

NBC Sports Group Media Conference

Wednesday, June 9, 2021

Dan Hicks
Paul Azinger
Jim Mackay
Tommy Roy
Press Conference



probably go even more, and then you throw in the digital on top of that, it's another 104, so just for coverage it's over 150. We have more cameras on the 6th tee, 88 in all, for our 4D replay device than we had in the entire golf course in 2008. So that's right, 88 cameras on that one tee box. You throw in all the tracking, tracing technology, the virtual graphics, double coverage from the sky with a plane and a drone and a menagerie of specialty cams. We've got a scorpion crane, rat cams, a frog cam in the pond at 18. It's the veritable wild kingdom out there.

The goal as usual is to show all 156 players in the field. My feeling is that if you've earned the right to play in this championship, you've earned the right to be shown on TV in a meaningful way. So we look forward to following up on all the stories of golf's longest day and the guys that fought to qualify for this event. It's the DNA of the U.S. Open and can't wait to be a part of it.

Dan, over to you.

DAN HICKS: That is hard to follow up. That wild kingdom menagerie that we have. I'm excited to be a part of all of that. This is my 29th year at NBC. I can't believe it. It's just gone flying by. But the summer of 2008, when it's all said and done, could be the most satisfying summer that I've ever had in the industry because obviously the Tiger win at Torrey Pines, as we go back there, and then later that summer Tommy Roy was also with me, not only at Torrey Pines in 2008, but in Beijing, China, when Michael Phelps did his thing. So 2008, this will be like a great flashback and, just to zero in on the U.S. Open there. It's too bad that, it would have been incredible to have Tiger back during this whole thing to kind of come back 13 years later, but it is what it is, but the story lines coming in, I think, couldn't really be better with Mickelson doing what he did at the PGA back in his hometown of San Diego. He played with Adam Scott and Tiger to start it off in 2008, and then ended up taking a back seat to the Tiger mania that ensued. But it's just going to be electric to see what Phil can do. It's going to be as much of a Tiger-hype with Phil as you could possibly think with any other golfer is this Mickelson-hype going in, because obviously he's got the all the runner-ups, the record six runner-ups in the U.S. Opens and this would complete the Grand Slams.

So I cannot wait to get there. Another great story is Jon Rahm, I think, who is had great success there and

MODERATOR: Good afternoon, everybody. Thanks for joining our 2021 NBC Sports U.S. Open media conference call. In a moment we're going to be joined by our long-time lead golf producer Tommy Roy, our 18th tower team of Dan Hicks and Paul Azinger and our on-course reporter Jim Bones Mackay.

NBC Sports will surround the upcoming U.S. Open at Torrey Pines with comprehensive coverage across the NBC Golf Channel and Peacock. We've got nearly 50 hours of studio coverage from Torrey Pines beginning next Monday June 14th, and then we'll bring you live coverage from the first tee shot to the final putt on Thursday and Friday and all the way through Sunday night, and when you put it all together it's a whole lot of hours, nearly 200 when you factor in all -- I don't want to take too many of Tommy's numbers, so I'll stop there.

We've got a robust commentary team to call all the action for us across all of your platforms, more than 30 commentators in all. It's a massive undertaking for any production team, but we've got the best in the business to lead it for us from Torrey Pines. So we'll start off with some opening remarks from our fearless leader Tommy Roy.

TOMMY ROY: Thank you. Well, of the 21 U.S. Opens that I've had the honor to produce the TV coverage, clearly the most dramatic, most memorable, for me and most watched was 2008 at Torrey Pines where y'all remember Tiger overcoming the broken leg and a gritty Rocco Mediate to win in a playoff. So we're really excited to be back out there, and how things have changed. In 2008, we were on the air with ESPN and NBC for a combined 29 hours, and as Jamie just said, this year the tournament coverage on NBC Golf Channel and Peacock comes to a grand total of 46 and a half scheduled hours and will



obviously everybody knows what happened to him with a six-shot lead and the unpleasant thing of COVID, and then having to pull out of that. But he's had great success there, so that's another story that I think is brewing as he goes out for his first major.

