

Golf Channel

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Roger Maltbie

Dan Hicks

David Feherty

Media Conference



2014, which included the 2006 U.S. Open and Winged Foot where he was inside the ropes for Phil Mickelson's memorable 72nd hole that eventually led to a victory for Geoff Ogilvy.

Similarly to Roger, Dan has been a part of many memorable U.S. Open broadcasts for NBC Sports and also has a special connection to this year's championship as a member of Winged Foot Golf Club.

And David, he'll be contributing to a U.S. Open broadcast for the very first time next week, completing the golf broadcaster Grand Slam, if you will.

Roger, Dan, David, we really appreciate you guys making the time to take part in today's call. Sort of hope that you might be able to kick things off for us with some initial thoughts on what might have your attention going into next week and maybe just your general excitement for the U.S. Open's return to NBC Sports and just being on-site at Winged Foot next week.

DAN HICKS: Let's go to Roger Maltbie.

ROGER MALTBIE: Thank you very much.

DAN HICKS: What's this tee shot look like?

ROGER MALTBIE: They're all hard, trust me. (Laughing.)

Winged Foot is one of my very favorite places in the world of golf. As a matter of fact, I think it's probably the best 36 holes at one site that I've ever experienced. It is a magnificent test of golf.

Now, I have not been there on the grounds since 2006 and I understand many changes have taken place as far as renovation, restoration, I guess a lot of trees are gone from the Winged Foot that I've known. I understand a lot of putting surfaces have been restored to their original dimensions. I am more than excited to see Winged Foot next week. I can't wait. It's provided some of the sternest tests ever in USGA history and I would expect nothing less than that this coming week. It's kind of widely assumed, and this comes from many different sources and guys that have gone to Winged Foot, players that have gone to Winged Foot in advance, that they're fully expecting over par to win the championship. Now from what I understand

JEFF SZKLINSKI: All right, welcome everybody, we'll get started. Obviously, everyone, thanks for joining us today as we preview next week's 120th U.S. Open at Winged Foot Golf Club in New York.

As you know, the USGA announced in June that the U.S. media rights for its championships have been transferred to NBC Universal, with this new agreement continuing through 2026.

The renewed partnership between the USGA and NBC Sports elevates a long-standing relationship dating back to 1954 when the U.S. Open first aired on television on NBC and most recently from 1995 to 2014 when NBC Sports carried media rights to all USGA championships.

Before we kick things off I just wanted to mention a few reminders to media on the call. First off, this call's being transcribed, so we'll be distributing a transcript of the call later this afternoon. If for some reason you don't receive it, please just reach out and let me know and I'll be happy to get it to you.

We'll be utilizing a round table format for this call. I know many of you are familiar with that format, there's no operator, so we'll simply ask that media keep their line muted at all times except when they're asking a question; and also ask that everyone be patient and do their best not to step on one another in trying to ask a question.

We should have plenty of time for everyone to ask a question and likely time for follow-up questions as well. Please also be sure to identify yourself by name and media affiliation when asking a question.

Joining us for today's call are our NBC Sports golf broadcast team members, Roger Maltbie, Dan Hicks and David Feherty.

Roger has played a primary role in NBC Sports' previous coverage of the U.S. Open in the '90s and leading up to



from a setup standpoint the golf course will be presented in a fashion that we would call maybe the traditional U.S. Open type setup and I think we're all excited about that. There are some definite, distinct flavor always to U.S. Opens, when you drove it off the fairway you knew what you were going to get, and it wasn't good. So it's going to be a more traditional test of U.S. Open skills, which I welcome and can't wait to see. So all in all, really excited about next week.

DAN HICKS: I'll pick it up from there. I think everything you touched on is pretty much right on the money.

I've had a real front seat to seeing all of these changes, the restoration that Gil Hanse has done, not only to the West Course, which is where the U.S. Open is going to be played, but he did the same thing to the East Course. And from the membership stand point we were all kind of wondering, you know, any time you kind of tinker with a Mona Lisa type of golf course like this an A.W. Tillinghast gem, you're a little worried, you're a little concerned about how it's going to look. Is it going to have the same feel, you don't want to change too much of it.

