

NBC Sports Group Media Conference

Thursday, July 10, 2025

Rich Lerner

Brandel Chamblee

Paul McGinley

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: Welcome to our Golf Central Live from The Open Championship media conference call. In a moment, we'll be joined by the primetime desk for Golf Channel's studio coverage of the Open Championship, our host Rich Lerner and Paul McGinley and Brandel Chamblee.

Just a few housekeeping items and programming detail. NBC will have comprehensive coverage of the 153rd Open at Royal Portrush next week across NBC, USA Network, and Peacock. That programming will begin early Thursday and Friday on Peacock bright and early, 1:30 a.m. eastern, followed by a 12-hour block of live coverage on USA Network beginning both those days at 4:00 a.m. eastern. Weekend coverage starts on USA and then shifts to NBC and Peacock.

Peacock's streaming coverage will include two featured groups in each wave, as well as its Open All Access whip-around show on Thursday and Friday, as well as a par-3 channel, which will focus in on the 6th and 15th hole.

Golf Channel's studio coverage is going to also include Live From the Range Monday through Wednesday morning, 5 Clubs with Gary Williams on Monday morning at 7:00 and of Golf Central will be live throughout the week midday prior to the championship, and then immediately following play in primetime as well on the East Coast.

We will have a transcript of this call available on nbcports.com/pressbox a little later on.

We'll start with our Golf Central Live host Rich Lerner.

RICH LERNER: Jamie, thanks. Good to be here. I'm actually sitting next to Pauly; we're in his apartment in the center of Dublin. Big one tomorrow night; we're going to Croke Park where Pauly played Gaelic football as a lad. Brandel will be with us, and Bailey, we're going to see --

PAUL MCGINLEY: Semifinals.

RICH LERNER: Semifinals, All-Ireland Gaelic football?

PAUL MCGINLEY: Kerry against me.

RICH LERNER: Monday night we're excited because Darren Clarke, the 2011 Open Champion, is going to be on set. Darren beat you in the North of Ireland final?

PAUL MCGINLEY: Yeah, that was in 1990.

RICH LERNER: So that's Monday night on Live From.

Open is one of my favorite tournaments of the year. In a world that's spinning faster than I can comprehend, time seems to stand still in an Open. We're in old towns, old golf courses, old pubs, and the oldest trophy in the game. AI will not determine the outcome, thankfully, of an Open Championship.

I'm also struck by how quickly Portrush and its return to the Open rotation has ascended. I think the consensus now is that it is right there with Birkdale -- St Andrews is sort of in a league of its own, but certainly one of the favorite venues now. So we're looking forward to getting up there in a couple of days.

Big, big story line, again, it's obvious, it's Rory coming back home, trying to make good on what happened in 2019. I do think, if he does win, he will have completed one of the most historically, and I would say emotionally consequential seasons in the history of the game. We know what happened at the Masters and the grand slam, career slam, but to come back home and put a button on it winning at home would be profound.

Then I think with that we have a fairly tight race for Player of the Year. I think Scheffler, Brandel -- and Paul might feel differently. I think Scheffler probably has a slight edge at this point because he's statistically superior, but Rory's won at two cathedrals at Pebble and at Augusta National, and if he adds The Open on top of The PLAYERS, then I think he's hands down Player of the Year no matter what happens the rest of the year.

I think we'll get some clarity on the Ryder Cup, and as

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always, the golf course will be the star. With that, I'll turn it over to our host this week in Ireland, Pauley.

PAUL MCGINLEY: Thanks, Rich. Like Rich said, we're looking forward to it. The country is going crazy about it. We're going to have stand-up crowds. We've got really good long range forecast in terms of weather this week. We're going to have blue skies and not too much wind.

Yeah, the usual narratives around Scottie and Rory will be the two lead things, and we're looking forward to it.

BRANDEL CHAMBLEE: I'll just say to carry on the aged metaphor that Rich was starting with also gives us the most unlikely (indiscernible). As you experience that more, age hurts players less.

Been over in Scotland now for about a week or so, I get asked every day a dozen times or so who I like to win The Open. Scottie Scheffler is so much better than anybody else, it's almost a ridiculous question to ask because, if you don't pick Scottie Scheffler, then you've completely overlooked by far the best player in the game.

But this is a major championship where inclement weather, rain, spin, luck of the draw, or a bounce affect the outcome more than any other major championship. It's the major with the slowest greens. So you combine all those, and it gives us the oldest and most unlikely prize.

Everybody knows that Tom Watson was competing in 72 holes in 2009 at 59 years of age. Darren Clarke, who's joining us on Monday night, was 42 when he won in 2011. (Indiscernible). Very unlikely winner Zach Johnson at The Old Course was 39. Molinari was 35, won in 2018. Brian Harman was 36 in 2023.

