

U.S. Senior Open Championship

Tuesday, July 6, 2021

Omaha, Nebraska, USA

Omaha Country Club

Harry Rudolph III

Press Conference

THE MODERATOR: My pleasure to welcome Harry Rudolph III here, playing in his first U.S. Senior Open, qualified at San Diego Country Club on June 14th.

Harry, thanks for joining us. Tell us a little bit about your journey in the game from being a high level amateur player, turned pro, left the game for a decade, returned as a reinstated amateur, and now pro again. Just kind of take us through some big picture stuff of your journey in golf.

HARRY RUDOLPH III: Makes me sound old, right? That's a lot of years in between. It's a long journey.

Growing up playing junior golf with a lot of guys who are here this week. Some of the guys I haven't seen in, quite honestly, 25-plus years. Got a practice round in with Mike Weir yesterday, played with Jim Furyk today. These are guys that I grew up with, played college golf with. Jim was my teammate. Stumbling upon guys at the driving range that we haven't seen, played in junior golf back then and coming up through college. I had my ups and downs through college as well, but at the end, Jim and I won a National Championship at University of Arizona.

That propelled both of us into a professional golf career. We both played Nike Tour together, and then one Q-School he made it through the final stage, and I missed the cut by one stroke. Next thing you know, like he's taking off on his career and obviously has done fairly well in the last 30 years, and then I couldn't just like crack that final stage in Q-School, which pretty much knocked me out of the game mentally, financially, emotionally, every which way.

Which got me into the work world, and I just blew through my professional career there pretty quickly, but it wasn't much. I thought I was going to just go to -- my family's had a restaurant in La Jolla, Harry's Coffee Shop for 60-something years now. I thought I was going to work for my dad and pay for my golf and work part time and play, and that just turned into full-time work. My dad needed the



help, and my brother, sister, and I bought the business from my mom and dad, and I worked there 20 years running the business and operating it with my siblings.

Somewhere in there after I quit playing for a long time, I had thought about reinstating for amateur for probably two years. I'd gone on to the website multiple times and just never submitted. One day I game home. I think I played with Gary Hallberg somewhere in San Diego, and he just looked me. That night I went home and submitted the reinstate amateur button and just decided to start playing for fun, which kind of got me back into the game and just enjoying the game a little bit, got me back into competition.

Then amateur golf, quite honestly, became too expensive. It was just too expensive. I couldn't do it. So then I kind of switched into pro golf again and tried to get out there and chase the Mondays for a while, and that just didn't happen. So I went back to work again.

Then two years ago I decided to start practicing for the Champions Tour qualifier. I gave it about six months ahead of time, I started practicing. I hadn't played a tournament -- I didn't play a tournament until the Q-School. I just kind of went into it to see what happens, made it to the finals. I had a chance the last day to get my card. I had a chance to get the top five spot and I missed it, with gave me the status to go to the Monday qualifiers, which I've been chasing, hadn't made any of those. Finally made it through at San Diego Country Club to get to this event, but even that took a six-hole playoff to get here.

So here I am ready to tee it up and just kind of see what happens for my after-50 career.

THE MODERATOR: You mentioned Jim Furyk, your college teammate. You played a practice round with him this morning. How much have you stayed in touch with Jim throughout the years?

HARRY RUDOLPH III: We haven't stayed in touch that much, to be honest, but it's like we don't even miss a beat when we see each other. It's just like we're right back where we were. We've always been good friends and friendly, but just life. He's on the road and has his family on the other side of the country. Once in a while, we'd see each other at a University of Arizona alumni event, but other than that, we haven't kept -- I should make a better



effort to be in touch with him, but like I said, we played today. It's like we haven't missed a beat.

Q. What are your expectations this week? What would be a successful week for you?

HARRY RUDOLPH III: To play with Jim Furyk on Sunday afternoon.

Q. How realistic is that?

HARRY RUDOLPH III: I think it's realistic. I could play with him.

Q. Because you've waited so long, do you have to block all that out just because you're on one of golf's biggest stages this week?

