

NBC Sports Group Media Conference

Thursday, June 6, 2024

Sam Flood

Tommy Roy

Dan Hicks

Notah Begay

Brandel Chamblee

Jim "Bones" Mackay

Smylie Kaufman

Press Conference



we've kind of revamped our telecast a bit and gone to this odd-even concept, where traditionally there are four announcers up in the tower with play-by-play analysts and then two hole announcers. We've gone to this odd-even method where there's a play-by-play paired with an analyst.

So for the prime hours from the U.S. Open, Dan is pairing with Brandel, and Mike Tirico is pairing with Brad Faxon. That system has worked very well, the concept being that Dan and Mike take care of context and what is going on on the course, giving historical perspective, and then the whys of why the golfer is being successful or what they're thinking about on the shot gets handled by the analysts.

Then obviously we've got an outstanding group on the ground walking the course, and thrilled that Bones is back with the team here, and he will be part of NBC Sports for years to come, as we're going to partner for a long time with him. And Smylie has brought his new technique to the Fridays with Smylie and his happy hour, so we're happy to have him on the ground, as well.

How awesome is it that Notah is on board, who a few days ago qualified for the U.S. Senior Open in Newport. We're thrilled with that and excited about the team.

One topic that always comes up around major events is the flow of our shows and interruptions. Obviously unlike the NFL, the NBA, Major League Baseball, there are no natural breaks in the action of a golf tournament. There's shot after shot after shot, and that's what's so awesome about televised golf, and Tommy and the team figure out what shot matters most and where we need to be next.

But we hear the comments and we know that we need to look for solutions, and we're working with our partners and figuring out ways to make sure as much golf as possible is going to be shown. We are a business. We do have bills to pay, so we do have to work through these partnerships to make all this happen, but we have found ways to reduce the interruptions, and we've reallocated the resources in our broadcast.

For example, Thursday we're going to have two additional minutes per hour of golf than in past years, and then you add to that our new leaderboard system which our math has told us we've got at least five more shots an hour

THE MODERATOR: Good morning, everybody, and thank you for joining our media conference call today. We will be joined by our executive producer Sam Flood and lead golf producer Tommy Roy, as well as our play-by-play announcer Dan Hicks, analysts Brandel Chamblee and Notah Begay and on-course reporters Smylie Kaufman and Jim "Bones" Mackay.

This morning we announced our full U.S. Open programming plan which features nearly 300 hours of coverage from Pinehurst across NBC, USA Network and Peacock, which includes the main broadcast. Our feature groups are all access streaming on Peacock and our studio coverage. Speaking of the studio, "Live from the U.S. Open" kicks things from Pinehurst Monday June 10th on Golf Channel and Peacock, with more than 35 hours of coverage throughout the week.

SAM FLOOD: Thanks, everyone, for joining the call today. Really excited about this event. Tommy and I were there a few weeks ago for final survey and check-in. What a spectacular venue. I can't wait to get it going.

I know NBC's relationship with the U.S. Open goes way back. I've been told we had one-camera coverage back in the 1950s of the 18th hole. I'm happy to announce that Tommy has more than one camera this coming week and has got plenty of facilities to get these 300-plus hours of coverage going. We're fired up about that.

As people probably saw during our PGA TOUR swing,



based on this technique, where the green sheets, which are promos for other events and other sporting events or elements that the USGA message is getting across, we're able to stay on the live golf and not go away from the action.

So we feel really good about how we've revamped the execution, and as always, on Sunday, the last hour of the telecast will be presented in full by Rolex with no interruptions.

That is kind of the overview of where we are. Two other adds to our group that you might have seen in an earlier announcement, but Roger Maltbie and Gary Koch will be back on board. Roger will be walking the course and Gary will be in the tower in an earlier shift. We also want to congratulate Gary for qualifying for the Senior Open as well. Both he and Notah will be matched up against each other at Newport when the Senior Open happens at the end of this month.

With that, TR, you've got some good golfers in your team and a good game plan. Why don't you take it away.

TOMMY ROY: Thank you, Sam. This will be our fourth U.S. Open at Pinehurst, along with us doing a U.S. Women's Open is there. We've been preparing for this event since way back in '99 when Payne won it, and we're really happy to be back.