It's a young man's game; it's a power game, but not at The Open Championship. It changes so much there because of the inclement weather, because the luck plays a bigger factor than any other major championship at The Open. Because of the slow greens, you get bizarre things like a ten-shot comeback from Paul Lawrie in 1999.

We can handicap this thing in the obvious ways, but Mother Nature will throw us a curveball very likely next week, or the golf course and the fates will throw us a curveball next week.

Q. This is a question mostly for Paul, but I'll open the floor to each of you to answer it if you'd like. I guess I'm curious, like every year The Open travels to links golf, and I think we sort of lump all links golf together, but I guess I'm curious to ask, starting with Paul, what is unique about Irish golf? What is different about Irish

golf than anywhere else in the world?

PAUL MCGINLEY: Good question. I think -- I'm going to be biased saying this, but I think it's the people. I think it's the crowd, it's the atmosphere. I think the golf is very similar. The golf courses that we have -- Portmarnock, Ballybunion, County Sligo, Royal Portrush, Royal County Down -- you have equivalent and golf courses just as good in the main land in the UK. I think what we saw in 2019 is the Irish ingredient of fun and crack, we call it over here, and flavor added with the top players coming over.

That's what makes it different and makes it unique. It's not necessarily the golf. The golf courses are no different than they are in the mainland. It's the people, the fans, the supporters, and how it will be embraced.

It's also an element of fun. Anybody walking in the crowds this week will notice a lot of one liners that you might miss in other Open Championships. Always look on the bright side and have a bit of crack, as we call it.

Q. My question is for Paul. I'm just curious, Paul, what do you think it means for people in Northern Ireland and Ireland in general to have not just The Open returning this year, but it's kind of become one of the favorite venues, like you guys were saying, on the road already? What does that mean to the Irish people?

PAUL MCGINLEY: It's great it's come back. If it hadn't have been a success in Portrush, we wouldn't have been back so quick for a start. Secondly, there's a lot of talk now, and I know it's officious now that Portmarnock is a possibility down the road. We don't know any dates on that yet, but they certainly are looking at it a lot stronger now.

The gates will open to Ireland through Portrush. I thought the R&A did a brilliant job politically to set it in Northern Ireland, having moved back to the name The Open Championship rather than the British Open and sensitivities around that word in the island of Ireland. So they did a wonderful job in positioning that.

It was seamless when it came here in 2019. There was no political objections. Everyone was happy to have it. We all embraced it, and of course we had an Irish winner on top of it all.

It means a huge amount to the country. We have a Ryder Cup coming up in '27. We're very proud about that. We've got a Walker Cup coming up in Lahinch. We're very proud about that. And the Irish Open is regarded as one of the best events in world golf around the world.

So we are a very sport loving nation. Rich talked earlier

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about Gaelic football being my background, and just for people on the ground, you might know Ireland's got 32 counties north and south. In Gaelic football and hurling, you can only play for the county you're born in. There's no transfers. We're going to Croke Park for the semifinal of the football on Saturday, and there will be 80,000 people at that game, sellout. And the following day is the second semifinal, and that will be a sellout too.

So Ireland is a sporting nation. The other thing about golf is that every town and village in Ireland has golf courses. I grew up, when I was a kid under the age of 18, I used to play in Royal Dublin and Portmarnock for five pounds. It's a very inclusive sport in Ireland. It always has been.

It's become very expensive, I have to say now, because so many people are coming over to play and the green fees have gone up. Certainly when we were growing up as kids, it was a very cheap sport. Even if you were a member of one of the elite clubs, it was tiny money compared to what you would pay for a private club in America. It's very inclusive. Most people in Ireland, sporting people, would play golf. Every town and village has got it.

Give you an example. My mom and dad are from Donegal, top left hand corner not far from Portrush, and their local club, it costs \$350 per year to be a member. With no fees on top of that.

Q. Your designing a golf course, aren't you, up in Donegal?

PAUL MCGINLEY: I've got a design company, and we've got three courses under construction in Donegal, which is a hidden gem. If there was stock in Donegal, I'd be buying it. It's the next frontier for golf in Ireland. They've got great golf courses up there. Some designed by Old Tom Morris, one by Tom Doak, Gil Hanse has done his work up there renovating a course too. This is an area that's going to be improving over the years.

Just to give you an example of how inclusive golf can be and how inexpensive it can be, particularly when you leave the Dublin area.

Q. I just want to jump in quickly, the record crowds we'll see next week, will they primarily be Irish, or will people be coming over from England and Scotland?

PAUL MCGINLEY: They're coming from all over, exactly. They're coming for the crack, Rich, that's my point. We do put on a good show. People have a lot of fun, and they like to drink the Guinness. There will be a huge amount of people coming up from the south of Ireland.