So we're going to let it all come to us, can't wait to get there, and with that, I go over to my esteemed analyst in the 18th tower, Mr. Azinger.

PAUL AZINGER: Thank you, Mr. Hicks. Well, I think I'm just going to look at what happened last year for a minute and just realize Bryson's coming into this U.S. Open having kind of really made his mark on the game as the cutting edge guy with just going to try to overpower courses with technology and all that. He's blazing a trail and he did it at Winged Foot. He laid a marker in the ground with respect to power. But I think the misnomer is everyone thinks it just came strictly off the tee, but Bryson's power was shown from the rough, a pretty thick rough. I am really curious how the USGA is going to respond to that, and that's, are they going to grow the rough up here at Torrey Pines maybe a little deeper than it was? The weather generally is pretty consistent there. It's not like going to Pebble where it's completely different in February and, but there is a familiarity with the course.

And, again, I love Mickelson too. I just have to say, I can't believe that Phil could do what he did the way he did it. We just saw Phil going to that next year and Phil set down only two markers in his career that Tiger had to shoot for, really. Phil won as an amateur and that kind of, it didn't really stand alone, but what he did at the PGA stands alone and it kind of, for the first time ever, Phil can kind of kickback and say, Well, let's see if Tiger ever does this, and I think that's cool, and we're kind of coming to Phil's hometown as well.

But Bryson and Brooks are a story, but to me, it's all about Bryson, will the USGA respond to what happened there. I don't know, Bones, maybe you do, and let's get your opinion on all this.

JIM MACKAY: Thanks, Paul. Well, good afternoon to everybody on the call. Really looking forward to obviously next week, our national championship. Certainly, as the guys have mentioned, whether it's the Jon Rahm angle or the Phil angle, it's going to be amazing heading in. But I just love the fact that there's so many stories. I covered the NCAA's last week. Pepperdine won the team championship and there was a young man on that team named Joe Highsmith, who wasn't even sure that he was going to play in the NCAA's last week. He ended up being a big part of his team's win, went home to Washington to of course qualify for the U.S. Open, and in the last couple of

days. So those kinds of stories I just love about the U.S. Open, a chance for a young man like to make that much more of a name for himself.

And of course I've got the memories from 2008 of Tiger doubling the first hole on Thursday and obviously doing his thing from that point on while he was in an immense amount of pain. It was one of the most incredible things I think I've ever witnessed on a golf course. So, again, just so many story lines. It's so exciting. I just can't wait to get there.

MODERATOR: I think we're ready to open it up for questions from the media.

Q. Paul, I have a couple of quick hitters for you. One, talking more specifically about Phil's game. It's one thing to win a PGA, but just the narrow fairways and the rough and the conditions and his game off the tee can be erratic at times. Is he built to win this tournament or what are his challenges?

PAUL AZINGER: Well, accuracy off the tee's generally imperative at a U.S. Open. That's, first and foremost, the challenge I think for Phil, for every player. But, look, Phil's flexible. He's always been flexible. He still has a tremendous touch and he grew up out there. I wouldn't ever rule Phil out. I never have. I can't rule him out until he quits working at it and from what we observe every week Mickelson's out there and he spends as much time practicing as anybody. I can't rule him out. I look forward to watching how he does.

Q. A guy, Patrick Reed won the last tournament on that course, the Farmers Insurance Open. He had a situation where there was some controversy over a lie and that kind of seems to crop up in his career from time to time. In your mind, how do you assess his game versus the noise around his game, if that makes sense?

PAUL AZINGER: He's a phenomenal player. If you watch him, he kind of stands out as one of the five or maybe seven, eight guys that make a different sound when they hit. He's just tenacious and very patriotic and he's a great character to watch. And you know what, I think people can watch him real close.

Q. A lot has been made of the Bryson-Koepka stuff lately, very recently in the recent weeks. In some ways, I don't know if they feel this way, but is that good for golf?

PAUL AZINGER: Well, I like it because I can't wait to see the next eye roll or how it comes to an end. It's fun, I think.

