

U.S. Open Championship 2025

Saturday, June 14, 2025

Oakmont, Pennsylvania, USA

Oakmont Country Club

Jack Nicklaus

Johnny Miller

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: Good morning, everyone. My name is Mike Trostel, I'm the director of the World Golf Hall of Fame and it is my honor to introduce two players who won their U.S. Opens at Oakmont Country Club in 1962 and 1973. Jack Nicklaus, 18-time professional major champion and won the very first of those at Oakmont here in 1962, and Johnny Miller, the 1973 U.S. Open champion closed that victory with an 8-under 63, a scoring record in all majors that lasted for more than 40 years.

Jack, you came here as a 22 year old. You had just turned professional just before that in the previous fall. What was the key to your victory that week on a course that was really one of the toughest courses in the entire world?

JACK NICKLAUS: The key was to beat Arnold Palmer. That was the key. The key at that point, I didn't know much about Oakmont. I didn't know anything about Oakmont. I came in 10 days before the tournament and played a couple of times and then went over and played the first Thunderbird that we had and I finished second over there.

I had won -- I hadn't won, I finished second in '60 and fourth in '61 and I sort of felt like this was my Open. I didn't realize that, as a 22 year old might not, that I was in Arnold Palmer's backyard.

The key to me was that I loved USGA setups. I loved the way Joe Dey set up golf courses. I knew that you had to drive the ball straight. I knew that putting was going to be a premium on this golf course.

I was talking to some of the guys in there, in the locker room a few minutes ago, and they're saying -- they said, What do you think? I said, Well, obviously putting is the key out here. I said, I three-putted the 55th green. I had one three-putt that week and I'm still ticked off I three-putted that one. That was sort of my mindset.

Basically you had to figure these greens out and not let them get to you, and be patient. 1-under par won the tournament, and 1-under par doesn't win a lot of

tournaments today, but it did then.

THE MODERATOR: Johnny, in 1973 you started the final round six strokes back. You were tied for 13th place. You had guys like Mr. Nicklaus, Arnold Palmer, Lee Trevino, Gary Player all in front of you. At what point in that final round did you start to think, man, I have a chance to win this championship?

JOHNNY MILLER: Well, I was pretty upset about the 76 I shot the day before. I had forgot my yardage -- I had walked some of the holes, and my caddie -- you used to just -- if you wanted to caddie in the U.S. Open, you just put your name in a hat, so to speak, and my caddie, Bodine his name was, I asked him, Well, where do you caddie; are you a pretty good player? He said, No, I'm a caddie, but I've never caddied for anybody that broke 90 before. I was like, Well, that's going to be a big help for me.

But yeah, getting back to -- I was pretty down in the dumps after the 76. I thought, Well, that's the end of that. I had played well the three U.S. Opens before, top-10 finishes. And after I birdied the first hole, that was nice, a nice start. It was a tough birdie there. Then I birdied No. 2, which wasn't as tough. I hit an 8-iron about this far from the hole.

3, which is probably the hardest hole on the golf course back then, made about a 20-foot putt there for another birdie. Then hit it in the bunker on 4, the par-5, and hit a good bunker shot out about this far from the hole. Walked off the green, and I thought, Dang, I was six back and 4-under now and the leaders might be nervous and I might only be one or two behind.

I got ahead of myself like a lot of golfers do when they think they're going to play the best round of their life and they're like, I've got six holes to go, if I just do this, I'm going to hit my best round.

But I got a surge of adrenaline and started to be very tentative. My weakness in golf was my putting. I could putt good at times, but after the fourth hole, I thought, I've got a shot here if I can keep it up.

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THE MODERATOR: For both of you who have won here in a U.S. Open, what qualities and aspects of your game do you think need to be especially sharp as we get into Saturday and Sunday here in the 2025 U.S. Open? What should we be looking for this week?

JACK NICKLAUS: Patience. Basically that's what you have to have. Obviously you have to play good golf, but just be patient with it.

I think that you -- I was a leaderboard watcher. I always wanted to see who was on the leaderboard. I adjusted my play a lot to who was on the leaderboard. That's basically what I think guys do if they want to win golf tournaments. They need to know where they are and need to know what their competition is doing, and they need to be patient with themselves and play good solid golf.

JOHNNY MILLER: Well, I have to say, as my wife, who's here somewhere, just get it in the fairway. Really, he was really -- Jack was really the first guy that would hit a 3-wood or a 1-iron off the tee which other guys never did. Almost nobody did.

JACK NICKLAUS: Most guys went ahead and drove it and hit it in the rough, right?

