

U.S. Open Championship 2017

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Diana Murphy

Stuart Francis

John Bodenhamer

Mike Davis

Press Conference

DIANA MURPHY: Good morning. And most importantly, welcome to the 117th U.S. Open Championship. We're so proud to be here and to introduce Erin Hills in the heartland of America, to the world with, of course, your help.

We welcome the best golfers in the world to play the ultimate test of golf this week, and Wisconsin's fans, volunteers and community could not be nicer in welcoming us. So we're thrilled to be here.

To all of you from Wisconsin, thank you. Your pride and enthusiasm is infectious, and we look forward to sharing this moment with all of you this week.

We started the U.S. Open journey in 2010 for all the right reasons. The golf course is a championship venue that will make history. And we also want to say thank you to its owner Andy Ziegler and congratulations.

As stewards of golf working to make the game more accessible, we should never be afraid to chart a new course and to support public golf courses all across America. We think we have a real show stopper at Erin Hills.

The players who provide us with this year's story, including two third generation players that are continuing a family legacy of championship golfers, Tyson Alexander and Davis Love, IV. Tyson's grandfather, Skip, played in six U.S. Opens, his brother, Buddy, won the U.S. Amateur and played in two U.S. Opens. It's time for Tyson to add to the history of that family album.

And then we all know everyone will be watching Drew Love as his father stands beside him at his first U.S. Open. Davis has been in 23 U.S. Opens and Drew's grandfather, Davis, Junior, has also played in seven U.S. Opens. What a wonderful story. We know Drew was certainly in good hands this week.



Greeting them and the rest of the field to the first tee this week will be our new honorary starter, Bob Ford. Bob is our 2017 Bob Jones Award winner whom we honored last night and he certainly embodies all that's wonderful in this game of golf, sportsmanship, respect, and character.

He will be our first starter for as long as he so chooses, so I hope you have a chance to welcome him. He's joined on the 10th tee on Thursday and Friday by Dr. Skip Gist, who is a five-year veteran and just recently retired from the executive committee and a very proud New Westerner.

Most importantly it gives me great pride to thank all of you for telling our story, you've been doing a terrific job thus far, and I know you're as anxious as we are to get the first ball in the air.

So with that, I'd like to introduce Stu Francis who will talk more about the field this week. Thank you.

STUART FRANCIS: Thank you, Diana, and good morning everyone. We had more than 9400 entries received from players around the world. We have a truly global field at this year's U.S. Open. It includes 11 past U.S. Open champions, 26 past USGA champions overall and three reigning USGA champions, Dustin Johnson, obviously our current U.S. Open champion, the Senior Open champion, Gene Sauers, and Stewart Hagestad, who won the USGA Mid-Amateur Championship at the end of last year.

Building on our tradition, 21 players advanced through both local and sectional qualifying to earn a spot in this year's field. We conducted qualifying at over 120 sites around the world, so we truly gave everyone who wanted to try to qualify the opportunity to do so.

We've had tremendous support from the state and regional golf associations in conducting the local and sectional qualifiers, and without their help and support, frankly, it would be very difficult to conduct a championship on this scale. And we're totally grateful for what they do for us.

As Diana mentioned there are some great human interest stories. We're thrilled to have two Wisconsin natives in the field, Steve Stricker, who engendered



huge crowds and Jordan Niebrugge. We welcome them into the field and are thrilled to have them.

There are some great stories from the qualifying rounds and if you just hung around the practice range or putting green you could hear one. Derek Barron, he's from Walla Walla, Washington, he's chasing his dream of the U.S. Open Championship while taking a week off from his job at a local driving range up in Washington. If you've got game, you can play in the U.S. Open, if you qualify.

We also have 14 amateurs in the championship, that's our third largest group ever. It includes Brad Dalke, our U.S. Amateur runner-up, making his first Open appearance.

The players range in age from 18 years old to 55 years old, and every one of them has the chance to win the coveted U.S. Open trophy. We look forward to watching them play, and the fans are ready to cheer them on. It's amazing to watch the stream of people rolling in today and yesterday, and the tournament and the championship hadn't started yet. We start at a par 5. We end on a par 5. And there's a lot of golf in between. So we hope everybody enjoys it.

Thank you, I'll now turn the floor over to Mike Davis, whom you all know, and he'll talk about course setup. He's a veteran of the U.S. Open.

MIKE DAVIS: Many of you have been here for a few days, but nonetheless, welcome on behalf of the USGA.

We are excited about this site. And I guess to start out let me talk a little about the site. We have gotten over the last few years a lot of questions, and certainly in the last several weeks of why Erin Hills. Why a new golf course? And why not a tree-lined golf course with really narrow fairways?

So let me talk a little about the philosophy. It all starts with -- in terms of where we go for U.S. Opens -- the golf course first. Yes, the operations need to work. Yes, we want to move it around the United States but at the end of it it really is about the quality of the golf course. And that's quality in terms of architecture of it, but it's also how do you test the world's best players. And we really do believe Erin Hills meets all of the criteria. But you know what's so nice about our wonderful game of golf, unlike other sports, is that beyond you can play for a lifetime, is the fact that our playing fields, the arenas, relative to other sports, really mean a lot.

