



Angus Mahoney (second from right) with US Amateur champion Nick Flanagan (second from left)

Brisbane's Angus Mahoney has been based at the Oakmont Country Club for the past seven months as part of the Ohio intern program, during which time he has shared a joke with Arnold Palmer and witnessed young Australian Nick Flanagan make golfing history.

Opened in 1903, Oakmont has hosted seven US Opens and four US Amateurs. This year is its centenary and in August hosted the 103rd US Amateur, its 16th major. I was placed with three other interns, two from England and one from New Zealand.

Boss at Oakmont is John Zimmers, who was much younger than I expected. Considering the pressure he is under, John is a great superintendent and had a wealth of experience to share, having worked with some of America's finest.

From my first day, it was all go. We started straight into an aeration program, two weeks of 12-hour days. Everything was precise and we used Ryan hand corers with quad tines. After doing that twice, we hand-broomed the sand into the holes.

We then scarified greens with Mataway hand scarifiers. At the same time the fairways were cored and deep-tined. Tees and approaches were also done using this method.

The course officially opened in late April, so everything was geared towards that and the US Amateur. In the lead up to the tournament we carried out a lot of tree trimming and removal.

Seeding work was also a high priority. The bunkers, too, were all levelled and depths checked. We fly-mowed all 200

bunkers every week and rotary mowed the backsides down to the flats so the rough units didn't leave wheel marks.

During the two weeks of the US Amateur we did our standard 80 hours plus 126 hours overtime. Our days started at 3:45am and we started mowing when there was just enough light to see the lines. All up, there were 100 workers during the US Amateur, 40 from Oakmont and 60 volunteers.

I'm not allowed to discuss green speeds but the USGA told us to slow them down! All I can say is they exceeded 13.5'. Greens were triple cut and double rolled, double cut and single rolled in the afternoon.

Fairways were cut twice a day, while the approaches, tees and intermediate rough were cut once a day. At one stage we cut greens five times and rolled three times in a 12-hour period.

I went out to watch Aussie Nick Flanagan play and was lucky enough to meet him on the practice green on Saturday. I brought along my lucky mascot, "Priscilla" a blow-up kangaroo draped with an Aussie flag, to give him a boost. Nick was really surprised to hear that I was working there.

Nick won the title after beating American Casey Whittenberg on the first hole of a sudden-death playoff. Considering how

difficult the course was set up, Nick is a true champion. To become the first foreigner in 100 years to win the tournament was phenomenal, and I am proud to say that I was a part of history that week.

The week before, Arnold Palmer, a former winner of the US Amateur, came to play the course. One of the caddies found me and dragged me over to have a chat with the legend. It was such a highlight talking to such a modest man. He made fun of my accent, but I laughed it off and told him the girls over there loved it!

I had no idea when I first signed up for the program that I would meet so many people and be involved at such a high level. It's intense and you need to be fully committed.

Don't ask for a tournament course unless you are willing to give it your all. The program may give you the opportunity to step foot on some of the world's best golf courses, but once you are there it is up to you to keep Australia's good reputation alive.

Anything is possible in America. You just have to make sure you work damn hard to achieve it." – Angus Mahoney 🏌️

Footnote: Since writing this, Angus has departed Oakmont and is now based in Florida.