

# U.S. Open Championship 2023

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Los Angeles, California, USA

The Los Angeles Country Club

## Matt Fitzpatrick

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: Please join me in welcoming our defending champion, Matt Fitzpatrick. How does it feel to be back at the U.S. Open?

MATT FITZPATRICK: Yeah, amazing, absolutely amazing. I just can't believe it's been a year already. It's just gone so fast, and to kind of look around and remember that all this buildup was the same at Brookline, it's just very odd.

THE MODERATOR: You had a chance to come out to LACC in February. Talk a little bit about the course and what you've seen so far in your few hours here.

MATT FITZPATRICK: Yeah, unfortunately I have not seen the course yet, but February I think it was a little bit different. I don't think the rough had grown in yet. Obviously now it's a little bit thicker.

But yeah, from the pictures I've seen, it looks fantastic. It looks in great shape, and I'm excited to see it tomorrow.

**Q. You had to say goodbye to the trophy. Talk about returning it and maybe anything fun you did with it over the last year.**

MATT FITZPATRICK: I was so sad about that. Yeah, I didn't feel like I spent enough time with it, really. Literally probably the month right after the Open, after St Andrews, I went on holiday to Italy with some friends, so yeah, I took it there for a week. That's about as exciting as it got.

**Q. I know you answered the question about being here in February. Are there other resources that you have and a game plan for a golf course that you haven't played too many times to get ready for what could be four days of golf?**

MATT FITZPATRICK: No, unfortunately not. I guess in this day and age you'd like to think there might be some artificial intelligence you could use to kind of plot your way around, I guess.

But that's probably something I'll have to look into. I spoke

to Edoardo Molinari this morning about any questions I might have. He's going to try and have a look and see what he thinks and give me the best information he can.

That's probably the only thing that I would probably go to.

**Q. Could you talk about your thoughts on the LIV/PGA merger and whether or not you're keeping your options open legally as far as that goes?**

MATT FITZPATRICK: I'll be completely honest, I literally know as much as you. I'm sure everyone has gotten questions about it. I found out when everyone else found out. Yeah, honestly, I know literally nothing.

**Q. Do you feel less or more confused about that whole situation this year than this time last year at this tournament? Or less uncertainty --**

MATT FITZPATRICK: I guess, yeah, the whole thing is confusing, I guess. It was confusing last year.

I seem to remember just last year just thinking about the tournament, just the U.S. Open. It was obviously different because I had the tie to the golf course and the history there, so probably was easier for me to mentally focus on that and be in a better place than obviously all this confusion that's going on this week.

Yeah, I guess the whole thing is confusing, yeah.

**Q. I know you haven't seen the course in these kind of conditions yet, but 15 potentially on Saturday could play 78 yards. Is that interesting to you? What are your thoughts on that?**

MATT FITZPATRICK: I think that's amazing. I know there's par-3s here that are 293 yards, I think. Might be able to play a bit longer. I don't know the ins and outs.

Yeah, I would argue that at 78 yards, stood there with a lob wedge in your hand, you're going to be a little bit more intimidated than stood there with a 3-wood in your hand. I would probably say that's pretty truthful amongst everyone in the field.



I imagine that the target is going to be very small and you're going to have to hit a good shot.

I think we need more short par-3s that are challenging, so I'm excited to see what that looks like.

**Q. The trophy in Italy, where did it go in Italy?**

MATT FITZPATRICK: It went a few places, actually. We were on a boat, so to Capri, Amalfi, Positano. Had a few nice day trips out.

**Q. Last year your preparation was kind of focused on U.S. Open. You did some things. Can you talk about this year's preparation and is it different at all?**

MATT FITZPATRICK: Yeah, this year I would say is quite a bit different. I feel like the start of the year, I had a good obviously first event in Hawai'i and then got injured, and that kind of felt like it set me back quite a bit for February and March. Ended up obviously playing well in April.

I feel like my game is kind of getting in the right place. You asked me at Memorial after round 1 or 2 if I was trending. I certainly felt like Memorial and last week I was playing some good golf. I didn't necessarily score too well last week, but again, I had a slight flare-up on the Friday afternoon with my neck.

I definitely feel like my game is in better shape. I certainly don't think it's as good as it was last year.

**Q. Talk about the neck and what you did.**

MATT FITZPATRICK: It wasn't technically neck. It felt like that, but it was more effectively between my shoulder blades, really. Just purely like muscle tightness that obviously feels worse than it was. Got some work done on it, and it was better. Obviously allowed me to compete.

**Q. How is your relationship with Billy doing now that Leeds has been relegated and Sheffield United has gotten promoted?**

MATT FITZPATRICK: Yeah, he's been crying about it for a while. We're still fine for now, but it will be a test once the season starts again, I think.

**Q. You used the word "confusing" a couple times. What about the current situation in golf is most confusing to you?**

MATT FITZPATRICK: Well, I think I just don't know what's going on. I don't think anyone knows what's going on. Are

we signing with the PIF, are we not signing with the PIF? I have no idea.