I wouldn't want to be mixed up in it. Sometimes I think they don't realize we might be laughing at them, not just with them.

Q. The before and after of Phil's, before the redesign of the South and after, it's striking in at least that he hasn't won since then and you guys did so well before that. How do you analyze, and from being with Phil those years, how do you analyze him before and after the redesign and what that changed for Phil in your mind.

JIM MACKAY: Well, I don't off the top of my head know what he's said publicly about the redesign. Certainly he's an opinionated guy and certainly the course changed pretty dramatically, and to me, in my experience caddieing for some of these guys, so much of what they have that is important to them is mojo. And whether it's Phil at Augusta, Tiger, any one of a number of places, and certainly Phil had that great mojo at Torrey Pines, I think winning two or three times prior to the redo.

The one thing about Phil is he's got this incredible memory, and so the one thing that, one of the things he's going to lose after the redesign are all this knowledge about putts and how the course plays and some real intricacies and nuances in terms of how he's going to go about approaching his business out there. So I just feel like he probably felt like he lost a bit of the mojo. Again, I can't speak for what his thoughts were on the redesign. Certainly it became that much tougher in terms of the penalty for missing fairways and shortsiding yourself along those lines. But I think it's just about momentum and I do think to a large degree you can throw it out heading into a U.S. Open. It's one thing to maybe not find the motivation to play there in February when the regular PGA TOUR event is played, but let's face it, he's got all the runners up in the U.S. Open. He's coming off this amazing PGA Championship win. I don't care if they're playing on the moon next week, he's going to come in feeling very bulletproof, in my opinion. Obviously he's staying at home. It wouldn't surprise me one bit if he got right in the mix and all those thoughts that he's got about his performance there of late or about the golf course is going to go right out the window because the bottom line is they're going to be giving out a trophy on Sunday and he wants it as bad or more than anybody else in the field.

Q. Bones, just to follow up, I think many people, and certainly I had forgotten that if Phil makes 5s at 13 instead of 9s, you guys are like two back. Is that kind of how you remember the week that he played, ultimately played, and we have the whole non-driver thing, but did he ultimately play better than maybe we perceive that he did?

JIM MACKAY: Yeah, no question about it. He actually wasn't feeling that well in the days heading into the tournament week. So I was with him the Saturday and Sunday prior to the Monday of tournament week, if you will. So he was fighting a few things. But, yeah, to your point, I thought he played quite well. Obviously that ball came back to his feet on 13 there a few times, and he made the 9, but it was not a week when he was looking for something within his game. It was there. Certainly, the pairing the first two days with Tiger and Adam Scott puts you kind of front and center, and I think that added an additional element to what he had going on.

But, again, when I think back to that week, it was certainly a week where he was hitting it where he was looking and had a chance to make some noise.

Q. Curious, which of the runner-up finishes at the U.S. Open was most painful for you and what was it like that next day going, dealing with the fact that you guys had let another one slip away?

JIM MACKAY: Well, it's not Winged Foot, which most people would assume. In my experience, it's the losses are much tougher to get over when your player plays really well and it doesn't work out. So it would most likely be Pinehurst in 1999 because Phil did play so well, and of course Payne Stewart just went out of his way to win that tournament there on 16, 17 and 18.

2004 at Shinnecock hurt a lot because he played very, very well there down the stretch, and then of course got the rock in the bunker there on 17 where the bunker shot got away from him a little bit. So those two stand out for me.

The Winged Foot story is a long drawn out thing, if you will, but the bottom line is he didn't have it that day. We knew that early in the day and it was just a question of kind of battling through. But, again, not to repeat myself, it's much tougher to get over. It was really hard to get over Pinehurst considering how well he played that entire week.

Q. Tommy, are you ever, you talked about all the things that you're doing here. In terms of golf, which is not a fixed arena. It's not basketball, football. It's not the swimming venue at the Olympics. But are you ever limited by terrain? Are you ever limited by the hills and mounds and the ocean and trees and everything and what kind of challenges did you have to overcome to do what you wanted to do there at Torrey Pines?

