

**1950 U.S. Open**  
**Merion Golf Club**  
**June 8, 9, 10**

Merion Golf Club and their golf professional **Fred Austin** hosted the 50th U.S. Open in the second week of June. It had been eleven years since the tournament had been in the Section. There were twelve Section members in the starting field. **Sam Byrd**, who had worked at Merion as the playing assistant for four years in the early 40s, was in the field. On the eve of the tournament the USGA decided to increase the purse from \$10,000 to \$14,900. Lee Mackey, Jr., a protégée of **Sam Byrd** from Birmingham, Alabama, opened with a six-under-par 64 that was a tournament record. Former Philadelphia Country Club assistant **Jimmy McHale** had set the previous record in the third round of the at St. Louis in 1947. Mackey had grown up just ten blocks from **Byrd** in Birmingham, Alabama. He said that he hadn't gotten anywhere in golf until **Byrd** started helping him with his game. He had worked for **Byrd** as an assistant in Detroit three years before. The course measured 6,694 yards. **George Fazio**, who had grown up caddying at the Plymouth Country Club, was the first player off the tee on Saturday for the last 36 holes. **Fazio** and Mercantville's **Al Besselink** were paired together in the 8 a.m starting time. At that time the lowest scores didn't always tee off first. **Besselink** stood at 143 and **Fazio** was at 145, which was well below the cut score of 149. **Fazio** shot a 72 in the morning and came back with a 70 in the afternoon round. **Fazio's** 287 total held up for quite awhile but when everyone was in he was in a three-way playoff with Hershey Country Club professional **Ben Hogan** (287) and Lloyd Mangrum (287). After starting with a 72 and a 69, **Hogan** shot 72-74 on Saturday for his 289. Hogan's legs were still in such bad shape from the automobile accident sixteen months before it seemed like he might not finish. Hogan said that the most tiring part was getting over and under the gallery ropes. The spectators were still allowed in the fairways at that time. Mangrum with a third round 69 was the only player to break par in either round on Saturday. **Dutch Harrison**, who had been the head professional at the West Shore CC and the CC of York, just missed the playoff as he ended up alone in fourth place with a 288, winning \$800. **Joe Kirkwood, Jr.**, who had been an assistant to his father at Huntingdon Valley CC, was next at 289, winning \$500 for his tie for fifth. Upper Darby's **Skee Riegel** (294), who had just turned pro after an illustrious amateur career, had a chance but a third round 79 put an end to that. **Riegel** and **Besselink** (294) finished in a tie for 12<sup>th</sup>, seven strokes off the pace. They each won \$133.34. In Sunday's 18-hole playoff **Hogan** fired a 69 for a comfortable margin of victory. Mangrum (73) was in contention until the 16<sup>th</sup> hole when he was penalized two strokes for lifting his ball on the green. He had marked and lifted his ball while the others putted and then replaced it to putt. As he prepared to putt he saw a bug on the ball and lifted it again to remove the bug. Because the rules did not permit a player to clean the golf ball he was assessed a two-stroke penalty. He holed the 12-foot putt. On the 17<sup>th</sup> hole **Hogan** holed a fifty-foot putt for a birdie to go four strokes ahead and clinch the playoff. First prize was \$4,000 and for the first time every professional who returned a score for the 72 holes received a check. **Fazio** (75) won \$1,000 for his third place finish. Many times the two losers in a three-man playoff would split the money but that was not the case at that U.S. Open. After 36 holes the field had been cut to the low 50 and ties. **Ted Kroll** (297), an assistant at Philmont CC the previous year, Tully-Secane CC professional **Henry Williams, Jr.** (298), DuPont CC professional **Terl Johnson** (300) and Newark, Delaware touring professional **Dave Douglas** (301) made the cut and received the minimum checks of \$100. All those who finished below 17<sup>th</sup> place won \$100 each. Ashbourne CC professional **Clarence Ehresman**, Manufacturers G&CC professional **Bud Lewis**, Cedarbrook CC professional **Jerry Barber**, Cool Creek CC professional **Mike Rooney** and Cobb's Creek GC's **Howard Wheeler**, who won the Negro national championship six times, missed the cut.

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