

U.S. Open Championship 2022

Wednesday, June 15, 2022

Brookline, Massachusetts, USA

The Country Club

Stu Francis

Mike Whan

John Bodenhamer

Press Conference



and I think it really displayed the fact that we have some very talented young women in the United States who are making their mark on the global scale in golf. So that was terrific for us.

Now, here we are at The Country Club for the 122nd U.S. Open. We are so excited to be here. This club was one of the five founding clubs of the USGA. It's conducted 17 USGA championships, the second most of all clubs, and the golf course is just in spectacular condition.

It really is a great, great place. The players seem to be uniformly excited about it, and we're very, very pleased to be here.

We do have real excitement at the USGA, as I just highlighted. And, frankly, one of the key reasons we have it is the gentleman to my left, Mike Whan. When we formed our search process and search committee for the next CEO and Mike joined us about a year ago, our thinking was we want our next CEO to have aggressive new thinking about golf and about everything the USGA can do and also to be very well-known and highly respected in the golf industry so he can hit the ground running.

Well, he hit the ground sprinting, and I've been scrambling to keep up with him ever since then. He's a great leader. Mike calls probably three, four times a day with new ideas, and some of them we decide we will go ahead. Some we don't, but he's a fountain of ideas. I think the excitement we have is palpable.

The other point I'd make is we really have a clear view now as to what our long-term strategic priorities are to really build this game, grow this game and have it thrive in the future 50 and 100 years from now.

With that, Mike, we all thank you. We're all excited, and I'll cede the podium.

MIKE WHAN: Thank you. I didn't realize that was the job criteria. I thought you were looking for somebody highly caffeinated, and I qualified.

THE MODERATOR: Good morning. Welcome to the Country Club for the 122nd U.S. Open Championship. My name is Beth Major, managing director of communications for the USGA, and object behalf of everyone at the USGA and the Country Club, we are thrilled to have you with us this week. This is a special place, and this promises to be a special week.

I'm pleased to welcome this morning USGA President Stu Francis on the left, USGA CEO Mike Whan, and USGA Chief Championships Officer John Bodenhamer.

Stu, there's a lot of exciting things going on at the USGA right now. I'll ask you to offer a few thoughts to get us started this morning.

STU FRANCIS: Thank you, Beth. It really is an exciting time here at the USGA in 2022. We conduct national championships with global fields, and we've gotten off to a great start in 2022.

We had our four-ball championships, both men and women's, earlier about four or five weeks ago, and they went very, very well, including we conducted our first ever USGA National Championship in Puerto Rico, so that was quite exciting for us and for them.

Next, we moved on to the U.S. Women's Open presented by ProMedica at Pine Needles, and that turned out to just be a fabulous championship. Minjee Lee of Australia won. That was her second USGA Championship. And the golf course played well, and the competitors were uniformly excited to be there.

After that we moved to the Curtis Cup at Merion in Philadelphia, and it was just a great competition and a long legacy of almost 100 years of Curtis Cups that have taken place.

The USA team won resoundingly. They played great golf,

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Well, thanks everybody. I think I know pretty much everybody in the room, but if you know me, when I started at the LPGA, the first thing I did is went and met with some of our living founders. I wanted to get back to the roots so we could talk about what to build from there.

There's a significant amount of responsibility you feel when you walk into the USGA for the first time, 127 years of history. Again, sometimes you've got to stop and think, 127 years ago, before there were professional tours, before there was a PGA of America, air travel, before there was TV. Sorry, my friends at NBC and Peacock.

So you sort of take on this responsibility, and so one is to make sure we understood the vision that was formed in December of 1894. And as Fred has heard me say and as Stu has heard me say and the rest of the board, and certainly J.B. is sick of me saying, we've got bold visionary for the next 100 years as the group was for the last 100 years.

I find every time I sit on a plane with these letters on my chest, everybody knows we're golf. Hey, USGA, I golf. They want to tell you about their scores and the ruling they most recently disliked.

But then about halfway into that plane conversation they'll look at you and go, what is it you guys do again? I said this to Stu about six months ago. We are 127-year-old brand with an awareness problem. I'm floored that a lot of people don't really understand the different things that the USGA does.

I've sat at my share of dinner parties and listened to some of my teammates try to explain it, too. Unfortunately, that mouse pad that you received that you got here, that 'unify, showcase, govern, and advance,' that was me. I apologize. That's how we're really going to internally we change United States Golf Association into 'unify, showcase, govern, and advance.'

And the way we think about that is we spend about \$12 million a year unifying this game. World handicapping system that used to be 10 countries, now 118.

The GHIN app where they are putting GHIN on your watch now and course ratings. All of that -- again, sometimes I think all of us that follow this game take for granted that I could get off the plane in Thailand, tee it up with an 87-year-old woman and a 14-year-old boy, and we could all exchange handicaps with that course rating and play the game. Try that in baseball or football.

I don't know how you'd actually bring it together, but the sport is unified because of the way the USGA and the R&A

work together to unify the sport.

We believe in showcasing. There are 15 national championships. I'm glad that you're all at this one. I'm glad that so many of you were in Pine Needles, but you might miss the other 13. It could be men, women, boys, girls. It could be professional, amateur. It's team and individual. Starting this year in July it's disabled, as well.

So we're really excited, again, about the ability in this sport to be able to say if you're having your best golf of your life at age 63, there's a championship for you. If you're having the best golf of your life at 12 and if you're having your best golf of your life with your buddy, it can happen, and we'll showcase that. We'll put you on a stage bigger than you've seen before.

I think you know we govern the game. You certainly know we govern the game because you've commented about it over the years and so have I. John knows, I've commented when I was at the LPGA.

But, thankfully, between the USGA and R&A we all play by a common set of rules. Whether we're talking about equipment testing and those standards, whether we're talking about rules of the game, amateur status, I'm really proud of what the USGA and the R&A do to make sure, again, no matter where we play and how we play, we all play by the same rules. Not a given in every other sport around the world.

The last thing that I've really probably harped on the most, and these guys will roll their eyes, is the A and what we call advance, which I'm really excited to learn about 102-year-old green section. I knew there was a green section, but if I was being honest with you, I couldn't have described it before.

It started 102 years ago when Inverness called us in and at the same time they called in the Department of Agriculture from the U.S. Government and said, help us, we've got a problem on our course. And 102 years later, even when the government bounced out, we stayed in. So whether it's agronomy and research and a nutrient needs, we spent over \$50 million since we started that program, and now we're clip to spend close to \$2 million to \$2.5 million dollars a year to further that research.