You can commute for the day. Door to door from Dublin to Portrush is only three hours, and it's motorway most of the way. We're going to have a huge contingent coming up on a daily basis to The Open next week. That's one of the reasons why it's been so popular in terms of so hard to get a ticket.

Q. I was curious, Paul and really everybody, but I think Paul might have a little more experience playing here, Calamity Corner, the famous par-3 No. 16 in the track configuration of the course, what makes that one of the great par-3s, Paul and Brandel and Rich?

PAUL MCGINLEY: I'll just go quickly first. It's a long hole. I think it's about 230 yards, and it really is calamity down the right-hand side if you go down there. It's a very steep bank with very long grass.

I think what's made it even more fearsome in recent years is the fact that it's now the 16th hole. When I played there as an amateur and when I was growing up, it was always the 14th hole. Now coming up so close to the end of a round, it's a hole you've got to be cautious on.

What I love about it as well is the design by Harry Colt, one of my favorite designers, what I love about what he did was he gave me a bailout up the left-hand side. A little pocket bunker, a little grass bunker up the left-hand side. Bobby Locke used to aim for that bunker when he played The Open there way back in the '50s.

So it gives you options, it gives you strategy. Depending on what the shot is, you've also got a bailout early. I think it's a wonderful par-3. Not normally a par-3 over 200 yards, but that is one that is very memorable, right along the huge, huge, huge sand dune.

BRANDEL CHAMBLEE: Just in general, though, actually we'll be leaning on Paul McGinley a lot next week as we talk about Portrush since he knows it so well. In general, I'd say -- Paul set it up for my wife and I to go play there not long ago. I would just say in general it's one of the most spectacularly beautiful golf courses that sort of meanders through the sand dunes that I've ever seen.

So many of the approach shots, you're looking at a very narrow entrance, sort of this gun sight entrance to these approach shots with sand dunes left and right and fairways that meander that punish misses, I think, more than most major championships during The Open Championship. There's still a high premium, even more so than most golf courses.

Like St Andrews puts a high premium on how far you hit it,



plain and simple. There's a high premium on, when they used to play Turnberry, on being able to work the ball in crosswinds. When you look at Portrush, there's just such a premium on finding the fairways and finding the greens. It's unlikely that a scrambler is going to do well there.

When you look at a Rory McIlroy and his potential to play well there, there's 174 players that are ranked in terms of finding the rough, how often you find the rough after a tee shot. Rory is 172nd out of 174. He may drive the ball beautifully by today's standards with strokes gained data, but by Portrush data, he's got to find a way to find more fairways than he's finding to make this dream that Rich alluded to at the top has any chance of materializing. As windy and as difficult as it's going to be to play in the conditions next week, he's got to find the fairway.

Then of course finding greens is so important. It's just, at least in my view -- Paul may differ with me on this, and I would certainly defer to him because he knows so much about it. But it's not a place where you would expect to see anybody sort of scrambling their way through this championship.

Q. For Rich and for Brandel and then Paul, you guys at the Travelers were sitting next to Keegan afterwards hoisting a trophy. How do you like his chances next week? Then for Paul, as someone who has captained, what is this like seeing Keegan do what he's done this year?

RICH LERNER: Brandel and I hashed it out on the set of the Travelers, and Brandel is now a convert to the Keegan as a playing captain movement, but he's still out of the top six. I understand -- and Paul knows this better than anyone having successfully captained the team, winning in 2014 -- it's a different animal than it was when it was last done by Arnold Palmer in 1963.

That said, given his statistical profile and given some of the other intangibles, he's what I would call the American Ian Poulter. He's fiery, and he knows the golf course, having played there and having gone to St. John's. I think it's doable, and I think he belongs on the team.

The question is should he be both player and captain, or should he give up the captaincy at this late stage to, say, Jim Furyk and then take it again in a couple of years or somewhere down the road? I think he can do both. My idea is that Bradley would sit out a morning session, be able to assess the playing field, set the lineups for the afternoon, go play in the afternoon, and then reconvene again at night.

I also think selfishly it's just a great story. Anyway, that's

where I personally stand on Keegan. And yes, he's won four tournaments in the last two-plus years. So do I give him a chance? Brandel knows the stats better. Certainly ball hitting-wise, he's capable. Greens running 10, I suppose not a typically great putter, but might serve him better than in other weeks.

It's certainly become a really juicy story line here as we get deeper into the season.

BRANDEL CHAMBLEE: Again, just from a data aspect, just looking at this player objectively without a name attached to it and you're looking at what he's done and his data, you would say, as a captain or an assistant captain on the team, that you would be weakening the team by not choosing this player.