TOMMY ROY: Well, there really aren't that many challenges. I mean, it's a gorgeous piece of property with

the canyons and the barranca, which it actually creates more opportunities for us, for like the drone. You can't have a drone flying over top of people, over galleries, and so there's plenty of places for him to fly there, which is terrific.

The one thing that I would say is I wanted to put a tracer on the 3rd hole, which is a downhill par-3. I was actually going to put it on the side so you would actually see the trajectory going down the hill, and we couldn't find a place for it because that canyon is so huge there. So that's like the only time that the piece of property has actually caused a problem for us. Otherwise, it's actually great for us. I love it. I love having some holes out by the ocean where the wind is going to blow, and then having the finishing up by the clubhouse where it's a reachable par-5 with Devlin's Billabong in the front creating all this danger, the risk/reward. You won't get me saying anything bad about this place. It's awesome.

Q. I want to touch on the 2008 U.S. Open and, Dan, your call, do you expect anything different, on Tiger's putt on the 72nd hole. For you both, you've been a part of some amazing moments in swimming and golf. Where does that moment rank for both of you?

DAN HICKS: Well, like I said earlier, it's, I think it's exhibit 1 and 1A with the Olympics that ensued in August. It's that close. I think they're almost interchangeable. They are different because what Michael Phelps did in China is just unbelievable, probably never be done again. In fact, I would go on record to say it's not.

But in the world of golf, the Tiger thing has topped them all. You can go back to what we have done at a number of championships and events through the years. Brookline in '99 was off the charts. So many other events that I've had the privilege of doing, all the Olympics, but the Tiger thing was just, I still can't believe it. The fact -- and I remember, we sat down with him. I sat down with him just before the championship started and there was all that talk about after the Masters he had the arthroscopic surgery and how good was he going to be because he didn't play and he was just coming in kind of cold to that U.S. Open, and we sat him down and last question I said was, There's a lot of speculation going on Tiger. How are you really feeling? And he kind of gave me that cheshire cat grin and said, I'm fine. And I could just tell by the response that he wasn't. It was your typical Tiger not going to give up what's really going on, but you could tell by the way he answered it that there was something going on and it didn't take long for him to start using clubs as a crutch and a cane and then it happened.

So that -- and before I toss it over to Tommy to respond.

I'll never forget, we came out of the tower, Johnny and I on Saturday after Tiger made those two eagles on the back nine, and I told Johnny as we got down the stairs in the tower, I said, Don't forget what happened today because you're never going to see anything like that again.

And as I went back to the compound, Tommy sees me and we were just like in awestruck of what we had seen and Tommy says, You know, the only thing better that could have happened was if this would have happened on Sunday. So we get to Sunday and that happens, and then I tell Johnny, I said, you know, forget what I sad Saturday. Sunday's as good as it gets.

So, to me, that is, that's on top of the golf list of things we have done right up there with Phelps doing what he did in 2008, the same summer.

TOMMY ROY: Same with me. Definitely No. 1 on my golf hit parade, I guess you would call it. But it's kind of funny, growing up, Jack winning in '86 at the Masters was what I always looked to as the most exciting event that I had ever seen. But it's kind of funny. That was only on the back nine. It was like an hour and 45 minutes of drama, and this thing that happened at the 2008 U.S. Open started where actually we had great golf on Thursday and Friday, but the unbelievable golf started there at the 13th hole on Saturday, and as Dan mentioned, we got off the air after he made the two eagles and chipped in at 17, it's like, Can you only imagine if this would have been Sunday. And then we get to Sunday and the way that ended with him making the improbable putt to force the playoff, and then we get to the playoff, that goes the distance, and they have to go extra holes. So it just kept getting better and better and better and lasted a full three days. So unbelievable memories of that whole week.

Q. Keeping on the Tiger theme for a second, I'm not sure who this question would be best asked to, but has anybody reached out to Tiger or Tiger's camp to see if he would be interested in voicing an open for you guys next week or trying to be a part of the coverage in some way?