JOHNNY MILLER: So when you can get the ball in the fairway you can work the ball if you need to, and you eliminate so many mistake upon mistakes. If you hit it here in this rough and you try to get too much out of the lie, you get in even more trouble.

It's still all about hitting that ball in the fairway. You see the guys that don't -- like Bryson DeChambeau, he was living in the rough there this last couple days. Of course he gets to watch it on TV today.

But yeah, you've got to hit it in the fairway.

Then you've got to be able to handle the U.S. Open pressure. There's a lot of guys like Jack was sort of alluding to that the thought of winning a U.S. Open is a little out of their comfort zone, so there's only a certain kind of player that can win a U.S. Open, especially on Sunday.

Q. For both of you, I don't know if the USGA did it then as they do now, but sometimes they'll ask a champion to donate the one club that was critical to them winning that week. What would it have been for you?

JACK NICKLAUS: Well, I three-putted one time in 90 holes. I always had my laughs with Arnold. You've heard me say it before, but I told Arnold, I said -- I shot 39 at

Cherry Hills to lose to him there, and I told Arnold, I said, Arnold, if I hadn't shot the 39 the last nine at Cherry Hills nobody would have heard of you. And he said, Yeah, and if I hadn't 3-putted eight times at Oakmont nobody would have heard of you either. It works both ways, and that's probably right. If Arnold hadn't three-putted eight times, he would have won the tournament, if it was eight times, whatever the number was.

The key to Oakmont to me was not three-putting.

JOHNNY MILLER: For me, I was up and down the first couple days. I wasn't really hitting the ball that great, especially on the first round when I shot the 76, I did not play well at all tee to green. Then in the last round, it was like, my guardian angel out there said, Okay, we're going to put together a perfect round of golf, and it was literally a perfect round of golf. I missed one fairway on 11 just by a couple feet, but the fact I hit every green and I hit the ball underneath the hole, only had one putt that was a little bit downhill, that's hard to do at Oakmont, to hit 18 greens and have no downhill putts.

But yeah, that round was just -- I guess it was meant to be because I was not playing that great. I had played with Arnold Palmer the first two rounds, which was, back in those days, was a crazy experience with his gallery. His gallery was -- they were crazy. Crazy good.

But to get through the gauntlet of playing with Arnold on the first two rounds was pretty good. We both shot 140, and just handling the pressure that week was -- that was the other part.

Q. Jack, you played obviously with Arnold in the playoff, but in the first two rounds as well in 1962. What was that like for you?

JACK NICKLAUS: Well, Arnie was the top player in the game at the time. He had won the Masters earlier in the year. He was the guy you had to beat if you wanted to win, and particularly here.

It was really kind of funny because I never really heard the gallery. I was a 22-year-old kid with blinders on and not smart enough to figure out that people rooted for people. I just went out and played golf. That's what I did.

I never really considered Arnold as something different. Arnold took me under his wing when I turned pro, and he never treated me anything other than as an equal, and became one of the closest friends I've ever had in the game.

We just did -- I didn't look at it that way. He was just

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another guy that he wanted to beat me and I wanted to beat him, and I guess that's what happened through the years with the two of us.

Q. A lot of people online and on TV love to make comparisons between your golf swing and Scottie Scheffler's golf swing. Do you see the resemblance there, and what do you like about Scottie's golf swing, and does it remind you of you?

JACK NICKLAUS: Well, I don't think there's a whole lot of resemblance. Well, the swing path is -- Scottie's is very good, and I felt like my swing path was pretty good. Johnny's swing path was very good. But most good players' swing path is good. Scottie has an unusual way of coming into the ball and having his right foot slide behind him. But that evidently allows him to get his right hip, not into the shot but out of the way, and allows his hands to stay close to his body and swing down a plane.

That was one of my keys was always to get my hands as close to my body as I could. I remember Byron Nelson when I went to see him years ago, Jack Grout sent me down to see him, and Byron made one statement, he says, I don't believe you can ever have your hands too close to your body when you swing, and I feel felt that's getting your arms and hands underneath you when you swing. Johnny was very much the same way, you were well under the ball and hands were way close to your body. When your hands get away from your body then you make bad swings, and Scottie doesn't do that.

JOHNNY MILLER: Yeah, Scottie has got sort of an old-fashioned swing. When you watch his club -- most guys are playing, the club is coming in like this and then going that way. He goes like Jack, and even the way I swung with especially my irons, right up the line and right down the line, and it keeps the face square longer, so I think that's an advantage.

Also, when you're this way, you can get out of the rough a lot better than guys that are going inside and going through all the grass behind the ball.