For myself and for Dan Hicks, this will be our 25th U.S. Open going all the way back to 1995 when we started. Tom Randolph, my co-producer, and Greg Katz, our editorial guy, and about a dozen of our technicians have done every single U.S. Open that we've done during that time, as well.

One little note that you might find interesting is the last time we were at Pinehurst (audio interruption).

THE MODERATOR: Dan, why don't we go to you now and give us some thoughts about your 25th U.S. Open and heading back to Pinehurst.

DAN HICKS: I've got to say that's the first time I've ever had Tommy go dead air while I'm listening to him. He's usually nonstop. As Tommy said, I can't believe this is our fourth U.S. Open here at No. 2. It's also, as you said, marks the 25th for some of our crew, which is absolutely crazy.

Also happens to be the 25th anniversary of Payne's victory, so some really nice symmetry there.

I'll just say this: We've had so many great experiences with

these U.S. Opens through the years, but personally that Payne win in '99 stands out to me because this is before I went into the 18th tower with Johnny and the great Dick Enberg was with Johnny at the time in '99, but I was greenside getting ready for the presentation and the eventual interview with the winner, and I just remember this powerful feeling on that green on that Sunday with the mist falling and when that putt dropped, I'll never forget that feeling. It was just electric.

The year before when Payne came up short at Olympic Club and then his passing later that year in '99, it's just the greatest personal experience I've ever had in golf, the power of that moment and having the opportunity to be so close when Tracey came up to Payne and embraced him on the green. I was hearing what they were saying. Tears were streaming down his face, her face. I was just a few feet away.

Phil Mickelson was down there, the father line that Payne delivered to Phil on Father's Day, it just had it all.

There's just something, I think, that's special about the spirit of Pinehurst, the mecca of American golf, and I look so forward to reuniting with that great spirit at Pinehurst. Look forward to our latest U.S. Open Championship there.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you, Dan. I think we have Tommy back now. We heard most of your opening remarks there. I think you got cut off just before we were going to get into some of the production details.

TOMMY ROY: Well, I was going to say that our last U.S. Open there was in '14. It was a little bittersweet because we knew we were losing it and it was going to go to FOX, and FOX took over for several years there, and we ended up back.

The interesting thing was Mark Loomis was the producer for FOX, and he will be joining us as the producer of the morning coverage this time around. So he'll be producing the morning, I'm in the afternoon, so you've got the two guys that have produced every single U.S. Open since 1995 doing the shows, which I think is pretty cool.

Sam mentioned one-camera coverage. We actually have 69 more of those this week. Our director is Joe Martin and Jeff Jastrow will have an even 70 cameras to work with. Lots of other toys.

The thing that I think is going to be most important is with these Donald Ross greens that are like if you take a cereal bowl, turn it upside down. For the people at home to understand what the golfer faces, trying to land a golf ball on these greens from long distances away, it's going to be

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crucial for us to explain that to the viewers, and we will have significant graphics to show that, not only setting it up before the golf ball is hit but also while the ball is in the air.

Looking forward to that.

We're on the air for 47 hours of our actual coverage of the championship. You heard all the extra hours with the digital feed, but 47 hours of championship coverage, so we have 19 announcers. Sam went through many of them there, and the goal is that when we get to Sunday afternoon when everything is on the line that our top guys are fresh and ready to call the dramatic finish that we hope we get.

The last little tidbit, Luke Combs, the country music star, who was born and raised in North Carolina, is going to voice our Saturday opening, and he's also going to be the voice of several Pinehurst area vignettes that we're going to sprinkle in.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you, Tommy. I know you mentioned a number of our commentators and now we'll get into some of our analysts and on-course reporters.

BRANDEL CHAMBLEE: It's great to listen to all your comments. I couldn't look forward to getting back to Pinehurst any more. I think the parallels of Pinehurst to St Andrews are apt, actually. If you walk around St Andrews, the city is quaint and it's wonderful, but it derives its energy from the old course, and I think the same thing is true of Pinehurst. If you walk around there, it's quaint and it's beautiful, and it's certainly a mecca for golf, but it derives most of its energy, if not all of it, from Pinehurst No. 2, such a historic venue.