But after he did the East Course then it was decided that, by the membership, that the West Course was ready to go with the same kind of plan, even though it's obviously a different 18, Gil did such an incredible job with the East Course that they entrusted him and everybody involved to go ahead and do the West Course.

I will say that it's gone beyond everybody's wildest expectations. It's going to be a great way to showcase to the rest of the country the new Winged Foot, it's not new, I shouldn't use that word, restored Winged Foot. The greens are unbelievable, like they always have been, but as Roger said, they actually peeled back the corners and rediscovered the old Tillinghast shoulders in a meticulous manner to get it back to exactly as much as they could to what it was back in the 1920s when it was first designed. And it's revealed a number of more dramatic shoulders on the greens, back and front, it's just spectacular. The greens themselves are in much better shape than they were in 2006. And it's going to be, it's going to just light up the screen I think when everybody sees it. And there are some changes to it, subtle but really good, and we can get into that if anybody has any questions on that. But I still wake up every day and pinch myself to realize that, not only is NBC back in the U.S. Open business, but to start it off at a club where I've been a member at the last 10 years is just pretty mind-boggling, but incredibly, incredibly exciting. With that I'll send it over to David Feherty.

THE MODERATOR: David, are you there?

DAVID FEHERTY: Yeah, I am. Sorry, I was probably muted. Can you hear me now? Are you hearing me?

DAN HICKS: Yeah, we're hearing you now.

DAVID FEHERTY: Okay. Cool. You know, I always look forward to going to work, I just enjoy what I do. But going to this one is special for me because I've broadcast at the Masters and the PGA and The Open Championship, but I've never done a U.S. Open. And it just, it's a really cool thing to have done all four, along with the Ryder Cup, the Presidents Cup, THE PLAYERS, the TOUR Championship, I mean I just love being around these guys that I work with and -- except Maltbie (Laughing.)

ROGER MALTBIE: Understood.

DAN HICKS: Totally. (Laughing.)

DAVID FEHERTY: Yeah. Yeah. And I'm looking forward to seeing the golf course. I'm a huge A.W. Tillinghast fan. He was bi-polar so that's one thing we have in common. I mean, I heard a story that he climbed a tree and had a couple of whiskies before he got to work in the morning, so that's three things we have in common.

I played the golf course a couple of times and it's just spectacular, it really is. It's a test of golf -- I always tell people, people tell me they go to Ireland and they love the golf courses there. Well if you go to the metropolitan area in the northeast of this country, it's probably the finest collection of golf courses in the world -- if you can get on them, that is. But Winged Foot, being in the New York area, with that, all those shots from the airplane above and whatever, it's just, it's just the name itself, Winged Foot, has a special ring to it and I'm, I can't wait to get there. Can't wait.

JEFF SZKLINSKI: Thanks, David. Appreciate you guys kicking us off. That's some great stuff out of the gates. Again, we appreciate media keeping your line on mute when not asking your question and your patience not to step on one another when trying to ask a question. Please be sure to identify yourself by name and media affiliation and with that I think we're ready to open up the call for questions.

Q. I spoke to Dan at length about this last week, but Roger, you were there with Phil every misstep of the way on the 72nd hole, so how crazy was it?

ROGER MALTBIE: Well, as we're talking 14 years ago, as my memory serves me, as there was a delay on the 18th tee to the final group to tee off, Phil pulled driver out of the bag. Now he had hit two fairways all day. He had hit it

everywhere and really didn't have a great idea of where it may come down when he took a swing at it. So I hit my button on my pack that I carry to get me on the air and I said to Johnny, I said, He's pulled out driver. And I couldn't believe it. To me, and obviously to Johnny and the comments he made, that was not the right call.

The fairway narrowed the further down it went. If you drove it up the left side of the fairway, even in the fairway, you were going to be blocked by trees at the corner for access to the green. So, anyway, he hits his driver and it's like, I think I said, It's left, way, way left. And there was a huge tent over there that the ball caromed off and then the ball came to rest in an area where the gallery had been walking all week and so he had a clean lie.

