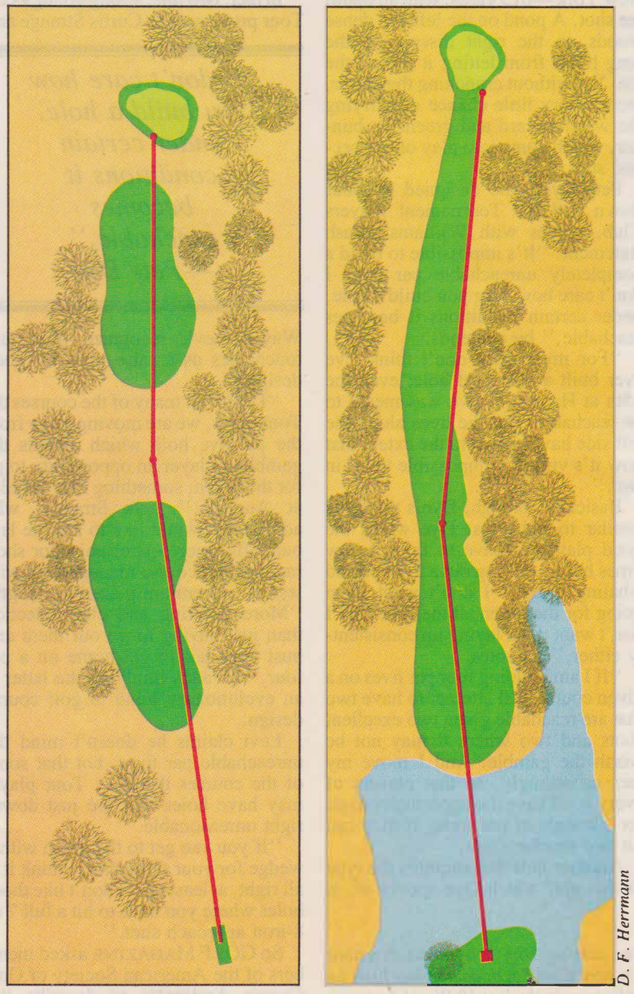
While Dye includes in his repertoire a few nearly untouchable holes, such as the third at Oak Tree in Edmond, Oklahoma, where a seven-foot deep pot bunker cut into the front of the green discourages most players from gambling, and the ninth at the new Tournament Players Club, Nicklaus rarely builds a hole that is not reachable with two perfect shots. In fact, after Harbour Town was completed, Nicklaus went out in practice and hit the 15th in two, as if to prove a point. Tom Watson is the only player to accomplish the feat during the Heritage Classic. But from the middle tees (470 yards), however, the hole is more easily reachable—former baseball player Chuck Hinton made a double eagle there last year with a drive and 8-iron!

Another famous, almost untouchable, hole is the 16th on the South course at Firestone. At 625 yards, it has always been one of the longest holes on the Tour. Since it runs downhill, however, the pros maintain it can be hit in two, despite the pond that fronts the green. The fact is that no pro had hit the green in two between 1963 (when Arnold Palmer and Bobby Nichols did it) and last year's World Series, when Tom Kite, one of the Tour's shorter hitters, smashed a 3-wood to the left of the pond and watched it run up the slight embankment to the putting surface. The shot brought Kite almost as much recognition as heading the money list, and certainly, it was a victory for shorter hitters everywhere.

Another long par five that has received extensive publicity is the diabolical 13th at the Dunes in Myrtle Beach, South Carolina, a Robert Trent Jones creation. This hole, which half encircles alligator-filled

PINE VALLEY: THE ULTIMATE UNTOUCHABLES

The Pine Valley Golf Club in Clementon, New Jersey, boasts not one but two untouchables, the seventh and the 15th. The 585-yard seventh epitomizes the entire course—mistakes are penalized severely. The landing area for the drive ends abruptly some 285 yards from the tee, dropping off into a terrifying expanse of sand and poverty grass know affectionately as Hell's Half Acre. The second shot must carry this hazard and land on still another island of fairway; the third shot, too, must be well struck to hold the island green 20 yards beyond the last patch of fairway. The only person known to have threatened the green in two is Jack Nicklaus, who hit his drive into Hell's Half Acre, then pummeled his second shot into the bank short of the green (below, left). The 15th hole is 603 yards, the first 175 over water and the rest decidedly uphill. Near the green the fairway narrows and banks right, shrugging approaches toward sand and scrub. George Fazio came closest to this one, leaving his second shot a ball's width off the green (below, right). □



D. F. Herrmann

Singleton Lake, bends through a 110-degree dogleg, tempting the long hitter to play his tee shot along the edge of the lake and try to carry the lake with his second. The prospect of succeeding is unlikely, and Mike Souchak gained immortality when he became the only player to hit the green in two. Ironically, he accomplished this feat using a 2-iron off the tee, coming dangerously close to the lake, and then crushing a driver across the water. The ball still had to run quite a distance to reach the green.