I played there in the 1982 NCAA championship. I played at the 1999 U.S. Open. I was on-site with "Live From" in 2005. I was on-site with "Live From" in 2014. I have some familiarity with the golf course.

As it relates to the playing of the golf course, it's described as a second-shot golf course, and certainly I would agree with that, but I would also say that it might also be called a third-shot golf course because there is such an emphasis there on what to do when you've missed a green, and if you go back and you look at the winners from 2014, 2005 and 1999, they haven't, unlike most U.S. Opens, dominated in greens in regulation. The winners mostly dominate. If they're not first, second or third, they're very close to that. But there they were more like 20th.

So it was their scrambling skills, and I say "skills" because a lot of people will try to criticize the setup from 2014 by saying Martin Kaymer, who wasn't known as a great

chipper, and he prevailed around there. But the idea of it is that it does give you options, and he chose the option of putting around there. Others were similarly putting but they were nowhere near as successful as he was. He was successful around 70 percent around the greens en route to that victory. That's part and parcel of why he was able to dominate there.

When generally I look at Pinehurst, I think it sort of morphs all the best options of most of the other majors. Certainly it has the green complexes that are -- if they're not the most beguiling set in the United States, they're certainly in that conversation. I would argue that they're probably the best green complexes in all of the United States. So it has that sort of element similar to Augusta National I would say. It has a linksey feel to it in the way it plays firm and fast. It will certainly have that way. Of course the aerial views give you these beautiful topographical looks of it that kind of look like parkland golf. It doesn't play that way but it kind of looks like parkland golf traditional U.S. Open.

I'm really excited to be a part of the announce team. It's a privilege to be a part of that team. Television golf is the team game to end all team games, and I think NBC covering the U.S. Open is the best team in the business covering the most revered championship certainly in the United States. Really looking forward to the week.

THE MODERATOR: Awesome, thank you, Brandel.

We'll hand it over next to Notah Begay. Go ahead, Notah.

NOTAH BEGAY: Thanks, Jamie. Well said, Brandel and Sam and Tommy. Really looking forward to the venue. One of my favorite U.S. Open venues simply because it provides such a great challenge and visually challenging for players from tee to green.

I think what it really highlights is somebody's ability to sort of manage from top to bottom just kind of where their game is at. I feel like when I was playing in a lot of U.S. Opens early in my career, it was the most comprehensive, most difficult test in golf. Guys like Tom Meeks were on the USGA setup committee.

Tom Meeks at that time was synonymous with a curse word because he set up some of these venues so difficult - high rough and firm greens and the scoring was indicative of that. Then it sort of softened up under the Mike Davis era a little bit, we saw much better scores, much friend better conditions, and now I think it's kind of returning to maybe a more balanced difficult test across the board.

Brandel did highlight some of the statistical performance metrics of Martin Kaymer. He was second in total driving.



He was first in scrambling, using that putter primarily. But I think one interesting thing is his conversion on the greens in terms of putts per green in regulation was almost double that of the field. He was making just under 40 percent of every green that he hit in regulation as far as birdie looks of the rest of the field. So we'll see if that trend holds on very strongly as he sort of works his way into the U.S. Open.

I'm more curious about how is Xander Schauffele going to hold up coming off his major championship win. In the last seven years, he's the only player to finish in the top 15 in every single U.S. Open. And is he going to translate the momentum he garnered off the PGA into this setup. I think it does set up for well him, but backing up a finish like that can be a difficult task.

And I'm also going to keep my eyes on -- I love this sort of side story of the LIV players. There's only one player that's been near the lead going into the last round of a major, and that was Dustin Johnson and he was five shots back. He's played eight majors and hasn't really shown up. Cam Smith hasn't really shown up. Jon Rahm obviously has been horrible this year.

I'm curious to see sort of how that translates kind of as a sidebar in contrast to the rest of the field. A lot of really cool things highlighted by just a wonderful venue.

