

# U.S. Women's Open

Wednesday, June 2, 2021  
San Francisco, California, USA  
The Olympic Club

## Rachel Heck

### Press Conference

THE MODERATOR: Please welcome to the 2021 U.S. Women's Open interview area, Rachel Heck. Heck will be making her second U.S. Women's Open appearance after tying for 33rd in 2017. Last August Heck was a stroke play medalist in the U.S. Women's Amateur before falling in the round of 16.

Rachel, what are your first impressions of the golf course?

RACHEL HECK: First of all, it's absolutely beautiful. Everything is in perfect shape, the greens are amazing, the fairways are so pristine.

The rough is so difficult. That will be, I think, the biggest challenge this week. It's crazy.

**Q. What does playing in the U.S. Women's Open mean to you?**

RACHEL HECK: It's so special. I watched this every year growing up, and I just aspired to be one of the players out there. To actually have that opportunity as an amateur is pretty unreal.

**Q. Have you prepared for this week any differently than others?**

RACHEL HECK: No, honestly, I haven't had much time to specifically prepare for this. We had our college season and postseason just wrapped up, so on to this now. I think just having the competition experience and having played a lot will be helpful.

**Q. How is the course playing differently than when you won a college event here not long ago?**

RACHEL HECK: The rough is completely different. When we hit it in the rough a month ago it was fine, you would just hit it on the green from there. It's a little different story this week. You've just got to take your medicine and get it out.

**Q. What are you able to hit out of the rough?**



RACHEL HECK: It depends. If it's really buried in there, I'll probably not go any higher than a 7- or 8-iron and just get it in the fairway, but sometimes you get lucky and have a good lie and can hit a longer iron.

**Q. Can you offer one example maybe of a practice round, of a hole where the rough was particularly bad or where you had to hit much less club than you'd hoped?**

RACHEL HECK: Well, that's not hard. My very first hole, I hit it in the rough on the left, and I thought, well, I'll just hit a 5-iron, and I hit that 40 yards straight into the rough again.

Then I was like, you know what, I need to hit it in the fairway. So then I hit it through the fairway into the other rough, and then I hit that on the green. So that was good right off the bat to see that.

**Q. This was on No. 1?**

RACHEL HECK: That was on the very first hole, yes.

**Q. When was that?**

RACHEL HECK: That was on Sunday. So, yeah, I think that was good to see. I think I tried to get a little too much out of it. I should have just hit it, taken a shorter iron, and got it in the fairway the first time.

**Q. So you got the wakeup call out of the way quickly?**

RACHEL HECK: Yeah, it was good for me, I think.

**Q. A couple of years ago, you suffered a back injury and had to pull out of the 2018 Junior PGA Championship after one round. In your Instagram caption, you wrote, You do not realize now what I'm doing, but later you will understand, John 13:7. How much does that bible verse mean to you right now?**

RACHEL HECK: Gosh, it means so much to me. If you look at this whole past year for everybody, nothing has gone to plan, and you know we can't possibly begin to understand why things are happening the way they are. I think that's something that's helped me a lot is just my faith and just trusting that He has a plan and it's all going to



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work out how it's supposed to.

**Q. You've had a lot of big moments lately. What's your energy level like? How have you been kind of able to regroup for this week?**

RACHEL HECK: Yeah, definitely in between events I've been trying to rest a little bit, just have light, easy practice sessions because it is hard going straight from Pac-12s to regionals to Nationals to here to the MediHeal next week. In between events, I'm trying to spend time with my friends and just have a normal college life and enjoy it.

It's hard not to be energized and excited when you're at the U.S. Women's Open.

**Q. One of the things we're focusing on this week is our LPGA USGA Girls Golf program and our 16 alums in the field, and you're one of them we're really excited and proud to follow. How did girls golf, growing up playing with girls and learning the game, help lay the foundation and prepare you for where you are today?**

RACHEL HECK: It was so important to me. I grew up, first of all, with my two sisters. I'm in the middle of three sisters, and we just grew up playing contests and playing with each other all the time and really pushing each other.

When I finally really did get into junior golf, and met my best friends through the game, just to see other empowered women playing such an incredible sport and making names for themselves is really inspiring.

To go from that to being here and seeing the pros that I've looked up to my whole life and just being surrounded by empowered women is really inspiring.

**Q. With empowered women, I'm seeing the pros that you grew up with. Now there's little girls growing up in the game looking at you. What does it mean to be an inspiration to girls?**

RACHEL HECK: It's crazy to think about that. I still don't really think about it. I still see myself as the wide-eyed little girl looking at the pros around me, and I think -- yeah, I've looked up to the pros, and I think that's always been a goal of mine to think that maybe one day little girls would look up to me the same way and be empowered to pave their own path and play golf.

It's really heartwarming to think that could be the case even now.

**Q. You mentioned being a college student. Are you done with the quarter? Are you still trying to study**

**while you do all this? Where is that?**

RACHEL HECK: This is actually our finals week right now. I have a paper that I told myself I'd write Monday and then I didn't start it, and then I kind of started it yesterday. And it's due Friday, and I have like three more pages to write, so I should get on that.

**Q. You're planning to finish that today? How would you juggle that with the first --**

RACHEL HECK: That's the plan, to finish it today. Will it happen? No. But that's the plan.

**Q. And one other unrelated question. I know you've played in a couple majors before. How different does this feel? I mean, majors here on this course with this weather seem like they have their own sort of distinctive personality. I know you haven't played in a ton of them, but you played in a few, three, I think. How different does this feel?**

RACHEL HECK: It's a completely different feel. It's so interesting. When I think U.S. Open, I think hot in the middle of the summer. I don't think bundling up to go play golf. I think that is the British Open in my mind.

So I think it is super interesting. It's such a unique venue for it, but it's really cool the women do get to play here at Olympic Club.

Yeah, I'm just going to enjoy walking the course. No matter how I play, it's such a special historic place, so I'm going to enjoy it.

**Q. How much have your coaches and teammates played a role in your success this semester?**

RACHEL HECK: They have been amazing. I think when I was -- our season got cancelled in the fall, and of course I was upset because I wanted to play golf, but, gosh, I just really wanted to be around them. They're the coolest people in the world. Coach Walker is amazing, Maddie is amazing. I love my teammates with all my heart. I'm just really disappointed that I didn't get to spend time with them. Now that I have been with them this spring, I've had the time of the life.

This morning driving to the course, I listened to the hype play list we all made for Nationals, and I got excited thinking about Nationals, even though it was last week. These are the moments I'm really going to look back on when I'm done with college. It's not necessarily going to be golf. It's going to be the time I spent with them.

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**Q. Last semester an interesting thing happened where you were playing basketball, kind of hurt your ankle. Talk a little bit about that. Were you nervous for the spring, and how did you kind of approach that situation?**

RACHEL HECK: Yeah, I was definitely nervous. Over Christmas break I was playing basketball with my friends, just show them what I got. I'm really bad at basketball, and five minutes into it, I sprained my ankle.

I don't really know how I didn't see that coming. So, yeah, I knew -- I was a little bit nervous going into the season not knowing how well I'd be able to walk on it and get through the course. The team at Stanford is great. My trainer is awesome, and they got me fixed up really quickly.

**Q. What's the paper on?**

RACHEL HECK: It's a policy memo for political science.

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