I'm proud of that. I'm really proud of the green section, but I've challenged our executive committee and our team to think bigger about advance.

I use the term BBLs a lot. You'll get sick of hearing me talk about this, but big, bold leadership initiatives. What are we going to do over the next 15, 30, and 40 years to leave this

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game better?

Stu will probably admit and probably be scared that I'm about to talk about this, but they're all forming. They're not formed, but they're forming. One of them we're kind of gently calling 15, 30, 45.

In the next 15 years what if we committed \$30 million to reduce how much water a golf course needs by 45%. If we set out to have that kind of big, bold leadership initiative -- one staff member said to me, Mike, what if we can't get to 45? I said, I'd be happy to sit up here and apologize if we only reduce water needs by 30% in the next 15 years.

But if we don't do that, who is? If we don't do that, what's golf going to look like west of the Mississippi long-term?

So we really feel like that's a goal we need to take on, and we need to be big and bold enough to hang it on the wall and challenge ourselves every quarter when we get together as a board of directors.

As most of you know, I think at least in this room, we're going to start a program that's a U.S. development team. As a commissioner of the LPGA for 12 years, I was floored by the fact that almost every woman who plays on that Tour came out of a country program unless she came out of America where she didn't come out of a country program.

And the Olympics threw that into hyper-speed because a lot of countries have what they call podium sports. If it's a podium sport, they invest in it as a government. If they don't, it's not. What I've seen change across the world because the Olympics is really powerful, but it hasn't changed us here in the States.

We're going to work with other organizations that already exist and create a program from age 12 until a minimum 17 and maybe longer to make sure that the best young boys and girls in this country have a pipeline to play. And if you can't afford to raise a professional golfer, then we're going to step in and help you raise that professional golfer.

If that golfer just makes it to college or just plays high school golf, that's fine because they'll be people like us that really thought we had a career in this game and then turned out to be the career in this game was different. I don't have a sun tan line on my left hand from a glove, but I still work in this game full-time.

So we really believe that the USGA's role is to build a USA Development Program to make sure the pipeline of U.S. golfers here is not about where you grew up, not about how much money your mom or dad makes, not about what

country club sponsored you. It's about whether or not you have the talent, the interest, and the dedication to be part of a Team USA program.

We've hired Dr. Matteo from the University of California Riverside to come in and be our head of the 15, 30, 45 program. Dr. Matteo is a Ph.D. in plant and environmental sciences, so I can literally not talk to him, but I've tried.

But we really need somebody to guide us on this project. As some of you may or may not know, we recently hired Heather Daly-Donofrio, who was the former chief Tour operations officer at the LPGA, and she's going to lead our USA Development Program.

So these are things we're going to get serious about. Some of you in the room know this because I've already found you and got a check from you, but in the next year we're going to raise \$10 million through individual donations, match that with our own money at the USGA, and endow the Walker and Curtis Cup to make sure that no matter what happens economically, what happens to sport, what happens to the USGA, those amateur championships can never go away.

We're going to put that money in the bank. I've always worried as a CEO that the next time economic turn for the worse, I'm going to go, gosh, it costs \$2.5 million to run a Walker Cup. What if we did it every four years?

And in a bad time these guys might say, yes. So if we can endow those things and make sure that I can't mess that up, so those are three of what will probably be five or six BBL, big, bold leadership initiatives.

I brought a lot of note cards here, and so far I've said nothing of what I came to talk to you about.

But I'll just finish with a couple other thoughts. In this world of wearing this jacket around, I'm also amazed. Some points that probably need to be clarified.

People will say to me, oh, USGA, so you must be moving to Pinehurst? Which I'm not moving to Pinehurst, but it sure feels pretty good there in February. But I'll just clarify a few things.

Pinehurst, what it is and what it isn't. We are going to open a Pinehurst Golf House. We are going to move about 50 or 60 of our teammates down there. It will be the head of equipment standard testing starting in 2024. It'll have a good chunk of J.B.'s championship team there and a bunch of other individual functions there.

So think of about 60 teammates down in Pinehurst and be

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part of -- this is the home of the USGA, and down there will be a great home of American golf as well.

Another thing that I find that is misconstrued a bit is anchor sites. What is it? What isn't it? Anchor sites is not the beginning of the USGA Rota, although some like that idea. Some don't.

What it is is a chance for us to work with a few locations that we know we are going to be back a lot over the next 20 and 30 years. What happens a lot at the USGA is we'll leave a place like The Country Club. Next month we'll all come in and have a debriefing, and we'll say, gosh, if we could do it all over again, you know what we would have done?

Then we all write that down. Nobody does anything, and everybody goes home. When we go to some of those sites, to be able to have that debriefing meeting and say, let's go do that, let's go do that. Some of the local states, counties, and cities are involved in helping us invest to make these championships even more doable in terms of having more fans, more TV coverage, more access for the players and caddies.

Anchor sites are about making investments long-term into making greater championships and knowing that those will be the place.

The other things that I don't want you to miss when you read an anchor site agreement is look at what else they're hosting, not just the U.S. Open. Anchor sites in our mind are partners across the board, U.S. Women's Opens, Amateurs, Juniors, disabled events. We really find to want places that want to not only want to host the biggest, but really host the best in every aspect of the game. These are going to be partners of ours long-term.

When we talk about this USA Development Program, I expect us to bring 300 of the best 14-year-olds to Pinehurst for a week. Then the next year we bring them to Pebble, and maybe after that they'll be at Oakland Hills. Expect to see us working with those partners to help build the pipeline of American golf.

Last thing I'll say is on distance. I'm surprised and, quite frankly, strangely caught off guard by how few people can understand where we are in the distance project. We've been pretty clear about it, but there's been something else in professional golf that seems to have taken a lot of attention away, so I want to be sure people understand.

We have a slow, deliberate -- and, yeah, I'd say slow. I know my team doesn't like when you say that word, but it's slow and deliberate and designed to make sure we aren't

sneaking up on anybody. Trust me when I say we're not sneaking up on anybody. It's designed to make sure we have to stop at every step and actually create a listening period.