SMYLIE KAUFMAN: Pinehurst is a very special place to me. It was actually my first start as a professional, first major. I went through local and sectional qualifying. I was going to stay amateur that summer, but I thought, you know what, why not, let's go and turn pro, and boy, oh boy was I showed up to quite a test.

I think my biggest memories from Sunday, Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, trying to understand this golf course was the beginning of the week I'm chipping everything, and by Monday I'm putting everything. On Tuesday I've got the 3-wood out around the greens. By Wednesday I had no idea what I wanted to do by Thursday, and I think that's the brilliance of Donald Ross and just all the different options that you have that you really have to find a way to get committed to one or two strategies because you can sit there on a shot around the greens, see just about everything.

It was an incredible test that week. I'm really happy to be around for the weekend because I'll tell you what, I didn't see you on Saturday and Sunday because I made too many bogeys on Thursday and Friday, so really looking forward to seeing who's going to be our champion this year at Pinehurst and really just -- I'm curious to see how the golf course is going to play in comparison to when I played in 2014, really just what that wired grass is going to look

like on the outside of the fairways and really diving into kind of the angles that you really need to be playing from, from the fairways to give yourself a chance to hit the greens.

Seems like to me it's a great spot for Scottie Scheffler to get his second major of the year. And for me, this is going to be my second U.S. Open working with the NBC team. Also really thrilled and privileged to be a part of the team.

I guess, Jamie, I know we're about to send it to Bones. I'd love to cue the U.S. Open music for Bones if we're able to do it.

THE MODERATOR: I wish I could. I'm not a producer. If I was, maybe I'd have it ready to go. I can pass it over to Bones and we can get some final thoughts before we open it up to questions.

JIM MACKAY: Good morning, everybody. Great to be with the team. I just want to say thank you to Sam and Tommy for having me back as part of this NBC U.S. Open coverage. It's a real thrill for me to be back as part of the team full time, and I can't wait to get going.

As for Pinehurst No. 2 and memories I've had of past experiences there, certainly '99 stands out. It's going to be talked about a lot, I'm sure, in the coming days as we head into the tournament, but it was a real -- as much as it stung not to caddie for the guy that won the tournament there that particular year, it was an honor to be on the golf course to see one of the more historic finishes go down there ever in U.S. Open history, as Payne did his thing there on 16, 17 and 18.

As Dan mentioned, it was almost like a movie set out there that Sunday evening with the mist and the finish and the staggering number of people around the 18th hole in the grandstands, which we're going to see again this year, several thousand people. Again, a real dagger that we took from Payne in terms of how it all finished out and how the tournament came to a conclusion, but down the road a real honor to be there and witness what went on.

Can't wait to get going. I agree with what's been said relative to both Xander and Scottie Scheffler looking really good as we head into this event. It's my personal opinion that it's way easier to win your second major than it is your first. So it would not surprise me if Xander picks off another major before this year is over, so why not here at the U.S. Open?

Can't wait to get there. Really excited about our team and our upcoming coverage, and just look forward to seeing everybody there in Pinehurst next week.



Q. I had a question regarding -- this will be directed to Brandel, Smylie and Bones, about Bryson and just the fascination with his game and with how he's perceived by the public. It seemed a couple weeks ago at Valhalla that I think he was being cheered for as hard as anybody on that golf course. I'm curious about what you make of his transformation of his game as well as his image and how he's perceived.

JIM MACKAY: Well, yeah, I couldn't agree with you more relative to the outpouring of support he got there in Louisville.

I just think he's a fascinating guy. You can almost rattle on too long about the public's fascination or even our fascination with how far he hits the ball. Yeah, it's amazing, and I believe he hit that 220-yard 8-iron into the 16th hole there on Sunday as things came to a conclusion, and he was right there in it with Xander.

I just think he's like all those guys out there, he's older, he's wiser, he's matured. I think that he's as much fun to watch as just about anybody in the game. When he's bringing it in terms of his "A" game, he's awfully tough to beat.

I think as we head into Pinehurst and he's carrying all kinds of momentum, I think it's going to be fascinating to see how he picks apart this golf course. Certainly there are a couple of par-4s where he's going to have the option to drive the ball right in front of the green, if he so chooses. It's going to be interesting to see how he handles the short game aspect of getting around there.