DAN HICKS: Yeah, in fact, that's exactly the line that I was thinking and we were all thinking is how good that would be, who better, if he couldn't be there to play it, to voice it and have him a part of the show. But we were rebuffed. He didn't want to do it, and I totally understand his situation. There is a lot going on in his world right now and there's also a part of Tiger that doesn't want to become this, I don't want to, for lack of a better word, a sideshow at an event that should be just, we should be concentrating on what's happening.

Also, I really believe that if you said yes to something, it would just be a non-stop parade of asks, and he would have to just, you know, start telling everybody no. So, yeah, it would have been fantastic to have Tiger a part of it in that sense, but I understand that what's going on in his world that he wanted to kind of keep it low key and stay out of the limelight for this one and just hopefully he'll enjoy it at home watching it on TV and be inspired when we talk about what he did 13 years ago and that's the best we can hope for.

So, again, would have loved to have had Tiger, a healthy Tiger back at Torrey Pines, at his age, for one more shot in an Open that Steve Williams, his caddie, described at the time was the most special one, the one that he wanted to win the most, and I think that's what kind of propelled him to that win in 2008. So, yeah, that's kind of the story there.

Q. I guess it's time to head back to the animal kingdom. We have frog cam, if I heard that right, bat cam and what else did I miss there? And what are those cameras specifically for?

TOMMY ROY: Yeah, so a scorpion crane, which we have at the first hole that's covering tee shots where the, it's basically a speed shot, where the ball is, the crane is positioned halfway between the teeing ground and the landing area, so the ball goes whipping by, and then it reveals what the next shot is. And that crane moves, then, to 18 where we do it on our approach shots as well.

We also have rat cameras, which, if you remember the old TV show from years ago called Rat Patrol, it's what inspired that name, that it was a show about these Army guys that rode around in Jeeps and had machine guns on the back of them, and that's sort of what these vehicles look like that we have that have a, they're basically a, I would call it, like, a super golf cart with a camera on the back of it that can zip around, and we use those to receive the tee shots that are struck.

And then the other camera is a frog cam that we have in the pond at 18. You know that's called Devlin's Billabong where I believe he made a 10 en route to finishing up an event there one year. So that camera -- well, first of all, that hole, it's very easy to suck a ball back off the front of that green, and so we have to have a camera positioned on that bank at all times to be able to cut to immediately to show the ball going into the water. So we have that, a camera actually in the water, and we're calling it a frog cam.

Q. There has been no U.S. Open playoffs since Tiger, Rocco in 2008. The Farmers Insurance Open has had three in that time span. Is this the week where we

finally get a playoff back at the U.S. Open?

TOMMY ROY: I sure hope we do. It's not a 18-hole playoff anymore. It's two-hole aggregate. They will play 7 and then 18, and then if they're still tied, they go to sudden death and they play 7, 8 and 18 in a rotation until it's decided. So, yeah, I mean, that would be incredible drama. We have a U.S. swimming trials that follow us, so they won't be too happy there if we're running long, but it sure would be great drama for the golf.

Q. I'm old enough to remember Rat Patrol. 88 cameras on one hole. Tell me about, like, why that is necessary, first of all, and how many cameras total on the golf course?

TOMMY ROY: Well, if you saw last week at the U.S. Women's Open, we had the same device. It's, Cisco is the sponsor. It's a 4D replay, and so you have this ring of cameras around the tee box that you can then do replays with where it will, the angle that you get to see the swing from, we can control it. That's why around the guy behind him, around to the front, freeze it wherever we want. So it's a really good tool for Paul to analyze these swings, and I can't wait to see what DeChambeau's swing's going to look like there. So that's why you required all those there. And thankfully, the USGA was very kind about allowing us to put that there. And, by the way, this is being streamed out so that whether we use the swing on the telecast or not, people will be able to access it via their phone, which is great.

And then the rest of the cameras around the course, we're 50-plus. Still tweaking a couple things here and there, but it adds up to around another 50.

Q. There was a lot made of the, in 2008, of the Thursday, Friday numbers 1, 2 and 3 being put together. Just was wondering what your memories are of that atmosphere, just, and whether there was any discussion amongst the players about what that atmosphere was like.