Now he had these trees at the corner, the second shot plays uphill, that presented a real problem. So he, instead of chipping out or pitching down the fairway and leaving himself some kind of third shot that he could hopefully get close or hit close enough to 2-putt and be in a playoff, he elected to go over the trees.

Now he smashed it into the trees, ball came back toward him, so he only advanced it maybe 40 yards, maybe, something like that, 30 yards, and he was facing with maybe even a harder shot. And you could see the look on his face at that point in time it's like, what have I done. Because now it was pretty apparent he had a very real opportunity to lose the U.S. Open right then and there.

So he took a whack at it again and he hit it left of the green, got it up over the trees, but he hit it left of the green, had to hit it so high that, with the angle the ball came down on, it plugged in the bunker left of the green. And as the green would run away from there, he just didn't have a shot. It was going to go across the green and jump out, unless it hit the flag stick or something weird. But anyway he chipped it out, he hit it across the green. He made six, he made a nice putt for six.

But it was just, it was, to my eye I was watching this terrible tragedy unfold right in front of your eyes and one really of his own making.

Q. Johnny called it on the air the worst decision making he had ever seen. How about you? What do you think?

ROGER MALTBIE: Well, it ranks up there, there's no question about that. But the biggest part about pressure is, yes, it can affect the quality of shot you hit, it can affect you physically, your hands can tremble, your heart beats fast, you can't get a breath, you got cotton mouth, it does all those things. But probably the real sign of pressure is

things start to go faster. It's almost an out of body experience and I say this with some level of knowledge, because I've choked plenty (Laughing.) I have got a career where I can point to places where I've done it. But it's decision making, as things are going faster, as all these things are happening, you tend to make decisions that can be devastating and that's really what happened to Phil.

It was sad to see because this guy deserves to have a U.S. Open title. Runner-up six times. What was it his fourth runner-up that time or whatever? I mean, he deserves to win a U.S. Open and a big part of me wanted to see him finish it off and get that U.S. Open. But it didn't happen and it was just one of those things that stays with you forever, whether you witnessed it live, on television or whether you were Phil, it was quite a powerful moment.

Q. Can I ask a follow-up on that? Curious, of all the things over the years you witnessed that people talk to you about at the airport, moments on NBC Golf, where does that one fit?

ROGER MALTBIE: Well, certainly for some period of time it was as talked about as anything that I've ever witnessed, whether it was Tiger's putt two years later in 2008 that Danny called so well at Torrey Pines or -- good or bad, the question that I received over and over again and I obviously have no answer for is, what was he thinking? I don't know. I don't know. Phil carries that bravado and aggressive style of play with him all the time, but there is a real line there as to what is aggressive, what is bold, and what is foolhardy. And I think he ventured on to the side of foolhardy and tried a shot that, hey, it was not the right decision to make and he paid the price, a big price.

Q. Dan, what are you seeing out there on the golf course? Who is it going to favor? Is the rough going to be a big story, are we going to see lost balls, just kind of give us what you're seeing from your perspective as a member.

DAN HICKS: Yeah, I'll just follow-up real quickly on the Mickelson discussion. I think it's amazing how we're still discussing this 14 years removed. I know it was the last U.S. Open there, but that's how powerful that story was, has remained, and will be until we tee this thing off next week.

Every time -- I got to tell you, every time I have played that 18th hole, and it's hundreds of times since then, whether I'm with fellow members or whether I'm with guests -- first of all guests all want to know where Phil hit it. They ask, where did he go. We get to that 18th hole on the West, everybody wants to know that. But I'm telling you, even the members who have seen it and talked about it a million

times, they ask me about it, we talk about it, and we just kind of mutter to ourselves down the fairway thinking exactly what Roger said, what the heck happened, how did it happen and how great is it going to be -- I have said it could be one of the all-time great stories of all time if, at the age of 50, he gets into contention. I think it's just, it just would be right up there maybe almost with Francis Ouimet. It would rival what Tom Watson was trying to do at the age of 59 at the Open Championship. So that's going to dominate. So anyway, those are my thoughts on Phil.