Yeah, he's got some unusual foot work, but a little bit like Calcavecchia and Greg Norman with the right foot coming into the ball. The right foot pulls this way, they pull it in and it sort of hits a high fade. When you make that move with the right foot, pulling it back in the hitting zone, it hits a high fade, which Jack loves that high fade.

JACK NICKLAUS: Incidentally, I've never heard my swing analyzed that way. He was dead on. That was really good.

JOHNNY MILLER: Thanks.

JACK NICKLAUS: I've never heard you do that. Well done.

Q. I was wondering what you guys thought about name, image and likeness in the college game, and what do you think about the impact on the modern game of golf given all the endorsement deals young players have today?

JACK NICKLAUS: Name, image and likeness impact on the game of golf? I don't understand what --

Q. Amateur golfers now can receive money --

JACK NICKLAUS: Oh, the NIL?

Q. Yeah, now that college players are receiving money through their name, image and likeness, and you guys back in the day couldn't do that, and then I guess it affects -- what are you guys' thoughts as they play junior and amateur golf and receive money?

JACK NICKLAUS: Do I like it? No.

JOHNNY MILLER: Well, they always say money corrupts, so I hope it doesn't corrupt the values of the game.

JACK NICKLAUS: I think what you're asking is basically the college players, college and amateur players, is that what you're asking?

My feeling is I do not like what's going on in college athletics today. I don't think a lot of people like what's going on particularly. I think the athletes like it.

But I think that -- and I think that, you know, you look at, most of your scholarship athletes are athletes who could not take a job. They're sponsored by the school paying for their education, which I think is great, but athletes have never been able to receive any money where they can go home for a weekend or take a girl out on a date or they couldn't have a job while they were working. That's part of their deal.

I don't like that part of it. I think athletes should get a stipend of some kind. I don't know how much. I think that probably depends on what the situation is.

But, you know, I don't like the idea that you've got the best team money can buy. I don't like that. That's what you're asking, isn't it? I don't like that part of it. We're all caught up into it. All the colleges are caught up into it. I don't think they can figure out a way to get out of it. I hope they

do.

NCAA evidently has not been able to control it. I think it's a shame. You see guys today that could go play a fifth year of college football and make more money than if they decide to go into the draft. I don't think that's really the right way to see things happen.

I don't fault them. I fault the system.

JOHNNY MILLER: I just think that it would be better probably if every guy that made the -- let's say the top athletes got a certain stipend for being there at the school, but not all different -- like one guy getting a million dollars or whatever. I think it should just be a nice amount of money, but nothing like what they're getting now.

It's tough; once you let the cat out of the bag, it's very difficult.

Q. You've each mentioned Arnold's name a couple of times. Given that we're here in Pittsburgh, may I ask you to recount Arnold's impact on the game?

JACK NICKLAUS: Arnold's impact on the game? Arnold obviously had an enormous impact on the game. Arnold in many ways popularized the game of golf. He came along basically when television came along, and maybe television was great for Arnold, but Arnold was great for television and great for the game.

He had a flair about him that nobody else had, and people loved him. And rightfully so. He earned what he got. He did a great job.

JOHNNY MILLER: I agree exactly with what he said. Arnie had sort of like a Seve Ballesteros, sort of an aura about him. Not that they did anything like Chi-Chi Rodriguez, who I loved, but it wasn't like he was entertaining, but it was something about the way they walk and handled themselves. Arnie was a man's man, big-time man's man. He could have been with John Wayne as two leading guys in a movie.

Yeah, it's nice to have a guy like that that can help push the game along, like Tiger Woods did.

Q. Johnny, Jack referred earlier to having one three-putt and that it ticked him off. Do you recall how many three-putts you had?

JOHNNY MILLER: I know on the last round, I three-putted the 8th hole. I hit a 4-wood right on line with the pin and underneath the hole 25 feet, and I left it short and missed a putt about that long. Did a 360. But I didn't have that

many three-putts. I don't try to remember how many three-putts I had, so I'll leave that for some --

JACK NICKLAUS: You couldn't have had many.

JOHNNY MILLER: No, I didn't have many, on Sunday anyway.

Q. Could you guys talk about the quality that you most admire about each other, both personally and professionally?

JOHNNY MILLER: Well, I'll go first this time. He's not a normal guy, this guy. He just believes in what he can do, and he had the length and he had the high ball and nobody could hit a 1-iron like he could. Nobody concentrated more than him. But he would be there -- imagine in a major championship, this guy would be there a week early and for four or five days he's the only guy that had been on the property. Who do you think, once the bell rang on Thursday, who do you think believed who deserves to win? This feeling of deserving to excel and win is a huge part of athletics.