Trent Jones, who designed this hole has five holes listed among our "untouchables." And he is quick to defend his position of preference for the basic theory of what a par five should be: "A hole that requires a driver, a brassie (2-wood) and a niblick (short-iron) or slightly longer club. In other words a true three-shot hole."

Trent Jones points out that the basis for the phenomenal scores today can be traced directly to reachable par fives. "When Floyd tied the record at Augusta, he was 15 under par on the 16 par fives he played," Jones states.

"With today's 280-yard driving averages, a 500-yard par five has been made a mockery of by the pros. The holes have to measure better than 600 yards. Still, I have no objection to doing this, and it can be accomplished without punishing the lesser golfer, through the use of tees 100 yards long or more."

The cruelest trick an architect could inflict on the golfing public would be to place an untouchable at the start or finish of a round, and two courses have gained immortality for just this. Probably the most difficult opening hole in golf is the first at Spyglass Hill, another Trent Jones monster, which measures 600 yards from the back tee and no less than 570 from the middle. A perfect drive can result in tremendous roll, giving the golfer fleeting thoughts of going for the green in two. The putting surface, though, is almost surrounded by a broad expanse of sand, and someone most likely would have assailed this hole as being unfair long ago if it were not also one of the most thrilling walks in all of golf.

And there could be no more controversial or arduous finishing hole anywhere than the 18th on the Yale Golf Course, which has ruthlessly finished off generations of Ivy League golfers. Legend has it that Charles Blair Macdonald, the architect, simply ran out of inspiration after 17 holes and headed straight back to the clubhouse with the 18th; unfortunately for the golfer, in-between were 583 yards of Connecticut woodland, an alpine pass and a small mountain. Macdonald cleverly located the landing area, approximately 20 yards wide, for the tee shot within the pass and then allowed for the option of playing the second shot around, to the top of, or over the mountain and toward the green. Since all these landing areas are blind, it is easy to sympathize with the unfortunate golfer who lost nine balls on the hole. Still, it must be stated there are no water hazards and only two bunkers near the green. Fortunately, according to Yale golf director Dave Patterson, the hole is not a total loss—it has received unanimous praise from cross-country skiers.

Maybe it is exactly this type of design that has influenced the team of George and Tom Fazio to virtually exclude the "untouchable" from their design philosophy. "Length doesn't make a great golf hole," states George, claiming that the 15th at Pine Valley is the only super-long hole he would place in the great category.

"Even there, I once put my second shot half on the green. Of course, I had a 35 mph wind behind me and the fairways weren't watered at the time," he states, before adding that "Sonny Frazier, a top amateur of days gone by, knocked it over the green with a driver and 4-wood."

Fazio does admit to a pair of "untouchables" on the Butler National layout, but is quick to point out that this course was designed and built more as a championship test than a golf course for all levels of players.

So, although it's true that we have thoroughly researched the great untouchables, it is just as factual that we could not hope to have included them all. If you know a good "untouchable," we would like to hear about it. If you are intent, however, on preserving its reputation as an untouchable, a word of warning: Don't invite Evan Williams for a friendly round. Or Tom Kite. □

Tom Doak is a student at Cornell University where his major is golf course architecture.

21 CERTIFIED UNTOUCHABLES*

COURSE	LOCATION	HOLE	YARDS
Baltusrol GC (Lower)	Springfield, N.J.	17	630
Butler National GC	Oak Brook, Ill.	7	617
		15	585
Canterbury GC	Cleveland, Ohio	16	605
Concord Hotel GC (Monster)	Kiamesha Lake, N.Y.	4	615
Essex CC	Manchester, Mass.	3	620
Industry Hills GC (Eisenhower)	City of Industry, Cal.	18	650
Medinah CC (No. 3)	Medinah, Ill.	7	599
Oak Hill CC (East)	Rochester, N.Y.	13	596
Oak Tree GC	Edmond, Okla.	3	584
Olympic Club (Lakeside)	San Francisco, Cal.	16	604
Pine Tree GC	Boynton Beach, Fla.	16	616
Riviera CC	Los Angeles, Cal.	17	613
Pine Valley GC	Clementon, N.J.	7	585
		15	603
St. Louis CC	St. Louis, Mo.	13	571
The Golf Club	New Albany, Ohio	14	618
Tidewater CC	Trenton, Maine	18	620
Tournament Players Club	Ponte Vedra, Fla.	9	582
Wee Burn CC	Darien, Conn.	6	588
Yale University GC	New Haven, Conn.	18	583

**As far as we at GOLF Magazine know, no golfer has ever reached these holes at these distances in two shots.*

"The Untouchables"

What's Inside/George Peper

"The Untouchables": It makes a snappy title for a book. Just ask our Contributing Editor, Oscar Fraley, who happens to be the author of *the* "The Untouchables."

