

# USGA Media Conference

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USA

**John Bodenhamer**

**Rick Palmer**

**Gil Hanse**

**Andy North**

**Beth Major**

Press Conference



purpose for that great championship and elevating all aspects of the U.S. Women's Open and taking it to some of the game's greatest and iconic venues as well. Very proud of that.

But it doesn't end there for the USGA and Oakland Hills Country Club. We have a long and proud history together, as many of you know, and today we're thrilled to announce six more championships for a total of eight championships over the next 29 years, wow.

We will truly embrace in an amazing way our longtime friend and partner at Oakland Hills Country Club, and please allow me the honor to announce the following.

Oakland Hills Country Club will host the 2024 U.S. Junior Amateur championship, the 2029 U.S. Women's Amateur, and yes, the 2034 U.S. Open will return to Oakland Hills. The 2038 U.S. Junior Girls championship, the 2047 U.S. Amateur championship, and believe it or not, the 2051 U.S. Open championship. The monster will be celebrated in 2051, and I plan to be there to see it.

Of course added to that are the 2031 and 2042 U.S. Women's Opens for that run of eight amazing championships for what is a long term strategic partnership that we're very proud of with Oakland Hills Country Club.

What a lineup. It's not every day that the USGA announces six televised USGA championships, well eight in all, and in this case it really is something that is unique, but really most unique is the special playing field that Donald Ross said, I rarely find a property so well suited for a golf course. All of us at the USGA agree.

It is a testament to our relationship with Oakland Hills and the incredible history that we share together. I might mention that this run of championships that you see behind me is quite special on a number of fronts. It represents on every front our player journey, strategically the way that we look at it.

You think about our relationship with the players, it's a strategic priority in that building relationships when they're playing in our junior championships up through our amateur championships and then the Opens. It builds a case with them about what we do for the game in conducting championships and much more to grow the

JOHN BODENHAMER: Good morning, everyone. I'm John Bodenhamer. I have the privilege of serving as the USGA's chief championships officer. I would like to welcome you all to the magnificent Detroit Athletic Club. What a wonderful place. I have not been here. It is a treat to be here and really fitting today to be at this location, which was, as I understand it, the founding location of Oakland Hills Country Club back in 1916. Pretty ironic, but very fitting.

Well, it's been a challenging time for Oakland Hills Country Club in recent weeks, and today we're about to share some wonderfully good news for the club, the USGA, and the game of golf.

USGA championships are both aspirational and inspirational. They showcase and celebrate the world's best players and give them the stage for achieving their dreams. Players of all ages and all backgrounds, both individuals and teams alike with our championships. In doing so, we host the National Championships in America, showcasing the nation's very best golf courses, which we like to think are the cathedrals of the game. We love that term. That's a Jason Gore coined term.

Today we're furthering a longstanding relationship that does just that. It pairs our best in place National Championships with one of America's greatest championship venues, a true cathedral of the game, that is Oakland Hills Country Club.

In early January we announced that two U.S. Women's Open championships in 2031 and 2042 would be going to Oakland Hills Country Club. It was part of a historic announcement that included bringing ProMedica on as our presenting sponsor for the U.S. Women's Open. And we announced the record setting, as you recall, \$10 million



game.

There's also an important play on equity, and Oakland Hills has a proud history with women's golf, and we plan to further that. I'm proud to say that the USGA has been about the game since day one, 1894 when we were founded. The U.S. Amateur was our first championship, and oh by the way, as an afterthought, the U.S. Open was first played, and a few days later was the U.S. Women's Amateur.

We've been about the game, men and women together, since day one, and we're very proud of that. And that's showcased with this lineup.

As you all might imagine, it's been a multiyear journey between the USGA and Oakland Hills that has culminated in today's announcement. Reaching this agreement with Oakland Hills Country Club several months ago was a milestone moment for us and the club. Given the breadth of these championships today, it's just remarkable. Given everything the club has been through in the last few weeks, we are honored they wanted to move forward with this announcement and this run of championships in the years that we originally discussed. It's quite amazing.

There are many who have played an integral part, and they're too numerous to mention, those from Oakland Hills, but let me mention just a few. Gil Hanse and his partner Jim Wagner. We know Gil and Jim very well through their work at some of the greatest places in the game. And we admire not only their work but the time and care they take to do the research necessary to truly achieve something special and remarkable in restoring special places to their architectural origins.

Gil, kudos, you've done that at Oakland Hills Country Club in restoring this Donald Ross masterpiece.

Past president Tom Stacy led the initial charge five years ago when we really initiated in an intentional way discussions with the club. I'll never forget he and a group of leaders, Don Noble and a few others, Mike Dietz, others, joined us at our annual meeting in 2017 in San Antonio armed with plans in hand that Gil had shared with them and asked, what would it take to restore our relationship? Tom, thank you for asking that question. We stand here today because of that question.