So Erin Hills is much different than Oakmont. It's much different than Shinnecock Hills next year. Much

different than Augusta National. It's much different than where a British Open course would be. And we should celebrate that.

When we were looking at Erin Hills we looked at what would the test of golf be. And first and foremost I will tell you it started with this piece of land. I can remember the first journey here in the summer of 2004. When you walk this course right now you -- essentially, that's what you saw back there. When they literally mowed out the quarters, before it was ever a golf course, you could walk that and I would say virtually every single person in this room could see a great golf course. You could see plenty of space between holes for operations, for grandstands.

And one of the most important things I would say, and we're going to see it, we've seen it already, and we're going to continue to see it this week, is that it's a wonderfully draining piece of property. We had a couple of inches of rain Monday night into Tuesday Morning. And by Tuesday afternoon, it's not as if it was firm, but it drained beautifully. And given the somewhat ominous forecast we've got for the next few days, that is really important. It's something that we factor into where we choose. But yet we have the by-products of it being a big site and handling the operation. By-product of being back in middle America for the first time since 2003. The by-product of being in Wisconsin for the first time. But it really is about this golf course.

And the other thing I will say is we've had questions about why a new golf course two out of three years. Here's how I put it, we really want to celebrate the great golf courses in the United States. We want to be true. We want to celebrate the historic golf courses. But every now and again we want to come back to -- we want to go to a relatively new golf course. And it just happened two and three years. But we think it's a good test. It's a different kind of test. But nonetheless, we internally talk about not the toughest test of golf, but what we talk about time and time again is how do we make this really the ultimate test in golf, where we're testing every part of the shot making. We're testing their course setup skills. We're testing their ability to handle their nerves, their physical abilities. Clearly the ability to walk 18 holes here, you've got to be physically fit to do it. There's a lot of up-and-downs to this marvelous piece of property.

So that's what we really get into it. And for those who love those historic courses, get ready, because you've got a decade of it coming, with Shinnecock Hills next year and then Pebble Beach then Winged Foot and then Torrey Pines then the country club up in Boston, then the Los Angeles Country Club, Pinehurst, Oakmont, Shinnecock, in a few months we're going to name another tried and true. By the time we get past

that, you'll be asking questions of where are the new courses. But you've got some of the old dandies coming.

In terms of the characteristics, many of you have been around the course so far. You've heard about what players have been saying, so I won't spend a lot. But it does, again, start with the land. It is a very rolling piece of property. It's very natural. It's wind swept. Wind does, when they built this course, designed it, it was designed with wind in mind. So the corridors are wider here. I'm not sure I have the exact data, but roughly -- 50 percent is wider than a typical U.S. Open. And you'll see that, by the way, next year at Shinnecock Hills, which is another windy golf course, that we're giving the players more space to play. But we think that's appropriate.

The putting greens here are in beautiful condition. They are predominantly all A4 bentgrass, which is a hybrid bentgrass. They are rather subtle in nature. About medium size for U.S. Open golf courses, but they're so good quality-wise that we really do expect, relatively speaking, more putts to be made this week than some U.S. Opens.

You'll see around another fairly unique thing for a U.S. Open around all 18 greens you'll see closely mown area instead of high rough. You saw that at Pinehurst, you'll see some of that at Shinnecock Hills next year. That doesn't necessarily mean it's going to be easier. It's just a different type of recovery shot. It brings in possibly putting from off the green or hitting a bump-and-run or a pitch shot. So it's exciting. And in some cases where they falls off it gets the ball further away from the greens.

Bunkers are going to be certainly a part of this week. To listen to the three architects, and by the way, I know they either have or will have a press conference, but you will hear them talk about bunkers. They purposely wanted these bunkers to be penal. The concept was, I heard Ron Whitten say bunkers are supposed to be a hazard and we designed them as such.

You will see in these bunkers, not only small nooks and crannies and crevices, but you'll also find more tilt to these things to where you oftentimes do not have a level lie in a bunker. And it's a marvelous sand in these bunkers, very angular sand, and it doesn't wash away with big rains, which is a beautiful thing given our forecast. I think those certainly will be a story.

I mentioned fairways. Very rolling, but the other aspect of this, which is interesting, is that because this is such a rolling piece of land, you have more hidden shots, more blind shots, semi-blind shots. When I've gone through my mind 14 of the 18 holes somehow, some

way, have some element of blindness to them, where you really have to understand where you're hitting. You have to understand the ground you're hitting to. And even for these wonderful players that can play at this high level, they have to commit to their shot, too. So I think that's an element.

And then the last thing is the rough. And that's always been a part of U.S. Opens. It's been interesting the last few days hearing all the comments and speculations about the fescue grass. But let me make a few comments to maybe clear a few things up, if I could.

First of all, we had the U.S. Amateur in 2011, that's an August event. You saw a very browned-out rough fescue that played beautifully. They were thin and wispy, exactly like you'd like to see fine fescue. While there was some penalty to it, you got in there, you found your ball.

Based on most years in June when we came here, we expected it to be a much greener fescue, which is exactly what you have. But what you do have this year which we didn't see in other Junes is a real thick fescue. And simply put it was because it was one of the rainiest springs and early summers that Wisconsin has ever had.