Before the pandemic, we talked about the distance insight survey and how we were really going to attack distance, but we talked about it in 15 different ways. In March of this year we came to the media and to the manufacturers and said, we're really focused on two potential areas: How we'll look at testing golf balls, using essentially the same testing method we do today, but updating that testing method to really replicate the speeds of today's game. And, quite frankly, we haven't done that since 2004. So those speeds and the way we test weren't representative of today's game.

And at the same time looking at a driver that might be something that we only have as a model local rule that would reduce how much spring effect is on the face and reduce some of the size of the sweet spot. Meaning, greater reward for center hits and greater dis incentive, quite frankly, for missing the center of the club.

We couldn't figure out a way to do that on a golf club and not negatively affect the retail market, so we looked at that as more of a model local rule to be put in play in an elite competition.

At the same time we talked about doing those two things, I don't want to miss something else. We've actually talked about removing some of the other tests that have been in place for a long time. One is called initial velocity of a golf ball, and the other is the limitation on how big a sweet spot can be.

We're potentially analyzing removing those two tests, and the benefit of that is we think if we removed that, there's a potential -- not a guarantee, but a potential it'll free up innovation space for the manufacturers to create a ball that would actually be better for low club speeds, be better for beginners, to be better for my father. Sorry, Dad, if you're listening. I just really took shot at my dad. But actually give the manufacturers a little bit of freedom.

At the same time on a golf club if we freed up a little more space in sweet spot, maybe we could create even more forgiving golf clubs.

At the same time we are trying to address distance at the highest level, we also want to make sure we respect what's happening in the retail side of this game and the recreation game and not only enjoy it, but potentially maybe even fuel it a bit.

So now we're stopped. We are in a five-month listening period. So everybody can tell us everything they like and disliked about that. About this time next year we'll be telling you about where we stemmed from there.

I'm frothing so I can tell you I talked a lot, but I'm going to flip it over to J.B. who I want to say thank you. The three J's of course setup -- Jason, Jeff and John -- allowed me to come out and said, do you want to be part of setup this morning? Not realizing that setup starts at 5:05, so I'll be asleep in about an hour. But it was really enjoyable to walk with them.

I'll just say to all of you and I'll say it again probably when we're on NBC with the trophy, but what's really cool about this place is when you think about 122 playings ago or 127 years, we had 11 competitors in the first U.S. Open. By the way, from three countries, none of which were from the United States.

To think about now, 9,300 people trying to get into this event. They came from every one of our 50 states and 80 countries. When they got together back then, they played four loops on a nine-hole course at Newport. 36 holes for the Open with the winner walking away with \$150. They played for a purse of \$335.

This week 9,300, 50 states, 80 countries. It took 109 qualifiers in 44 different states, three different countries, to get here. We really believe that you made the cut if you're here.

I've said this to the women a couple weeks ago at Pine Needles, you make the cut to get into this. This is the hardest event in the world to get in, so if you are here, you ought to feel pretty special. And this week we will play for \$17.5 million with the winner walking away with \$3.15 million in a winner's check.

While there's a lot of things that have changed, we're still going to be playing for that gold medal, now the Nicklaus Medal, and the same trophy.

Amazing evolution in this championship, but at its heart, it's been around here longer than any of us, longer than most other organizations in the game. It's open, and as J.B. says all the time, the golf ball doesn't care where you're from, how old you are, or how you got here. It's can you put the ball in the hole in less strokes than others.

Thanks for that time. I promise in the future to froth less and give you a little less, but I'm one year in, and if you can't feel my excitement, then shame on you.

It's an exciting time for a 57-year-old kid who grew up

around this game and changing hole locations and cutting greens when he was in high school because in my mind this is the greatest sport in the world and I'm really happy to be a part of this sport. J.B.?

JOHN BODENHAMER: Well, thank you, Mike. I have to confess, I'm a Seattle native and Starbucks is my thing in the morning, but with Mike on board, I've drank more Coke Zero than I ever have before.

He's a joy to work with, inspiring, big, bold leadership ideas. I think all of us at the USGA feel like we're on a very positive trajectory, and it's all part of the celebration of this week, the 122nd U.S. Open. Thank you for joining us and being with us.

I'd like to share just a few thoughts about that celebration that is the Open and here at a very special place.

This Open almost didn't happen, and there's a number of stories behind that, but prior to 2013 and the U.S. Amateur here, we didn't think we could conduct a U.S. Open here.

The footprint was small. It was in a residential community. There were just too many hurdles to overcome and what we do and what you see out there now, but conducting the U.S. Open at Merion Golf Club in 2013 changed our perspective. When we came here for the Amateur in 2013, we thought coming back to Brookline was possible.

I remember walking the golf course with Mike Davis, seeing little drop down hole No. 11 and thinking what could be possible and thinking big and thinking creatively, and it's going to unfold in an amazing way at an amazing place that goes right back to our very roots.

You know the stories. You know, as Mike mentioned and Stu mentioned, a founding member club, and we all know about Francis Ouimet in 1913, but think about these couple of things that relate to what's about to unfold here and what really happened in 1913 and a few years, a few Opens, after that.

They actually delayed the U.S. Open until September of 1913, so Harry Vardon and Ted Ray could play. What they did was monumental.

Really what Ouimet did, think about. It boils down to one statistic I heard a few weeks ago. The population of our country in 1913 in the United States, think about it, was a little more than half of what it is now. There were 350,000 golfers in our country. Two years after Ouimet won, there were over 2.1 million golfers in this country.

What he did and what he spurred and being on the front



page of sports pages all across the country changed the face of game in this country. Gene Sarazen -- I heard this story just this last week -- was here and witnessed what Ouimet did, and it was almost like a four-minute mile moment.

If Francis can do it, I can do it, and he did later. It really opened up the floodgates later in really inspiring American golf.

You think about this place, and it's old. It's old. It doesn't really have an architect. There were a handful of members that laid out six holes here in 1892. A year later they hired a Scottish professional, Willie Campbell, who came in and blew up the six holes and built nine holes.

And the opening of that course, there was I believe maybe the club president, leadership of the club. They played the first hole, and he made a one. Knocked it right in the hole. Next shot, pulled it left. Next shot, hit it right. Everybody started to walk away. He made the first one, but he can't make anything else. There are lots of those stories here.

We'll play this week at par-70, a little bit longer than 7,200 yards each day, but it's more important than that. What you'll see on this golf course is an ebb and flow like nowhere else.

The first four holes, buckle up, you're going to have to really golf your ball. You get into 5 through 9, you'd better get it then because when you make the turn and you go to No. 10, we mailed it in. It's only 499-yard par-4, the Himalayas, but it was fabulous.

