

# U.S. Open Championship 2020

Wednesday, September 16, 2020

Mamaroneck, New York, USA

Winged Foot Golf Club

## Webb Simpson

### Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: We would like to welcome Webb Simpson to the podium here at the 120th U.S. Open at Winged Foot golf course. Webb is the 2012 U.S. Open champion. Webb was a member of the 2007 Walker Cup team and is making his 10th career U.S. Open start. He's currently the 6th ranked player in the world. Webb, what are your first impressions of the golf course?

WEBB SIMPSON: It's in phenomenal shape, it's firm, I know there hasn't been a whole lot of rain up here lately. It's just hard. It's really hard. I know they have cut the rough the last few days, but I played in the U.S. Amateur here in 2004, I remember thinking this is a really hard golf course, but it's very fair. My caddie, Paul Tesori, caddied here in 2006 for Vijay and had the same thoughts. And so this is a, to me, a classic U.S. Open setup where it's brutally hard all day, but there's no tricks to it, you got to drive it in the fairway. And I'm sure the guys are saying the same stuff that if you're not in the fairway it's hard to score and I do think this will be a higher winning score U.S. Open than we have seen in a while.

THE MODERATOR: Great. Questions.

**Q. One of the things guys have kind of talked about this week that seems odd to me is kind of laying up on a par-3. Have you ever done that and would you consider doing it?**

WEBB SIMPSON: I've never done it, but it's definitely, it's definitely a hole where you cannot, you really don't want to go long and a lot of times we're going to have yardages where we're in between clubs and we're always going to hit the shorter club just to be short. So I hit a shot today, I couldn't quite get my 3-iron hybrid there, but I still didn't want to hit a 5-wood long, so I hit it and I was five yards short of the green perfect. I'm not going to purposefully lay up, but I will purposefully try to hit it short of the hole to the front pins. If I miss the green short, that's fine. I think if you make two pars and two bogeys there, you're with the field or beating the field.

**Q. Were you one of those guys who embraces the**

**harder it is the better you like it or is there a limit and where does this potentially rank on the scale of difficulty places you've played?**

WEBB SIMPSON: So I like for it to get as hard as it can get without them losing the golf course. I think a couple, we have seen a couple U.S. Opens where it might have gotten away from them and when something, when a golf course gets away from you, you're bringing in luck. We don't mind it to be really hard, we just don't like for luck to play a huge part. This is the epitome of a golf course where it's just hard, it kind of in your face all day, especially that finish, where the best golfer will win this week. I think there have been setups in the past where you could argue that the a great golfer with a good amount of luck won that week, but you're not going to have that here at Winged Foot. It's going to be whoever wins on Sunday is the best golfer here for the week.

**Q. Is there anything you find similar to Olympic here that might be an advantage to you?**

WEBB SIMPSON: I mean Olympic is similar in the sense that it's a classic, old-style golf course, doglegs, you have to shape some tee shots to hold the fairways. And again, Olympic was kind of brutally hard, not a lot of scoring holes. Out here there's only a few holes where you're going to have shorter shots in, you got to take advantage of those holes. So, yeah, there's some similarities for sure and we're going to have, looks like, great weather, so the golf course is going to get firm, a little bit more firm each day. I mean, I'm getting 40 yards of roll right now on some holes. But that's good, it's a long golf course. I don't think that's bad. And they're penalizing us when we hit a bad tee shot.

**Q. Brandel Chamblee this morning on Golf Channel was pointing out that despite the recent dominance of Dustin Johnson, Rahm, even Justin Thomas, that you are the best combination of length and accuracy off the tee, plus you're a better putter and you've won this championship before. So how do you feel your chances stack up in this event this year and with your understanding of the patience it takes to win at a place like this?**



WEBB SIMPSON: Yeah, I mean I'm coming in confident, I've been playing good golf for awhile, I have always loved this tournament. My first one was 2011 at Congressional, I grew up watching Payne Stewart make the putt in '99 at No. 2, I was a standard bearer that week as a 13 year old. So I've always loved the challenge and kind of the thoughts behind a U.S. Open. I love the idea of patience matters here. Some weeks you can get impatient and that's okay, but this week you have to stay patient. Every golfer is going to make tons of bogeys this week. So it's kind of the marathon mentality of kind of who can kind of hang on and play the 72 holes as well as they can. So, yeah, I like my chances. And I've been driving it well, I'm certainly not near as long as some of those guys you mentioned, but length on a week like this doesn't matter as much. It always helps but it doesn't matter as much.

**Q. You're also No. 1 in bogey avoidance on the tour and given the carnage that has happened here the past couple of times that it's been here, how important do you feel that will be, just eliminating those kind of mistakes to keep yourself relevant every day?**

WEBB SIMPSON: Yeah, I mean that's huge. Somebody told me yesterday that I think Geoff Ogilvy in 2006 hit less than half of the greens in regulation and it just shows how good his wedge game was, his pitching. And so that's been a major focus for us the last few days, because I'm going to miss fairways and I'm not going to be able to advance it that far, I know that. So how well can I control layups, I mean laying up most weeks out of the rough is pretty easy, you just hack it down there but this week it actually takes skill. And again, there's a huge emphasis on hitting good pitch shots, controlling them. And what I love about this golf course is the greens are crazy and they're undulating, but there's plenty of pins where slopes around the pin can really help you. So if you know what you're doing, these pitch shots and wedge shots, you actually have a little help. So it really does test every part of your game.

**Q. How do you compare the Webb Simpson who won in 2012 to the one who is teeing it up this week?**

WEBB SIMPSON: I think I've just, years of experience, I've learned a lot, I've endured a lot, had ups and downs. So I think then everything, I was kind of wide eyed and didn't know what to expect. Thankfully I was able to get the W. But I really, I just love the moments of getting into contention and trying to win. Whereas, I think then I was extremely nervous, not really knowing how to handle myself. So now I really, I look forward to that, that's where I hope to be on Sunday afternoon, and I think all around through the bag my game has gotten better and more solid and, yeah, just feel good. I'm getting older, I got my gray

hairs, but I feel young inside.

**Q. How do you feel about playing without fans? Do you thrive on that energy or is it more calming perhaps or does it, is it advantageous for the younger players perhaps, the more inexperienced players?**

WEBB SIMPSON: Yeah, I think guys that haven't played many major championships it's going to help because any major we're going to have 10, 12 deep on most every hole and the grandstands will be filled up. So I think for those guys it helps. For me, I love the crowd. There's more going on, but it, actually, I think the more going on, the more that's out there, the better focused we are. It's like when I get paired with Tiger or Phil, I've always loved it because with how many people are out there and how many moving parts and the golf carts and the cameras, you really got to zero in on what you're doing and it actually helps. So the PGA was obviously our only major without fans and I didn't play late so I didn't really experience kind of the lack of roars when Collin made eagle or somebody makes a long birdie putt, but those things, we miss those things and especially in New York where the fans are historically, they're just loud and they love golf, so we'll miss them this week.

**Q. Do you have a favorite New York moment in terms of fans? I mean, it's different up here and having an Open without them is going to be different, but do you have a moment that you remember that sort of got to the essence of what it's like?**

WEBB SIMPSON: No, I mean when I think of the fans in New York I just think of the volume, the noise is louder than anywhere. Boston tries to compete a little bit, but here it's just louder. I think people aren't afraid to kind of speak their mind when you hit a bad shot and that's part of it. We know that going in. And we appreciate that people care enough to come watch us and it's a bummer, it's a bummer for all these states and towns, but I think especially here hosting a major.

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