

As perhaps the most successful golf course architect in the U.S. today, Tom Fazio has established his reputation by reshaping massive amounts of earth into natural-looking, playable golf holes. We open with a Fazio hole that is natural-looking and playable. But it wasn't reshaped from the earth. It was there to begin with, which reveals another side of the artistry of Fazio.

The 13th at Oklahoma State University's Karsten Creek Golf Course makes a good opening hole for our exercise. It plays straightaway to a flat fairway, then uphill to a gentle green. It has just one bunker, on the right edge of the fairway. Water off the tee shouldn't come into play (unless you play from the back tee and can't carry it 180 yards.) The green allows the shot to be run up and onto the surface.

This is a relaxing hole. From the regular and forward tees, you can hit a smooth driver. You don't have to jump on it. But take more club than you think on the second shot, for the green sits about 30 feet above the level of the landing area in the fairway. There's little trouble around the green, which is deep enough that overclubbing isn't a problem.

It's the kind of hole you'd want to open a round on every course. Straightforward, a bit taxing, but not overwhelming.