

## PHILADELPHIA SECTION PGA HISTORY

# George Fazio Posted Outstanding Record in the U.S. Open

By Peter C. Trenham

Golfers here know that Jim Furyk won the U.S. Open last year, and most have read about Johnny McDermott winning it in 1911 and 1912, but many may not be aware of the late George Fazio and his Open record. With the exception of McDermott and Furyk, Fazio has the best Open record among the homegrown Philadelphia area professionals.

Fazio was born in Norristown in 1912 and learned to play golf as a caddie at the Plymouth Country Club. He had an outstanding playing record, winning the Canadian Open in 1946. In spite of the interruption for World War II, Fazio played in 14 U.S. Opens, 14 PGA Championships, the Masters seven times, and he won the Philadelphia Open five times.

The high point of his career may have been in the 1950 U.S. Open at Merion Golf Club, when he missed becoming the Open champion by one stroke. Fazio played the first two rounds in 145. That left him six strokes out of the lead, and there were 18 players between him and the leader, Dutch Harrison. The next day, Fazio was the first player off the tee for Saturday's double round, and he posted a 72-70 with a 33 on the last nine. As the day wore on, his 287 kept looking better as one big name after another left the last green with higher scores. Later in the day, Lloyd Mangrum struggled in with a 76 to tie Fazio, and then Ben Hogan also finished at 287 as he bogied three of the last seven holes. In Sunday's 18-hole playoff, Hogan shot a solid 69 to beat Mangrum by four strokes and Fazio by six.

Fazio went on to challenge for the title in two more Opens. At Dallas in 1952, Fazio trailed by two strokes at the halfway point before finishing fifth, and at Oakmont in 1953, he tied for fourth as again

he was two strokes out of the lead after 36-holes.

Along with playing tournament golf, Fazio tried all phases of the golf professional business. He was a head pro, an assistant pro, leased golf courses, managed the city of Philadelphia's driving ranges, and on two occasions he was the playing pro at Pine Valley Golf Club. In the 1950s and early '60s he had a Ford automobile agency in Conshohocken that William Clay Ford had set up for him.

In 1960, knowing he was no longer able to compete at the top of tournament golf, he decided to go into the business of designing and building golf courses. He heard Bob Hays, coach of the University of Pennsylvania golf team, was going to build a golf course west of Phoenixville. Fazio hired an aerial photographer to take pictures of Hays's property. He then taped the photos together and laid them out on his dining room floor. He covered the photos with tracing paper and spent most of the night designing a course for the property. The next day he called Hays and told him he was going to build his golf course. Hays told Fazio that his group already had an architect, but Fazio insisted he was going to do the work. Hays agreed to meet with Fazio, and when he saw the drawings, which were all framed, he agreed to hire Fazio.

With the financial backing of William "Bill" Elliott, the chairman and CEO of the Philadelphia Life Insurance Company, Fazio designed and constructed what would be his first of many golf courses, the Kimberton Golf Club. Construction took one year, and the course opened for

business in May of 1962.

With the backing of Elliott, Fazio then constructed the Moselem Springs Golf Club and the Waynesborough Country Club in the next three years. He went on to design sixty-four courses and redesign twenty more in a career that didn't begin until he was in his late 40s. Nine of the courses he created were in the Philadelphia Section.

Several of his courses quickly made *Golf Digest's* list of "America's 100 Greatest Golf Courses." A number of Fazio's courses and ones he redesigned hosted national championships and PGA Tour events. He was hired to make changes on courses for the major championships, which included the Masters in 1972, six U.S. Open courses and the U.S. Women's Open in 1968.

Even though Fazio was a great player, he gained more fame through his design work than his playing record. Of all his great course designs, his pride and joy was the Jupiter Hills Club in Florida, which opened in 1970. The club was owned by Elliott, Ford, Bob Hope and some other investors from Philadelphia. Fazio moved to Jupiter Hills and spent most of the remainder of his career tinkering with Jupiter Hills when he wasn't designing golf courses with Tom Fazio and Jim Fazio, his nephews. ↗

*This monthly column contains excerpts from the history of the Philadelphia Section of the PGA written by Peter C. Trenham, a past president of the Section. Trenham served 29 years as the head professional at St. Davids Golf Club and currently is the Director of Golf at Reading Country Club. The history can be found on the Philadelphia Section PGA's Web site: [phillypga.com](http://phillypga.com).*



**GEORGE FAZIO**