

U.S. Women's Open Championship 2017

Tuesday, July 11, 2017

Matt Sawicki

Beth Major

Stu Francis

Shannon Rouillard

Press Conference

BETH MAJOR: Good morning, everyone. Like to welcome you again to the 2017 U.S. Women's Open Championship, very happy to have you with us here for the week. It is my pleasure this morning to introduce you to Championship Directors Shannon Rouillard and Matt Sawicki and USGA Championship Chairman. Stu Francis.

Matt, could I ask you to talk about the preparations for this year's championship?

MATT SAWICKI: I would like to first welcome everyone to the 2017 U.S. Open Women's Championship. I learned this week that New Jersey has 285 golf courses here, to state locally boasts Baltusrol, Somerset Hills here locally. What we have known since the junior amateur championships and since we announced this championship back in 2012 is that this provides an equal test of golf to those golf courses. This facility truly is second to none.

We have received tremendous support from this community, the Township of Bedminster, Somerset County and the state of New Jersey.

This club really has dedicated itself to the player experience and that starts at the top: General Manager David Schutzenhofer; director of golf, Mickie Gallagher; Rob Wagner, the director of grounds. I know the players will appreciate their efforts and hospitality this week.

The most important and often overlooked group at any championship are the volunteers. We have more than 1,400 of them here participating this week and, simply, we could not do it without them.

This week truly is unique because we are so close to our headquarters. We are able to celebrate that with a number of activities. Tomorrow we will open a new exhibit Breaking New Ground: Women in Golf Course



Architecture at the USGA Golf Museum. This exhibit celebrates women, founders of their own clubs who provided leadership, initiative, and innovation to the game of golf. All badge holders and ticketed fans have access to the USGA Golf Museum for free for the remainder of the year.

Since Sunday, we've hosted a group of 40 First Tee participants who have been engaged in a learning science through golf program with our test center and innovation staff. In fact, on Wednesday, they will test the equipment that they built over the last couple of days here on our championship golf course.

Last night, we actually hosted them for dinner at our USGA staff dining area. I was struck by two things: First of all, their intelligence. But two, their passion for the game of golf. I will tell you this: The game is in good hands with these future leaders of the game.

Yesterday, three-time U.S. Women's Open champion Annika Sorenstam hosted a Share My Passion Clinic with girls from LPGA, USGA girls golf programs in Pennsylvania and New Jersey.

As is customary at the Women's Open, all kids 17 and under are able to attend this championship for free. Tomorrow is our junior day. We've got a clinic at the short game area. We've got stations throughout the day that include the opportunity to take the picture with the U.S. Women's Open trophy, to learn about (indiscernible) and its applications to golf and perhaps most invigorating a tour of the media center.

Finally, our broadcast partner intends to air 20 hour of life television coverage this week. We'll have feature group coverage on USGA.org. On our website you can also find information for fans about tickets, parking and prohibited items.

You will also be able to access information about our future host sites, Shoal Creek Golf Club, Country Club of Charleston, Champions Golf Club and the Olympic Club. It's going to be an exciting week. We've received tremendous support. We've seen wonderful wonderful enthusiasm, and overall we look forward to a great week. Thank you.

BETH MAJOR: I had would like to invite Stu to make a

few comments.

STU FRANCIS: Before I share some thoughts on the strength of the field and the great players we have with us this week, I wanted to take just a moment to briefly address why we choose this course for the U.S. Women's Open Championship. We selected this course in 2012 after successfully conducting U.S. girls junior championship and the U.S. junior championship in 2009, which both were great successes.

As for all the championships, the decision was also based on the quality of the golf course, the fan experience and the first class operational team here at Trump National Bedminster. We remain confident that this course will provide the ultimate test of golf for the best players in this world this week. That's our goal. Anyone who has walked course and talked to the players this week as they played their practice rounds will tell you this is truly a special golf course and we're excited about the week ahead.

Additionally, the Trump Organization has been a stellar host and we're excited about this week from all standpoints.

We're very pleased this week to welcome 156 of the best women golfers in the world. They come from 28 countries worldwide, so we truly have a global championship. We have ten past winners of the U.S. Women's Open, including Brittany Lang from McKinney, Texas who is here to defend her championship. We're excited to have our current us junior women's amateur champions and our women's amateur champion with us this week. We have 26 past Curtis Cup players this week. We have all three Olympic Medalists playing in our championship this week.