Even though I guess it is confusing, it's pretty clear that nobody knows what's going on apart from about four people in the world.

**Q. Do you feel like you should be compensated for not going to LIV?**

MATT FITZPATRICK: Yeah, pass.

**Q. Talking to your peers over the last week or since this started, is it the same? Does everybody have the same kind of questions? Is everybody in the same position you're in, being confused and so uncertain and wondering what's going on with everybody on the TOUR?**

THE MODERATOR: I think it's been asked and answered so we're going to move on to U.S. Open topics.

**Q. Can you talk about the impact winning your first major has had on your mentality and how you managed that week to week, good or bad, having obviously a more natural higher expectation of yourself?**

MATT FITZPATRICK: Yeah, I think it's obviously been a huge boost. I think for me winning last year gave me the boost that when I played my best or when I play well I can compete with anyone and I can win a major.

I think that was the biggest thing for me to take away turning up to events, knowing that, okay, my game feels in good shape. I've got a chance to win this week, whereas maybe previously I've almost felt like I played well and not necessarily competed in majors, whereas now I feel like it's kind of the opposite.

As long as my game is there or thereabouts, I feel like I can perform.

**Q. Prior to that, would you turn up to majors thinking, I feel like I've got a really good chance of winning, or was it more getting in contention and now it's more, I can win at every major?**

MATT FITZPATRICK: Definitely. It was more about trying to get in contention, just putting myself in that position, giving myself a chance. I wouldn't necessarily say I felt like my best golf could compete with some of the guys out here.

I know I had conversations with my coaches about that,



about what guys did that I didn't. But certainly after last year I feel like I can compete.

**Q. You shared a little bit of insight of the short par-3 and the possibilities of the emotions going into that. What about some of the other holes here on this course, and where do you think it's a little more scorable? Could you share your game plan on some of those holes?**

MATT FITZPATRICK: Yeah, I played it 2018. I can't really remember too much about it. I did walk it the Sunday of Riv again without playing it. It's kind of hard to remember. I couldn't really give you any insight into that. Yeah, sorry.

**Q. With all the stuff going on in golf, can that be a distraction when you play a major, or is that stuff overrated?**

MATT FITZPATRICK: No, I think it's overrated. I think you're not going to be stood on the first tee thinking, oh what's going on in the golf world.

You're thinking, it's a par-4, where do I need to hit it, where is the wind. That's all you're thinking about.

**Q. Prior to a week ago, golf was headed to a big divisive issue over the rollback of the ball. Where does that stand right now? Where do you think it should stand with everything going on, and do you have an opinion on it?**

MATT FITZPATRICK: Yeah, I think my opinion is if you're going to roll the ball back, I think just do it for everyone so everyone is playing the same ball, and if it's going 30 yards shorter, then great, whatever.

I just don't think you should have a ball for the pros that might be used some tournaments, might not be used some tournaments, then amateurs can buy different golf balls. I don't think that would work. That would be my opinion.

If they roll it back, great. If they don't roll it back, also great. I'm kind of there. I think you've either going to go all in for everyone or not.

**Q. Should the timeline and process continue, or is this a bad time for it?**

MATT FITZPATRICK: Yeah, I guess. I think they just need to do testing and -- it's not my role. I don't understand the ins and outs. But I don't understand why they can't be like, we've done a bunch of testing with this shorter ball and it looks great, we're doing it, or not.

I don't understand why it's not that straightforward. But that's why I'm not doing that job.

**Q. What clubs are working for you right now, and do you expect those clubs to translate into this weekend?**

MATT FITZPATRICK: I feel like my approach play has been decent after the last few weeks. I feel like from my memory, this is a golf course that's going to be important for second shots, and hopefully can continue the trend of where I feel like my game is at with those clubs.

**Q. I know you haven't seen it now, but it is a bit drier and faster. From what you know of the course, how fast of a course is this from a pace-of-play standpoint?**

MATT FITZPATRICK: I have no idea. I think it'll be slow. I think the long par-3s tend to screw that one up. So yeah, I'd probably say -- it's five hours every week, so it will be nothing new here I would imagine.

**Q. How do you feel about the rule by which players and caddies cannot share information about clubs, what club they hit?**

MATT FITZPATRICK: I mean, guys come over to my bag to look at what club I've taken out. I go over to their bag, caddies go over to their bag, caddies come to my bag. That's the way the game works.

Even though sometimes it's picked up on on TV, everyone does it, and they'd be lying if they said that they didn't.

**Q. As you well know, that part is all legal and if you actually say it, it's different. So how do you feel about that distinction?**

MATT FITZPATRICK: I'll be honest, I don't want Billy saying we've hit 4 or 5 or -- I don't agree with that. At the end of the day, I've got a lot of friends out here that I play with. I'm still trying to beat them, and they're trying to beat me. You don't want to be giving them advice.

But at the same time it's glaringly obvious they can take 10 steps to the right and be like, oh, he's hit a 4-iron or a 5-iron. I think it's pretty tough to marshal effectively.

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