Literally from the time Jeff Hall and I arrived here and John Bodenhamer, maybe 9, 10 days ago, I shouldn't say we, but the grounds staff has been baling hay. They could feed a lot of cattle with all the fescue that's been harvested. And we continue to do that.

And I think the way you should think about it would be every single year at a U.S. Open we are altering the rough right up to the end. That could be the mow patterns, the height, it could depend how much moisture is in the ground or how dry it is. So that's a standard operating procedure for every single Open I've ever been involved with, maybe with the exception of Pinehurst No. 2 that really doesn't have grass for the roughs, although I will even tell you there that we did some work in the native areas to make sure those played properly, too.

So the other day we got, as I said, almost -- I think I said -- almost two inches of rain Monday night. We were sitting Monday afternoon at our daily 2:30 meeting with the grounds staff, Zach Reineking, who is the superintendent, suggested that us that, hey, guys, if it rains as hard as they're saying, you're going to start to see some of this fescue, particularly the fescue that's in closer to the fairways, it's a chewing fescue, red fescue, versus further out it gets to be the hard fescue, the sheep fescue. And we all decided Monday afternoon that if it rained that hard and it laid down we

were going to take care of it and mow it down, and get to four or five inches like the mown rough. That's exactly what we did.

I guess I would just leave you with this, we are very, very pleased with the corridors, as I mentioned. They are wider corridors than normal but they need to be so given the fact that it's a windy site. It's a rolling site. And you'll see. But the penalty for hitting in the rough, there's always been -- you go back to 1895 for the first U.S. Open at Newport Country Club, it's been part of the test of golf.

In terms of the set up this year, it's a par-72. It's the first time we've had a par-72 since 1992 at Pebble Beach, when after that, the second hole at Pebble Beach was converted to a par-4. And I say that because on the scorecard I think it reads 7700 and change. And what I would tell you there is if you're comparing apples to apples and it was a par-70, take roughly 400 yards or so off.

And so this will not necessarily be an overly long U.S. Open. You see it on the scorecard and you'll say, oh, my god, how long it is. But having said that, this golf course delivers -- allows for wonderful flexibility. So I know when Jeff Hall and I -- Jeff, stand up for a moment, just so they know who you are. Jeff really has been engaged with me very closely for many years on the setup. But when Jeff and I sit down, and certainly Stu Francis, our chair of championship committee and John Bodenhamer, we may alter that 150, 200 yards, 150, 200 yards less. But we never look at total yard, we look at how each hole is going to play. We look at how firm conditions are and wind conditions and so on.

The forecast for the week, we are very likely to get some pretty significant rains later today. So in the next 18 hours they're predicting anywhere from a half an inch to two inches of rain. They're predicting more rain Thursday night into Friday morning, likely some on Saturday. So I will just tell you that this golf course drains beautifully. We will never get it as firm as maybe we want it, but it's going to provide a wonderful test of golf.

And just to finish up on setup, the putting greens, themselves, I mentioned the quality, the condition. We will not get these putting greens as fast as we could, as fast as the architecture would allow, simply because we're looking at the winds. And we're not supposed to have overly strong winds, but we need to be mindful that when you get the greens too fast balls start to move on greens. And when we go into every day we're mindful of that. They're a nice speed right now, but they're certainly not lightning fast.

With that, let me recognize a few people, if I could.

Diana mentioned Andy Ziegler who is the owner, but Andy, if you'd stand up, so everybody knows who you are. We can't begin to say enough good things about Andy. And Jim Reinhart, if you would, Jim is the general chair and associated with USGA for many years, but the commitment these gentlemen have made, and really the whole board the staff at Erin Hills have been significant. There really was no play out here late last fall into this spring. And the golf course just -- it couldn't be in better condition. So thank you for that support.

Last person I'll mention is Zach Reineking. Zach, if you'd stand up. This is the real hero at the U.S. Open. He is the golf course superintendent. And frankly has more to do -- other than 156 players here, has more to do with this U.S. Open and its success than anybody. And Zach, great. Zach has been here since Day 1 of Erin Hills and has seen it really evolve. Great job, my friend.

With that let me turn it over to John Bodenhamer, who is going to talk about rules and conduct this week.

JOHN BODENHAMER: Thank you, Mike. Good morning everyone. We thought it might be helpful if we shared just a few thoughts, took this opportunity to share a few thoughts on what is new since last year.

I'd like to take this opportunity to do that. I think as many of you know after last year's U.S. Open we made the commitment to you, the players, and our fans to review all of our championship and rules and related protocols and procedures and we've done that. That process actually began the day after last year's U.S. Open concluded, as our first priority was to insure the success of our remaining championships last year as several of them were set for broadcast television.

Through our work over the last 12 months we have learned a great deal. I'm proud to say that. We really have learned a great deal. And our focus over those months has primarily been three things. First, to expedite our ruling process to insure that we're more timely in our rulings. To be decisive in our decision making. And to more effectively communicate to the players and to all of you.

Let me just share a few examples of what is going to be new this year here at Erin Hills and throughout the rest of the year for us at the USGA. We've taken steps that will allow us to immediately mobilize our five person rules committee, the committee in charge of the competition. They'll be in close communication with one another at all times. And they'll be able to make timely decisions, expedited decisions.