You play 10 through 18, it's going to be a good old-fashioned U.S. Open test. When you get past 10 and you come to a couple of special holes after that, a hole that we love, and I think it will be a focal point of the championship by what happens, is No. 11. It's a little drop-down par-3. It'll play at the most 140 yards, and we'll move it around a little bit, but it's a hole that everybody in the game can relate to. A little 140, 130, 120-yard. Maybe even two digits one day that we'll drop down to in playing that hole. Everybody can relate to this hole.

What Gil Hanse did in restoring that little green, that upside down cereal bowl and what'll happen around there with our plan, I think you'll see some special things happen.

That hole was used in 1913. It was not used in 1963 or 1988. We're proud to put it back in the rotation here. We took out the club's fourth hole. We rerouted things a little bit. It is a new routing. But that little 11th hole will be something special.

In 1913 Francis Ouimet was playing in the final round. It was wet. He was concerned about dropping a high shot into that green, around that green. So he wanted to hit I guess in the day, in 1913, it was the 1913 version of the stinger. He took out his jigger and tried to hit a low line shot into that green and chunked it. About 20 yards off the tee, wedged it on the green, and three-putted. Think about that. Double bogey 5.

He walked off that green, and there was a fan that had come out to watch and said, oh, what a marvelous run. It's sad that it's all but over. Ouimet talked about how that inspired him to go on and win later and make the playoff or finish into a playoff with Vardon and Ray the next day and ultimately win.

Really inspired him. Really think about it. Vardon and Ray finished earlier and they came out and watched Ouimet play. On 16 there's a famous story that folks around here tell where Ouimet had knocked his first shot on that little green on 16, the par-3, knocked it nine feet by, and Vardon and Ray are out watching. He made that nine-footer, and Vardon was known to shout out in appreciation for what Ouimet did. He was even rooting for what this young American was about to achieve that day here at The Country Club.

I think if you think of one hole, and I promise you something magical will happen on No. 17 here at The Country Club. It just has to. You think about the history.

1913, Vardon doubled it in the last round. Ouimet birdied it. He birdied it in the playoff.

In 1963 Arnold Palmer missed a two-footer, Jacky Cupit drove it left, wedged it short, and pitched it up and three-putted for a double bogey.

Tony Lema double bogeyed 17 to miss the playoff by one, and Julius Boros birdied it to get into the playoff. It's bound to happen.

Curtis Strange in 1988 three-putted from ten feet above the hole on that upper plateau the last day. And even the U.S. Amateur Jay Sigel beat my college teammate, Rick Fehr, by making a 45-footer from the lower level up top to win his back-to-back U.S. Amateur.

Something is going to happen on 17 this week. I don't know what it'll be, but that's the magic of The Country Club. There's just so much more here.

What's really great about this place are these little, tiny putting greens. You look at what's out there with most of them. You're going to have to drive your ball in the fairway

with the rough this year, and you're going to have to be a great iron player to keep your ball on these firm and little, tiny putting greens.

Francis Ouimet said in playing this golf course well, it takes a lot of knowing. So those that have done their homework, some came in early months ago, last week, I think it'll pay dividends as they play The Country Club.

We're very proud of a couple other things we're doing this week. I'll touch on them briefly. If you want to talk a little bit more about the golf course, Jeff Hall of my team and Jason Gore, the three J's as Mike says, we're happy to talk with you afterwards. We'll give you all the details, but there's some other things that are happening we're proud of.

Sustainability is very important to the town of Brookline, to the USGA, and to The Country Club, and we've embraced that. This will be the most sustainable U.S. Open to date, and I would argue our consultants from Waste Management that have come in and helped us design this, the most sustainable and eco-friendly championship in the game this year.

We'll do it in three areas. We'll reduce our footprint of significant energy and fossil fuel conservation measures that we're taking throughout the championship. We'll divert things that normally go to landfills through recycling, and dramatic reduction of single-plastics. We will use over over 500,000 less plastic water bottles through the use of aluminum recyclables.

MIKE WHAN: And we'll be turning off the air-conditioning in the media center starting today.

JOHN BODENHAMER: So my pages don't blow away. It'll be a time of renewal, as well, with the town of Brookline and insets that we will embark on with the community.

144 trees that we'll plant in this community to -- excuse me, 128 trees to signify 128 years of the USGA that will make up a big part of the community's inset program in cooperation with the U.S. Open.

Just other things that will minimize our carbon footprint. We're proud of it. We'll be the most sustainable championship in the game this year, and we'll build on that for the future.

If you want to hear more about that and all this happening, Reg Jones of my team and Eric Steimer our championship director here, as well.

Lastly, I'd say that the Lee Elder Internship Program is

something we're very proud of. That started here with a collaboration with The Country Club, Macey Russell and the club really embraced that.

We all know Lee Elder. He was a champion of the game, a champion of equality. We're proud of our relationship with Lee. He's a Bob Jones winner for us.

But this idea came Lee. Macey Russell and the club came to us and said, we should do this. We'll bring in 25 young people from around the country. We'll showcase everything that we do, the business of golf around a U.S. Open, and inspire them into careers around the U.S. Open. Not just playing careers. Some of them are fine players, but the business of golf and how we conduct a U.S. Open.

Camille Ramos of our team will share more about that with you if you wish, but she'll see those young people around the site this week, and that's an investment in the future, and we plan to continue that as we go forward in future U.S. Opens.

I think as Mike mentioned, lastly, I would say that this is a year of firsts. Many firsts for the USGA. Our women's four-ball was played in Puerto Rico. First time we've conducted a championship in a U.S. territory.

We'll play our first championship in the state of Alaska in July, the U.S. Senior Women's Amateur. It'll be the 50th state that will have hosted a USGA national championship. We complete the loop with Alaska and Puerto Rico, and we're proud of that.

And as Mike mentioned, we'll conduct our inaugural U.S. Adaptive Open championship on Pinehurst No. 6, our great partners at Pinehurst, and showcase another aspect of this game and community of the game that will grow and embrace, and there will be so many inspiring stories coming out of that championship, you won't believe it.

I would mention that off to the left of the second tee, you can go into our Museum Experience, which will showcase some of the champions of the game but also our new adaptive open trophies that are there and were unveiled a couple of weeks ago, as well.

