



# FRIGHT TO THE FINISH

If the last PGA at Atlanta Athletic Club was any indication, the par-4 18th will leave the field quaking in its spikes

ILLUSTRATION BY *Carlos Alcantarilla*



**HOME STRETCH** The approach to 18 requires a knee-knocking carry over water.

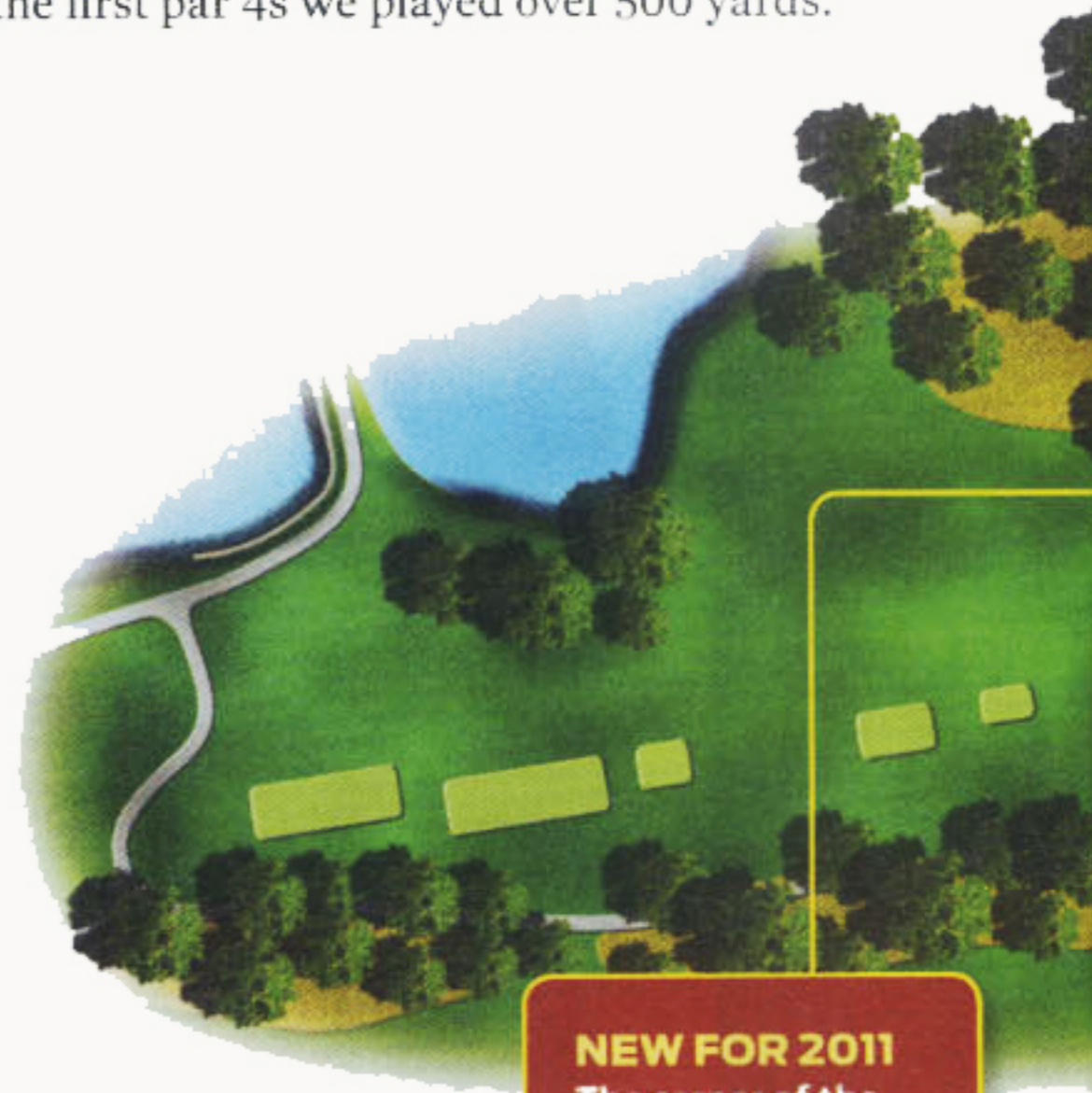
**W**hoever prevails at this year's PGA Championship won't likely do it with a birdie on the 72nd hole. Atlanta Athletic Club's closer is a long, watery backbreaker that produced 172 bogeys or worse at the 2001 PGA (against just 43 birdies) and played a cruel 0.398 strokes over par. "If you think a 510-yard par 4, all carry over water, is hard, then, yeah, it's a hard hole," says Stewart Cink, who lives 10 miles from the club and finished tied for 59th here in the '01 PGA. Hard, but not hard enough. As part of a 2006 Rees Jones redesign of the Highlands course, in which Jones rebuilt every tee, bunker and green—and added 273 yards—he left his fingerprints all over the home hole. Here's a look at those changes, plus some advice from the pros on how to keep this beast at bay.