And as far as what the course is doing, the rough is so thick and so dense right now I think they're figuring out whether or not they're going to have Steve Rabideau, who is the course superintendent, cut it. There were plans to just let it go after September 3rd and just see if they could get it six inches on certain holes. I think all that is up for debate, as it always is. You don't want to make it to where it's an absolute jungle, but it is really thick. While I was at the TOUR Championship I was getting videos from and pictures from Steve Rabideau about how thick it was and I'm telling you, it is healthy and lush.

I think that one of the big differences, along with the rough even being denser this time around, is the fact that the greens I think are going to be much better than they were in 2006. There were some problems with them 14 years ago and they were a little bumpy, a little spiky. This time around, with the new USGA greens, SubAir if needed, new drainage with the restoration, these greens, as long as Mother Nature cooperates to a degree, are going to be just fantastic showcases for this Open.

So it's going to be tough, and I agree with everybody that has played it and seen it for the first time, I think it's going to be, I think it's going to be an over par score, it's just a matter of how many.

Q. Is there one hole you're eager to see as a member, regular and somebody who was there in 2006, how it's going to play this time, either because of changes or changes in the game?

DAN HICKS: Yeah, there's so many great holes, it's hard to pinpoint them, but there's a new tee at 17 which is joined along the same teeing ground as 13 East. It was, it's brand new, it was put into play when they did the restoration on both the East and the West Course, and it plays over 500 yards from back there. 17's a gorgeous hole. That big Christmas tree that sits short right of it off the tee, which used to kind of protection the golfers that were coming up the other way from 12, is gone, so you see the whole, you see the entire hole, the slight dogleg to the right just kind of out in front of you, it's a gorgeous hole. They put some new bunkering down the right side, they added a couple

bunkers down there that are going to test the guys from trying to bomb it over that. So that hole sticks out.

But there are so many that are, they're all good and I think probably the hole that probably looks, it will look the most different from all of them is 14. It's got that little cloverleaf bunker over the teeing area as you go out to the fairway. They brought a bunker in that's going to, that could cause some problems on the approach. But the biggest difference is the tree removal. That 14th green looks totally different from the fairway because as you look up it has this infinity look to it, it's absolutely gorgeous. They took away that bunker short left of the green, so I think that hole will look the most different of all of them.

But I think we're going to see some, we will see some brand new hole locations which are going to be afforded to the staff because of the bigger greens that they recaptured with the restoration.

Q. Wondering, with the Pinehurst announcement this morning, I'm just wondering what your guys' thoughts are on a U.S. Open rota.

ROGER MALTBIE: Okay, I like it, I really do. I think there are certain golf courses in this country that are special, that are unique, that provide differing tests, certainly because of the geographical location and whatnot. I like it very much. To revisit those great tests on a frequent basis makes a lot of sense to me and I welcome it.

DAN HICKS: I would agree. I think we're in a day and age where conducting sports events is difficult as it is, expensive, more challenging, I think -- and I look at the Olympics as well, which is the biggest spectacle in sports, period, and I look at some of the venues that have been left behind that have cost an extraordinary amount of money. And I think that any time you can just kind of engineer a place once and keep repeating it, I think it gets easier to present it there. It's just going to be a matter of these respective clubs and venues agreeing to go ahead and have it. I think it's a great idea. I wouldn't be opposed to going outside of the rota every once in awhile if it totally made sense, but I like the idea.

DAVID FEHERTY: Yeah, you know, I like the idea as well. There's so many great golf courses in this country and just to be able to pick out, cherry pick a few of them and it's like Dan said, it would be nice to see it start off in a certain amount and then maybe expand the way we saw Royal Portrush in the Open Championship roster this last time. So yeah, I mean to see it go from place to place is one thing, with all the fantastic golf courses that we have, but it's the U.S. Open, it would be nice to narrow it down.

