

# U.S. Women's Open Championship 2017

Wednesday, July 12, 2017

## Juli Inkster

### Press Conference

THE MODERATOR: Good afternoon, everyone. Welcome again to the 2017 U.S. Open Women's Championship. We are really pleased to have with us this afternoon, five-time USGA champion Juli Inkster.

Juli won three consecutive Women's Amateurs, 1980, '81 and '82. Then turned professional, won her first U.S. Women's Open in 1999 and her second in 2002. I always find it interesting that both the 1980 Women's Amateur victory and the 2002, the first and last, were both at Prairie Dunes Country Club.

Juli is here throughout the week. She will be working with the FOX broadcast team. She also on Monday evening joined us over at the USGA Golf Museum to spend a little time with the 20 or so amateur players that we have in the field, talking about her experiences, having played in a record 35 U.S. Women's Open Championships.

Thank you for joining us today.

JULI INKSTER: Thank you.

#### **Q. Can you talk about that experience of talking to those young women on Monday night and what that was like?**

JULI INKSTER: It was a blast. They were 15 to 18 years old. Some of them their first U.S. Open. The USGA starting this, I think it's a great thing. It gets them together. It gets it more about life skills and golf, gets them together, gets them communicating, camaraderie. Just being able to talk to them about my experience, about being an amateur and playing in the U.S. Open and my experience of being professional and playing in the Open and then my experience about winning the Open.

There were bright-eyed, bushy tailed and they had some great questions. We kept it really relaxed and it was great seeing them all together. I think it's a win for the USGA. Not only on the women's side, but also the men's side.

THE MODERATOR: Next year, speaking of USGA championships, you will actually have the opportunity to compete in another USGA championship, the Senior Women's Open. The Senior LPGA is going on this



week.

Can you talk about the opportunities that now are presented for the players have been the legends of the game and now being able to play on this great stage as well?

JULI INKSTER: I think it's great. I think it's maybe ten years later coming than it should be. We have the opportunity -- I have the opportunity of playing in my first U.S. Senior Open and Chicago Golf Club is going to be a great venue for that. I know there's a lot of players that are going to love to play, love to compete.

I think any player when they get to a certain age, it's -- we definitely lose a little bit of our skill set but we never lose the -- lose the competition side of us.

These girls like to compete. And these ladies like to compete. I'm one of them that loves to compete. I can't wait to have the opportunity to play a four-round senior tournament and see how I do.

THE MODERATOR: I will allow our friends in the media to ask questions.

#### **Q. Ai Miyazato, I respect very much, announced her retirement months ago. She said it's hard to keep her motivation. On the other hand, Juli, you are still being as a player. How do you keep your motivation and what do you think about Ai's retirement?**

JULI INKSTER: I hate to lose her, she's very well respected on our Tour not only as a player, but as a person. She's probably a nicer person than she is a golfer and that's hard to do. She's very good. To keep your motivation, it's hard.

Ai has been under a lot of pressure every since she got out here. She's the next thing after Ayaka Yamamoto that did well on the LPGA tour.

Every round, every practice round she had to answer a lot of questions. I usually just walked off the golf course and went to the locker room. A lot more pressure on her. She's really playing for the nation.

I was pretty much just playing for myself. I can see where she wants to do other things in her life. I wish

nothing but the best for her because she's a great player and a great person.

**Q. You have been known as someone who speaks their mind, doesn't seem to be too concerned about. Obviously we're here at Donald Trump's golf course. Obviously there are issues involving the president. We all know that. So we have been asking about that. Almost to a woman, every player has said I don't want to talk about it or I want to talk about golf, which is their right, of course. If I ask those questions and we all have of Venus Williams or Serena Williams or the NBA, WNBA players, figure skaters have taken on Trump or Putin or whatever. I'm curious what your thoughts are why we have seen everyone, literally every single person in unison saying they just don't want to talk about it? Is there a reason why you think the LPGA players here this week are so reluctant to talk about it?**

JULI INKSTER: I just don't want to talk about it. Just kidding.

Well, this is what I think because it's a no-win situation. I'm kind of a person that I love a math problem and when you get done, you have got a set answer. I think the reason why we live in the United States is everybody has their own opinion. I think that that's a great part of being an American. Everybody has their own opinion. I don't preach my opinion on anybody and I really don't want them to preach their opinion on myself.

I know zero about politics. If you want to talk sports, I'm all in. But if I don't really know the subject, I don't think I should get in a debate with anybody.

I just think we are golfers. We are at Donald Trump's golf course. They put this on the schedule in 2012. He wasn't the president of the United States. We played at Mar-a-Lago and no one seemed to mind then when we played at Mar-a-Lago.

I think we're fortunate to be able to play on a great golf course like this whether it's got Trump's name on it or Obama's name on it or whatever. We're going to showcase the best women's golfers in the world, and they just happen to be playing here.

**Q. Would you prefer that he come this week and watch you guys or that he stays away and doesn't create a scene as your colleague Brittany Lincicome mentioned?**

JULI INKSTER: Well, in the history of the USGA, we've only had three acting presidents anywhere in a U.S. Open. So if he comes here and we're the fourth, I think

it's his right to come here if he wants to. But I think FOX and the USGA focuses on golf, showing the best women golfers in the world. I think that's what we're going to try to do.

**Q. I'll give you a math problem.**

JULI INKSTER: Not a hard one, I hope.

