

U.S. Senior Open Championship

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Newport, Rhode Island, USA
Newport Country Club

Chris Hockaday

Press Conference

THE MODERATOR: Please welcome Chris Hockaday to the interview room at the 44th U.S. Senior Open here at Newport Country Club. Chris, it's your second U.S. Open. How would you say the course here compares to last year at SentryWorld?

CHRIS HOCKADAY: SentryWorld might be the hardest golf course I ever played in my life. This course, I like it. For me, the greens are similar to what I grew up playing on.

When I first got here, it kind of had the Scottish look to it, but I love this place. After being around it for a couple of days, I really like the layout, I like the course, but it's going to be a difficult test, especially if the wind gets up like it was yesterday.

Q. What's been your initial kind of takeaway as you're walking around on the course and seeing it?

CHRIS HOCKADAY: Let's see. Initial takeaways, I don't know. Right now I'm just hoping to make the cut. I'm hoping I'll be here for the weekend. I would love to -- that would be a breakthrough for me, to spend the weekend here.

Q. Chris, obviously you've played golf most of your life and on mini tours, but you've had to overcome an addiction in your life.

CHRIS HOCKADAY: Yes, sir.

Q. And now can you talk about what you're doing now to help others in the same situation and how you're working through your church?

CHRIS HOCKADAY: Yeah, well, it's been -- I was doing it from 2006 to 2019. I got out of doing that at that time, and now we have another group, a recovery group at our church, but I still have a lot of people from my church that will call me and give my number out to other people to help



them.

I've got a lot of experience in recovery. I relapsed many, many times over probably a 15, 16 year period; went into treatments four or five times from 20 to 34 years old. I got clean when I was 34 years old.

I just felt like the Lord put it on my heart to share it with others what he'd done for me, and it was really that simple.

Q. When people come to you and they've had these challenges in their life, what can you say to them to help them?

CHRIS HOCKADAY: Just hang on. For me, it was a change of lifestyle. I wanted to get clean, but I still wanted to do the things that don't go along with a sober lifestyle. So changing my lifestyle, I think, was the hardest part.

Q. Let's take you back to how you got in the situation that you got in back when you were in high school. What led to that point, and why did you go that avenue at that time of your life?

CHRIS HOCKADAY: That's a good question. I still don't know. It was more of a peer pressure thing, just wanting to fit in. But then when I started doing that, it was like there was a part of me that really enjoyed it. It was an escape from the stresses of reality.

It just got easier to spend more time in that escape than it did to face reality. It really was that simple.

Q. How serious did it get, and when did the point come in your life that you said, I can't do this anymore?

CHRIS HOCKADAY: It was very serious. It's pretty serious when your own family kind of cuts you off and everything. They went to all kinds of lengths to help me over a long period of time. Everything they did failed.

When it comes right down to it, you can do anything you want to to help somebody, but if they're not on board to help themselves, it doesn't really matter.

So when they -- they were my best enablers, my family was, including my wife. So even my wife split from me



there at the end. So there was nobody to turn to except for the Lord.

I found myself in a field praying to the Lord to just save me, help me. I didn't know what else to ask for. 12 hours later, I was in a program that was four hours away from where I was living. To me that was a miracle, and it got my attention.

Q. How did you find that ministry? I think it's called Potter's Wheel.

CHRIS HOCKADAY: Yes.

Q. And what did you do there?

CHRIS HOCKADAY: I had a really good friend named George Carroll who had give a pastor some golf lessons. The pastor's name was Larry Miller. He founded Potter's Wheel Ministry.

Larry had befriended George, and George was a close personal friend to me, and George never criticized me and he never passed judgment on me. There's two or three times I remember talking, and he said, you know, I've got this guy I was giving lessons to.

So finally I called him one day, and I said, hey, what's your pastor friend's number? I'd like to talk to him. So that's kind of how it started. That was five years before I got clean.

I went there, I went to the program, I went through the program, but I couldn't wait to get out. I just complied. I did what they told me to do.

When I got out, I couldn't wait to get out, and I kind of sort of went back to my lifestyle. Just like okay, I'm okay now, but I wasn't. So when I came back there four or five years later in 2004 I stayed there a year, and I needed it.

It was just time for me to change my lifestyle and create some new habits that changed my life. Just adding some biblical principles to my life.