Mike Dietz, past president who followed Tom, whose indomitable and positive spirit and amazing connections here in Motown, reintroduced us to Detroit and gave all of us at the USGA the faith that the U.S. Open could return to Detroit and thrive at Oakland Hills Country Club. We couldn't be more excited. Thank you, Mike, for giving us

that jump start.

And certainly, Rick Palmer, current president at Oakland Hills, his steady no nonsense leadership has been there from the start. He'll be needed now more than ever in a time of renewal for Oakland Hills Country Club as they rebuild their clubhouse. Thank you for your friendship, Rick. It means the world.

I can't leave out the staff, Steve Brady, head golf professional, whose hospitality and expertise as a player has been second to none throughout the process. Thank you, Steve.

Phil Cuffare, the director of agronomy, who worked closely with Gil and Jim to bring Gil's work to life at Oakland Hills Country Club. I remember stepping out on some of Phil's turf nurseries a couple of years ago and seeing the various strains of grasses that Phil had cultivated to go into some of what Gil was imagining. Just bravo, Phil, for bringing Gil's work and Jim's work to life. Just really, really amazing work.

And then our buddy Christine Pooler, general manager at Oakland Hills. From past history, we know Christine very well, and we know her to be a dynamic leader. She's the right person at the right time in this moment to lead Oakland Hills, and she will raise up a new clubhouse along with their amazing team on the board and the membership, and from ashes will come triumph. We thank Christine for her leadership and her friendship. We look forward to working with her for many years to come.

Our history with Oakland Hills Country Club dates back to 1924. The club has hosted 11 USGA National Championships, including six U.S. Opens. Now, think about this. When we bring the U.S. Open back here in 2034, it will be 110 years after hosting one here in 1924. Amazing to see a venue with 110-year history with the U.S. Open. There aren't many of those.

When we stage a U.S. Open here in, yes, 2051, it will 100 years since Ben Hogan tamed the monster in an historic and memorable championship which later he stated in some of his remarks, including the toughest 18 holes he had ever seen. Pretty strong from a guy who may be the greatest ball striker that ever lived, at least one of them.

You heard me say this before, but the USGA believes that our venues differentiate our championships from all others. Does it matter where a player wins his or her USGA championship? It does matter where they win, as Nick Price said in our championship committee meeting, it does matter where they win their U.S. Open, men or women.

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Those special moments from the past, whether they're Hogan or Palmer or Nicklaus, those are special moments, and those ghosts of the past do matter to the players. They want to win where those special moments have been created. It makes their championship win, whether an Open or an Amateur, that much more special. And those ghosts wander the property here at Oakland Hills Country Club, and we look forward to making more memories.

We could not be more proud and excited that eight more members will be able to say they earned their title at Oakland Hills Country Club, not only joining the likes of Ben Hogan, Glenna Collett-Vare, Gene Littler, Arnold Palmer, Jack Nicklaus, Steve Jones, yes, Andy North to name a few. It really is an amazing time of renewal, and we look forward to celebrating all of that and more with our partner at Oakland Hills Country Club.

Without further ado, I'd like to introduce club president Rick Palmer to take it away.

(Applause).

RICK PALMER: Wow, what a great day to be a member at Oakland Hills Country Club. Eight championships, including two U.S. Opens in 2034 and 2051, to go along with our previously announced, as John mentioned, two U.S. Women's Open championships, and a 29-year partnership with the USGA. We are thrilled, excited, and honored. Thank you very much.

I also want to say to John and Mark, you guys coming to Detroit to stand with us and make this announcement in our great city is extraordinarily appreciated. We thank you.

It really is a great way to end what's been kind of an emotional month for us. It comes to mind, I'm pretty humbled today, I kind of feel like the offensive lineman that recovered a fumble in the end zone, and the referee blew a whistle and said, hey, we won the game because there are so many people that have made this moment possible. And at the risk of ignoring probably many, I do want to acknowledge a few.

As you know, an announcement like this is not just for Oakland Hills, it's for the golf community in Michigan, and it's for the great community and sports town of Southeast Michigan with its economic benefit. Pleased today that Chris Whitten, the executive director of the Golf Association of Michigan, and Dave Beachnau, the executive director of the Detroit Sports Commission, could be here for the announcement.

Secondly, I'll repeat a little bit because John and I didn't rehearse. So our professional staff, Phil Cuffare, director

of agronomy; Steve Brady, our head professional, member of Michigan Golf Hall of Fame, and two-time U.S. Open participant as a player; and Christine Pooler, our general manager. They have been intricately involved every step of the way -- conference calls, meetings, course tours -- and your input has been invaluable. We're pleased to have you all.

Next our board of directors that's here and many of our past presidents and their board of directors, and in particular, our future championship committee co-chaired by Tom Stacy and Mike Dietz. Your leadership in getting us this process has been the driving force, and we thank you for that.

But most importantly, to our members. Six years ago we started in on a process. Our resolve was to make Oakland Hills a better place than when we found it as stewards of the members. We did have a secondary goal to make the restoration so viable that it would be a viable option and considered for hosting future major championships.

