

U.S. Senior Open Championship

Tuesday, July 6, 2021

Omaha, Nebraska, USA

Omaha Country Club

Jim Furyk

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: Thanks so much for coming in, Jim Furyk, the 2003 U.S. Open champion, a 17-time winner on the PGA TOUR. Competing in your first U.S. Senior Open this year, but you've had a lot of success in USGA championships, seven top 5s in the U.S. Open, in addition to that win in 2003. Why do you think these tough setups really suit your game?

JIM FURYK: I've always been a player that -- so I figured it probably suits some of the strengths of my game, hitting fairways, kind of grinding out, par being a good score, short game, probably held on golf courses similar to what I grew up on. I grew up in the northeast part of the country in Pennsylvania, so the style -- a lot of those golf courses were very similar to what I grew up on and played.

I guess it's always been -- of the four majors, it's been the one that I thought gave me the best opportunity to win, and then you look at the bulk of my career. I did win one but had more opportunities to win a U.S. Open than any of the other four. You always have to be playing well, though. I always liken it to going to the U.S. Open -- everyone is are you excited to go to the U.S. Open? It's like sitting outside the principal's office knowing you're going to get paddled but you're excited to go in and see him type deal. Like not really. It's going to be hard. It's going to be difficult. You're going to have to hit fairways of the sometimes 74 is a good score, if that makes sense.

But when I'm playing well, I think that style of golf is good for my game.

THE MODERATOR: Specifically to this course, I believe you said this is your first time here this week, but from what you saw this morning during your practice round, what are some initial take-aways, and what do you think you need to do well here to be in contention on Sunday?

JIM FURYK: You've got your typical long rough. It's very long, very thick. The rough around the greens even gets thicker, and it's like a bowl grass around the collars that's

very difficult to chip out of. The greens have an unbelievable amount of undulation and slope in them. It's going to put a lot of pressure on the setup team to find four pin placements on the greens. That's how severe they are. And as always, you have to put the ball in the fairway.

It's going to be a difficult golf course, and scoring is not going to be -- I just don't see it being good this week. I want to see what happens with the rain, the moisture of the golf course, how firm and fast will the fairways get? There are some that have quite a bit of canter to them like 17. When it's a little softer, a little bit more damp, it's a little easier to hold the ball on the fairway, but if it gets dry, gets running firm and fast, anything in the right half of the fairway is going to want to take off and get to the rough.

I kind of want to see how much this golf course dries up. It's difficult now, but if it gets real firm and fast, it's going to be very difficult.

Q. You mentioned scoring-wise, I know it's tough to look into a crystal ball, but Kenny Perry won this tournament eight years ago at 13-under par. If conditions are such and stay similar to what they are today, is that attainable, 13-under? Would that be a surprise to you?

JIM FURYK: I don't see it. I have to tell you, the golf course has this much to do with the scores we shoot. The setup of the golf course is 80 percent of it. It's a hard golf course by design. It's one of those courses that, when you're setting it up, you're not worried about are they going to rip the golf course up? You're worried more about is it going to be playable in spots? Speed of greens is more dependent on how much slope and where do we have to put pin placements?

So I can't imagine the speed of these greens could ever get to 13-plus because you limit the amount of places where you could put pins. Like I said, that's my interest. When I said earlier I'm curious to see how much -- you know, how dry is it going to get? How firm and fast is it going to get? If it does, if it gets really firm, really fast, quick, I don't see 13-under par, but I guess he finished with like 63, 64. I'm still scratching my head and trying to figure out where that came from. That's some darn good golf. Did he win by a bunch?



Q. He won by five, I think, right?

JIM FURYK: I would hope.

Q. He was down ten and won by five.

JIM FURYK: 15-shot swing, could be worse.

Q. You're one of the few players who have had the chance to win a U.S. Open and a U.S. Senior Open. I think there's been seven in history to have done that double. What would that mean to you?

JIM FURYK: Well, definitely a nice trivia, and it would be really a nice feather in my cap, but I think more -- I have a history with USGA events and winning the U.S. Open. Every week I tee it up, I'm trying to figure out what it's going to take to get my game in the right place to try to compete and contend, but it would be a lot of fun, to be honest with you.