I think he's going to be one of the major, major stories as we head into that week.

SMYLIE KAUFMAN: My answer I would probably say is Bryson really brings energy, brings youth to the game. His social channels have absolutely blown up. I think he's brought a very big audience (indiscernible) pretty heavily. I think the fact that really he wears his heart on his sleeve out on the golf course.

We have plenty of great golfers in the game today, but not many people are -- he has the charisma like Bryson has, that he is not afraid to show a little emotion, which I think is great, not only for the game, but shoot, it's great for TV. I really think Bryson is a great golfer and also a bit of a TV star. He's been the one guy that Notah kind of mentioned that has been the one LIV player who's shown up at these first two major championships.

BRANDEL CHAMBLEE: I can't really think of another player like him. I rack my brain trying to come up with

some historical parallel to Bryson DeChambeau. From a talent perspective he's certainly the top of the food chain, but the fact that he accepts nothing at face value I find endlessly fascinating, not even the hard-to-decipher golf machine book. He didn't accept that. He dove into it and had his own interpretation.

The way he's reworked his game, came up with one-length golf clubs, who would have ever, ever thought of trying to do something like that. That's endlessly fascinating. And his ability to transform himself during the pandemic in a power sense. Again, endlessly fascinating and interesting, and then parlay that into major championships.

But what I've seen this year is all those changes were about him and how he could be better, but what I've seen this year is more external elements to him, trying to put on a better show for the crowds, trying to be more demonstrative and animated after shots.

I think that to me is the final piece of the puzzle because as people watched him, while they were fascinated, I don't think they were particularly enamored with him. It was too much all about me. Him smiling and air punching and being animated, that's by design. He's trying to give the audience something, show them how much he's enjoying the game. It's been absolutely fascinating to watch. Sixth and second in the first two majors this year. I know people are thinking this golf course doesn't fit him because he's not necessarily known as the best scrambler or certainly versatile in that role, but I know it's a small sample size, he leads this year in the two events that he's played, he leads in strokes gained around the greens.

He's playing beautiful golf. I think he's -- outside of Scottie Scheffler, honestly, and no disrespect to Xander, I find him to be almost the equal in terms of interest to Scottie Scheffler. He may even exceed Scottie Scheffler in terms of interest.

I'm just delighted that the majors bring all these players back, and can't wait to watch him at Pinehurst.

Q. For Sam, yesterday there was a story in the Wall Street Journal that says that NBC is very close to signing a pretty significant rights deal with the NBA. I'm wondering as golf fans sort of see that news and reckon with that news, I'm wondering should we feel or should golf fans feel concerned that NBC is investing so heavily in other sports and perhaps to the detriment of golf?

SAM FLOOD: NBC believes in sports. We show it by having the No. 1 show on TV with Sunday Night Football. We show it by having the Olympics by putting all of our

resources and making sure the Olympics are best-in-class production every two years.

We're involved in sports. We're hardcore sports fans. Golf is a major sport on our network. We have an entire network dedicated to sports. Whatever negotiations are ongoing, we are huge believers in the sports world, and that will never impact our commitment to make sure we do best-in-class golf, and give Tommy Roy and his team all the assets and resources that he needs to put on world-class productions.

Q. I'm curious, you mentioned some of the conversations around trying to improve the production as far as commercials are concerned. How does NBC and the USGA go about sort of forging a path forward or a solution to that? How do you take that from an idea to something where you can tangibly say there are fewer commercials or interruptions throughout the course of a telecast?

SAM FLOOD: Well, we've been meeting since January trying to look at how to put the best possible product on the air, from Pinehurst, and in those conversations we've looked at ways to reduce inventory, promo time, USGA interstitials and new ways of executing them. So they will be more organic to the telecast. The USGA has messages they want to get out, and those will be part of Tommy's telecast that will be organic to the show versus going away to a standalone item.

There are different ways we feel we can engage the audience and build the content that gives those messages, but we have reduced the amount of promo time in the shows and reduced the amount of time we'll be interrupted by really smartly evaluating everything we do, where it hits, and how it's integrated into the telecast.