I will point out it was amazing that Gil and Jim through their meetings and John and Mark and Jeff Hall and Jason Gore, through all their meetings, their message to us was entirely consistent, do what's best for your members at Oakland Hills. Don't make course design decisions on the basis of hoping to host a major championship.

Well, it was our secondary goal, and here we are. So we're pretty pleased with that.

And to conclude my remarks, I would like you to allow me to read from our vision statement that was put in by our members some 40 years ago, and it reads in part:

Our golf courses and members have played and will continue to play an integral part in the history of golf in the United States. We are dedicated to providing the resources to preserve our courses as championship venues to host state, national, and international championships.

My fellow members at Oakland Hills, I say job well done.

At this point, I'm pleased to welcome the architect for the restoration of the South Course, Mr. Gil Hanse. Thank you.

(Applause).

GIL HANSE: Thank you, Rick. Thanks, everybody. It is indeed a great day for the Oakland Hills Country Club. Excited to be here.



As has been mentioned, it's been about six years. Charlie Fritz was the president we were interviewing at that point in time to be involved in the restoration of the golf course, and I think the thing that we talked an awful lot about was Donald Ross, and Ross' input in the design and the quality of what he built and obviously the magnificence of his creation on the south but also on the north.

So from that standpoint, we looked at what can we do, through the prism of looking at Donald Ross and the original design, to create first and foremost a great golfing experience for the membership, and then secondly look at what it takes to host a major championship at this point in time.

We had a little bit of a detour on the way. Appropriately the membership wanted us to take a second look at the master plan, and we did so, and I think ultimately it turned out that it was better. It made the project better. It made the outcome better. And it ultimately made this a result that I think all the membership at Oakland Hills can feel very proud of.

So from that standpoint, we looked, we researched, we looked at the 1929 U.S. Women's Amateur program which came our way through the archives of the club. We really tried the best that we possibly could to put back what Donald Ross had created.

We had some great talented people working with us on the golf course, principally from our standpoint. Kye Goalby, Blake Conant did a lot of the shaping work out on the golf course. Their passion and attention to detail frequently was maddening to me, but at the end of the day, it really made sure that everything turned out for the best.

And as I'm always accompanied on this journey, my partner Jim Wagner is as responsible for any success and any of the things that we get to do in this business and the places that we get to work. So Jim's around. Feel free to talk to him later on as well because everything we do Jim makes better.

When you work on a project and you spend time -- when we looked back on this, we were talking about being down here at the DAC. I was fully expecting the summer of 2020 was going to be spent coming down to baseball games and really having a good time in downtown Detroit, and this pandemic thing got in the way. So I spent a lot more time driving from my home in Philadelphia to Detroit because of the lack of air travel or at least worried about air travel than I did actually going to any baseball games or spending any time downtown.

But it was an interesting time for us to do a project. I

mean, everybody was so focused on what was happening onsite. We were very involved in all of the details, and our partner in that as well was Phil Cuffare, the golf course superintendent and his team.

I can honestly say we have rarely worked with a team as dedicated and as competent in doing what they do but also grasping and understanding the architectural work that was being done, never letting any detail go unnoticed, making sure that we got everything right and that we put everything in the ground in the right way, all the infrastructural improvements that occurred, that the membership supported and put in.

So from that standpoint, our partner in the dirt, Phil, your whole team, they were amazing. We get to -- superintendents unfortunately, in my mind, I think they're the least appreciated men in our business. As architects, we get to stand up here and kiss babies and shake hands, but at the end of the day, it's the superintendents who make our work come to life. And our partnership with Phil and his team is one that we treasure on a personal level, but on a professional level we understand fully how it's made our work better.

Steve Brady, golf pro extraordinaire -- I didn't realize about the Hall of Fame stuff. I would have treated him with a little bit more respect if I knew all that.

(Laughter).

We actually got him out there with a shovel and a rake helping us on a few of the greens. For him to jump in and contribute like that, but also any time we needed anything from the perspective of how do the members play the golf course, how do they appreciate it, how do they understand it, he was extremely helpful in all of that information. So thank you for your input.

Christine -- John, you're absolutely right -- you're the right person in the right place for what's unfortunately occurred, but I have no doubts that you're going to make it better, and it's going to be a better place at the end of the day.

The leadership -- Rick, Mike, Tom, all the guys who stuck with us through the entire process -- the board who gave us the freedom and flexibility to make decisions in the field because at the end of the day, that's where the real stuff happens. You have a plan in your hand and you have a concept and an idea, but when you're physically building, something occurs to you or something comes up or something can possibly be made better, we couldn't have asked for more support than we got from the leadership at the club. From that standpoint, I want to say thank you to all of you.

 . . . when all is said, we're done.®



It's a fun day for us. It's an exciting day. It's not in any way, shape, or form a culmination of the work that we've done. This is an ongoing process, and we're excited to be partnered with the club and partnered with the USGA in trying to make all the championships that are going to occur here better.