Further, we have identified one particular member of

our five person rules committee as what we're calling our chef referee. That's a common term with committees, but when necessary, that person is empowered to make instantaneous decisions. That person is one of the most knowledgeable individuals in the world on the Rules of Golf and it's Thomas Pagel, who is our senior director of rules and amateur status on our staff. We think of using another analogy from other sports, Thomas is our white hat referee. Among all the black hats he's the white hat and empowered to make instantaneous decisions.

We've also enhanced the use of technology. We have four on-course video review locations to assist us in expediting our rules decision-making process. These locations will be augmented also by tablets. And some of us on the committee will have those with us and will be able to move quickly on making decisions considering facts as we go forward.

In addition, as we mentioned last December, we'll adopt a local rule for a ball or ball marker that's accidentally moved on a putting green. Players take reasonable actions around their ball and it happens to accidentally be moved, just put it back, no penalty. We introduced that local rule back in December. I'm sure you're all familiar with it.

Likewise, a new decision adopted in April regarding the naked eye and reasonable judgment standards are available. Along with the previously mentioned local rule, we believe it will greatly diminish the need for video review in the first place.

Further, I should also mention that the introduction of the local rule last December and the decision -- they really came after thorough discussion through our rules modernization initiative. These weren't knee-jerk reactions. They were products of long-standing discussions with the USGA and The R&A, our Tour partners, PGA of America partners, others, we feel good about them. We feel good about our ability to act quickly for the benefit of the game. I think it represents that we've been listening and we're prepared to act in the best interests of the game.

I think all of you are aware that when we announced the naked eye and reasonable judgment standards, we also announced a video review working group. Led by the USGA and the R&A, but also comprised with our friends from major Tours around the world, as well as the PGA of America, they will provide recommendations on the industry use of videos as we go forward. We're excited about that. And they'll speak in the coming months as they reach conclusions and recommendations.

These and other steps that we've implemented we

think will allow us to really expedite our rule-making process and be decisive in our communications, which were two things that perhaps we fell a little bit short last year. But we're committed this year to expedite it and we're excited about it.

One last thing I would like to share with you, too, that's a little bit different this year, we've been contemplating it for the last several years, but for all of our Open championships this year we are transitioning to a stationary referee model. For the first time since 1991 we will not assign walking referees to each group. There are very particular reasons why we want to do that, we think that helps our championship and rule making administrative processes. And it also enhances the player and the fan experience. And we think those are good things.

We asked ourselves why do we have walking referees and we answered that question and really transitioned to this model because it's best for the championship, the players and the fans.

While it's important that we learn from last year and we did, we wanted to report to you on our progress this morning. Our main goal is for this week to be about the players and their journey to the final round. They're the story of this championship. As such, we are very much looking forward to an exciting and great 117th U.S. Open.

We're happy to take your questions. Thank you.

BETH MAJOR: Thank you, John. Thank you Mike, Diana and Stu for your comments.

Q. This past semester my team and I worked with FOX U and USGA coming up with campaign tactics for the 117th Championship. So thank you for having us. It's a surreal experience. We know from Wisconsin how much this means for this state and the communities to be hosting the USGA, what does it mean for the USGA to be here in Wisconsin and at Erin Hills?

STUART FRANCIS: That's a good question. First, let me say this, the State of Wisconsin has been so welcoming to the USGA, to this championship. We are deeply grateful. The actual championship will generate probably 120 million or more in economic impact to Wisconsin, Milwaukee, and the entire state. We're using many local vendors and craftsmen. We have someone like a Rowe Pottery, where we have a host of gifts in the merchandise shop.

And I think the crowds following Steve Stricker, for example, are just a great portrayal of how supportive

Wisconsin is of its own. And I think Steve's comments were really remarkable. He went out and qualified for this championship and he shot 132 to finish first in the qualifier. And we heard him say yesterday that was incredibly satisfying. And it was incredibly satisfying for every person of this state and the USGA. So we're looking forward to a great championship and we appreciate all the support we've had from everyone here.

Q. John, if what you have in place this year were around last year at Oakmont, Dustin's ball moves on the 5th green, would you walk us through what would happen then if you have what you have now?

JOHN BODENHAMER: Well, I think if the local rule were in effect at that time we would have --

Q. Minus the local rule. I understand that part of it. But just the procedure of the video stations and communication. How would that work minus the local rule?

JOHN BODENHAMER: I'm sorry, I misunderstood your question. Thank you for clarifying that.

I think last year there were two things we fell short on; it took too long to make the ruling and it left uncertainty with the competition. I think should a similar circumstance happen I think we are poised to move quickly. We have adopted protocol to expedite inside. That's what I meant by the mobilization of the committee. Last year, let's speak to our intentions on that. We had our best rules minds on the golf course, and that's been a long tradition for us. We had a number of folks across those two bridges, those two pinch points at Oakmont. They were there for very good reason because our best rules people were with the leaders and we wanted to help them. You go back to 2008 at Torrey Pines and Mike and our president at the time, Jim Vernon, were with Tiger and Rocco on that playoff. And on the first extra hole Rocco dropped it in the drop zone and he went to grab it. And Mike and Jim stopped him. That would have been an unfortunate way for the championship to end. That's why we do it. Those are our intentions.

