

U.S. Open Championship 2022

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Brookline, Massachusetts, USA

The Country Club

Keegan Bradley

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: Welcome to the interview area, Keegan. I know you threw a strike last night at the Red Sox game. Not only a local connection, but tell us a little bit about your family connection with the Red Sox as well.

KEEGAN BRADLEY: Yeah, my wife, Jillian, grew up in Vermont. Uncle is Carlton Fisk, so they call him Uncle Pudge. What a fun night.

I've thrown out the first pitch one other time, but I hadn't even met my wife yet or, obviously, had no kids. To be out there with them and be on the field and have 20-plus family members there, it was really, really fun.

THE MODERATOR: Obviously, a really cool week for the sports fans in Boston. Talk a little bit about that and then also what you expect from the fans out here this week.

KEEGAN BRADLEY: Well, I'm definitely biased in this regard, but I consider Boston to be the best sports city in the world -- or in the country, at least, and they're so knowledgeable about sports. Especially the basketball and football and baseball and hockey, but they're going to be loud, and they've got Game 6 tomorrow. Jeez, what a time to be in Boston. I wish I wasn't playing in the tournament so I could have fun with all these sporting events. Really, really awesome.

THE MODERATOR: I know it was important for you to make the field and even more important to not have to go through a 36-hole qualifier, so just talk about being here this week as player.

KEEGAN BRADLEY: Yeah, I mean, I tried to put this in the back of my mind because this was important to me. I knew it was a big deal when none of my family members would ever talk about it around me.

It was never acknowledged or spoken about until I made it, and then I'm getting texts: "I can't wait to watch you." At Wells Fargo when I came in second, I was pretty bummed out, but the silver lining was I was here, and I didn't have to go through that horrible 36-hole day. There's something different playing in a U.S. Open when you qualify that way,

I think.

I'm excited. I love just coming back here. I love going into the local stores and hearing the chatter and the accents and talking about the Celtics.

There's a sense of calm being around here.

THE MODERATOR: Talk a little bit about the course here, and did you have a lot of experience with it prior?

KEEGAN BRADLEY: No, I had never played here growing up. I came to the Ryder Cup here in '99 with my dad on Friday and Sunday. I was actually on my dad's shoulders right on this 18th green.

Everyone ran out into the green. My dad reminded me of this. I asked him if I could run out on the green, and he said, okay, I'm going to stand -- there's a crooked tree. He said I'm going to stand right near the crooked tree. No cell phones then. Go and run back. I was out there, and it was crazy. Then I ran back and met him at the crooked tree right behind us here.

Pretty cool. I don't take this for granted. I don't know when the next time a major will be in Boston, so this is cool.

Q. What's more nerve-wracking for you, throwing out the first pitch at Fenway or getting on the first tee here?

KEEGAN BRADLEY: Well, I was such a nervous wreck yesterday. I kept telling many I wife, why did I agree to do this? This is like -- this is all I need this week, you know, is the pressure of -- I'm getting -- every time I walk through the player dining, they're all, like, I'm going to the game. I'm videoing it. You better throw a good one.

I was actually standing behind the mound with the First Tee before the pitch. I started to, like -- things were getting fuzzy. That's how uncomfortable I was. I was proud of the strike I threw -- or the ball I threw.

Sometimes in my life there are moments that are shocking, and being out on that mound at Fenway Park with my

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family there and playing here is really surreal. Truly it is.

Q. Earlier this month Brad Faxon and Billy Andrade announced that the CVS Charity Classic was going to end after 23 years. I know you played in it a bunch of years. You won it three or four years in a row. I didn't know if you had any thoughts on that coming to an end and what it meant to Rhode Islanders?

KEEGAN BRADLEY: What it meant to a golfer growing up in New England, those two, Brad Faxon and Billy Andrade for a player like me, there's Tiger Woods and Fred Couples were all my favorites, but those were the two guys that I looked at and was, like, okay, they made it from a little bit south of where I came from, but New Englanders are New Englanders.

To be able to watch them and watch these guys win and play well really made me think that this was possible. Growing up I always knew about the CVS. I had been there. I had seen it. Then, being able to ask to play in it was really fun.

Again, we don't get to play golf up here at all. So for my family and me and then one year I won it with my high school best friend, Jon Curran, who played the Tour. It was just amazing. And what Billy and Brad have done for the local community with that tournament is spectacular.

Those are two pioneers in the New England golf scene. I'm thankful for them in a lot of ways, but the CVS was a major part of that, and they should be very proud.

Q. I know you just said -- did you think it was a strike last night?

KEEGAN BRADLEY: Yeah. (Laughter.) Yeah, it was a strike. I said, I couldn't even see it it was going so fast, so I think it was a strike, yeah.

Q. Did Kevin give you any pointers behind the plate or anything like that?

KEEGAN BRADLEY: No. I was texting a few buddies that I know that play baseball. The one guy said, just get on the mound and throw it as hard as you can. I go, that's horrible advice. They said that would be like you getting on the first tee and me just saying tee it up and swing as hard as you can. It was horrible.

I was expecting sage advice, but yeah, I barely remember doing it. The last time I did it, I said, if I do this again, I'm going to enjoy it more, and I didn't. It was worse. (Laughter.)