So thank you. And with that, man who needs no introduction. Oh, you're going to introduce him. I will step aside.

(Laughter).

BETH MAJOR: Thank you, Gil. Thanks also to Rick and to John. It's such an exciting day. Personally, as someone who has been a part of several USGA championships at Oakland Hills, I hope that the sense of friendship and true camaraderie that exists between the USGA and Oakland Hills and all of the wonderful people there comes through today. We are genuinely excited to be making this announcement.

29 years, John, I'll be right there with you in 2051 as well. So we look forward to many, many more years to come.

Before we start our question and answer session, I would like to introduce a special guest who knows a fair bit about memorable moments of USGA championships at Oakland Hills. Andy North, who counts among his professional victories, the 1978 and 1985 U.S. Open championships. In 1985 at Oakland Hills, Andy was the only player to finish under par en route to his one-shot victory. I'd like to welcome Andy to the stage.

(Applause).

ANDY NORTH: Since I'm older than these guys, I get to sit down. That's nice of you. Thank you.

BETH MAJOR: We have a video for everyone.

(Andy North video played.)

BETH MAJOR: It's a pleasure to have you here today. I'm sure watching that brings back some memories.

ANDY NORTH: Who was that?

BETH MAJOR: Can you offer some recollections and thoughts on Oakland Hills in 1985.

ANDY NORTH: Before I begin, let me congratulate Oakland Hills and the USGA for making great decisions. The job his team did, Phil, to get us all back on track when

we needed it, I'm really excited for that.

The fact that the first Junior Amateur I played in was 56 years ago, and to have been able to play it at Oakland Hills, where Charlie Woods will probably be the favorite in '24, it would have been unbelievable. It was a great experience, but to be able to play those championships as kids at Oakland Hills and some of the other great venues we're going to have it, congratulations to USGA for doing that.

Great. Now we're ready for whatever you want to do.

BETH MAJOR: So who was that guy? That was most certainly the wonderful 1985 U.S. Open champion at Oakland Hills. Can you offer some recollections about that week and what being a USGA champion at Oakland Hills means?

ANDY NORTH: After I won in '78, I played okay for a while. I had a whole bunch of injuries, got barbecued in the press for being terrible, you know, some of the things that happened.

Anyway, I'd come back -- had an operation and came back in '85 and really played some really good golf through the '85 season. A really good tournament, but more so, really was playing some good golf.

The week before at Westchester, I'd missed the cut and was staying with some friends. We went up and spent Saturday fiddling around looking at some property and just killing the day. About 4:00 in the afternoon, I said, I need to go to Detroit. I want to get there so I can spend some time tomorrow and figure out what I'm doing.

And I got in late Saturday night, went to the golf course Sunday morning. I think I was the first person there. I went to the range, hit some balls, and sort of figured out what I was doing. You know, you have one of those magical moments that we've all -- everybody who's ever played the stupid game has at one point in time or another. And sort of figured out what I needed to do.

I hit 15 or 20 balls that all of a sudden it felt like you wanted it to feel like, and I really felt good about what I was doing.

And I went back to the hotel and put together a practice plan for the week. My idea is I wanted to get as much done as I possibly could do without spending very much time at the golf course. So often at major championships you spend all day out there because it takes so long to play practice rounds. It's just guys are -- it's six hours, seven hours to get around the golf course, which makes no sense to me.

So I decided I was going to play late in the evenings and went back out Sunday afternoon and played nine holes at about 5:00, only person there, hit extra chips, extra putts, whatever you needed to do to try to figure out what you're doing. I did the same thing all week long. I played back nine at 7:30 in the morning on Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, and then played the front nine late in the day.

I felt like -- we had some rain come in on Wednesday. I was completely prepared to play, and very seldom do you get to -- you try to get your game to where it's at a great point going to majors. That's what all the players try to do, but it very seldom happens. Sometimes it's too early. Sometimes it's too late. I felt like this is one of the first times in my career I absolutely knew what I was wanted to do, I knew how to play the golf course. I'd figured it out.

When I played the PGA five, six years earlier there, I had no idea how to play the golf course, and I ended up missing the cut. I walked away going like, well, this is -- I can't stand this place. What am I doing?

But I figured out how I wanted to play the golf course, and I was able to go out there the first three days and execute exactly what I wanted to do. I played beautifully. I think I led the field in greens hit in regulations, fairways hit, all the things you need to do at a U.S. Open to compete well the first three rounds.

Then got up Sunday morning and went to the range and had absolutely nothing. I couldn't find it. I had no idea what I was -- you think you have an idea what it is, but you're struggling. I didn't hit very many solid shots, and I really struggled the first 11 holes. I think I was -- what would I have been, 4-over maybe the first 11 holes, and I'd let everybody back in the golf tournament.

I hit it in the right-hand bunker that doesn't exist at 12 anymore off the tee and hit a 5-iron out of that bunker to layup down in that area in that valley short where you've got a 9-iron or pitching wedge left. The shot I hit out of the bunker at 12 all of a sudden felt right. It was one of those things, you had a good feeling again. I hit a beautiful third shot in there, missed a short putt for birdie.