Last year we did not anticipate those pinch points with the bridges and it took us too long. This year we'll be mobilized quickly and if that happens we'll be able to get together quickly and look at something either on course, if somebody is out there doing their job, or we'll be in close proximity. That's what I meant by mobilizing the committee.

We've enhanced the technology so we'll be able to have a quick look. That was a problem last year, we couldn't get at it quick enough because of the number

of people in those pinch points. And we've empowered our chief referee to make an instantaneous decision. It will not take as long. And we will not leave that uncertainty if similar circumstances come up this year.

Q. Just to be clear, if there's a discussion over the ball movement, would you walk Dustin over to a tablet and show him right there on the spot and decide it right there on the spot? That's kind of what I was looking at?

JOHN BODENHAMER: That decision might not need to be reviewed. It's a different situation because there's no longer a penalty involved. The determination needs to be whether it was accidental or something else other than the player caused that ball to move. If it's accidental, no penalty, just put it back. If it moves on its own, you play it from the new location. We don't think there's going to be the contention there as last year when there was a penalty involved.

Q. Just to follow up on that, so if there is a video review with the player, will it take place looking on a tablet on the course or will it be after the round, if there's something to review?

JOHN BODENHAMER: Every situation is different, Jeff. But I think our intention is for our committee to have the ability to review on-course. Not necessarily the player. I wouldn't rule that out, but not necessarily. That's not our intention. But our committee will have eyeballs on it. We'll make a combined decision and we'll move quickly and we will inform the player.

Q. Follow-up on that, is the chief referee going to be stationed in front of the telecast or roving the course?

JOHN BODENHAMER: The chief referee, Thomas, will be in one location throughout the championship. He will be the general that will be direct go the other four members of the committee.

We have additional staff, multiple eyeballs that will be watching the broadcast, as well. And that's how it will be. It won't be just one person. And Thomas will be the field general directing all of it.

Q. Mike, it doesn't look real good for Phil at this time. I have two questions related to that. Can you just go through the hypotheticals, if he were to get late to the tee, what is he looking at, when is there a possible penalty? Also, could you address just maybe how you might have tried to accommodate him when he first called you and alerted you to the situation?

MIKE DAVIS: Sure, Bob. Phil actually called me the Saturday of the Memorial. So, whatever, a couple of weeks ago to alert me to this situation. And I will tell you on behalf of the USGA, we applaud that decision.

Families should always come first. So he explained the situation.

In terms of how it affected pairings, it really didn't. I don't do the pairings, but I will tell you that we have, as you might imagine, there's some bigger name groups that are kind of in the prime time Thursday, prime time Friday. And obviously they flip-flop. And it's different ones.

So he got paired with kind of a prime time -- I think he's with Steve Stricker and Stewart Cink. So I think that when those pairings were done it was just that this is a great pairing of three, let's say, veterans of U.S. Opens.

But the way it would work, is he really doesn't have to notify us really until the last minute. I'm sure if he plans on not coming he will give us plenty of notice, because it's a three and a half hour flight from San Diego.

But we already have a first alternate basically designated. Now, that may not be the first alternate that would get in for Phil because there could be another fully exempt player that withdraws.

By the way, the way our -- this question comes up a lot -- how do you pick the alternate? Well, if somebody from the Columbus qualifier who made it has to withdraw, we would put the first alternate from that Columbus qualifier in.

But if it's one of the exempt players then we have a list that's been predetermined by both the quantity and the quality of players at that site, and so we already know who that is. And I know Jeff Hall and others would have alerted those players, saying, listen, you need to be on standby, but not just standby late in the afternoon. We may have a withdrawal in the morning. So the alternates would be here, and if that person -- if we get that word ahead of time, that person is already going to know he's going to be taking Phil's spot.

Q. A couple of questions. First, this new procedure, is it documented?

MIKE DAVIS: Procedure for -- I'm sorry?

Q. For the rules issues that we've been talking about, is it a documented procedure?

JOHN BODENHAMER: As far as our video review protocols and procedures? Absolutely, they're all documented.

Q. And also the procedure in regards to the expediting decisiveness, do you have a procedure in place when you are notified of an issue how the process works?

JOHN BODENHAMER: Every situation is different.

There are protocols that we follow and things that we think about. But really our thought, our plan, our intention is to act as quickly as possible while being thorough in the consideration of all the facts. And being thoughtful in communicating with the player in an expedited and decisive way. And that's the best way I could put it.

Q. And Thomas Pagel, if he makes a decision, even if he ends up making a decision and it's wrong in the end, his decision is the final decision?

JOHN BODENHAMER: His decision would be final. And that is something we've empowered him with when the situation requires it. But we think in most instances there will be a consultation with the committee, as we always usually do.

MIKE DAVIS: Alex, just to clarify on that one, that's specific to rules-related issues, not all championship issues in terms of Thomas Pagel with that. There is the championship committee and Stu Francis chairs that. So it could be a golf course issue. It could be a player conduct issue, something like that that wouldn't rest just with Thomas.

Q. Mike, two questions, one is a theme coming into this event was the pressure the USGA might be under, considering what happened in the last two events. You've talked about the rules. Any other way that you're trying to make sure that this tournament comes off better than the previous two?