Q. Brandel or Notah, I'm wondering if you recall your early impressions of seeing Scottie Scheffler's footwork around the tee box, and if it took a while to make sense of how it works for him.

NOTAH BEGAY: Well, I've been watching Scottie since he was in eighth grade. That was the time that I was living in Dallas, really close friends with Coach John Fields at Texas when he was recruiting him, among the rest of the college golf world that was recruiting him.

One of the best things that they identified with him was his remarkable ability around the greens. He's got one of the best short games in the entire game.

But he was a great athlete. I think there's some unique things that I think great teachers are able to do when they

find unique talent: They don't change them. I think you're just talking about Bryson. His dad is a PGA of America professional, worked at a golf course his whole life, and he just sort of had this understanding that Bryson had his own way of doing things, his own way of seeing the game, and he allowed him to go down that path. Consequently he wasn't a heavily recruited collegiate because people were afraid of what they were looking at because it was different.

Now, with Randy Smith and everybody else that was surrounding Scottie through his junior years, he was winning everything in sight, won over 100 junior tournaments in and around the Dallas area before he went to Texas, and I think it was very smart of them not to address the foot issue because as anybody will ever tell you, Brandel, Bones, Smylie, if that ball is coming out right, if it's not broken, don't fix it.

I think that's one of the best things they ever did for Scottie in sort of allowing him to develop in his own fashion, and now he's kind of made that a trademark for himself, and obviously worked his way to the best in the game at this point.

BRANDEL CHAMBLEE: I would just say when I first saw Scottie's foot work, I personally didn't think it was that unique. Johnny Miller's feet went everywhere when he was playing his best golf. They flew everywhere.

We've seen Bubba Watson. Obviously his feet are going everywhere. Phil Mickelson's feet were certainly not -- certainly wasn't the most balanced player when he played the game. Bobby Jones was up on his toes. Walter Hagen was everywhere. So I didn't think it was that unique.

But the more you look at it, the more it's certainly the sloppiest I've ever seen, but I think part of that is due to the equipment which allows you to swing at the ball a little bit harder, and part of that is the game is more power prejudiced than it's ever been, and part of that is the game is more about athleticism than it's ever been.

It's funny how we all get caught up in beautiful, stick-your-finish poses, and while it is beautiful, Rory does it, it is beautiful but nobody ever talks about the perfect balance of home run hitters because their feet are going everywhere. They're knocking it out of the park.

Golf has essentially home run hitters now, a lot of them. They're 6'2", they're 185, and they're trying to maximize trajectory and spin and power.

I look at that, and I find it esthetically interesting but really it's just about maximizing athleticism, and you just can't say

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enough about how he blends power with finesse.

We can do this whole conversation about how distant Scottie Scheffler is from everybody else in the game of golf. It was unfortunate that the PGA had such a disruption in it, but I suspect he'll carry on doing what he had been doing before the PGA at Pinehurst.

He's just miles ahead of everybody else. I find that pretty intriguing because the criticism of the equipment and this era is there's so much parity in the game, that the equipment makes it really hard to separate yourself, and yet we have a guy that's separated himself farther than anybody else besides Tiger Woods using this equipment in this era of proposed parity.

There are a lot of things to love about Scottie, but that's certainly one of them.

Q. Smylie and Notah, we had this Grayson Murray tragedy and Lexi Thompson talked about mental health and pressure of being a pro golfer. How unique are these pressures to the golf world and life on Tour? What more can be done to support golfer struggling out there?

SMYLIE KAUFMAN: Yeah, definitely. For somebody that's seen the highest of highs and the lowest of lows in this game, I definitely don't think I can ever relate quite to where Grayson ever was in his life, but he was a friend to me and somebody that always was really checking on me, which I think about daily now.

As far as just the help and having a support system, if it weren't for my friends and family and others around my team keeping me on the train tracks, it's a very lonely game. It's a lot of flights, hotels, being away from your family. It can be very hard.

