

# 18-Hole Showtime

## Duke Golf Course To Put Years Of Progress On Display

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Dumpy Hagler smiles when he talks about the first day he saw the completed Duke University Golf Course.

"We'd worked toward this goal for some time," Hagler said. "I retired from coaching football in 1956 and then the course opened in 1957. And I was right in the middle of it all that time and was really thrilled the first time I saw it finished. It was something."

Hagler's dream of building a Duke golf course were realized on Sept. 23, 1957 when the course was opened to the public. That dream was shared by famed former Duke football coach Wallace Wade.

"Coach Wade was quite enthusiastic about golf himself," Hagler said of his football coach at Alabama. "He was very instrumental in getting the land set aside for the golf course and getting the money for it."

Duke will be on show this summer when it plays host to two of the top amateur golf tournaments in the area. The 12th annual Durham Amateur tournament will be played this weekend at Duke, and the 39th annual Herald-Sun Papers Golf Tournament returns there July 1-7.

The 76-year-old Hagler, pinned with the nickname Dumpy by a Nashville sports writer because of his 5-foot-8, 170-pound build, became the Blue Devils' golf coach in 1933 and coached the team until retirement in 1973. That's not bad for somebody who didn't take up golf until he was 21 and shot 112 the first time he played.

Hagler coached 18 Southern and Atlantic Coast Conference championship teams and top individuals such as Mike Souchak, Art Wall and Dick Siderowf. Most of those teams played their matches and practice rounds at Hope Valley Country Club.

The Duke course was originally planned for construction before World War II by Perry Maxwell, who did some design work at Hope Valley. The first plan laid the course out beside what is now Highway 751 and back near the present 10th tee—in the vicinity of the Duke Faculty Club. But when the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor, the plan was put on hold by Wade.

At the conclusion of the war, the plans resurfaced. Beginning in 1954, famed course designer Robert Trent Jones—"We chose him because he was one of the best designers in the whole world," Hagler said—

was picked to build the course.

"Those were solid woods back then," Hagler said of the area beside 751. "Jones would come in and leave a tree here and there. The workers would want to cut them down. But he knew what he wanted in the back of his mind."

Jones built the 6,879-yard, par-71 course straight out into the woods toward Cornwallis Road and back toward the clubhouse, which sits on a knoll overlooking the driving range, putting green, first and 10th tees and ninth and 18th greens.

Right off the bat, Duke was labeled one of the top university courses in the nation. The 1962 NCAA Golf Championships was the first major event. Houston won the team title and the Cougars' Kermit Zarley outdueled teammate Homero Blancas for the individual title.

"We tightened the fairways and let the rough grow up," said Hagler, who took over head professional duties when the course opened. "So, the course was definitely in tip-top shape."

The shape of the course has been the topic of debate over the last decade, however. Nobody argues whether Duke is one of the tougher layouts, but most say the course's upkeep doesn't mesh with its design.

At the 1980 Durham Amateur, a few area golfers petitioned the sponsoring Friendly City Sertoma Club to move the tournament to a better site because of the course's poor condition.

"When I came here, the fairways were about 90 percent crabgrass, and the greens had crow's feet all over them," said Duke head pro Rod Myers, who came from Ohio State in 1973. "Our golf course was just not ready for play. But it's better, a lot better, now."

The big problem then, according to Hagler and Myers, was a lack of funds and bad timing.

Myers said Duke Golf Course has a budget of about \$180,000, which he said is about average. Last year, athletic director Tom Butters budgeted an extra \$250,000 for work on the course, for additions such as cart paths, new bridges and rocks in the creeks to alleviate erosion problems. The money also allowed course superintendent Lester Richard to increase his manpower, start a weed-control program and experiment with the greens. The greens have a solid stand of bentgrass now, and most of the scraggly patches through the green are in non-playing areas.

Myers said for most of the Amateurs, the growing



(Herald File Photo)

Hagler At Duke Course In 1973