If you feel -- like Scottie Scheffler, he believes he works harder on his game than anybody else, and there's something about that. Ben Hogan, nobody hit more balls than Ben. That feeling of deserving is a huge part of being successful.

JACK NICKLAUS: Well, Johnny Miller is obviously a really good player. I loved his swing arc. I loved the way he played. I loved the -- Johnny was a streaky player, and once he got his putter rolling, get out of the way, because he made a lot of putts.

Johnny carried that sort of -- I suppose when you've got that thing going, a little bit of a swashbuckling attitude, and into broadcasting, too.

JOHNNY MILLER: (Laughs).

JACK NICKLAUS: He played it as it was and I think he said it as it was when he was on the air. I think you admire a guy for, sometimes he's going to take a little bit of a hit for sometimes what he said, but for the most part that's what he thought. I can't criticize somebody for saying what they thought. Johnny did a really good job of that through the years of his broadcasting. He was probably the most insightful guy out there.

Q. Do you wish you had stayed in TV a little longer?

JOHNNY MILLER: Do I wish I kept announcing? That was my 50th year in golf when I got to 29 years with NBC.



It seemed like a nice time to leave. I still had my wits about me and had my own way of doing things.

When I played on the East Coast especially, they'd go, Hey, Johnny, we love you, keep telling it like it is. What people liked about my announcing was that I just said what I'd say to my best friend in my own house and talking to the TV.

It was sort of like, it is what it is. If a guy duck hooks it on the last hole and hasn't hooked a ball in the last month, he might be choking. I was the first guy to use that word, which is not a very nice word. But I thought the greatness of golf was the choke factor. I just still think that that's the greatness of golf is to be able to handle pressure. If you can handle pressure -- Jack liked to hang around the first three days and then just feel like on the last day he had a huge advantage. He believed in himself, and not only believed in himself, he could produce on that last round and handle the putt or the shot.

I was more of a guy that didn't like it to be close. He liked it to be close. I wanted to win it by -- when I won the Phoenix Open by 14 shots, I liked it. If that ball is going in the hole, I'm going to fill it up until the round is over if I can. None of this fancy stuff about hitting away from the target. I wanted to have the thrill of going for knocking down pins out of the green. That was my fun. I liked to drive fast and hit hard with the driver and that kind of stuff.

I don't know, everybody does it differently. But that's just the way I thought.

Q. For both of you, since you were talking about doing things differently, the purse this week is \$21.5 million and the winner gets \$4.3 million and even if you miss the cut you've got \$10,000. Can you talk about how different your lives would be if you were playing for those numbers?

JACK NICKLAUS: Actually I don't think it would have made any difference. We played in a time when it was what it was. I think I won \$13,000 when I won here in '62. I don't know what your prize was, Johnny, probably 20, 25,000?

JOHNNY MILLER: Yeah, when you won, the lesser tournaments were like \$20,000 and good tournaments was \$25,000 for first place, and the bigger ones were \$30,000 in our era.

JACK NICKLAUS: That's what it was. Would I have loved to have had what's going on here when we played? Yeah. Obviously all of us would. But I also was really pleased that -- I know Johnny and myself both trail blazed the way

for what's happening today. I think if you look back at Hogan and Snead and those guys, they trail blazed it for us.

I don't know how far off I am, but like Hogan's lifetime earnings were like 400-some thousand dollars. The guys today, you see they're winning ten times that to win the tournament here.

JOHNNY MILLER: Scottie Scheffler won like \$80 million last year or some crazy amount.

JACK NICKLAUS: But would it have changed our lives? I would hope not. I would hope that we probably would try to live our life very similar. I've enjoyed what I've done. I've loved playing the game of golf. I've loved my design work. I love being involved with being able to take and utilize what I have to be able to -- in charity and help others.

They're all things that I don't think that would have made any difference, whether we were playing for what we played for or what they're playing here today. If we would have had the ability to do this, I think we would have tried to do the same thing.

JOHNNY MILLER: The big difference is the guys make so much money that, what do you think? It helps that you're hungry and playing hard. It used to be you had to make some money to be able to take care of your wife and maybe child or whatever, and it made golf more of a competitive thing and guys would play more tournaments because they're trying to make it while they can.

JACK NICKLAUS: We had to win tournaments to make a name to make a living. Today they make a living playing golf.

THE MODERATOR: Jack, Johnny, thank you so much for being here. We really appreciate it. Have a great week the rest of the week.

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