And the second question is a strictly local question. You've talked about rain in terms of the course. But what about rain in terms of the parking, specifically the grass lot in owe con make walk area?

MIKE DAVIS: To your first question, if we're being honest, yeah, we're human. We know we've had some issues the last two years. As I like to point out, there's a lot of things we're very proud about with Chambers Bay, proud about at Oakmont.

When I look back at Chambers Bay and introducing a new part of the country, a public golf course, folks think about the drama. Think about the drama at the end with Dustin Johnson and Jordan Spieth and that leaderboard. Yes, we didn't like the quality of the greens, but that aside there's a lot of things to love about Chambers Bay.

Last year at Oakmont we were really thrown a curve, so to speak, with just some dreadful weather. But think about how well Oakmont performed as a golf course. Think about Dustin Johnson and that performance he put on, especially given the rules situation.

So I think we'll look back at those with a lot of fond memories. But, yes, there are some things that of course we had some issues.

So moving forward we want a nice, smooth U.S. Open. But, listen, we're prepared -- you never know what's going to happen with Mother Nature. You're never going to know what happens with certain rule situations or how the players play the course. So you just deal with them and you remain nimble and flexible.

In terms of parking this week, I'm going to have to defer to -- is Reg Jones, do you want to talk about that a little, if you would.

REG JONES: Thanks. It is our intent, obviously, with the weather coming up, our cruise have been preparing as best they can. And feel very comfortable with our blue lot and our preparation so far. That being said, if we do get a substantial amount of rainfall, we do have alternate parking that will be available. And those details will be on our website at USOpen.com.

Q. Mike, I'm sure Erin Hills would love to have a second U.S. Open. When you all are analyzing this week what factors will you look at before you all decide whether to award another U.S. Open here?

MIKE DAVIS: Well, golf course first. We're going to look at that golf course and say how did it perform. We take in consideration that this is likely going to be a softer golf course than we want. And we like a firm, fast golf course where you really have to think about what happens when that ball lands and where is it going to go. But we're likely not going to get that this week, and we would take that under consideration. But we will take player feedback as part of it. We'll use our own observations as part of it. We'll look at the agronomics as part of it. Certainly outside the ropes how did the operations work, how did the community and the state and this area of the country embrace the event, all those things play into it.

And we're blessed with many wonderful invitations. Ultimately it really is that championship committee that is going to, after being presented with all the different options for a site, they will look at it and go from there.

We'll do a lot of homework after this event and really do an analysis of how things went.

Q. Contrary to all beliefs I love the Rules of Golf. And we actually have a rules segment every week on our radio show from one of your very own, USGA Robin Farran, who we nicknamed Dr. Evil, with all the changes. The question is, since you're talking about having a

person walk, an official walk with the group, what's the advantages of the stationary officials. I'm trying to put that together?

JOHN BODENHAMER: Sure, great question. Thank you for that. It's quite simply we looked at all of the aspects of this, and we asked ourselves what is the best model for us to use, what is in the best interests of the championship and the players. Really when you think about, our walking referees, it is to their advantage when they come to the championship -- now they come, and the way we've done the assignments, they just need to know everything there is about two or three holes on the golf course, to which they're assigned. And we give them those assignments earlier as a result of so they can go out and they can familiarize themselves with every aspect and nuance of those couple of holes. And so -- and it also allows them to be familiar. But it also allows us to put our best rules officials on perhaps holes that might produce complex rulings, or issues that people that might have experience with that in the past and some institutional knowledge that the championship might benefit from.

I think that the ability for our stationary referees to be out there and interact with our professional Tour rovers from the PGA Tour, the European Tours, is going to be a benefit to just that interaction, how they communicate with pace of play and with rulings, suspensions and resumptions.

We looked at it, other major championships use this model, some don't, some do. But we asked ourselves what was in the best interests of the championship, the players, the fans, and this is the way we wanted to go.

Q. How critical is it, just a follow-up on an earlier question, is it for the USGA to have a smooth championship this time around? How much is it weighing on your mind based on the recent instances?

MIKE DAVIS: It's really an interesting question, because you would think something like happened the last couple of years would affect just the championship department, maybe the rules department. But it affects the whole organization. And by that I mean that anytime your competency comes into question, that affects the people that are doing -- doing our equipment testing, the agronomic people on the greens section, our people in dealing with the history of the game and helping to grow the game.

So, of course, we want to avoid those things. But sometimes things happen. But I will tell you we mobilized right after last year and really thought about it long and hard and say where do we need to change.

And, folks, you think about that ruling last year, without going into the details, this was an incredibly complex set of circumstances. You were dealing with a rule that frankly was already broken. We had made the decision that it was going to get changed in the next revision. We just happened to fast forward that. You were dealing with a situation that the leader on the last day -- you were dealing with the situation where he got wrong information. You were dealing with a situation where video was involved and the player didn't understand how the rule operated.

So we learned from it. But if you don't think that The R&A, the PGA Tour, the LPGA, state and regional golf associations, other Tours around the world didn't learn, they did learn.

So we not only learned from it but we made changes from it. And I think that's the way you have to approach anything that doesn't go right is saying how can we make it better, how can we make sure it doesn't happen in the future.