Q. If you guys were to pick about a half dozen or so courses to be on your rota, which would they be?

DAVID FEHERTY: Wow. Winged Foot (Laughing.)

ROGER MALTBIE: Shinnecock.

DAN HICKS: Shinnecock.

ROGER MALTBIE: Pebble Beach.

DAN HICKS: Pebble Beach.

DAVID FEHERTY: Yeah. Is Torrey Pines, out west, is that to be on there, Roger?

ROGER MALTBIE: Um --

DAVID FEHERTY: Oakmont.

DAN HICKS: What about Olympic Club? Olympic Club?

ROGER MALTBIE: Oakmont.

DAN HICKS: Oakmont.

ROGER MALTBIE: Oakmont obviously.

DAN HICKS: Yeah, those are mine, basically.

ROGER MALTBIE: When you get past the obvious ones I hate to speculate because you're always going to upset somebody.

DAN HICKS: What, they didn't name us? What's that?

ROGER MALTBIE: Yeah, I don't want to get into that. There are obvious ones to go to though, I mean, there are.

DAN HICKS: Yeah, those are the go-to ones.

DAVID FEHERTY: Yes.

Q. Roger and David if you want to pop in as well, but Collin Morikawa, so impressive what he's been able to do at this young age. What were your first impressions of him, what did you like about what he was able to do at the PGA Championship?

DAVID FEHERTY: I watched that PGA Championship and just his -- you know he's wise beyond his years, it seems to me. To have the sort of level head and the nuts, if you like, to stay in front and to win the way he did against the players that were in contention just says so much about him. We're going to see him for a very long time to come,

he's an impressive, impressive young man.

ROGER MALTBIE: Well, I agree with David, certainly. There was much said about the rookies that came out last year and of course Wolff and Hovland were players of particular note and Morikawa probably a little less so. But upon me watching him play, I just liked everything about his game. He may not be a real bomber of the ball, but his game is complete, it really is. I guess his putting can be, you know, he's not an outstanding, great putter, he he's not known for that. But his ball striking, his decision making, his poise, his mechanics, everything is so sound that he was the player of those three that impressed me the most early on. And now, of course, we see him win the PGA and hit that drive at the 16th hole and make eagle, he just seems to be filled with the right stuff. It's going to be fascinating and fun to watch his career unfold. He is a wonderful young man and a wonderful player.

Q. What do you expect from Rory next week? Do you guys believe in a baby bump or is it, you know, what's your experience from your own times playing Majors after having a baby?

ROGER MALTBIE: That was a long time ago. (Laughing.)

My wife got one, I didn't really get one. I was not a great major championship player, for sure. I think he's on a real high, a real mental lift. There is a joy and a satisfaction that comes with becoming a parent certainly for the first time and I think it's great that he's had a week from the TOUR Championship to go home, settle in there, enjoy that. I think he will come to Winged Foot with, I don't know if renewed attitude is the exact phrase to use, but I just think Rory's life is looking pretty good right now and he's feeling pretty good right now and I would expect him to have great week, I would.

DAVID FEHERTY: Yeah, so would I, just knowing him and I've been watching him growing up and he's just, he might take off to another level now. He's real happy, he's in great shape, he's the perfect age to peak and it would surprise me if he's not in contention next week.

Q. Two in the field this year were at Winged Foot in 2006 and that's especially true among the top-ranked golfers now. And as was said, everyone expects a more traditional U.S. Open style setup than we have seen lately. Together is that really going to heighten the learning curve next week for most players? Do they know what they're getting into? I'm curious what you think about it.

ROGER MALTBIE: Well I think they will learn real quick. They will learn in practice that, hey, this rough means

something. They will learn a lot about that at Winged Foot that, Oakmont and Augusta come to mind, but they are as severe as you'll find.

DAVID FEHERTY: I expect a lot of whining.

ROGER MALTBIE: Oh, yeah.

DAVID FEHERTY: There will be whining, no question about that. There always is when you got a golf course that's so penal off the tee.