But "The Untouchables" isn't a bad title for a golf article either when the subject is par-five holes that no man has ever reached in two shots.

The idea grew out of a chance encounter several years ago with Evan "Big Cat" Williams, twice the national long drive champion. For some reason, Evan and I, both residents of the New York metropolitan area, had wandered to Tequesta, Fla., on the same day and had simultaneously arrived at the then-new Jupiter Hills GC course, in search of a game.

Host professional, George Fazio, kindly introduced us and sent us off together in a car.

Williams' name rang a bell, but I couldn't place him until I saw his first tee shot, or I should say, watched his first tee shot fly until I could no longer see it. That day, on one of the finest courses in America, Williams hit his drives pin-high on four par-four holes, reached all the par fives in two shots and hit a 205-yard par-three with an 8-iron, all *en route* to a score of one or two over par. I have never seen a golf ball hit as long and hard as he hit it that day, and I am sure I never will.

Two moments stand out in my memory. One came at the first hole, which we played as our 10th. On the elevated tee of that 505-yard par five, I hit first and nailed the ball as squarely as I ever have.

"Evan," I said, "I can't hit it any better than that."

The Big Cat smiled, said something kind and then blistered his ball several subway stops past mine. Visibly pleased, he said, "That's got to be one of my best, too. Why don't we step 'em off."

Moments later we had the numbers. My drive measured 276 yards, Williams' was 364. For my "approach" I sliced a 2-iron into the trees next to the green. Evan feathered a pitching wedge to four feet.

The other happening was also on a par five, the 17th, which is a slight dogleg left, also from an elevated tee. The hole measures 520 yards as mortals play it, but when Evan stepped to his tee shot on that hole, he turned to me and said, "Mr. Fazio told me just to aim this one straight at the green."

Now the green on this hole was barely visible over the tops of the trees, about 420 yards as the crow flies, though no sensible crow would dare cross the terrain in question.

Nonetheless, Big Cat stepped to the ball and lined up as directed. Now Fazio and a couple of his club members had walked out to witness this launch, stationing themselves at the crook of the dogleg about 250 yards out. I still remember watching them crane their necks as they followed the flight of the Cat's drive, the way tennis spectators follow a high lob to the baseline.

To the best of our knowledge, no one has ever hit any of these 21 monsters in two shots, at least not from the championship yardages

The ball finally returned to earth about 50 yards short of the green. Fazio still raves about the shot. "He hit that ball at least 320 yards on the fly. No one has ever cleared those trees—not Nicklaus, not Weiskopf—no one."

In the Jupiter Hills tap room later that day, Williams made a strong claim. "You know," he said, "I don't think there's a par-five hole in the world that, under the right conditions, I can't reach in two."

Well, Evan, we may have found a few. On pages 52-59 GOLF MAGAZINE presents the first-ever list of America's untouchable par fives. The list was assembled and the article written by a young man named Tom Doak, a 20-year-old student who is following in the footsteps of Robert Trent Jones, majoring in golf course architecture at Cornell University. Doak, who has done research projects for us in the past, warmed to the assignment we gave him over a year ago and went in to the research full-bore, contacting dozens of golf course architects, local and regional golf associations and state and regional sections of the PGA of America. To each organization and individual he asked the same question: "Do you know of any par fives that have never been reached in two shots?"

Early this year he returned to our New York office with a list of 24 "certified untouchables," plus another list of holes, such as the famous 13th at Myrtle Beach, the 16th at Firestone CC and the 15th at Harbour Town, which have been reached but only on rare occasions.

Taking the list of 24, our editorial staff went to the phones for some double and triple checking. Associate Editor Nick Mastroni learned that the 603-yard 12th at Oakmont had been hit by both Nicklaus *and* Weiskopf, Senior Editor Lew Fishman discovered that the 600-yard first hole at Spyglass Hill had also been reached a couple of times and yours truly learned from Bob Benning, the head professional at Congressional CC, that their 599-yard ninth hole had been hit during practice rounds for the 1976 PGA, although "never in actual competition." So the list dwindled to the final 21 on page 59.

To the best of our knowledge, no one has ever hit any one of these monsters in two shots, at least not from the championship yardages we've listed.

Still, we may have missed a gorilla or two, so if you know of someone who has hit one of our magic 21, please let us hear about him. Also despite our attempt to be comprehensive, we've undoubtedly left out a certified untouchable here or there. If you think you have one, tell us where it's located. We'll pass the word on to the Big Cat and anyone else who may want to put it to the test. □