JIM MACKAY: Yeah, I just remember the crowds were huge. The weather was amazing. I remember on the first tee you could really feel it within the gallery, that they were seeing something that they certainly didn't often get to. Certainly, with Phil and Tiger playing the first two rounds together it was very, very rare for that to happen.

And then to be quite honest with you when Tiger made 6 on the first hole, it was, you know, it's, not that that was the story, but it was just so interesting to see how he responded in the wake of that. In typical Tiger fashion, his body language never changed, his mood, his how social he

is on the golf course. It was fascinating just to watch that unfold in terms of him knowing that he had 71 holes, at least, to go in that tournament in terms of getting it done. But it was cool. If I'm not mistaken, both Tiger and Phil had said publicly prior to that, We would like to play together in the first two rounds somewhere, because it almost seemed like with what was going on on the PGA TOUR they were almost always on the opposite side of the draw. So to get them together, they had asked for it, it happened, certainly, as everyone has said on the call today, it turned out to be one of the more amazing tournaments ever played and I think that that Thursday, Friday pairing just played into that.

Q. Dan, just curious, the expect anything different call, I missed the beginning, but I'm just curious, where, how does that, does that still stick with people? Do you still get your golf buddies using that or when you're in line at the airport or something, do you get that one thrown back at you much compared to maybe other calls in your career?

DAN HICKS: Yeah, no doubt about it. That's the one that has resonated the most. There's no doubt about it. And I will be at an airport or somewhere out in public and I'll get that from time to time. I get it probably mostly when I'm playing golf with my buddies at the club, and it happens pretty much every round. If something goes in that didn't really look like it was going to go in, somebody inevitably throws out the, "Expect anything different?" So it's been a lot of fun, and it's, I think the great calls, not just, I'm not talking about mine. I'm talking about like a Verne Lundquist, "In your life," or a Gary Koch, "Better than most." They stand the test of time and that's what you're trying to do. You're trying to enhance the moment. You really have no idea when you're doing it that it's going to live on that, in the way it does. But it's neat to have the opportunity to enhance the moment and it's really cool to have it live on decades afterward and still hear about it. It's pretty cool.

Q. Compared to 2008 at Torrey Pines, what would you say in terms of just kind of innovation and changes in technology makes your job easier this time around and is there something that makes it tougher? Is it the number of hours, for instance, that you all have to produce? Is there, just, if you could just kind of talk about some of the differences in 13 years going back to a place like that.

TOMMY ROY: Yeah, it's interesting. Yes, the number of hours can make it more difficult, but at the same time, with my goal of trying to get everybody on the air those first two days, that actually helps. I mean, shame on us if we don't get everybody on the air. And I think what is helping the coverage, honestly, is that all the tracing technology, the

Super Slo Mo helps us see what's going on better. Now we had Super Slow Mo back then, if you recall, actually, the expect anything different putt, we had a Super Slow Mo camera there on 18 on the tight shot of the ball watching it bounce across the poa annua green and fall in the side of the cup. So we have four of those now this year.

But the other thing that I think really helps is having an X Mo, which really slows down the frame rate to watch these things take place because, quite honestly, watching a golf ball struck with your own human eye, you can't see what's really happening there and the X Mo helps.

Having things like the ARL, the zero, which are virtual graphics for the greens, wind detection devices. I think all that helps and we didn't have some of that back then. We didn't -- we have got three bunker cams. We didn't have that back then. The NBC See It. All these types of things, I think, help the viewers understand what's going on much better than they could back in those days.

Q. What do you like about this new version of Jordan Spieth's swing and how much, how surprised are you by the success he's been having this season?

