

U.S. Open Championship 2021

Thursday, June 17, 2021

San Diego, California, USA

Torrey Pines Golf Course

Russell Henley

Flash Interview



Q. Russell Henley, 4-under. Talk us through your round a bit.

RUSSELL HENLEY: Yeah, just a very disappointing start. I hit a beautiful drive and had a 9-iron in and I hit it in the one spot that my caddie and I decided we did not want to hit it. Very annoying start, and then after that I feel like I just kept playing solid, hitting fairways, giving myself birdie looks, and felt good with the putter. Felt like I was reading the greens well and hitting my lines. Just hung in there.

There's just some tough holes out there, and you've just got to hit fairways. I'm just trying to hang in there.

Q. It seems like conditions are getting a little tougher. What's going to be in store for the afternoon group?

RUSSELL HENLEY: I don't know. I don't know if it's going to firm up and get baked out or stay receptive on the greens, but if it's blowing like this the whole week, it's just going to be a hard week. That's kind of what you want in a U.S. Open, though, right?

Q. Does any part of this almost feel like the Farmers Insurance or does it feel completely different?

RUSSELL HENLEY: I haven't played in that tournament since 2014 and last time I did I shot 79 on the South Course. I don't know. I don't really remember besides just leaving the course feeling like I just got beat up.

It's tough. I feel confident in my game, and I feel like the firmer fairways is definitely helping me have some shorter clubs into these holes. Hopefully I can just keep it going.

Q. Is that why you haven't played it since 2014, you decided you didn't want to be beat up?

RUSSELL HENLEY: Well, there's just so many great tournaments to play in, and I always feel like I play well at Sony, I really like the American Express, I love Phoenix, or Scottsdale, and I love Riviera. I played in that one time and really struggled and it was like, well, I'll just not play it from now on. Maybe that's not the best reason.

Q. When you had the fog delay this morning were you in a way excited because you knew it would dampen the course a little bit and at least make the greens more receptive?

RUSSELL HENLEY: I didn't think about that, honestly. I didn't think about that, I'm sorry.

But they were receptive, so definitely, this morning.

Q. You had a lot of success as an amateur, low amateur in this event and not so much in this event since. How do you sort of quantify or address what happened today?

RUSSELL HENLEY: You know, I feel like the last year I've been playing golf that I feel like I'm a top-50 player in the world. I've had a ton of top 10s. I've been in contention. I've been really consistent. The last couple tournaments I've played haven't been quite as good, but the last year has been really consistent and really good. I feel like I'm just kind of still playing well.

That doesn't mean I'm going to definitely do that the next three days, but I definitely felt comfortable out there. I feel confident with my game. I don't feel like it's a huge surprise just because I do feel like I've played some good golf in some bigger events in the last year, but in terms of putting four rounds together at a U.S. Open, I've struggled with that. So I'm just going to keep trying.

Q. Is there anything you're trying to do differently to piece all 72 holes together or kind of stick to your process since you're playing well?

RUSSELL HENLEY: Yeah, I'm just going to try to stay rested and not practice too much after my rounds. Yeah, and just do anything I can do to just stay rested. No really change in my mindset or anything, though.

Q. Are you pretty much playing the best golf of your career right now?

RUSSELL HENLEY: In the last year I have. I would put



myself as a golfer over the last year against any other time. I've gotten hot a few times and won some TOUR events for sure, but consistently I think the last year or so has been my best year, and I feel good about it.

Q. How has Jim McLean helped you and what are you guys working on?

RUSSELL HENLEY: He's taught me a lot with my driver. That's kind of the main thing I wanted help with. He's got me really just -- I dialed in a better shaft and a better head, so hitting a TSi3 driver now instead of the 4, and it's really just a couple little things and staying aggressive through the shot. Not crazy. But he's been very simple when I've asked him any questions.

Q. Would you say your confidence is as high as it's ever been?

RUSSELL HENLEY: I would say over the last year, like I was just saying, I've played the best golf I've played consistently in my career. I feel like I have more of a complete game. But I haven't finished top 10 in majors or anything. Haven't really been in the majors. Been in a couple, but I'm still working to -- kind of that part of my career, I want to make that better, play better in the majors. I feel good, and yeah, keep trying.

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