18th

par 4  
507 yards

## The Tee Shot

With water left of the landing zone and bunkers right, a slight draw around the corner of this dogleg left is the ideal play. The landing zone is some 30 yards wide, but with all the danger flanking the fairway, it can feel a lot narrower from the tee. Players can't afford to lay off the gas, either. "You've got to get it out there pretty far to go over the water on your second shot," says David Toms, who won the PGA here in 2001. "It's all you want. I think it was one of the first par 4s we played over 500 yards."



**NEW FOR 2011**  
The corner of the pond has been stretched toward the tee by 15 to 18 yards, making an intimidating drive more imposing still.

## The Long Story

"The last time we played there they called it 490, but they covered up the yardage markers on the tee with sod," Cink says. "I played there not too long after and they'd uncovered them and it was 520. When you added it up in your yardage book, all of it added up to 520. A little trickery. No one wants to break the barrier of that kind of length when you're not at altitude or anything. It's extremely demanding."

## The Approach

Finding the fairway off the tee is paramount because most players will face an approach of 200 yards or more—all carry. Needing a par on the 72nd hole to win the '01 PGA, Toms pushed his tee shot into the right rough, leaving him with a gut-wrenching decision. "I had 215 or so to the green and I decided to lay up with a pitching wedge," Toms recalls. "Then I hit a full 60-degree sand wedge to 12 feet and made the putt (*photo*). It's normally a par 5 for member play. So they're laying up trying to make birdie, and I laid up and tried to make par. I played the hole well that week, which was probably one reason I won."

**NEW FOR 2011**  
Jones added a new bunker on the right side of the second landing zone. For players who find a bad lie and are forced to lay up, it's just one more hazard to sweat.



BRANT SANDER IN ATLANTA JOURNAL-CONSTITUTION/AP

**SAFETY FIRST**  
Toms decided to lay up, which proved the prudent play.

## NEW FOR 2011

The front-left greenside bunker was removed and replaced by a new back-right bunker, and the left greenside bunker was lowered and reshaped. Jones also expanded the front section of the green to allow for a front pin position that will be fun for fans, but frightening for players.

**PATE ACCOMPLI**  
Pate's win at the 1976 U.S. Open was his first and only major victory.



MIKE TUDAN/CORBIS

## Gut Check

With a one-shot lead in the final round of the 1976 U.S. Open, 22-year-old Jerry Pate also pushed his drive into the right rough. His lie was much better than Toms' (it was perched on top of the grass) and his approach much shorter (he had about 190 yards left), but with a major on the line the pressure was no less intense. Pate wanted to hit 4-iron, but his caddie suggested he take one less because of the adrenalin coursing through Pate's veins. So with dusk settling in, Pate pulled 5-iron from his bag and stuck it to two feet. Birdie. Game over.



MIKE YOUNG

The 18th at Oakland Hills South.

## BITTER ENDS

Atlanta AC's 18th is one tough closer, but not the toughest. Here, among all the majors since 1995, are the five finishing holes (all par 4s) that played the hardest in relation to par:

Major	Site	Scoring Avg
2008 PGA	Oakland Hills (South)	4.661
2007 British Open	Carnoustie	4.611
2007 U.S. Open	Oakmont	4.602
1996 U.S. Open	Oakland Hills (South)	4.535
2010 PGA	Whistling Straits (Straits)	4.515

Source: PGA Tour ShotLink