Q. Can you adapt to those conditions that quickly if you really haven't been in them that often?

DAVID FEHERTY: Yeah. You can hit fairways. (Laughing.)

ROGER MALTBIE: Yeah, certainly. Hey, these guys, they change grasses and types of courses on a weekly basis. They will do their due diligence and they will understand a good deal about the golf course. I'm not sure you can learn everything about a golf course in a few days, you might need more experience than that, but, yeah, these are conditions that they haven't seen much, I think it is of benefit to all the players that played at Olympia Fields in the BMW Championship the week before last, I think that it was a great prep for what they can expect to see at Winged Foot with the firm and fast conditions and some pretty good rough. They're going to see even more rough, but they have had a little intro as to what to expect when they get to Winged Foot.

DAN HICKS: Yeah, it's a little entre. It's obviously not the same and I think what's differentiating Olympia Fields' experience from what these guys are going to see next week are the greens. You get on the wrong side of one of these Winged Foot Tillinghast greens, it's game over. And I don't care how good you are -- obviously Phil did something unbelievable 14 years ago hitting two fairways and being in contention -- but I just think that the bomb and gouge methods that we have seen, that even some guys tried at Olympia Fields, Bryson DeChambeau and others, I think that is going to be one of the most interesting things to watch is, is Bryson DeChambeau and Rory McIlroy and all these guys going to try to do that.

Now there's, there are some holes where they can cut a corner on and they can take advantage of their length, but it's going to depend on how fast these fairways are rolling. I think that's going to be one of the most fascinating things to watch is to see if these guys in these routine rounds of hitting multiple 340, 330 yard drives, are they going to take that approach at Winged Foot where it's going to be the toughest test they have seen in a long, long time.

Q. I was interested in knowing what it means to each of you to be able to call the U.S. Open for Dan and Roger, calling it again, and for David calling it for the first time. How excited were you guys when you found out it was coming back to NBC?

DAN HICKS: I knew there were some conversations about doing a one-off U.S. Open at Winged Foot because of Fox's programming responsibilities. But again it was just chit chat that I was hearing, I wasn't holding out hope because it just seemed like an impossible thing to get your hopes up for. And then just a few weeks before it was formally announced I was actually on the golf course with Pete Bevacqua our president of the NBC Sports Group and we were playing in the same group and we were kind of off to ourselves over off this fairway and he said, Can you keep something to yourself for awhile? And he told me, he said, I think we're on the goal line of getting back the entire USGA package. Now first he said, I think we're on the goal line of getting the U.S. Open back. And I said, Wow, I can't believe it. So that means Winged Foot in September. And he says, Yes, and no. It means the entire package. And I just felt the chills go up and down my body as if to think, there's just no way that happened. And obviously the whole COVID-19 saga kind of triggered things going in that direction, but to get a property like this back when it becomes a part of you, it becomes -- all we did major-wise for 20 years was this U.S. Open -- it gets in your blood, it gets in your DNA, it becomes a part of you. And then you think you're never going to have an opportunity to do it again and then it comes back like this and the manner in which it did, it was just, I think, I cannot recall another broadcast rights deal unfolding like this.

And there's another side of it and the people at Fox, I feel for those guys, I really do, I'm good friends with Mark Loomis who is the producer for Fox Golf, he's a life-long family member of Winged Foot and he was all set to do and produce a U.S. Open at his home course and now he's not going to have that ability to do it. So I get that side of it.

But our side of it, we have been on the other side too, we have lost it, but not quite in the manner in which this happened. So it's an unbelievable privilege to do it again and to start it off at Winged Foot and do it another six years starting next year is just something that, coming down the back stretch of our careers, my career, I never thought I would have a chance to do, so just a dream come true like stuff.