Then at the 13th hole, I hit a 5-iron about 12 feet from the hole and made that for birdie. From that point on, I hit the ball really, really solidly the rest of the way in.

It's funny in this game how you completely can lose it and you can get it back somehow. That's what makes it magical. When you think you've got it figured out, you're in big trouble (laughter). That's usually the case. When you're completely lost, that's when guys come back and

win golf tournaments.

So it was a magical week for me. So many things went right that week. You obviously have to have the help of other players sometimes, and T.C. helped out quite a bit, if any of you are old enough to remember that. But all in all, it was a great experience, and it's something that you take an awful lot of pride in to be able to win on a great golf course.

I think that's the first time anybody had broken par at Oakland Hills in a major championship, so that was pretty cool.

BETH MAJOR: Andy, John talked about two things you've touched on, and I just wanted to ask you to elaborate a little bit, both the concept of winning on a cathedral of the game like Oakland Hills, and then also the player journey. You talked about what an opportunity it is for a junior player to experience their first junior major experience at a club like Oakland Hills. Can you talk about how important those two things are to players?

ANDY NORTH: I think, first of all, from the journey itself, I was a huge fan of the USGA from the time I was a little kid. To play in the U.S. Junior was the ultimate event to play in, and I was lucky enough to qualify a couple of times and get to play, and I got beat the finals at Twin Hills in Oklahoma City a million years ago, '67, I think it was.

I played in the National Amateur when it was match play. I think I played four years in a row on that and the qualifying process and whatever.

The U.S. Open, I tried qualifying for the U.S. Open ten times before I got in. I started at 15 years old and would go out there and figure, I'm going to do this. You've got -- you're playing junior golf with guys -- Jim Simons was one of my best friends from junior golf. He qualified as a 17 or 18-year-old at Merion and actually probably should have won the golf tournament. He had a great chance to win the golf tournament. These two guys, Trevino and Nicklaus, ended up beating him.

So that whole journey to -- the USGA, in my opinion, did things the right way. They set the golf courses up the right way. I love the fact that par was a really good score. You had to be able to play golf to make pars on their championships.

Then finally got in the U.S. Open and loved it. I thought, one, to me it was the best event in the world. It was set up that it identified usually the best players. You had to play great golf. You had to be physically and mentally able to get through the week, which sometimes that's not the case,

but I loved it.

The very first one I played in was at Medinah and got a chance to play with Ray Floyd on Sunday and ended up playing well enough to get back in the Open and go get in the Masters for the first time. So it really was a great starting point for the rest of my career at the USGA.

BETH MAJOR: Wonderful. So we've talked a lot about the playing experience, but Andy, you've obviously spent many years from a broadcast perspective. Can you talk about what watching a major championship at a U.S. Open at Oakland Hills is like, whether you're watching it on television or there in person enjoying the event?

ANDY NORTH: I think the fact that this is what makes major championships so beautiful, that you get the chance to go back. If you look at our major championships, the Masters is so unique because it's played on the same golf course every year, but I think the fact that the other three majors have to have an identity of also playing wonderful facilities.

And you can remember it's -- usually in enough time you can remember the last time it was there. I've been lucky enough to do a lot of television at Pebble Beach and Shinnecock and Merion and some of the other great sites that we've had. It's neat to be able to go back there and remember -- you know, you probably dig up stories you use during the week, like Trevino and Nicklaus in the playoff or Trevino throws a snake at Nicklaus on the 1st tee in the playoff at Merion. You go back there and do the event, those are the kinds of things you bring back up.

To remember great shots by players, I think that's what the fan really loves to watch. From a broadcasting standpoint, that's been an awful lot of fun too, that you got a chance to play these venues in the Open, and now you get to go back there and actually do TV there. It's pretty cool.

BETH MAJOR: We're about to bring up our other two speakers today. Gil, Rick, John, please join us at the podium. While they get settled, we are going to take questions both from in the room and also from everyone who's joined us. So everyone knows, we have more than 125 folks who have joined us from across the country on the Cisco WebEx. Thank you to all of you for joining us as well. I'll open it to questions.

**Q. You spoke about the annual meeting in 2017 with Tom Stacy, and you say he asked you what would it take to restore our relationship? What did it take, and why did the relationship need restoring? Was there an issue there?**

JOHN BODENHAMER: I think it was more about the process and the place that Oakland Hills was in as a golf course. They were on a journey. They wanted to achieve some things. And the question did come, what do we need to do to host a major championship? Rick said it, it is a theme for us. It is a genuine belief that these great clubs need to do what's best for their membership.

We can adjust the great venues from the masters that created them, the Donald Ross, the William Flynn's, the Hugh Wilsons, all of those, the bones are there. You can play a major championship on many of them.