Q. Was there a moment when the light came on in your mind during that period and said to you I'm on the right path now?

CHRIS HOCKADAY: Oh, yeah, definitely. I spent a lot of time with the pastor. He loved golf. I caught some flack when I was in the program because a lot of the guys didn't get to ride off with the pastor and go play golf somewhere, but he didn't have many professional golfers come through his program either.

So every now and then, we'd slip out on a Sunday afternoon after service and go play 9 holes or 18 holes.

It was in those moments of time, personal time with him, we became personal friends. He said so many things, but I remember I always struggled with anxiety. There was many bible scriptures, but this pastor said something out of his mouth that had nothing to do with the scripture. He just simply said, son, wherever you are, be all there, because that's where God intends you to be.

It just clicked that day. Something happened. When he said that to me, I felt like -- because I always had the feeling like it didn't matter where I was or what I was doing, but I felt like I ought to be somewhere else doing something else.

So that day, it just, this anxiety kind of subsided. I feel it come on every now and then, but I'll remind myself of that. There's many other little quotes and scriptures that I use to help me get through hard times.

Q. When you sit or speak with those that have addiction challenges, you go in and talk to groups or you do one-on-one? Tell me how that works.

CHRIS HOCKADAY: Today it's more one-on-one. I'll tell you something real quick. I'm human. I have my shortcomings. Still to this day I get selfish and I start complaining about little things. Lord, what do you want me to do. I'm not joking. My phone will ring not long after I say that, and it's somebody that needs help, and it gets me out of my selfishness.

God has my attention. That's all I can say. I look for him everywhere now, where I didn't used to. So that's the biggest difference I think in my life now, is my perspective. Of life and people, and circumstances of situations. They all come into our life to help us to grow and become stronger and better people. I didn't take it that way for many years.

So I guess you could say it took me 35 years to grow up and mature really.

Q. You had golf in your life growing up.

CHRIS HOCKADAY: Yes, sir.

Q. You went to college. You possibly became a little bit better when you were not on the starting team in college. How did you lose golf but then still regained it later in life to get where you are today?

CHRIS HOCKADAY: I think it's because I always had a love for it. But I can tell you this, it's like I was a 12-year-old kid, and I told my dad, I said, I want to play on the TOUR one day. Somewhere between 12 and 20, it just kind of faded, and I didn't see how it was going to ever happen.

In the process of getting clean, you know, you do some inner healing. You go back in your life, and you try to find these things that cause you to have these character defects, and it's things that you don't like about yourself.

Just going back into my childhood and digging into some things and an inner healing class that they do at Potter's Wheel, it made me realize that I had unforgiveness towards myself and that I had never forgiven myself. It's crazy because I'm the most forgiving person in the world. You can ask any of my friends. I don't hold any grudges towards anybody, but I have a grudge against myself for years.

It took the instructor in that class at that time, who is not here anymore. A couple years later he committed suicide, just to tell you how painful addiction is. He helped me to realize that I needed to forgive myself, and he made me mad when he told me that, but he was right, and I did.

In doing that, it's as if everyone always has a little kid inside of us. I saw a friend of mine a few weeks ago I hadn't seen in 30 years. When we picked up, it was like we left -- just like where we left it off at.

In saying that, what I'm trying to say is all of us have that little kid in us, even though we get older. But I had lost the little child that was in me and really had made him just shut up.

The little kid's dreams just started coming back. I don't know how to describe it other than the desire to play and compete and do what I wanted to do when I was a child came back into my life.

So even though I was working a full-time job, I was trying to do this and qualify as well over the past few years, except for the COVID. That kind of interrupted things a little bit.

Q. Is this part of the dream now, playing in the U.S. Open?

CHRIS HOCKADAY: Absolutely, yeah, it is. It is. I'm still pinching myself. But, yeah, this is part of it.

Q. What's the game of golf given you? What have you taken away from the game that's seemingly been part

of your life your whole life?

CHRIS HOCKADAY: Man, that's a good question. I'm still waiting to see that. To be honest with you, I can tell you this, I've met so many wonderful people through golf, and most all my friends are through golf. I mean, you could pretty much say my whole life, if it weren't for golf, I don't know where I'd be really.

In fact, my recovery came through golf. I wouldn't have met the guy that I met if it weren't for golf. So a lot of things in my life have come to me through golf.

Q. What would complete the dream this week?

CHRIS HOCKADAY: Winning this week would be great. To be honest with you, right now I'd just like to be here on the weekend at this moment. If we can do that, we'll just go from there.

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