Q. One more kind of golf-related. I know you said you had 25 friends come in. Where are you telling them to watch? What would some of your advice for fans, buddies coming to have a beer -- where would you say to watch?

KEEGAN BRADLEY: Well, the whole back nine is pretty -- a lot of grandstands, a lot of fun places to hang. The USGA does a great job of spreading the tee times out. On the Tour it will be -- the premier pairings will be off 10 in the morning and 1 in the afternoon. But here in the U.S. Open they do them all around. There's going to be action everywhere.

It's going to be a lot of people I think, so you better pick a spot and hang there.

Q. You mentioned Brad and Billy. When it comes to the state of golfing now in terms of New England producing top-flight golfers, what's your take on the current crop and how close do you keep tabs on it?

KEEGAN BRADLEY: Well, listen, it's hard for us up here to compete. Growing up in Vermont, which Rhode Island, believe it or not, has a much longer season than even I had. But here I grew up getting beat by a lot of these guys in the South and California.

Then as we got older, I started to beat them. The key, I always tell everybody -- all the younger kids ask me, what do you have to do to get on tour, and I always give them the same answer: You have to work -- if you grow up up here, you have to work twice as hard, if not more. When the season is here, you have to be out there and working.

I think New England athletes, New England people in the workplace, they all have a certain edge to them and a blue-collar hardworking attitude. I see that with all the young golfers coming up from here.

Q. Do you keep tabs on guys like Caleb Manuel or Michael Thorbjornsen?

KEEGAN BRADLEY: Yeah, I grew up playing the Challenge Cup up around here, so I follow that a little bit. I always get a huge sense of pride when I see a U.S. Am or some of the tournaments or someone from New England. That's the beauty of growing up in New England. It could be New Hampshire, it could be Rhode Island. You feel like we're all in this together.

Q. What do you see as the current state of your game at this point in your career?

KEEGAN BRADLEY: This is about as good as I've felt I



feel like. I made some pretty big leaps in my putting over the last couple of -- about the last year or so, and I've had a few tournaments where I haven't really played my best, but putted well and had some decent finishes, which I haven't done in years. If I match up everything like I've done for over a month, for a while, I'm up at the top of the leaderboard.

Listen, I love where my game is at. This U.S. Open brings a lot of challenges. Being in Boston and home, it brings even more.

It's going to be a tough test this week, but it's one that you look forward to for sure.

Q. Do you feel like this -- what do you feel like this course demands, and how do you feel like that matches up with your game?

KEEGAN BRADLEY: I think it demands everything, as every U.S. Open does. What I love about the setup here this week is the rough, it's tough and brutal, but it's not hack it out. Sure, there will be some, but if you are just off the fairway in the rough, you can hit it up at the green. You might not get on the green.

I love the way they've set that up. I love the setup here this week. The greens are brutal. There's a few greens especially on the front there might only be a 10-foot area to put a flag. It will be interesting to see.

It's great that -- haven't had a U.S. Open here in a while, so you don't really know what to expect.

Q. You've known Phil Mickelson for a really long time. What do you make of his last few months?

KEEGAN BRADLEY: I was putting on the first tee yesterday, and Phil was getting ready to tee off, and he got a monster ovation. People cheering. Phil was giving the thumbs up to everybody.

I think he is going to be just fine. It sounded like the same Phil Mickelson with the crowd as I've always heard.

Q. Just wondering how you plan to take on 5. Is it find a number that you want to lay up to, or is it just get it up as close as you can?

KEEGAN BRADLEY: I think you get it up there. Unless it's blowing hard in, but the second shot if you lay up is completely blind. If you lay too far back, you can't even see the flag. You're hitting up at sky; there's no trees behind or anything.

I think the best way to handle that hole is to -- I think if you can get up by the green, you'll at least hopefully make par. You can hit one on, so I'm going to go for it.

Q. Knowing that the U.S. Open or the PGA TOUR doesn't come to the Northeast all that often, is there something about this course that is distinctly New England?

KEEGAN BRADLEY: Yeah, I mean, for a person growing up in New England, this is sort of our crown jewel. The Country Club is New England's best track.

You know what, you find in most New England courses is the course has to kind of go with the terrain, so there's some funky shots. It's a little quirky. There's some blind shots. You're hitting down into fairways.

It's like how a lot of these courses are out here, but again, The Country Club growing up was always this mystical place. So to be out here playing the U.S. Open is pretty fun.

Q. Kind of on the flipside of the Phil thing, without getting into specifics of the debate, there's been other guys on the flip side, I think Rory, J.T., and Rahm, that have emerged as kind of spokesmen. Can you imagine having to deal with that in addition to trying to play in these tournaments? And sort of speak to how much they are taking on right now.

KEEGAN BRADLEY: Rory and those guys?

Q. Yeah.

KEEGAN BRADLEY: Yeah, they're very adamant in how they feel about everything. It's a good thing all three of them are incredible players, so they can go out -- they're three of the best players in the world.

They've taken a pretty hard stance. They're just talking with what they believe in, and they have that right for sure.

Q. Can we get a prediction for Game 6 tomorrow?

KEEGAN BRADLEY: The Celtics for sure, yeah.

THE MODERATOR: We have to give it to the local media, the soundbyte. Thanks, Keegan, for your time and good luck this week.

KEEGAN BRADLEY: Thank you.

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