I would just leave you with something Mr. Ouimet said about this property, and it kind of sums it up and what we'll all feel here this week. The weather forecast is good. And as Mr. Ouimet said to me the property around here is hallowed. The grass grows a little bit greener. The trees bloom a little bit better, and there's even warmth in the rocks that you see around here.

This is a special place to Mr. Ouimet. It's a special place to



the USGA, and we're going to have a great U.S. Open Championship. Thank you.

Q. The U.S. Open prides itself on being the most thorough examination in major championship golf. Our last six winners have been some of the longest players in golf. In these debriefings Mike talked about, is there any worry that maybe distance is playing too much of a role in dictating how this championship is played?

JOHN BODENHAMER: I think that's to be determined. I can't comment on that. We'll just have to see how that plays out.

But I will tell you that this week -- what we do in a U.S. Open, we endeavor to have the players get every club in their bag dirty. We want to examine every aspect of their game. So when they win a U.S. Open, it's something special.

I don't know, I think distance has always provided an advantage for people. You go back, it's kind of relative in some ways. Bob Jones, when he won, and Jack Nicklaus and Tiger certainly, it's always been part of it. You should probably have an advantage if you're a little bit longer.

How it plays here, I don't know. We're going to find out. It's been 34 years since we've been here. I can tell you as we set up the golf course, we've been true to what the architecture provides.

This will be a good old-fashioned U.S. Open with rough, and we'll see how they navigate that and what they use off the tee. It is not our narrowest, but will provide narrowness. I am telling you with these small greens and the firmness, they're going to need to be in the fairway.

Q. I'm sure you're well aware of the controversy that's surrounding this tournament --

MIKE WHAN: What's that?

Q. The 9/11 families who have written a scathing letter to five Americans who are playing here, including Phil Mickelson, and followed up with continued criticism of Phil after we talked to him. My colleague, Josh Peter, talked to Jamal Khashoggi's fiancée. She said, none of these guys who are on the LIV Tour should be able to play the majors. Obviously, this is a PGA/LIV battle, but it's also a battle in golf. I'm curious, do you feel you have a responsibility to the game and the country as the national governing body for the sport to speak out and support the 9/11 families and Khashoggi's fiancée?

MIKE WHAN: Yeah, as you and I spoke last week long on this, I'm not really sure my answer is what you like or what everybody likes.

We definitely feel responsibility to this game, and we feel a responsibility to the competitors that play it. We did sit down and have a long conversation about a week before the U.S. Open, did where somebody else play and what promoter they played it with, disqualify them for this event? We decided no on that, with all the awareness that not everyone would agree with that decision.

That's probably enough. I would tell you the same thing. You and I talked about on the phone. Whether we all like it or not, in February 30 guys played for the same promoter in Saudi Arabia with an acceptable release from the PGA TOUR, and for years the DP World Tour has had an event there, same promoter.

I'm sure there are players that both came through our qualifying and maybe teeing it up that are sponsored by those different -- so we asked ourselves the question of one, one week before if you play somewhere where you're not approved to play, would you be disqualified for the 2022 U.S. Open? And we said no.

And we also had to ask the question, if you're going to put that kind of clause in, who gets in, we've got to go back to 9,300 people and played last week but who played ever, where, sponsored by. It becomes a pretty slippery slope to try to apply that across 9,300 people.

But we understand that nobody -- I've said this to these folks who work here. When I was 4 years old my dad started waving an American flag in our yard ever since. As soon as I bought a house, the first thing I did was put an American flag there, and it's been flying in the front yard of my house forever.

You're not going to find a stronger American than me, but at the end of the day we ran this championship by asking ourselves, did those people disqualify themselves from the 2022 Open? And we believed the answer to that was no, and that's the decision we made.

Q. And no support for the 9/11 families?

MIKE WHAN: Complete support for the 9/11 families. Listen, we're all three Americans, and if anybody doesn't remember that day, then shame on you. That's alive and well in my head. I remember where I was, what I was doing, who I was talking to when the first plane went in. We lost a couple neighbors.

But as it relates to the USGA and this championship, that was the decision we had to make a week ago, and that's the decision we made.

Q. Can you get us a copy of this anchor site agreement since you suggested when you read it --

MIKE WHAN: There's not "a" anchor site agreement. There's anchor sites agreement.

Q. We'll take one.

MIKE WHAN: You'd really love legal of the anchor site agreement. 47 pages in your PDF.

Q. Rules changes and equipment changes that you've made, put in place, either grooves or anchoring, have you accomplished the goal when you put those in place?

MIKE WHAN: I'm not sure I'm the best one to answer. But I think at the end of the day when it comes to equipment standards, our goal isn't -- I said this to the players.

I was at PAC meeting at the PGA TOUR during the Memorial a couple weeks ago. And I said, unlike current belief we're not wide awake at night worrying about someone hit a drive yesterday, what happened two weeks. We are not a group that's worried about PGA TOUR scoring. It's not something that keeps us awake.

We've got to be the group that thinks about 30 years from now. Is this golf course obsolete to a certain level of players, or are golf courses like this never going to be built close to a city again because of the footprint?

So what we're trying to do is address the slope of a curve long-term. I think when we make changes that we're proposing right now in distance if we go through that process, people are going to be longer six years from now than they are today because guys are going to get stronger, more athletic, and I said that to the Tour players.

One of the reasons why we like using the ODS, the overall distance standard that we have in play, is because it allows longer to be longer and have an advantage. We want athletes to have that advantage and have to think their way through the course.

But we also need to slow down the curve of that line, the pace of that line in whatever we're trying to address just to make sure that the game doesn't outpace itself, and we wake up 30 years from now where our kids enter a game that's weaker than the game we entered as kids.

So we don't try to fix the game for tomorrow or next week or in two years. We try to make sure the slope of this game and the sanctity of this game in the next 50 years is in better shape than it would be had we not made those adjustments.

JOHN BODENHAMER: I believe your question was to do with anchoring as well. Yes, I believe we did achieve what we wanted to achieve.

The goal with the rule change was keep golf what it's been 400. A free-swinging stroke. Not something that's anchored to your body, and we did achieve that. I think living through that and being part of the rules process, I think there were a lot of cries that millions of people are going to leave the game because people aren't going to enjoy the game.

I think that's been proven not to be the case. We're proud of how the game has grown, and we're proud of keeping the essence of golf and what it has been.

I would say that has been -- look, was everybody happy about the decision? No. But I think our obligation, as Mike said, is to look at 50, 100 years from now and what's best for the game. That's our obligation.