When I think about Lexi, as well, their schedule, they go to Europe, they go to Asia multiple times during the year. It's constant travel, not having routines that are normal compared to most people, and I'll tell you what, it's very easy for every single shot that you hit to attach emotions to it or have expectations of, hey, I want to be here. And for the tragedy with Grayson, he was on his way back. If you would have told me this happened three or four years ago, even two years ago, I would have said, you know what, I could have seen it coming. But with Grayson, how he had made his comeback, and how every time I had spoken with him, everything was amazing. He was unbelievable in our interactions.

I think that's the thing with mental health is you don't really know what's going on with somebody. Even on the outside

they may be showing, hey, everything is great.

For me, it's taught me a lot of life lessons about being more friendly and kind and asking how others are doing and being more personable with them, because for somebody that has struggled with mental health at times like so many men and women across the world, it's important to always ask that question.

NOTAH BEGAY: I'll just add on the back end of that. Personally having my own personal struggles with alcohol and playing golf at the highest level, it's hard. We were raised in an era where if you admit your weaknesses or you admit that you're having deep, dark thoughts, which a lot of us often have surrounding performances, personal issues and whatnot, it's viewed as a weakness.

I think it's important that we don't sweep this under the rug as an organization, as a game, as athletes, because we're human beings, as well. I think we can utilize this as an opportunity to grow and become better as a game and to support each other a little bit more off the golf course, knowing that each one of us, regardless of your profession, is going through something, and to sort of be sensitive and compassionate about what the individuals are dealing with and if you can support them in some capacity, go ahead and do it.

Q. Tommy and Sam, you mentioned bells and whistles. Are there any kind of fly cams, drones? And what are your thoughts about CBS as far as the drones making noise? What are some of your special toys next weekend?

TOMMY ROY: Yeah, so we're going to have two drones. At the Phoenix Open earlier this year, we had a second drone that we added in there to be in that arena there, where in the past we've had a fly cam, and it allowed us to get many more unique angles, and we repeated that at THE PLAYERS at the 16th and 17th hole arena there. So we will continue that at the U.S. Open, where one drone will be at the first tee and the putting green and the range and the whole clubhouse area, while the other one is out following the leaders on the course.

The one thing I'll say, I can't speak so much for what happened in Canada last week because (audio interruption).

I don't know where I got cut off there, but just speaking about what happened in Canada last week, I wasn't there to know exactly what went down, but I will say that the drone operator that we have uses a much smaller drone that is also quieter, and he -- Ben McClung is his name, he played golf at Vanderbilt with Brandt Snedeker, so he's

very familiar with the game. We have never had any issues with players being distracted from the drones because you just have to be very careful about when they fly, to make sure that they're out of eyesight of the players, and if they're quiet, you can do that.

As far as other toys that we have, obviously we have tracers on every hole, but at 4 and 14, those are downhill tee shots that we have high tracers there that look down on that shot, so you can see where the ball is headed to in the distance. Bunker cams at 6 and 13. We had a jidda (phonetic) tracer at 8 and 18, which is the tracing device that not only do you see the trace of the ball flying away but the camera actually zooms with the ball, which is quite a cool effect.

Got a rail cam at 17 green. The 17th is a pretty crazy green with a lot of undulation, and it's a very lengthy green. This rail cam will be able to show that from a really cool angle.

Speed shot cranes at (audio interruption).

SAM FLOOD: The one thing Tommy didn't get to was the happy hour. We've got Smylie set up, and on Friday afternoon he'll be doing his thing, so we're looking forward to that, and Smylie is ready to really. We had great reception for that at PLAYERS and across the PGA TOUR swing. So it's become a signature element, and Smylie is ready to roll with that on Friday.

Q. For Sam, regarding the dual announcer teams, I'm just curious, how viable do you think this could be as a permanent option for NBC golf coverage?

SAM FLOOD: We really like what it's added to us. When you think of the depth and quality of our play-by-play announcers, starting with Dan, who's so talented, you've got Mike Tirico, and in the past, he would serve as a host at the U.S. Open, and we all know that the fans want to see as many shots as possible, and going to a host setup takes away from that. So having Mike who also loves doing play-by-play (audio interruption).