DIANA MURPHY: Let me just add a little bit of that from my perspective, having the opportunity to watch the organization really digest the impact and to -- they had a couple of choices, right? They could be terribly defensive and say, wow, we got it right and it's everybody else's fault. Or they could come together and say what can we do differently. And we do that with all of the championships at the end of the season, whether it's an Amateur or U.S. Open, we do a very thorough review of what did we learn, what can we do better, so that each year, every championship, all 13 are the very best possible.

There's no question that the organization led by Mike went very deep into assessing where did we miss it and what can we do differently. And so the ownership of being very proactive, not just now, but with the very next championship last year. So many of the things we're talking about today we implemented with the next championship and continued all year.

So I think we've all had in our lives opportunities to learn from mistakes, and this was a tough one, but I couldn't be more proud at how the organization's responded. We're not going to get everything right. There may be something else we didn't think of this year. But I think you're going to see a wonderful championship and a terrific championship on Father's Day Sunday.

Q. Mike, you've been aware that Rory and Jordan Spieth were both critical of the decision to cut back the fescue when the fairways are as wide as they are. Is it more danger that you're being over compensating because some of the players were

critical of it?

MIKE DAVIS: Well, when we made the decisions to modify a golf course, whether it's green speeds, roughs, directions we're mowing, how much water we're applying or not applying. It's not as if we don't listen to feedback from players. But I will tell you in this case, it had nothing to do, absolutely zero to do with what the players were saying. We looked at some spots and we said this is simply not going to play properly.

So what's great about it is there's going to be varying opinions on it. Some players are going to like it. Some players aren't. And that's okay. That really is okay. And there's a little bit of history to it. I talked to Jack Nicklaus quite a few times about this, but to hear Jack talk about coming to a U.S. Open, and folks, he was the greatest U.S. Open player ever. He loved it, absolutely loved it when players would be chirping about things he'd say that player is done, that player is done, and in most cases he was right.

And you have to come into this test of golf, whether it's this week or the Women's Open or the U.S. Girls Junior, you've got to come in with a certain mindset. And you know you're going to -- we're going to test you. And you've got to come in with the right mindset. And if you do -- so it's part of this -- it's part of the championship and part of the history of this championship.

Q. I have two questions. The first being open to anyone, just trying to expand on the rebranding of the championship from the toughest test of golf to the ultimate test in golf.

And secondly, for Mike, the 18th hole has so many options. As you look at that hole on Sunday and how you want to finish this tournament, where you could play it from the tips and make it a hard five, you could move it up and have three in play. What's your philosophy there?

MIKE DAVIS: On the first question about rebranding, you know, it's interesting. We really got branded as the toughest test not by ourselves but by others. It's not necessarily bad. And we're not shunning the fact that it is a tough test. Folks, it is a tough test. We get to the Women's Open it's going to be a tough test. There's history. Well over a century of history of that with the USGA.

But I will tell you when we sit and talk as a group and we're sitting, looking at a golf course, we're setting a golf course up, we are never, never talking about, we have to have even par win or we have to make this as tough as possible. I can promise you if we wanted to make it really tough, we could make it far, far tougher

than what we make them at the Open. It is, by and large, tougher than they see week to week. That's something that we like. And everybody likes. Some weeks you like a course, you don't like a course. Some weeks it's a birdie fest, some par is a tough score.

But I think when we talk about the ultimate test of golf what we're doing is saying, okay, we need to test their shot making skills. So your ability to be accurate with the ball. We want to embrace -- somebody can hit a ball a long way, that's a skill. We don't want to take that away. We're not going to pinch fairways out at a certain point like other organizations do, we don't feel that's right. We want to test your ability to control the trajectory of the ball, we want to test your shot-making skills, your recovery skills, your course management skills, which sometimes you can plan out, sometimes you have to react when you're on the course. And your ability to handle your nerves. That is part of it. And it tests the caddie's ability to handle his or her nerves, as well.

So that's what it really gets at. We've always talked internally about it's not just the -- so you're hearing us talk more about that simply because we said, you know what, let's let the world understand a little bit. We're not just trying to make that the toughest test.

Second question on 18. That hole plays basically due east, from 675, which sounds like a long way, it is a long way, down to 622 yards. It generally is downwind, because predominantly, ladies and gentlemen, you get a westerly wind here, maybe a southwest wind. We saw you a lot of players either reaching it in two in in the U.S. Amateur or getting very close. We will alter that based on winds. We'll alter it based on hole locations. And we do hope that there are some days that some players decide -- maybe not actually going for the green, but just short, right, up in there, to give themselves a great angle on the third shot. That will be part of it. It's a marvelous finishing hole. We don't finish on many par-5s, Pebble Beach and Chambers was another. But it's neat. And when we have one I think it lends itself a little bit more to be a risk/reward hole.

Q. Mike, when you talk about green preparation as it relates to wind, for this golf course, how much does it relate to pace of play?

MIKE DAVIS: On pace of play, first of all, Doug, the pace is going to be longer. I'll let John speak to that. But with wind, what we're the most concerned about is making sure the holes play properly. Think about it, the tee shot at 1. The tee shot at 8. The tee shot at 10. Tee shot at 11, tee shot at 12. If we get that wrong. For instance, if we set 8 up thinking it's going to be a southwest wind and all of a sudden you get a northeast wind, now you can't -- the players can't even reach the

top plateau, which is certainly not what we want. I know Jeff Hall and I have made it abundantly clear to Jake Swick, our meteorologist, that you have to be on your "A" game this week with wind predictions, not just direction but also velocity. It's nerve wracking, honestly more than most Open sites.