HARRY RUDOLPH III: Yeah, that's part of golf anyway, right? You've got to block everything out. It's not like I forgot how to play, even though I was away for a while. You're not in competitive situations, and even 72-hole events, quite honestly, are pretty rare, even in the Champions Tour. They're only 54-hole events.

Playing at home, I play mini tour stuff with the young guys, but even those are one-day events, sometimes two-day events. It's obviously a much bigger event here, and it's a national Open, and there's the best players in the world here that are over 50. Honestly, I'm going to have fun getting out here and competing and seeing where I stack up.

Q. Welcome to Omaha. Just wanted to get your thoughts on the course setup, the rough, all the fun stuff.

HARRY RUDOLPH III: So just to confirm, it is a Perry Maxwell golf course, right? I didn't know that playing right off the bat, but I went around the first time, and I actually -- I love the golf course. I like the way it looks and sets up. I personally like all the hills and the undulations and the ups and downs. I think that part is great.

Then I found out it was a Perry Maxwell. I won my first college golf tournament at a Perry Maxwell course in Oklahoma called Dornick Hills, so I'm fond of Perry Maxwell golf courses. When I found that out, I was like, oh, man, no wonder I like this place.

But the rough is tough. I hit a full 9-iron like 40 yards yesterday out of the rough. Today I was able to get it out of the rough a little bit better. I was in it more often, so I got more practice. Fairways are going to be key. Greens are obviously fairly slopey, and they're pretty fast. You're

going to have to be -- I'm going to play to the right side of the slope a lot of the time. Even if I'm short, I'm going to try to be hitting it up the slope because the chipping is pretty tough around the greens. And there's some long holes.

I hit the ball pretty far, so I'm not that concerned about the length. I just need to find the fairways.

Q. How is Jim's game? He'll be one of the favorites obviously here. Is he playing well?

HARRY RUDOLPH III: Jim is playing great. He's a fairway finder and shot maker. He's just so consistent, he's amazing. His short game's great. He putts it good. He's definitely a favorite going into this week. Just watching him get it around, trying to pick his brain, kind of picking his brain on some of the short shots around the greens is kind of fun to see how he does it and where he learned some of those shots and pass along some of the information.

Q. Going back to your journey through a couple of the stages here, first of all, when you were a junior, you were going head to head with Mickelson, and you were winning just like he was at that time. What was that like? Obviously, you did well in some USGA events at that time also. What was your mindset at that point in your life?

HARRY RUDOLPH III: The USGA events, I played well in. I was a medalist at a U.S. Junior event when I was a kid. When I was 17 years old, I made it to the final 16 in the U.S. Am and was having some success there.

Like I always said, looking back, playing against Mickelson, had I known then he would be one of the best players ever, I might have cut myself some slack for losing to him often. But he and I have had a good relationship. Back then it was a rivalry, and now we play a lot of golf together at home, so he's helped me with my game. Just getting out there and playing with him and competing against him. Obviously, if he was here, he'd be one of the favorites, if not the favorites, considering he's a PGA champion.

But he helps me a lot, just kind of grinding against him at home and practicing. Back then, like I said, it was a rivalry, and we pushed each other pretty hard. I think probably as hard as anybody could back as a young golfer from 6 years old until whenever, after college. Then I didn't see him too much because I didn't get on the PGA TOUR, but obviously he did.

Q. As a followup, obviously you did well on the collegiate level, but it didn't necessarily happen for you right after that as a professional. Were there times that you doubted yourself and your game, and did you

ever wonder, gee, why isn't this happening for me like it is for others?

HARRY RUDOLPH III: Yeah, every day. You look at all the guys that we're competing against, not only were they winning, but they're also winning majors. Justin Leonard, David Duval, Mike Weir, Jim Furyk, just to name a couple guys, Tim Herron. So many guys that I grew up playing against, they were making it, right?

I played everywhere. I played in Canada. I played in Asia, Australia, South America, Nike Tour, every mini tour. It's just every year I was constantly qualifying for my job, and that just wore me out at the end of the day. Like I said, it just kind of wore me out emotionally.