PAUL AZINGER: Well, if you want me to go, I will. I don't think that Jordan's swing looks that much different. I mean, you could be splitting hairs, I suppose, but the way he feels, I think is enormous, the difference. Jordan, the big miscue for Jordan off the tee is always the problem that he, has always been the problem, but he's always been able to save himself with the putter. That's the part that went away. I mean, you're talking about a guy that was looking at the hole, putting cross handed on anything inside four feet. So there's those little bugaboos in his head there and Jordan says a lot when he's talking to the media and, I don't know, sometimes you can talk yourself into a slump. But he's out of it now and he's a confident player and I just expect him to make every putt he stands over at this point and I honestly just expected him to miss every one a couple of years ago. So Bones has had more of an up close look following him around firsthand tee to green, I'm sure he's improved, but always the big barometer is how do you handle the greens and he turned that around.

JIM MACKAY: I'm going to say that I'm not surprised at all, in fact I would like to thank Jordan Spieth because I'm going to win some money later this year when he makes the Ryder Cup team and which is something I thought he would do. He, in my opinion, obviously there's a tremendous number of great players in the game, but if you just break it down to their hands, to me he has what I would call a generational hands and certainly Seve had that around the green, Phil has it, without question, he showed us that at the PGA, and to me Jordan's got that

too. So when you got hands like that, certainly he's getting the ball up-and-down a lot, he makes a lot of 30 footers, more so than when he's one more probably than anybody else in the game. But I also think that helps him within his full swing. I think he said publicly that he had a bit of a wrist issue at some point and that it affected his grip and he was now able to get it back to where it was. I just think that when you're dealing with that Hall of Fame ability that he has, that enables you, when you're in a slump, to come out of it and win again very, very quickly. Certainly he didn't play well for a couple of years or so, but when he shot the incredibly low round that he did at Phoenix on Saturday of this year, I believe it was a 61, and then watching him the next week at Pebble, some of the shots he was hitting under pressure coming down the stretch, especially with the driver, it seemed to me that it was just a matter of time and I just think he's going to do huge things the remainder of this year and including probably be in contention next week.

Q. Obviously a unique dynamic of a major we're used to having courses where guys see it every six or seven years, this is a venue that guys have even every year at the Farmers, so I wonder from a player perspective how do you incorporate that past performance at the Farmers, if guys have played well in January, do you think that that can give them a tangible boost next week or do people need to view it as kind of a blank slate because the course is going to play so differently, not only in June but in the hands of the USGA?

PAUL AZINGER: Well, I don't know that the Torrey Pines plays all that much different really from late February to now, the weather's so consistent there. I'm sure it will be hard as a rock, it was at the previous U.S. Open, if I remember, it played pretty tough. It can be anything the USGA wants it to be, this golf course, so I don't know, we'll see what they do. I haven't been out there, I don't know how deep the rough is going to be, I don't know, we'll see.

Q. Do you feel like if you're a player like Jon Rahm or Tony Finau who has had some success in recent years that that can give those guys a bit of a boost over the field?

PAUL AZINGER: There's a familiarity and a horses for courses always when you go out there and play and these golf courses that they have played in the past generally present the lowest scores. Congressional is a course some of these guys were familiar with when they went there, Rory, he broke all kinds of records at that U.S. Open. You never know. But I always like horses for courses. I think Bones will a test to that. Some guys just can handle that poa annua grass, not everybody can, that

stuff around the greens is interesting, I mean you have to have experience out there on that stuff and you have to like it, that's a big hurdle and you have to not mind a USGA setup, but that's going to be the challenge, how tough will the USGA make it? Are they going to be accused of responding to Bryson if the rough's too deep. You know, Bryson, he won the U.S. Open hitting less -- I think he hit about 40 percent of the fairways and won a U.S. Open. Tiger Woods won it at Torrey Pines, not at the U.S. Open there, but he's won on that golf course finishing dead last in fairways hit. It can be done, but it's generally the accomplishments are on the greens. Mickelson lost all his home course advantage there when they redid that golf course.

MODERATOR: Well, thanks, everybody, for joining. Again we'll have a transcript of the call posted on our press sites nbcspportsgrouppressbox.com later today. Again, our coverage of Torrey Pines begins next Monday with Live from the U.S. Open on Golf Channel and then we'll have comprehensive live coverage of the U.S. Open across NBC, Golf Channel and Peacock beginning next Thursday. So thanks again for joining everybody and have a great day.

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