That isn't making everyone happy. It's doing what's best for the long-term interest of the game, so in that mindset I'd say that, yes, we achieved success from our standpoint with anchoring.

Q. The people involved in the LIV Tour series say that golf viewership numbers are down, participation numbers are down, and they believe that the increase of competition, free agency, new tournaments will revitalize the whole of the golf industry. What is your take on that?

MIKE WHAN: You say that they say the numbers are down in the U.S.? Is that what you said?

Q. They're talking globally, but that's what they say.

MIKE WHAN: I politely disagree. If you look at any number of the game right now, I'm not sure the game has been this healthy in a long time.

I'm not just talking about number of people playing or who's making up that number. The entrance of women and people of color, it's game-changing numbers. We went from having 30% of public golf courses having financial difficulty to 6% just in the last couple years.

37.5 million people just in the States enjoying this game,



and I think the really cool part is one-third of that 37.5 is 12.5 million don't even play it on a golf course. They play it at TopGolf and driving ranges and putt-putts. We're embracing that, as well.

What's really happened a lot in the last couple of years is that group kind of elevating over to the golf course, as well. Retailers having a hard time getting product, manufacturers keeping up. They're problems, but problems we all would have really wanted about four or five years ago.

Listen, I'm saddened by what's happening in the professional game. Mostly as a fan because I like watching the best players in the world come together and play, and this is going to fracture that. I've heard that this is good for the game. At least from my outside view right now, it looks like it's good for a few folks playing the game, but I'm struggling with how this is good for the game.

The thing that most saddens me as a former commissioner of the LPGA is I used to always say to everybody, sponsors, fans and most importantly my athletes, you know what makes this sport different than every other professional sport? You own this thing.

I would walk into a board meeting at the LPGA, and it was players on the board. They didn't report to a bunch of owners. They didn't report to two guys that had all the money and had all the decisions and if those two guys changed their mind, we all had to change our plans. Professional golf has been for a long time been their sport. Not a couple of people's support.

What concerns me or saddens me the most is we could get to the point where a couple of people hold those strings, and how they act may or may not be great for the game. I don't know. But those three things are kind of tough to grapple with.

But I think in terms of growing the game globally, great. If that turns out to be true, great. But I think it's pretty challenging to find me the pocket where that's hindered. Playing five times in America where the game is about as strong as it's been is kind of a dichotomy to we're going to take the game all around the world.

Q. The players that had already qualified for the U.S. Open, you've explained why they will be in, but could you see a situation going forward where these breakaway players are going to find it harder and harder to get into the U.S. Open?

MIKE WHAN: Yes.

Q. That was sort of my question. What would you possibly do to maybe narrow the opportunities for them to get in? Drop the World Rankings, perhaps? Or make it more skewed towards PGA TOUR and DP World Tour players to get in?

MIKE WHAN: Well, first off, I just answered the question is could I foresee a day? Yeah, I could foresee a day. Do I know what that day looks like? No, I don't.

To be honest with you, what we're talking about was different two years ago, and it was different two months ago than it is today. We've been doing to 127 years, so I think the three of us and everybody else that we work with need to take a long-term view of this and see where these things go so we're not going to be a knee-jerk reaction to kind of what we do.

But the question was, could you envision a day where it would be harder for some folks doing different things to get into a U.S. Open? I could. Will that be true? I don't know, but I can definitely foresee that day.

STU FRANCIS: The other point I'd add to that is we're quite proud of the fact that half of the field for the U.S. Open qualifies for the U.S. Open, and we want to retain that. And as soon as we start to move off that percentage by a meaningful amount, I think it changes the U.S. Open a great degree.

The aspirations that young golfers have around the world to go out and get through local qualifying, get through sectional qualifying is really one of the harbingers of why we think the U.S. Open is the greatest championship of all.

JOHN BODENHAMER: By the way, I think we have 15 or 16 players in the field this year that made it through both stages of qualifying, local and final. That's more than usual, and it's great to see.

Q. A number of people have expressed that perhaps the most disconcerting thing about LIV Golf is that a foreign government is kneecapping an American business financially and pillaging its assets in terms of its players and diminishing the sport. Two-part question. What answers do we have to stop this from happening in other sports again? And secondly, is not LIV Golf as it exists right now silly team names, \$12,000 for three-day tickets? Is that not the reddest of golf's red light districts and dumbing the game down to its lowest common denominator?

MIKE WHAN: I'm not sure if that was a question, but it sounds like you've got your article written. I don't need to get in the way of that.

Q. The question is, what are your thoughts on that, and what ideas are out there to stop it from happening elsewhere?

MIKE WHAN: I think if you think about the way you had to ask that question, is you said LIV as it exists today, I'm not going to try to define what LIV is as it exists today, because it's going to change. It's changed a lot in the last two weeks, and certainly changed a lot in the last 12 months.

I think our job is to make sure that we promote golf no matter how it's played and at the same time sit back and make sure we assess what is or isn't good for the game long-term.

But, hey, one thing that's been great about this sport is athletes have had choice, and obviously some athletes are taking advantage of that choice. Doesn't mean I have to like it.

And I remember saying this to I think Christine when we were talking on the phone last week, I don't get to build my field criteria based on what Mike Whan likes or what the three of us like. We build a field criteria. We post it, and we let people play their way into it or out of it, and that's how we made the decision on 2022.

Q. You mentioned hole 11, hole 17, and we've heard a lot about the rough and the small greens playing a big factor this week. How have you seen the conditions of the course play out during these practice rounds, and are there any last-minute tweaks or changes going into tomorrow you plan on making?

JOHN BODENHAMER: There are lots of last-minute tweaks and changes because I think what we do is all dependent on the weather. We have a strategy. We have a plan. But I think the thing that makes everything possible is what has been done here by the club.

Dave Johnson, the golf course superintendent, and his team here, they've just been magnificent. This golf course, it's as close to perfect as what we would want for a U.S. Open as we could imagine. Couldn't give more kudos to Dave and his team.

I think you'll see some narrowness. You'll see some U.S. Open rough. You'll see some appropriately firm greens, some good hole locations, and we'll just let the golf course be what the golf course was meant to be, and I think whatever that score is, we're going to have a great champion, and you're going to see some magic on 17.

MIKE WHAN: For all we talk about distance, it's going to

be fun to watch what 100 yards can do at a U.S. Open. I mean, that's going to be a good place to hang out on Sunday.