Looking back, I wish I would have just maybe stepped away from the game for six months and then kind of given it a push again just to kind of refresh, but like I said, at that point, I didn't know that I was going to be transitioning into the restaurant industry. I picked the two hardest jobs that are out there, golf and the restaurant business.

Yeah, I wouldn't trade it. At the same time as I was transitioning, I met my wife, I bought a house, I have two kids. So things shifted dramatically another direction and just ran with that until now. So giving it another go.

Q. Once you got into the restaurant business, obviously, some of us have worked in a restaurant, so we know how hard it is. What are maybe some of the things that you learned working in that business that can help you now? Also, what are maybe one or two things that you did in the ten years you didn't play golf that you might have not done if you had been a professional golfer?

HARRY RUDOLPH III: The number one thing in the restaurant business is, I'd say, work ethic. It's very much like golf in the aspect that it just never ends. You could have the best day ever in sales in any restaurant and you still have to open up the next day and be ready to go again. Golf, you could shoot 62, and tomorrow it doesn't matter. You've got to go out and perform the next day. So there's a lot of parallels in terms of that. That's probably the best analogy I could give between the two industries.

It's just never-ending. You can never perfect it. You just have to keep on grinding. Getting up early in the morning, my hours typically were I was opening the shop at 5:00 a.m., and a lot of days I was there until 5:00 p.m.

it makes going out and having a six, seven, eight-hour day on a golf course look pretty good.

I forget what the second part of your question was.

Q. Maybe one or two things that you did in that ten-year club that you put the clubs away that you maybe wouldn't have done?

HARRY RUDOLPH III: Getting married, buying a house, having kids. I'm not sure I'd be able to do any of those things if I was still out competing, just the lifestyle. A lot of guys here have done it. It wasn't looking that way for me. It was much of a single life on Tour and solitary. It got a bit lonely out there. I'm sure you've heard that from lots of guys. Being on the road is tough. I'm sure the guys who have had the longevity of playing 30-plus years and they're still here competing, that's not easy to do. I don't think they get enough credit for just enduring all the ups and downs of the game.

Q. What were your responsibilities while working for the family business?

HARRY RUDOLPH III: At the family business? I was on the floor, basically a general manager, boss, managing every aspect from inventory, hiring, firing, payroll, you name it, banking, everything. I did it all. Customer complaints, customer compliments, cash register, taking money, everything. So that was my job.

Q. Were there long stretches where you, not just didn't play competitively, but didn't play golf at all when you were away from the competitive game?

HARRY RUDOLPH III: Very long stretches, yeah. When I quit, I quit. I didn't watch golf. I didn't read about golf. I didn't play golf. I was done with it. It was kind of when Tiger was really taking off, and honestly, I didn't really watch Tiger play a whole lot because I wasn't watching any golf to the point where I didn't recognize a lot of guys' names that were on the Tour.

I know one time Stephen Ames came in with his coach to our restaurant. I probably shouldn't admit it, but he came down and sat down with his golf coach. I knew he was a golfer, and I made some dumb comment like so you're out there playing any Tour this year? And I didn't realize that the previous year he had won THE PLAYERS Championship. And I'm asking him if he's got any eligibility on Tour. That's how far out of the game I was that I didn't even know.

Anyways, Stephen, if you're here, you probably don't remember that conversation but --

Q. What are some of the biggest changes from when you left the game to when you returned competitively

since there was a pretty significant gap?

HARRY RUDOLPH III: Distance. The ball going straighter and distance, that was the biggest thing that I noticed. I always hit the ball pretty far before, and it's just kind of fun to be able to keep hitting it further even though you've taken a bunch of years off and aged, you're still able to get the ball out there.

Q. What was the largest tip that you got or someone got at the coffee shop? Was there a big one that came in, a good story?

HARRY RUDOLPH III: That's probably Mickelson related, when he would come in. He was a very popular customer with the waitresses when he would come in. I didn't get any tips. If I ever got a tip, I always gave it to the staff. So I didn't pocket the tips, but I would say it's probably Mickelson related.

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