Q. (Audio interruption) in his breakthrough season and how that's carried on with a lot of players now also talking about their sports psychologists and now maybe because of the success of Wyndham, I feel like a lot more players are deciding to do that.

NOTAH BEGAY: I think it's hit or miss in terms of, I'll characterize it, as a mental coach, simply because I think the athlete has to have a certain mindset to be receptive to the type of constructive thoughts that a guy would provide in terms of dealing with all the emotional and mental

challenges that an athlete would deal with on the golf course or in any other sport.

It goes deep. It goes into deep behavioral health issues. It goes into family of origin stuff, and I just think that historically that hasn't really been a place that most athletes want to go to achieve peak performance, but I think that's where athletes do have to go in many cases, however they choose to get there.

I know many a great player that does not utilize any sort of mental support, but with Wyndham, sort of being in the position that he is, sort of being an up-and-comer, in terms of his youth and energy he brings to the Tour, I think it's a wonderful fit for him as well as a couple other players. I think Max Homa, I think they actually use the same coach.

But it's just the mental cues that you need. If you've ever been at an event and had to make a swing when it all mattered and you're having dark thoughts about where the ball is going to go, Brandel and I have been there, and Smylie. To be able to just rely on something that can get you through the tough times, these guys have used it very effectively. But it's not for everybody is what I'm trying to say.

SMYLIE KAUFMAN: Just to follow up on Notah, the only thing I'd add to that is just social media I think is so prevalent now, and all that these guys do every single week. They read just about everything. I think some guys put it away. Jordan Spieth has had Twitter and Instagram since 2016. So some guys put it away, and if guys are active, a lot of times after their rounds they hear about it, their bad play.

So constantly not only do you have expectations from yourself, but there's so many people around that want you to play well, and when you don't, you hear about it. That's just another factor now that the game is so popular, so many people are watching the game of golf, so many people are betting on the game and there's a lot of interest.

There's expectations that players put on themselves and then the fans put the same expectations on the players. That leads to players sometimes going down rabbit holes trying to look for results right away and can lead to yourself getting into a pretty dark hole.

BRANDEL CHAMBLEE: I think Smylie really hit the nail on the head. Listening to Lexi Thompson last week at the U.S. Women's Open get pretty emotional in the press conference, at one point she just almost said as an aside, "words hurt." When she said that, I thought, that's got to be social media. If you go on social media, that's just an avalanche of negatively, and we all have negative biases.

I think they're just compounded by that.

Aside from that, golf is -- unlike other sports, the difference from the top to the middle to the bottom is about five, six, seven percent. It's much, much different in other sports.

It's a razor's edge between playing well and losing your job. We focus on the stars, and we talk about the stars, but there's another 100 players that go to bed at night wondering if they're going to have a job next year.

It's easy to get your whole sense of self-worth wrapped up in a score, and it's so important to have a team around you to provide some balance and ballast.

But now I think Wyndham Clark has made it more obvious that perhaps the way to play your best golf is to have somebody deal more holistically with your life as opposed to just your golf.

Q. Xander had not quite the close calls of the Phil Mickelson, but for a long time he was the guy with the label hasn't won a major. Wonder if you see in the comparisons to what Phil later did after getting that first win.

JIM MACKAY: Yeah, I think that you can certainly draw a comparison between the two. Certainly it didn't go on as long for Xander as it did for Phil, who was 34 when he won his first major at the '04 Masters.

I think that it's a tough place to be, and I think that -- I thought that Phil handled it really well back in the day when he was dealing with the issue, if you will. Certainly Tiger was really difficult to beat at that point in time, as he was dominating the game.

I just think that Xander is a very, very wise 30, 31 year old, whatever he is. I believe he's right around that age. I think that you listen to the comments that he makes in his pre and postgame time with the press, and I think that it speaks to the head space that he's in, and it's very, very comfortable and solid.

As I mentioned earlier and as you've said, I'm not going to be surprised at all if Xander wins one of the next two. I think he's probably -- he's certainly top 3, 4 in the world and his world ranking would show that, but beyond that I think he's a guy that's here now for the long term, and I think that he has a chance to run off a few major championships here in very short order.

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