Q. Secondly, given that major golf championships these days is about entertainment as much as competition some times, you know where I'm going with this, Mike, are we ever going to ditch the 18-hole playoff?

MIKE DAVIS: Next question, please.

Doug, you know, if you go back into the history of this championship, used to be a 36-hole playoff. In fact there was one where they were still tied after 36 holes. They went another 36 holes. I think it was 144 holes played. We've innovated ourselves since then.

But, listen, I don't think in the foreseeable future you will see a change in the 18-hole playoff. It's hard to sit here saying why do we do it for the Women's Open and not the U.S. Open. But we've had good experiences with it. I'm thinking about that great three-man playoff in 1994 at Oakmont. What's interesting is we had a sudden death playoff, one player would have won, if it's a three or four hole playoff another player would have won. But over 18 holes Ernie Els was the best player that day. And we think there's something to that.

And think about that magical 18-hole playoff with Tiger and Rocco in '08. We could get one where maybe it would change our mind. It's ultimately up to the championship committee. I'm kind of hoping it doesn't happen under my watch.

Q. Mike, I know you've been getting asked a lot of questions, and I can just tell from how you're talking about this course you're passionate about it and the work you've done. Do you have a favorite hole or some holes that you're really looking forward to the players playing?

MIKE DAVIS: Not a favorite hole, but I love the second hole. Love the 9th hole. 14 is a marvelous par-5. 18 I think is a beautiful finishing hole. So for different reasons I would say those would be my favorites. And mostly for architectural reasons. I just think they're very interesting holes.

Q. Mike, on course setup, there's got to be a concern about drivable par-4s and pace of play. 2 could really back you up. The other danger is you have several par-5s that could end up basically playing as 100 yard par-3. Could you talk about, besides 18, what goes into your consideration and how flexible you can be in the setup?

MIKE DAVIS: So let me -- I don't know whether on the pace of play part, I may have Jeff Hall make a few comments on that, because we do have some things in place, or John could. But you're right, all four of these par-5s -- by its very nature, par-5s usually play slower, even relatively speaking, than par-4s, because you've got that element with the quality of these players that so many holes, even a 675 yard hole downwind, a player may wait in the drive zone to hit. If for no other reason, out of respect.

So I think all three of these par-5s some days will play as three shotters for some players. I also think every one of those par-5s some days will play as two shotters, or at least attempt to get there in two.

The second hole is a very short par-4. The 15th hole is another short par-4 that on certain days a player may have a go at it. And maybe even if they don't think they can reach it out of respect for the group in front, so they don't bother them, they may lay back. I think for all those reasons we do believe this is a slower playing golf course. If maybe somebody could give a microphone to Jeff Hall. And he might have a few comments on what we have planned on the pace of play standpoint this week.

JEFF HALL: Just the facts and figures, the maximum allotted time for 3's is four hour and 52 minutes. We calculate that, it's not just a back of the envelope special. We calculate that using the length of the holes, the walk time from putting greens to the next teeing ground. We use data to help us create that number.

We had a very productive meeting with our rovers last night, who are all folks that you would be very familiar with from the PGA Tour and the European Tour. They are professionals, deal with us every single week. We lean on them heavily to help us manage this very important aspect of the championship.

We really focused on pace of play in 2013. We took a very different look at things, to the point that Diana made, we're constantly trying to improve. And this was certainly one of those areas.

We moved -- we separated the afternoon further from the morning wave to insure that both waves are able to be monitors as its own entity, so that we can equitably apply the pace of play guidelines to both waves. It served us well. Since 2013 the first group in the afternoon has never caught the last group of the morning. So they have plenty of golf course in which to move.

We certainly are aware here at Erin Hills with the wind and the presentation of the fescue grass, that we could

have more ball searches, potentially. We've got 5,000 plus volunteers and a large number of those are part of our marshal group. And we have marshals that we can pull into our needs if we find because of weather conditions a particular hole is creating challenges with errant tee shots, whatever it may be, we'll get the resources to those places to help us find the golf ball and keep things moving.

Another benefit of the stationary referees, they can monitor what's going on with our crosswalks. If a crosswalk is staying open too long causing players to wait and we lose two minutes, that's two minutes we never get back. We want to mitigate that. And we've been doing that with our walking referees effectively. But this is an opportunity to be even more effective in that regard. If we see a rope line is too tight and tie shots get outside, and we're up and down with rope lines, they can communicate that to the operations folks. And we can widen the rope lines, so players don't have to worry about rope lines going up and down.

We are been consciously monitoring over the last four or five years and it has had a positive. Have we turned a four hour 45 minute round into three hours and 30 minutes, I don't think anybody in this room could expect that type of result. This is the United States Open. This is a very stern test of golf. It's that ultimate test of golf and the pace of play is going to reflect that.

BETH MAJOR: Thank you. Stu, Diana, Mike and John, thank you very much. And thank you all for joining us this morning.