But it wasn't for us to come in and tell Oakland Hills what to do to have another U.S. Open or U.S. Women's Open. It was really about doing what was right for their members, getting to know them better, building on that relationship that we'd always have with some of the new leadership. It was that simple.

**Q. This question is for Rick and John. In what way, if at all, did the fire last month impact discussions between the two groups? Did it speed up announcements?**

RICK PALMER: No, it didn't. We had completed the process, the extremely thorough process, that took five or six years. When we were asked and awarded the U.S. Women's Open, we were asked to come to New York, these other championships were done. They were completed. We had that, and we were just waiting on our partners to say the time and place of the announcement.

I will quickly say that the fact that when these got announced after the fire, that within days the support of Reg Jones, who's the outside the ropes guy in terms of what we're going to do for our members, for really the next multiple seasons, and John and Mark going to us and saying we stand with you, are you ready to host a 2024 U.S. Junior? Our members said not only are we ready, we need it.

We're going to have it, and we won't have a clubhouse, but we're going to host the best U.S. Junior that's ever been hosted. So none of this affected it, the fire didn't affect anything.

JOHN BODENHAMER: If I could just add to that a little bit. Mark Hill, would you raise your hand, let folks see you. Mark is my partner in crime. We, along with other members of my team and Beth and Julia, we do this together. Please get to know Mark.

I will say this too, we were sitting in a USGA executive committee meeting the morning of the fire, and all of us

within the USGA were horrified to see what had happened, and our first thought was, boy, we hope everybody's okay. I communicated with Christine as soon as we saw the images and we found out that thankfully everybody was okay. And even better, the heroic firefighters to get all that wonderful memorabilia out of the clubhouse. What a great story that is the human chain.

So we did touch base with the club, we did go back, and it just is a testament to the partnership and more importantly, the friendship that we all feel at the USGA with Oakland Hills Country Club. Special people. That we gave them the opportunity to defer today, to defer the U.S. Junior Amateur, but no, we didn't want to do it, but we wanted to do what they wanted to do out of respect for our friends, and they said, no, we're going to do this, and it's going to be amazing. We know that it will be.

We've got a number of members of our team reaching out to the club, Christine, Rick, Reg Jones, our director of U.S. Open championships, as well as Mary Lopuszynski with merchandise helping with fixtures for their new golf shop and Steve and other members of their team.

I think for us, for this partnership to be really a partnership, you're in it thick and thin, and we'll be there in the long term for Oakland Hills Country Club.

**Q. Rick, can you just kind of share your emotions from the fire and to have this good news be out for the world?**

RICK PALMER: Our emotions, it's a great day. The process that our team has gone through and our incredible members, we're well on our way to not only preparing for the next two or three golf seasons and what that experience looks like, but our rebuild process is engaged. It will be a member driven process.

We have contracted with the architect for the initial design. We are going to in the next two weeks have member focus groups totaling about 200 members to give their thoughts about where we want to be.

You know it's ironic, one of our great members, Chris Ilitch, he hosted our leadership team last week, and he talked about embracing your history with our iconic clubhouse, like they did with the Fox Theatre. And he also talked about preparing for the future and how we future-proof our clubhouse, just like we future-proofed our golf course with the investment and the infrastructure under the ground.

So it will be a member driven process and ultimately proposed and approved by the members. But I have no doubt that our membership will step to the plate, and we

will have very soon a state of the art, beautiful iconic clubhouse.

**Q. For Andy, what did you figure out about Oakland Hills that led to your victory in 1985?**

ANDY NORTH: The PGA was '80 -- was that '80 or '81? I didn't have a game plan of any kind. I attacked hole locations that are on the top levels of the unbelievable green complexes that we have out there, and I knocked it over a bunch of greens where you're making Xs, I had no idea.

I basically figured out that, if I put it in the middle of the green and be putting up to those areas -- I didn't hit at many pins that week. 5th hole, for example, you had it on the mound on the right. One day I put it in the middle of the green and putted up the hill. I tried to do that at holes like 13. The one day I got aggressive was on Sunday when I ended up hitting it back to the back left hole location.

Overall, I think I played much smarter, and I understood what the architect was trying to get me to do, which I had no clue the first time I played there. Absolutely none.

**Q. For the young amateurs and the pros that may not be familiar with Oakland Hills, when they come and play, what will be the test of golf that this course will provide them with this new level of golfer and athlete that is now out there?**

RICK PALMER: You're talking to a 20 handicapper (Laughter).

JOHN BODENHAMER: And a damn good one.

RICK PALMER: I get my shots. So really I would defer that, I think, to Gil or somebody smarter than me. I certainly won't be on the practice range with them.

GIL HANSE: I think we've added length where it's appropriate. We try not to really grab yardage wherever we can because that tends to lead to a disconnect on the golf course. One of the things we love about these great old golf courses is they're easy to walk. You walk from the green right to the next tee.

We've got a few areas where we've added some length, which will be appropriate from a challenge standpoint. A few areas where we've shifted fairway bunkers down range. I think, when we get down to these major championships, it all comes down to it's rough and firm greens. If we can get firm greens, then I think we'll have the best challenge possible.