As in our tradition, we've had 21 amateur players qualify amongst the 59 players who have qualified from the 21 local and U.S. based qualifying sites and the four international sites. We truly are an Open Championship.

And, frankly, if you could read some of the letters we receive from people who qualified for the U.S. Open, it's such a thrill for people. We are highly incentivized to keep the qualifying field as big as we can.

The process of qualifying for the U.S. Open really is one of the most unique aspect in all of sport. As long as you have a handicap that allows you to play in the tournament, you can make your place in the U.S. Women's Open.

We're particularly proud this week on that front to represent and host amateur Bailey Tardy of Peachtree

Corners, Georgia. She is a 20-year-old rising junior at the University of Georgia. She has qualified three consecutive years for the U.S. Women's Open, all from the sectional qualifier at Butler County Country Club in Pennsylvania.

Also Mariel Galdiano of Pearl City, Hawaii has qualified for her fourth U.S. Women's Open. That is not an easy feat. We hope you will be inspired by their stories as well as the stories of everybody else here this week. It's going to be a great championship. I'll now turn the floor over to Shannon Rouillard who will give you some background on course setup.

SHANNON ROUILLARD: We are so excited to be at such a wonderful golf course this week. I don't know how many of you have been out there yet, but it is in tremendous condition. The credit goes to Rob Wagner and his grounds team. They have put so much time and energy and such great pride in the preparations leading up to this week it's unfathomable. It's really tremendous work. The players are going to benefit from the condition of the course this week.

Par is set at par 72 and we're going to play it at 6,732 yards. A few course setup notes, we are hopeful for firm and fast conditions this week. It truly puts a premium on shot-making and course management. We want the player to have to think about what the ball is going to do when it gets on the ground. However, we all know that Mother Nature has a seat at the table. We play an outdoor sport and we have to adjust accordingly. If she does, you will probably more likely see good scoring happen out there.

There's a variety of setup options on the old course. There's number of tees to choose from and the greens are large. More than half of them stretch over 40 yards long. We're targeting 12 to 12 and a half feet on the Stimp meter and we've introduced graduated rough. Intermediate is cut at one and a half inches. The first cut of primary at two and three-quarter inches, and the second cut of primary at four inches to rope line and beyond.

If we do have a playoff, the players will play holes 16, 17 and 18. If they are still at a tie, they will play the 18th hole repeated.

We talk about the ultimate test in and the U.S. Women's Open is no different. It is considered the ultimate test in women's golf. There is three parts to that: shot-making, course management and mental and physical resolve.

So how do those three points relate to the old course. The fairways out here are fairly generous. It's important for players to set themselves set up on the

proper fairway to have the best angle of attack. The greens are large, so with that distance control is going to be critical for players to be able to score.

How about the mental and physical resolve? If a player becomes a student of the greens, really studies the greens, as I'm sure they will, they will find that they will be able to use the contour of the greens to their advantage when executing from the proper position in the fairway. Even though all the par-5s stretch out over 500 yards, birdies are going to be attainable.

Then we need to remember and think about what's at stake, a Women's Open Championship and earning that title to live in history forever. Mental toughness, stamina and endurance the eventually champion is going to have to become the next Women's Open Championship.

The third part of the ultimate test is course management. Tom Fazio is known for designing courses that reflect its natural topography and the old course is no different. If players really study the course, they are going to learn that Fazio wanted to give the players options, options into how to attack the flag but also options if their ball goes astray. You are going to find there's a number of different places where closely mown areas have been introduced and the player needs to think about whether they want to putt, chip or pitch the ball onto the green.

So where are some great places to watch out there? You know, the circle out here of 16, 17 and 18 close to the clubhouse I'm sure is going to provide plenty of wonderful opportunities to watch some great golf. As well if fans wanted to meander further out onto the course, there's a great perch up there by 5, 6 and 7 and 12 and 13. You can see a lot of golf just from that one spot.

So weather, what does the weather look like? The week is projected to have some higher temperatures and increased humidity and really our biggest threat of storms is late Thursday night into Friday.

Pace of play, the course will be set to play at four hours and 47 minutes. Keep in mind that's really for the first groups. In that time is 22 minutes of walk time. We need to keep that in the forefront.

