

1990 U.S. Senior Open

You have to hit it right to left off the tee and high in the air to these small greens. That's the way they built these old golf courses – right to left, trees and small greens. God, this one is beautiful! – Lee Trevino

You've got to play this golf course the way it dictates. You can't play an attacking game or you'll start making bogies, hitting it in the rough. You've got to be patient. I'd really love to play this course from the back tees. – Jack Nicklaus

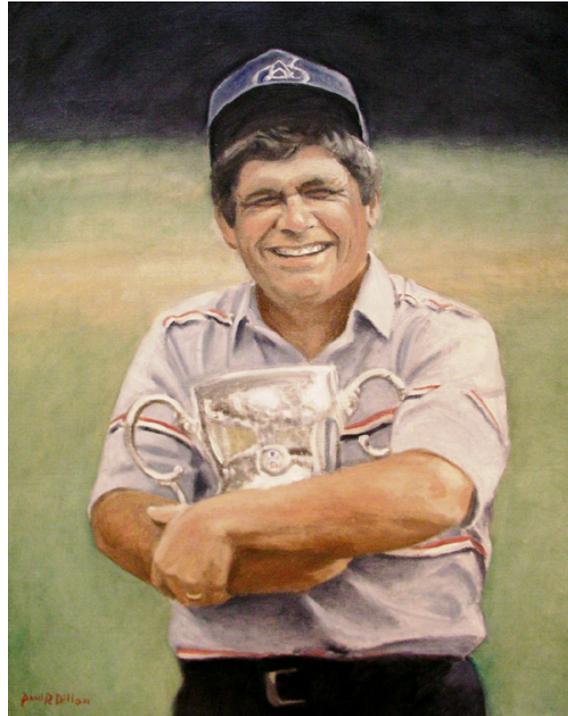
This is one of the best U.S. Open courses I've ever played. You couldn't find better fairways. It's a very straightforward course. – Gary Player

The par 4s here are harder than most we play. On many holes we won't hit drivers. 3-woods or 2-irons 40 to 50 percent of the time. – Arnold Palmer

In 1986, with the club's Centennial year looming on the horizon, then board member Ted Price suggested at a meeting of the board that the club host a major tournament as a central part of the festivities. Bill Adams suggested that the USGA's Senior Open made sense for Ridgewood. So a letter was drafted, signed by club president Fred Thompson, and sent to Frank Hannigan and P. J. Boatright of the USGA, who accepted the proposal enthusiastically. The Eleventh U.S. Senior Open would come to Ridgewood.

At the time, few if any of the members foresaw the impact of that decision – for 1990 was the year Jack Nicklaus and Lee Trevino would become eligible for the Senior Tour, golf's traveling museum. The 1990 Senior Open promised to be a reunion of the “Big Four” of a previous generation, with Arnold Palmer, age sixty, and Gary Player, a youthful fifty-four, likely to join Nicklaus and Trevino – and numerous other golfing legends, as well.

In fact the 1990 Senior Open would prove to be the premier golf event of the season, attracting international media coverage and approximately 110,000 spectators during the week, including some 25,000 on each of the last two days. It fulfilled its promise in every way possible.



Lee Trevino - 1990 U.S. Senior Open Champion



Arnold Palmer

On Tuesday evening, June 26, the club's Centennial celebration reached an apex at the Byron Nelson Gala Dinner held at the Park Ridge Marriott Hotel. Approximately seven hundred Ridgewood members, guests, and staff were joined by Nicklaus, Trevino, Palmer, Bobby Nichols, Chi Chi Rodriguez, Walter Zembriski, Charles Coody, Al Geiberger, USGA executive director David Fay, and Miller Barber, to date the only three-time Senior Open winner. Sportscaster Jack Whitaker was master of ceremonies, as guests at the dais paid tribute to the evening's special guest of honor, Byron Nelson, who had graciously accepted the role of honorary chairman of the tournament. He was presented an honorary membership in the club, and a replica of the bronze plaque in his honor

is now displayed in the garden outside the Grille.

Senior Open week (June 25–July 1) consisted of three days of practice rounds followed by the four days of tournament play. A field of 156 gathered to contest the issue, including forty amateurs. The Center and West Nines were used for the tournament, set up to play to a par of 72 at 6,697 yards, 3,275 out and 3,422 in. The greens “stimped” at about 10, and the rough was cut at 3 inches, but was not cut during the week. The 1990 Club of the Year Award.

Opening day belonged to Trevino, but not until after a handful of 68s (John Paul Cain, Ken Still, Walter Zembriski, Jim Dent and Charles Coody) gave him something to shoot at. Lee fired a 67, highlighted by a string of five consecutive birdies starting at the eighth hole. (As he walked off the twelfth green after his fifth birdie, an unthinking spectator encouraged him, “C’mon, Lee, get hot!”) Nicklaus, on the other hand, did not play his best, but salvaged a 71 thanks in part to a streak of consecutive birdies at eleven, twelve, and thirteen.

Trevino came right back Friday morning with a 68 but the field kept pace. Dent added a 68 of his own, but the story of the day was Gary Player, who birdied the first seven holes to vault back into contention. Player carded a 65 for the day after his first nine 30, and moved to within five strokes of Trevino, as did Nicklaus with a 69 built on three back-nine birdies. Arnold Palmer was not as fortunate – his 74-80 failed to make the cut.



Runner-up Jack Nicklaus congratulates Lee Trevino

Saturday proved to be a golf gallery’s dream. While Trevino spun his wheels with a so-so 73, Nicklaus (67) and Player (68) charged. When Trevino bogied the home hole, Nicklaus had the lead, and Player as a playing partner for Sunday. Trevino would play once again with Jim Dent, who had kept pace in spite of a fifteen-stitch cut on his right index finger. Miller Barber and Don Bies also carded 67s, which put them into contention just behind the leaders.

Saturday’s dream almost turned into Sunday’s nightmare, however. Following a week of perfect weather, Sunday dawned sunny, but a severe thunderstorm hit the area shortly after the leaders teed off in the afternoon. The shower, and the one-hour delay that resulted, cooled off his pursuers, but not Lee Trevino. After putting his approach on the lip of the cup at the tenth hole, he found himself with a three-shot lead. Only Nicklaus could muster a challenge, but Trevino matched him birdie for birdie down the stretch.

A bogey on the long par 5 seventeenth hole, the result of a misplayed pitch to the green caused by a problem with his eyes, thwarted Nicklaus’ bid. Ironically, he had mastered Ridgewood’s par 5s throughout the tournament, playing them in 9 under par. In the end, Trevino’s final 67 gave him a two-stroke margin at 275, 13 under par. His prize was \$90,000; Nicklaus won \$45,000.

The best round of the final day belonged to Chi Chi Rodriguez (66), who entertained the galleries throughout the week with his trademark antics and banter. Chi Chi’s strong finish allowed him to tie Player and Mike Hill for third place, at 281. Player’s 65 on Friday was the low score of the tournament, and established a record for Center-West. The three most difficult holes proved to be 3 Center, 5 West and 9 West.