And the infrastructure underneath the greens and Phil's talents will allow that to happen as long as the weather allows that to happen. So I think an appropriate challenge, all the infrastructures in the ground, as Andy mentioned, those putting greens are some of the finest examples anywhere.

Just architecturally all the different hole locations, the ability from a setup standpoint for John and his team to vary that, all of that exists within the infrastructure and within the architecture of the course.

I think we've got a golf course that will be an appropriate challenge even in this day and age.

JOHN BODENHAMER: If I could just carry on that, I think there is an important point that the club did make a major and an amazing commitment, as Gil referenced subsurface-wise, not just in the putting greens but throughout the golf course. In the summer, when we come in the upper Midwest, it's probably going to rain. It just will. Oakland Hills Country Club is prepared to get water off the golf course.

As Gil said, for us at the USGA anyway, our DNA is to really provide, if we can, until we put domes over golf courses it still is an outdoor game, but a firm and fast golf course because we believe the best players, whether they're in the Junior Amateur or the Men's or Women's Opens, will rise to the top.

It's not just controlling your ball up in the air, but thinking about what happens to it when it hits the ground. The best players really think differently about that, and it separates them if we can create those types of conditions. Just the architecture at Oakland Hills, playing from knoll to knoll, and I think some of the tree removal, some of that just lends itself to something very special.

**Q. From the time you won your championship in 1985 until you tee it up at the next U.S. Open, how different does this course look to you? You played it in the fall. Is it recognizable at all to you?**

ANDY NORTH: I think, once you're on a particular hole, you see the hole as it always has been. Other than a couple that Gil did, the work on the 7th hole is absolutely spectacular. I think that's going to be one of the coolest holes in championships when we get there playing. But I think you get on a tee, you still see the hole. When you're playing, you're focusing on that and not the trees and some of that other stuff.

The one thing I appreciated the most is when we're sitting

having lunch afterwards upstairs and be able to look out over the entire golf course, and it's just absolutely gorgeous.

As a member, I take a lot of pride in what they've done here. I think in the last month to six weeks probably have taken as much pride in this club ever. The communication that's gone out to the membership and what we're trying to get done and what we need to do and what's happened and what hasn't happened, it's been fantastic. Thank you for that. It's an amazing club with great membership, and I'm excited and really honored to have been a member the last few years.

It's going to be a fantastic site for all these championships. If John and Gil and I were to go out and set up Oakland Hills for a tournament tomorrow, we can make it as hard as possible so that no one could finish. Is that how we want to set up a championship? No. We want to test the players the best they can be tested. You can basically set up the golf course and predict what score is going to be shot that day.

That's the beauty of the people who are really good at setting them up is can you get it to test the players the best you can possibly test them but still have it fair? That's all we ever care about. We don't care how hard it is if it's fair. If it tests you to the limit that you've got a headache for a month after you play there, that's part of the deal.

I think that's what the USGA has been known for and has done so well over the history of the organization.

**Q. Rick, what can you tell us about construction plans for the clubhouse, timetable? I know you said it won't be ready in 2024, but what do you know at this point?**

RICK PALMER: Well, thank you for the question. What we've done, as we've said, our governance, the first thing is we've got to get the demolition done and our construction plans and that process completed. In getting the plans completed with the process and then getting the various municipal approvals and permits, you're probably looking at a year to make that happen.

Our process, all our board does is appoint a committee who now has hired the architect for the initial design phase, and the committee has now appointed a long range planning committee of our members with focus groups. So that process is ongoing right now of what are the best things that we could have in a design in order to look at this as an opportunity because the clubhouse being down, it does present a one-time opportunity to make an investment.

Once all that happens and we actually break ground, it's probably a two-year process. So you're more than likely optimistically looking at three season, but our three seasons are going to be incredible because of how great our place is. It's going to be different, but we're going to have full dining, full athletics, swimming. Oakland Hills is going to be a great place to be for the next three years.

**Q. For Gil, what was the average percentage of green space recovered, and which greens had the largest amount recovered?**

GIL HANSE: I would say we probably averaged about 25 to 30 percent additional space on the greens through the restoration, and scale-wise, boy -- what do you think, Phil? 14?

PHIL CUFFARE: 14.

GIL HANSE: 14 is probably the biggest expansion.

**Q. How on earth do you remember strokes from a game you played more than 30 years ago?**

ANDY NORTH: Let me ask back to you. Do you remember great shopping trips 25 or 30 years ago?

(Laughter).

I think that's how golfers are wired. You remember. You listen to quarterbacks talk about throws they made in games 10, 12 years ago. I can't remember people's names, but give me numbers, I can figure that stuff out. It's just stuff that I think is innate in what we do.

**Q. We heard that much of the memorabilia was recovered. Was anything lost that you know of that was damaged beyond repair or restoration?**

RICK PALMER: Two things on that. Thanks for the question. We recovered the day of the fire, as everybody talks about our employees and our firefighters getting things out while the fire was going on. Yeah, the good news is our construction restoration company was able to access our basement vault where a lot of archives were stored, and we did recover a lot of additional items.