We've spent a lot of time at the USGA over the last number of years collecting data on pace of play, really working on how to get players through, how to allow them to have an enjoyable experience and play courses in a reasonable amount of time. When you consider the stern test of golf and what's at stake this week, we're looking for them to play in a reasonable amount of time and our pace of play guidelines are

gonna support that.

In closing, as a past Women's Open participant, I'm truly humbled to now have the opportunity to be on the other side of the fence and set up a golf course for the best female players in the world. I can't wait for Thursday to come.

BETH MAJOR: Thank you. We'd like to open it up to questions.

Q. Could you address why Mike isn't here, Mike Davis?

BETH MAJOR: As is always the case with our championship press conferences, we have staff and representatives who are focused on the conduct of the Championship. Matt is running the event outside the ropes Shannon is running the event inside the ropes and Stu is the chairman of the Championship Committee. As is always the case at the Women's Open, that's why they are our representatives today.

Q. He has been in the past at some events, correct?

BETH MAJOR: It's probably been several years since he has been here. I know this is the team assembled last year. We are being consistent with the same team.

Q. Mike has said when asked about why you are here and the issue of Donald Trump bragging about sexually assaulting women and you are holding the crown jewel of women's golf here, he has said it's politics. He's not going to talk about politics and that's politics. My question to each of you since Mike is not here, how is the topic of sexual assault politics?

STU FRANCIS: I think we've already issued our statement on that discussion. We really are here to conduct a great golf championship. We were formed in 1894 to do that. We have 156 women playing in the championship who are excited about it. It's largest purse in women's golf. Our goal is to talk about the golf championship and we've put out our statement.

Q. Does the USGA have a position on sexual assault?

BETH MAJOR: If you would like to discuss it further -- as we've mentioned, we are here to talk about the golf competition at this time. That is always the purpose of this press conference leading into the week. If you would like to discuss that, certainly we believe it's an important question and would be happy to discuss it with you. We are prepared to do that afterwards.

Q. Why the difference in the women's and men's playoffs in the men's and women's U.S. Opens?

STU FRANCIS: Sure, it's really been a longstanding

tradition where we have had the three-hole playoff in the Women's Open and the 18-hole playoff in the Men's Open. We evaluate it every several years and we decided to keep it the way it is. It's always nice to crown a champion on Sunday night rather than Monday.

Q. When you say that, that works for the men. Wouldn't you want the same ending for the men to be on a Sunday if that's the case?

STU FRANCIS: That topic is always up for discussion. It's a good question, but that's how we've done it.

Q. Do you expect the President to be here?

MATT SAWICKI: Quite frankly, we don't know. We don't know the President's schedule. The only thing we know about the President's schedule is that he plans on attending a Bastille Day celebration in France on Friday. Beyond that we have not been told.

Q. If he does come, will it affect fan security?

MATT SAWICKI: We have a wonderful public safety partnership with Somerset County, with the state of New Jersey, Township of Bedminster. We have been planning, as we do all of our championships, for over a year in developing a comprehensive security plan.

As far as if the President were to visit, we've got security protocols in place. But ultimately we're not going to go into detail on what those protocols are.

Q. Is there any concern that his presence and the leadup about him coming has overshadowed this event from what it should be about women's golf?

MATT SAWICKI: There is a long association between the offices of the President and the game of golf. It is one in which many Presidents have had a passion for the game. And ultimately we think that when the President supports the game of golf, that's a good thing.

I believe Mike Davis is on record as saying we've had three Presidents attend our Open Championships in the past, Presidents Harding, Ford and Clinton attended. If one President choose to come, we would welcome the President.

Q. In talking with Pete Bevacqua, he said that he sees down the line that women's and men's golf events will be held concurrently the way we see in tennis. I'm wondering what your thoughts are on that?

BETH MAJOR: Shannon, do you want to offer some thoughts on that?

SHANNON ROUILLARD: I think it depends on the bid. We play an outside game and there's not a lot of

facilities around this country that lends to playing concurrent U.S. Open and Women's Open. You saw we did that back in 2014, went back-to-back weeks. I think we're definitely looking at other possibilities to do that in the future. But it really needs to be the right fit, the right facility, the right market and the right opportunity for the best interest of both the men and the women.

BETH MAJOR: Thank you all so much for being here today. We look forward to a great week of golf, some great coverage and we look forward to helping you any way we can throughout the week.