Like I said, it was always the event I thought gave me the best chance on the PGA TOUR, and now it's going to take a little bit of time playing the Champions Tour, Senior U.S. Open, to kind of get a feel for the courses, how they're set up. One of my first questions to Robbie on the way down was is this pretty indicative? Is this setup very similar to most Senior Opens, or is it kind of dependent on the course and it changes each and every year? I'm trying to get a feel for all that and how it will suit my game.

Out here you have a little bit smaller window. You look at PGA TOUR, I felt like I had a real good 15-year window to kind of win a major championship. Out here, unless you're Bernhard, usually most guys don't get a 15-year window, and I lost a year kind of, when you think about it, through COVID and also playing a little bit of the regular Tour.

I'm excited about it, and I'm kind of liking the new chapter and being part of the Champions Tour and here at the -- it's hard. I know I'm not supposed to say senior when I'm over there, and now I've got to say Senior U.S. Open. So learning the lingo.

Q. Welcome to Omaha. I'm just curious your thought, if you had any thoughts about Phil winning the PGA at that age and if that might impact guys, when they turn 50, maybe staying out there a little bit longer, maybe out there grinding at that level or coming here.

JIM FURYK: Everyone has to do what they're comfortable with. You have a guy like Vijay Singh and Davis Love, and they tended to want to stay on the PGA TOUR, but they also hit the ball really far and their games were kind of geared for the PGA TOUR. Then you get some guys that

they turn 50 and adios, we never saw them again.

I don't think what Phil does really is turning any trends or tides. He's a little bit of an outlier as it is. Phil's always been, in our age group, leaps and bounds ahead of the rest of the crew. He was good enough to win college events when he was a junior. He won a PGA TOUR event as an amateur. Now he's won, broken the record of the oldest major winner ever at 50. There's not a whole heck of a lot of Phil Mickelsons coming along in the next ten years.

So I don't think he's starting a trend where guys aren't going to want to come play the Champions Tour. There's going to be a few guys here and there who maybe wait until they're 52, 53, 54, but most guys when they turn 50, they're kind of ready. The PGA TOUR, as it gets younger and younger and younger, I think the Champions Tour will as well.

Q. You just played a practice round with Harry Rudolph, your teammate from the University of Arizona, whom you won an NCAA Championship with. What was it like to reconnect with him this morning?

JIM FURYK: We keep in touch. We don't text on a monthly basis. I still hear from a lot of my teammates. We roomed a lot on the road. We were the two veteran players when we won the National Championship. We were the two seniors on the team. It was great to see him catch up. He's always been a fun, happy-go-lucky, kind of like that California surfer kid. Nothing really seems to bother him too much. So it's always fun to be around Harry.

I kind of also today had a guy that I grew up playing junior golf in Pennsylvania, I knew him a little bit from junior golf in Pennsylvania, William Smith. Got to go back in time and see some old friends. So it was a good day.

Q. When you see Harry again and you know his journey -- not that he's had a bad life, but he didn't have the professional career that he wanted. Do you think about, hey, I'm lucky that it worked out for me because it doesn't work out for everybody.

JIM FURYK: Yeah, I think we all do. I think, when you're 35, I don't think that's the way you look at it, but as you get older and you start kind of trying to figure out, we had a very successful -- we had a National Championship team. We had -- Manny Zerman, two U.S. Amateur finals. Dave Berganio won two U.S. Amateur pub links. Harry was a first team All-American. We had a really special who's who. I never could put my thumb on why was I successful or why did I get to that level in the Tour? There's some

things that I think I did, but there's no real recipe of why things happen.

I think some of it's hard work. I think some of it's being fortunate at the right time and having things -- things progressed in my career probably at the speed they were supposed to. When Manny and Dave and Harry came out of school, they were all signed by an agent. They were all supposed to be PGA TOUR players, and they put a lot of expectations, a lot of pressure on them. I was just the kid with the funny swing that shot some decent scores once in a while, and no one really paid much attention to me. It was a blessing for me that I got to kind of progress at my own rate. Played a lot with Jerry on mini tour stuff when Carol was caddying for him. We kind of got to do things our way.

Then when it was time and we got maybe to that big show, I think we were probably ready for it because we did it on our own time.

FastScripts by ASAP Sports