That process, though, recovering and is it fully restored are two different questions because there was water damage and they're wet. So that process is ongoing.

Then fortunately, with technology, all the beautiful pictures have been there that you walk down on the second floor. The picture you saw here, they were not recovered on the second floor. They were all digitized. All those things will

be recreated and reprinted, so we're really just talking about the framing.

So don't have the answer. I know a lot of people want to know the answer, but we just don't have it at this time in terms of percentages and a length of time.

**Q. I just have one more quick question for Andy, if you will. I know the state of Michigan has so many golfers, so many courses, I think record setting. What do you remember about being in this area in suburban Detroit and winning in '85 about the fans, about the galleries, and even just in your travels back here and as a member of Oakland Hills that makes this area special?**

ANDY NORTH: I think you look at Wisconsin, Michigan, Minnesota, upper Midwest has the best golf anywhere in the world. The people are so gung ho to play, they understand the game. It's fun to go places where people understand you hit a good shot, you didn't hit a good shot. People talk about that in Scotland particularly where they won't clap for a shot that you hit close when they know it wasn't the right shot to hit.

I think the it the same here. When you get around sports fans who understand the competing part of it and have played the golf courses and that sort of thing, it's fantastic.

I've been very, very fortunate in the state of Michigan golf-wise and always look forward to coming back.

BETH MAJOR: I'll take one more question.

**Q. Gil, you were mentioning earlier, giving praise to Steve and Phil for helping you during the restoration, and then when Rick mentioned the 20 handicap or like most honest golfers are, you have to obviously focus on the members' happiness and their fun and enjoyment but yet balance that with really stiffening up the course to make it so you can host all these Amateurs and Opens.**

Can you give me an example of one particular hole that maybe changed in a way where it's playable and more fun for the members but also it's going to be difficult at all these championships?

GIL HANSE: I think maybe not one particular hole, but I think just generally speaking, we looked at widening fairways and landing areas where somebody like Rick or myself would hit a golf ball as opposed to where a professional is going to hit it. So I think off the tee it's a little more generous for the members, and tightens up as we get closer to the landing areas for professionals.

I think the other part of it is just opening a lot of the greens in the front. A lot of them have been pinched off over a period of time. Now members who would like to hit those types of recovery shots where balls can release and run through the front of the green, whereas professional golfers really never really look at that. The only time they look at that is an option as a recovery.

If they're in the fairway, they're not thinking this will be fun to bump and run a shot into the green. They're looking at flying it. It's an aerial game for them. If they get in trouble, get in the rough or get in a bunker, then they might have to try and utilize it. It makes it more interesting for a professional golfer on the recovery level, but it makes it much more playable for the members having the greens open in front.

Those two changes accomplish a lot for the membership.

ANDY NORTH: Can I jump in on that? Great architects like Gil and Jim are able to create situations where it's harder for the professional than it is with a 20 handicap. To me that's where they've done a great job, by lengths, openings, whatever, and hole locations, that sort of thing. So I think they've really done that here.

JOHN BODENHAMER: If I could just add to that briefly, from a USGA perspective, for us it's about variety and angles. Maybe a few fairways will be a little bit wider, but these magnificent putting greens that are now 20 to 30 percent larger or forward hole locations that happens everywhere that are lost over time, they've now been restored. These are truly some of Donald Ross' most magnificent greens that were ever done under his tutelage.

For us to create those angles and how, not just what is over common or force carry, but what happens when you try to get to a certain part of the putting green from a certain part of the fairway. We think about that a lot and the variety that extends.

For us the ultimate measure is in really providing a great test is players need to get every club in their bag dirty. They need to hit it high, low, left, right, control it on the ground, mental, physical. Andy talks about it. He's a champion two times. He gets it. He's done it.

That's what we try to achieve to really create something special so when somebody wins a U.S. Open or U.S. Women's Open, they've done something really special.

BETH MAJOR: Gil, John, Rick, Andy, thank you so much for sharing your insights and your special memories today. This has truly been an exciting day for the USGA, for our friends at Oakland Hills, and for golf fans both here in

Detroit and across the country.

Thank you to everyone for joining us, and a sincere, heartfelt thank you to everyone at Oakland Hills for your continued partnership and friendship.

We're also grateful to our teammates from the USGA Museum, who traveled here from New Jersey today, to share some of the artifacts that share stories of the USGA championships that have been held at Oakland Hills over the years. I encourage you, if you didn't have a chance to before the program, to stop by and view some of these amazing memories that have been made at Oakland Hills and a taste of things that will come in the years to come.

I hope everyone can join us.

**Q. I would add it's a very fun and interesting website. There's a lot to that website.**

BETH MAJOR: I agree. Again, thank you all for being here for this special day and special announcement. We'll look forward to seeing you for many, many years to come. Thanks so much.

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