**Q. We're getting to the stretch for your Solheim Cup team. Probably got about 17, 18 players in the mix for the 12 spots. What are you looking at now?**

JULI INKSTER: I'm look at players that are playing well right now. I'm not looking at 2016. Right now I think my top six are pretty set.

2015, I think it took 317 points to make it. Right now Danielle Kang is a little bit over there. From there, you have Brittany Lang and you have Michelle Wie tied for 7th and then you have Austin Ernst and Angela Stanford. You have Lizette Salas coming up. Then my two World Rankings are Mo Martin and Brittany Lincicome, and I've got two great real rookies in Angle Yin and Nelly Corda that I'm not turning my back on them either.

So I think it's the toughest job as a captain, these two captain's picks. I feel like I'm in a no-lose situation because I have a lot of great gals to pick from.

**Q. Can you just talk about how you think this golf course will test the players and the type of players that it suits?**

JULI INKSTER: Good question. I think I like the high long hitters, some like Amy Yang, someone like maybe a little bit of Gerina Pillar. I think you need to get a high ball. You need to come in from the air on these greens. You need to be precise with your irons. You need to play smart.

This is a golf course where your caddie is going to come into play. I know as a player I see the hole location and the flag stick and I'm going right at it. You have to be able to talk to your player and say, we need to go here on this hole and you got -- so it's going to be a good working relationship between caddie-player.

I think your second shot is the most important shot on this golf course. The fairways are pretty generous between 35 and 40 yards wide. Most of the LPGA players are very good drivers of the golf ball. I think your second shot is going to be important here.

**Q. As somebody who's had a long successful career, can you speak to Cristie Kerr and the path she has taken and her longevity and durability in this game?**

JULI INKSTER: Cristie's wired a little bit like me on the

golf course. She's feisty. She shows her emotions. I don't talk as much as she talks on the golf course, but she has a real passion for the game of golf. She loves working on the game of golf. She doesn't mind putting the time in. She loves to play. And that's 90 percent of the battle when you get to a certain age. You have got to want to play and you have got to want to be good. She still has that. She still thinks she can be No. 1 in the world. I don't think there is any reason why she can't be.

**Q. Off that question, it reminds of something Danielle Kang said a few weeks ago. She said she was so amped up trying to make it onto the Solheim Cup team that it freaked her out a little bit. When you come across a player who is so ambitious and trying to get on this team that it's almost having a detrimental effect on their game, what do you say?**

JULI INKSTER: I've been on both sides, so I know where they are coming from. It's easy for me to sit up here and say don't try, just relax, play your own game. The window is getting really short, getting closed in, I need some of these players to really step up these last four weeks and play some good golf. They know who they are.

I have been on Danielle Kang for four years saying, Hey, I would love to have you play for me. I like your tenacity. She's won two U.S. Amateurs. She loves match play. She loves the mano on mano thing. She showed me a lot in that championship. She was leading most of the time. Come Sunday it got real tight but on that backside, she played like a champion. She went out and won that thing. I'm glad she's on my team.

**Q. Defending a title at the U.S. Open, men's or women's is very difficult. You have tried to it a couple of times. What is the challenge in your mind trying to defend here?**

JULI INKSTER: Well, the golf course changes. That's for sure. Your game changes. But I know when I won my first one at Old Waverly in Mississippi, I was playing very well coming in there. I was Top-10, Top-5. I remember driving in saying, If you're ever going to win an Open, this is the time to do it.

I had like a six-footer on the first hole for par, and I said to myself again, If you're ever going to win an Open, you better suck it up right now and make it. I made that putt and from then on I just thought it was my Open.

You have got to have that mentality like -- you have got 21 amateurs in this field. You have got a lot of people playing from different countries here that never played

on an LPGA event. There's not -- it's not like you have to beat 156 of the best women golfers. It's a great championship, but you have got a shorter field in who can win this championship. You have got to take it by the horns and go out there and get it done.

It took me a little while to learn that, to say I don't need to play my best golf. I just need to play good golf for four days. I think mostly the USGA not only challenges you physically, but they challenge you mentally. That's where you can really separate yourself from different players.

**Q. Only three players in the field are 40 years old or older. It would seem like with the equipment advances and stuff that older women would have a better chance to be competitive than maybe during the persimmon and balata days. But it's not happening. What are your thoughts on the evolution of women's golf getting so young?**

JULI INKSTER: I think they are starting so young. Basically, these amateurs, they are professional amateurs. They play worldwide. They play in the summer. They are playing like every week or every other week. They are playing a lot of golf.

I think you get to a certain age and you are like man, there's more out there. I want to do different things. I think that's what you see a lot of.

The first time I played in California I was 18. So I just think it's a different era. I went to four years of college. A lot of these girls aren't going to four years of college. A lot of these girls, when they get 28 to 35, they want to have a family. Having a family and playing out here, it's not like it used to be where you can throw a bunch of stuff in a car and drive tournament to tournament. It's a lot of work. I think a couple of those things are the reason why a lot of players aren't playing in their 40s.

THE MODERATOR: You are working your third season on the broadcast. Which is more nerve wracking, playing in the U.S. Women's Open or covering it on the broadcast?

JULI INKSTER: The broadcast. You have got to the makeup room. Who goes to the makeup room? You can see it didn't help much. Broadcasting is a lot tougher, I think, than playing. If I'm out there, if I make a mistake, it's on me. If I make a mistake on broadcast, it's on my whole team and I don't like to do that.

I'm learning and hopefully I'm getting better.

THE MODERATOR: We are thrilled to have you here

this week. Thank you for joining us this afternoon.