JOHN BODENHAMER: I think you also have, if you look at things, you've got your really strong par-4s, 499; 15 plays 510 downhill, but you've also got several that are under 400 yards. That's pretty rare anymore in major championship golf. Each of those -- No. 5 is going to be quite exciting. It measures about 320 on the ground, but as the ball flies, it's about 300 yards. So it'll be interesting to see how the players take that on. I think that'll be another highlight, No. 5.

I think when you go around this place and you just see, they didn't move much dirt with donkeys. They had a little bit of dynamite, but that was it. And the rock outcroppings, with the fescue browning up over them, it's like being on our coast out in South Hampton or over in the United Kingdom. You've got almost sand dune-like rock outcroppings that players will hit blind shots over to these marvelously canted putting greens. This is a throwback U.S. Open, as well.

Don't ask me. Go talk to the players. Where is Jason Gore? He'll tell you almost unanimously. I think unanimously from what I've heard the players love this place. The ghosts of the past matter. You can't buy history. You can only earn it, and The Country Club has it.

MIKE WHAN: We need a t-shirt that says 'donkeys and dynamite.' I think there's a trademark in there somewhere.

Q. Obviously, it was a very fast-moving situation with LIV last week, but going forward, how comfortable would the USGA be admitting players to championships if they're serving a ban or a suspension, indefinite suspension, on the PGA TOUR?

MIKE WHAN: I think it would be a lot of hypotheticals for me to get what LIV is going to be by the time we're talking about this next year, but as we would do any year, we're going to definitely reevaluate field criteria. We would any year. We will take a look at what the landscape looks like.

I didn't mean to send some sort of tremor that everything is going to change tomorrow, but when asked the question, could you foresee, of course I could foresee. What exactly that may or may not look like will depend on what happens to the landscape.

Q. Is it fair to say that suspensions imposed by the PGA TOUR would get your attention in working out that kind of --

 . . . when all is said, we're done.®

MIKE WHAN: They already did. It got our attention for this championship.

Q. Mike, a couple things on that topic. Your World Ranking Board seat hat, if you don't mind putting that on. Is an event required to play by the rules of golf to earn ranking points? Is that actually stipulated in writing?

MIKE WHAN: I don't know, to be honest with you. I've been to one World Board Ranking in my current position. I did it on the women's side obviously, but I don't know if that's a stipulation.

I also don't think -- I'm probably a couple thousand emails behind over the last three weeks of championships, but I don't think we are sitting on a submission. That's really what you do with a World Ranking is you review a submission, if a tour were to enter a submission. So I don't believe we're sitting on one.

Q. On the topic of developing players, the USGA oversees golf in North America, but you mentioned this is just a United States-focused effort. Is Canada and Mexico, is that something that you see becoming part of this at some point, too?

MIKE WHAN: I'm glad you asked. Canada and Mexico have great development programs. To me it's funny when I think about if you're a young girl growing up in Spain or a boy growing up in Sweden, you've got a program, and at 14 in Sweden you're probably moving to Scottsdale to the team Sweden home where they're going to introduce you to DI coaches and nutrition and stretching.

There's a path that they kind of take you on. Canada has got a great development program and does Mexico. We don't. So we're actually spending some time with both of them to learn more about what they're doing.

Again, I'm a pretty global guy. I've definitely got that coin at the LPGA of I love taking this game worldwide. But if you go back 20 years ago, the top 100 female golfers in the world were probably 70/30 America to the rest of the world and now it's 80/20 the rest of the world to U.S. Same thing is happening on the men's top 100. Just people don't pay as much attention to it because the top 20 is pretty American.

Now I get to work at a company where the first two letters are United and States, and I really believe it's our responsibility to build a strong pipeline and make sure that this sport -- and I also think it's amazing the diversity of this game at age 12, and it's amazing how much diversity is gone at age 20. We can be better.

We're doing a lot to get people into the game. We could be better about keeping the people that want to be in the game in the game, and I really think that's a charge we should own at the USGA.

STU FRANCIS: I'd add one point. I played a round of golf three or four months ago, and my caddie was a mid-20s woman, and she was a great caddie. I talked to her a little bit, and she said, you know, I hear you guys are talking about a Team USA concept. And I said, really, would you have interested? She said, actually yes, I won a USGA Junior Girls championship. I didn't have the resources to continue. I love the game but I had to divert myself, and this is what I'm doing now.

It was just case in point that if we had been there to help her guide herself through everything she needed to do, she could have turned one USGA championship into many majors and whatever.

We're very, very committed to this as something that's important to golf and important to the aspirations of all the junior players.

JOHN BODENHAMER: If I could just add to that, too, and I see Heather Daly-Donofrio hiding in the back there like we're church or something -- that she's in the background. There she is. I would encourage you to reach out to Heather.

I would describe this, and we are super excited about it. The pieces have always been there, but it'll be a collaborative venture starting at the grass-roots level and identifying the talent with our allied golf associations and others and then up through the American Junior Golf Association, the college game, the amateur game, and then on to hopefully the tours just making for better people.

I think we see it as something that is uniquely USA and USGA, and we're excited about it and really what the future would hold. But I would say this, too: Our championships, you know we pride ourselves on our openness, our DNA, we welcome the world. This is the United States Open, but the world is - it's just like our country. Everybody can come to this country and be welcome. We're inclusive, and be a part of what we do and earn our national championship. Our championships will stay that way while we grow on our own team and our future stars.

MIKE WHAN: It would be easy for the golfing population to have missed what Tiger Woods said at his induction ceremony at the World Golf Hall of Fame that I think he said at age 13 or 14 the family had a family meeting at the kitchen table because they didn't have the funds anymore

to raise a golfer of that caliber. And he said, lucky for me, my dad decided to second mortgage the house, but if not we would have had to come up with a plan B.

I mean, we were in the audience thinking about USA development team program thinking, imagine if they chose plan B and the world might have missed one of the greatest golfing assets of the world.

I had this conversation with Tiger down in Jupiter back in February, which is, we've got to make sure the next kitchen conversation there isn't a plan B, there's a plan A and we'll be part of that plan A. We're going to create a significant grant funding program to help the Tiger Woodses of the future and anybody else in this space. If you've got the interest, the game and the passion for it, we're going to keep them in the game.

To me, sitting in the audience listening to him tell that story, I thought, what if the kitchen conversation had gone another way.