ROGER MALTBIE: Yeah, I could offer maybe a little different perspective on that as someone who transitioned from being a player into golf broadcasting. It's a thrill doing what I do. It's a thrill because I get to be on the ground, I

get to see and watch in realtime, right there, the best players in the world playing their best golf. That's why they're leading and I'm following them. It is a great honor and fun to broadcast PGA TOUR events and see these guys. But majors are a little different. Some events are a little different. What really, really makes our job fun or my job fun, is those events that are special, that really mean something. And obviously a USGA championship, a U.S. Open does. As the Ryder Cup has grown over the years, that is. Those are things that you look forward to. Those are the things that get you excited, really excited as opposed to the week-in, week-out broadcast.

So it was an honor to do it for 20 years before and as Danny said, as shocking as everything -- I mean you could have pushed me over with a feather when I heard that we had it back -- but it is just really exciting, a great, great opportunity. I know from top to bottom we're all ready to go. I mean, we really are excited to do this U.S. Open.

DAVID FEHERTY: Like I said before, this is my first U.S. Open, it sort of completes that Grand Slam of broadcasting, if you like. I'm trying to remember where I was when I got the texted from Tommy. I thought he was drunk texting. I've been in the business 25 years now and I've never -- I have never seen anything like this where it just all of a sudden, whoosh, it's on your lap, out of nowhere. And it's a real, it's a testament to our crew and how they can get ready for this and put it on in such a short time frame. But I'm incredibly excited just to see it, just to be on the grounds. It will be special for me.

ROGER MALTBIE: It's really been the only real highlight of 2020 for a lot of us (Laughing.)

Q. Since Winged Foot in the past has kind of surprised us a little bit with like a Billy Casper win or a Hale Irwin win or a Fuzzy Zoeller or Geoff Ogilvy, I'm wondering who each of you think could be that guy this year. Somebody that maybe we don't expect, somebody that's not always a front runner.

DAN HICKS: Tough one.

ROGER MALTBIE: Yeah.

DAN HICKS: The thing that keeps coming back to me is Michael Thompson. It's funny, because when he won for the first time since he won the Honda Classic all those years ago recently, one of the first words out of his mouth, he knew he was going to go to the U.S. Open and go to Winged Foot and he said, Winged Foot is one of my favorite places, I just can't wait to get there. I mean, this was months removed from it happening. And I'm not saying he's the favorite, but I guess what I am saying I

think guys that embrace this course are liable to do better with it. I think that it's going to be a huge, huge patience test like it always is, but especially this time around. So a guy like that comes to mind.

I think it will be an incredible test for a guy like Jon Rahm who obviously has gotten better and better with that attitude, we have seen evidence of that multiple times in the recent times we have seen him in contention. But that's what makes a course like this so good. Obviously length's going to be a big deal, but you got to hit it in these fairways and I think that's going to give the grinders like a Kevin Kisner and other guys that can get it in the fairway hole after hole after hole, I think those guys are going to have a chance too. So I know that's a round about way of saying who knows, but that's kind of the makeup of the potential different kinds of winners we could have.

ROGER MALTBIE: At the BMW Championship for the first round I was given my choice of a couple of groups as to who I would want to follow and I selected Dustin Johnson, Justin Thomas, and Daniel Berger. And not because of Dustin Johnson, I mean, yeah, Dustin Johnson and Justin Thomas, I don't know why I'm having a problem with that, but it was Daniel Berger.

Now since the restart of the PGA TOUR, I mean this guy has played as well as anybody on a week-in, week-out basis. And so a guy that would be, I think, a little bit under the radar but a guy whose credentials for the last four months or so, five months, have been as good as anybody's. I'm thinking Daniel Berger would be my pick.

DAVID FEHERTY: I'm thinking Brendon Todd as a guy that putts so well, he drives it relatively straight and just a grinder. He gets in there and when he gets into contention he tends to stay there. He's been a wonderful player since his comeback and I think he's got the ideal game for a U.S. Open.

Q. Roger, from back when you played, when Westchester was a regular stop, when Westchester Country Club was a yearly tour stop, did you ever kind of sneak away from there and go to Winged Foot and go to Quaker or maybe go see Sleepy Hollow or were there other things to do?