This is necessary, and it's amazing to John's point how many players, coaches, college coaches, just athletes have come to us and said, how did we not start this 30 years ago. It's not time, it's beyond time.

Q. Do you mind giving us any kind of insight you've gotten in terms of feedback on your conversations about distance?

MIKE WHAN: Yeah, I mean, it's funny, I went to the PGA TOUR event at Muirfield and the night before I met with the PAC, which is 15, 16 players that hit a pretty long ball, and the next day I met with Jack's table, which was kind of a different audience, a different audience saying, where have you been.

I think the really enlightening -- I said this to Stu when I came back, both groups, Jack's group that he organized and the PGA TOUR players, were really both concerned about making sure that we don't do any damage to the recreational game and keep pushing it forward, and neither sort of realized what we were working on. The ball changes that we're talking about really impact the higher you swing and really much impact the less you swing, and even if you add four yards of distance to a golfer like me, we can pick up the white and blue tees and go up four yards, and we're good. We just can't go back 25 from the black tees.

And the way we talk model local rule, because we couldn't figure out a way technologically not to really disadvantage the recreational golfer, I was amazed how many professional Tour players on the PGA TOUR applauded

the thank you for taking care of -- they're playing a lot of pro-ams, and there's one person that said, I play in a pro-am every week; please don't make the game harder for those guys. And taking out some innovation where maybe it could create some space for retailers to actually think more about the beginning and slow swing speeds and beginning golfer. I was amazed that that was pretty positive on both.

I think one question that PGA TOUR guys had is we're working pretty hard to create swing speed, to have more flexibility, and are you going to take that away from us, and we realized it's the same test, just updated with modern -- the reason you can feel comfortable that length is still going to be length, it's the same approach, and guys have outgrown the current and they'll outgrow this one.

We don't want to take athleticism away from the game. We don't want length to not be an advantage. The goal is not to find a ball that flies 302 and falls out of the air. I think for them it was really educational. I remember coming back to Stu and saying, we shouldn't assume everybody knows what we're doing on distance AOIs because most were hearing it for the first time, and we should definitely not assume they understand what we're trying to do on the recreational side of the game.

I came away from that energized.

Q. In previous conversations when you took the job, you talked about wanting to have a great degree of cohesion amongst certain bodies, PGA of America, the PGA TOUR and yourselves and kind of working really in concert with each other, and I wonder in the advent of LIV what level of cohesion exists and what's the challenge of having people on the same page not doing what's best for each individual organization.

MIKE WHAN: Yeah, I do believe and I'm not smart enough to do anything on my own, so I learned that early on. So when I think about our success at the LPGA, almost all of that came at the hands of partnership, PGA, LPGA, Martin at the R&A was big. I wouldn't know how to do this job and not be partnered with those guys. We don't want to govern to the sport, we want to govern with the sport.

So that's an important part for us.

I think, like I said, I think we have to see what this becomes. If this is an exhibition or tour, to be determined. But I've said this many times, I've seen a lot of things get started in the game, a lot of things, maybe nothing with this amount of noise, don't get me wrong, or this amount of funding behind it, but I've also seen a lot of those things not with be us a couple years later, so don't know where this

will lead or where it will go, but yeah, my job is to continue to bring in cohesion to the game, and I'm not going to stop doing that, but I'm also -- one event doesn't change the way I think about the future of the sport.

Q. I just wanted to get your feelings on the fact that we're at the U.S. Open and hardly anyone is talking about it, just because of everything going on.

MIKE WHAN: We're praying that that changes tomorrow. Even I can say that you don't have to ask how we feel about it, ask 156 players that are grinding it out out there to get to tomorrow.

Q. They're talking just as much as we are about it.

MIKE WHAN: Yeah, but they're trying to focus on the same thing we're trying to focus on. I get it; it's a news story. We're not going to run away from the news story. We had to make some tough decisions that not everybody agrees with.

Where this will go, I don't know, but like I said, I'm glad my kids are grown because I used to tell my kids the greatest thing about golf was X, Y and Z, and listen, I understand if people want to play a heck of a lot less golf and get paid more money, and that's a choice and that's great.

What that means to the future of the game I think to be determined. I think hopefully as soon as we tee this up tomorrow morning, we'll have something else to talk about, at least for the next four days.

Q. Not to dumb this down and maybe I missed this, but John, what are the playoff holes if God forbid we have one?

JOHN BODENHAMER: 1 and 18, and I think everybody knows we have a two-hole aggregate playoff protocol. If still tied we'll go hole-by-hole or in other words sudden death and we'll go 1 and 18, 1 and 18.

MIKE WHAN: Every time we've played here we've had a playoff.

JOHN BODENHAMER: Every Open has had a playoff.

Q. Just wondering if prior to announcing your decision last week, did you have a conversation with Jay Monahan, and did he try to lean on you or put any pressure on you to be on their side?

MIKE WHAN: No. Jay and I are friends. I was at the Memorial and actually he brought me in to talk about distance. We actually didn't talk about this. At the end of

the day, we do a lot of things together.

Somebody asked me the other morning, have you talked to Martin Slumbers. I talk to Martin Slumbers all the time. We don't talk about our field criteria. We all run championships. They're all different in how we run those championships, but no, I've known Jay a long time; he wouldn't do that, nor has he ever.

Q. What's your timeline for when you hope to start identifying players for the development program, and how much will this cost?

MIKE WHAN: Both are the reason why I hired Heather. You've followed me long enough to know that I get excited about big ideas and then I need somebody to say, here's what the idea really looks like, and Heather is going to be the person that kind of helps us define.

But as I said to Heather, if this takes three years, I'll be patient. If it takes three weeks, man, I'll be on board with you.

Exactly what it's going to be is to be determined. But listen, we want to build something in the neighborhood of a \$40 million grant program. We want to have a significant pool of funds to help -- you can't build an American pipeline with a couple million bucks. We've got to be there in a big way, and the good news for me is, and J.B. knows this, I've shared this around the country with a lot of people. I'm always floored how many people would like to help, both corporate and individuals that believe that this is more than past time, so I think we're going to have a lot of friends and family join us on building an American development team process that's going to be pretty interesting. And if not, we're going to do it anyway, but I do think we're going to have room for people to jump on the train with us.

THE MODERATOR: Stu, Mike, John, thank you for being here with us this morning. We look forward to a wonderful U.S. Open over the next four days.

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