ROGER MALTBIE: Oh, no, I went over there and I met a fellow named Chip Wyle (Phonetic) was in the newspaper business in Westchester and in the counties around in there and I had missed the cut, this is 1975, I had missed the cut at Westchester and met him at the hotel where I was staying and we just started chatting and he says, well, I'm a member at Winged Foot, you want to play tomorrow, Saturday? And I said, sure. I want to go see Winged Foot,



I had never played there. And Chip and I have now been friends for 45 years, but every year I would go there, if I played in the morning we would go over in the afternoon and play. We would go a lot. Nine, if we could get in 18. I have a real love affair with the place and have for a very long time. Yeah, so I went over there a lot. I loved every minute of every time I got to go play.

JEFF SZKLINSKI: If we don't have any additional questions we can go ahead and wrap up the call then.

Q. I have one. It took 48 minutes to mention Dustin Johnson, I timed it. Still haven't mentioned Tiger. So how good is D.J. playing right now? You mentioned consistency but since the restart, I mean he's had Tigeresque levels of consistency, he's in contention every week.

ROGER MALTBIE: Well he has been for the last month, I mean, what was it? July at the Memorial, what did he shoot? 80, 80.

DAN HICKS: Yeah, missed the cut with 80, 80.

ROGER MALTBIE: He was not all that good a month ago, but for the last month he's been outstanding. So all parts of his game right now look pretty good. And he showed me a lot at Olympia Fields being patient, playing the right shot, putting the ball in the right position, not short siding himself very often, really playing more strategic golf than the bomb and gouge, which is pretty much what we see on a weekly basis. But he really showed me a lot of moxie, which I enjoyed a lot and I think he displayed a lot of that again last week at East Lake. He had a day there or two that he didn't drive it at all well, seemed to get that sorted out on Saturday, and then on Sunday not as good, but you can tell when a player gets up over the ball and the shots are reacting where they're aiming and the ball's coming out on their aim. You can tell they're in a pretty good spot. And that's where he looks like where he is to me right now. So, yeah, I think he'll have a really good week, I do.

DAN HICKS: I'll just add that, I said it, I mentioned it on the telecast on Monday, he's never been to Winged Foot, D.J. has not ever been there. It's pretty unusual in this day and age for a player like D.J. who is 36 years old or whatever he is, to not have gone to a big time venue like that. He was a little young in 2006. So I was talking to him at the TOUR Championship and he was expressing the desire to get there for the very first time and he was scheduled to go tomorrow, Thursday, but we have got some weather coming in, so I'm not sure if he's going to be able to go in there with his brother Austin, whose never been there either. And he was going to get a local caddie, which I totally said that's a great idea, so I mentioned a couple

caddies that might work for him. But anyway, I think that, you know, so it's going to be a quick learn session. I remember how often Phil went in 2006, the joke around the club was that he practically lived at Winged Foot, because he went there so much. So it will be interesting. These greens are different than -- there's three sets of complexes of greens in this country, and Johnny Miller used to tell me this all the time, that are totally different with a different kind of rough or challenge than anywhere else and that's Oakmont, Augusta National and Winged Foot. So it will be really interesting to see if D.J. can keep this putting streak going on greens like that.

DAVID FEHERTY: D.J., yeah, well, I mean what a performance over the last month. To maintain that level of play and be in the lead for that length of time just wears you down. So people have given D.J. a hard time sometimes for maybe not being the sharpest knife in the drawer, but I'll tell you, when he pulls his golf shoes on, he gains about a hundred points on his IQ and he is a genius on the golf course with one of the best attitudes I've ever seen. He never gets too up, he never gets too down. He is just -- and he's got that beautiful empty kind of a space, if you like, where there's not -- he doesn't allow much to go on in his head, he is just paying attention to the here and now, what it feels like. He's got no future and no past, he just he seems to live in the present on the golf course.

JEFF SZKLINSKI: All right, thank you guys for doing this. Thanks for making the time to take part in today's call, especially Roger, Dan and David. Again, I'll be sending out a transcript of the call later this afternoon and we're very much looking forward to next week. Thanks everybody.

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