But having said that -- and I've certainly paid a lot of attention to Paul talking about the importance of a captain and the decision that the captain makes. This particular week at Bethpage black, there is a sense that the spectators could get out of control. As much as Keegan Bradley can be important to getting the support of the crowd, I think as a captain he can also set the tone that the rambunctious nature that we're expecting there should also be respectful. As a captain, he needs to set that tone.

I've listened to Paul talk so often about -- as Rich and I query Paul all the time about the decisions he made as the captain and makes in the background contributing to the Ryder Cup, and it's just a monumental task that shouldn't be taken lightly. The question is is he demonstrably as a player going to help the team, or could he demonstrably affect the outcome as a captain? I think it's more likely he could demonstrably affect the outcome as a captain than he could as a player.

Yes, he's easily one of the best players to pick, but I think his role as a captain could be far more important. As it relates to him playing well at The Open, he's played in 11 Open Championships. His best finish is 15th. He's missed the last five cuts. He missed the cut at the 2019 Open at Portrush. He's got the highest ball flight on the PGA TOUR. He sends it into orbit. I'm not sure that he fully appreciates or understands how to play links golf and to work his way around these golf courses.

So he would not be amongst my top 10 picks. Again, The Open gives us a lot of surprises. If the wind doesn't blow, as it generally does at Open Championships, and the forecast I looked at is going to be cloudy and soft, it may mitigate the need to play great links golf next week.

PAUL MCGINLEY: I think -- where do I go with this one? I think the jury is out in terms of what he can do, and that

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jury doesn't have the answer yet to say, yes, he can do it or, no, he can't.

Yes, it is a huge job, but the other side of it is 75 percent of what you do as captain is done before you get to the golf course to play the Ryder Cup. A lot of work is done before that, a lot of communication and stuff and setting the scenes.

We had Tiger very successfully, winning as a playing captain in the Presidents Cup down in Australia. Certainly over here in Europe we've had instances where a captain has performed well as well as captaining. It's not something that's never been done before, certainly in recent times. And I know Arnold Palmer obviously.

I'm not dismissing it in any way, and I know that America are prepared for this, and we in Europe know that. We're not going to have any giddiness about the fact that we don't think he can do it -- far from it because America has prepared this. Nobody can say it's not possible because it hasn't been done in recent times.

I would say that Jim Furyk will probably step up very much into the vice captaincy, senior vice captain role, and he obviously had a great Presidents Cup last year, went very well for him. I know the Ryder Cup didn't go well for him, but that doesn't mean he could never be a good captain. I think he learned a lot from that and put it to good use in the Presidents Cup last year.

So he would be a very capable and able No. 2 to step in for Keegan should Keegan be a playing captain. So I'm not dismissing it. I think it's possible. I'll be interested to see how it evolves like everybody else.

Q. Paul, as a hometown boy, I'm going to exclude you from this question. For Rich and for Brandel, welcome to my 53rd Open. Tell me, first of all, how many times you have covered an Open. Secondly, a typical journalism question, tell me the best and the worst things about covering The Opens, The Open over here?

RICH LERNER: I've covered, I believe, just about every Open since '99. My first was van de Velde, as you well remember, John, and congratulations on 53 years.

We were all ready to escape Carnoustie. It was done and dusted. The Frenchman would be the first from his country since Arnaud Massey in 1907. The laptops were closed, and we were ready to move on. Then he jumped in the burn, and all I remember is five hours later, I was stumbling down the train tracks in Carnoustie smoking a Marlboro, and I don't smoke. That was my introduction to the Open.

I love that -- I'll certainly repeat what I said at the top. The world is spinning in ways that I can't fathom. Maybe that's because I'm getting up there in years now. I always get the sense that it stands still when we come over here. It is as it was still and always great.

I like how moody it is, the weather. I like the authenticity, and I like the commitment to the game that I sense from golf fans over here.

What I don't like probably, it needs a little more room in the showers. Selfishly, I'm 6'4". Somewhere along the line, I was at a hotel somewhere, some small hotel in a small town, seaside town, that only had a bathtub. I hadn't taken a bath, John, since I was nine, and I got in and everything fell. It was rather humbling. I don't mean I fell, I mean everything on my body fell.

So the comforts of your average Marriott, we're not enjoying those over here. Look, Brandel comes over here for a month at a time. He'll tell you better. We just love it. It's very much of the game, in the game, all about the game. It's wonderful.

BRANDEL CHAMBLEE: Again, the congratulations that Rich expressed to you, but covering more than 50 is quite an accomplishment. I certainly enjoy your work. When I first came over here, I spent the summer in Scotland in 1982 traveling around with my roommate whose father was Dave Thomas, the famous Welsh golfer.

Q. His name was Paul Thomas.

BRANDEL CHAMBLEE: That's right. I got a great taste of links golf. We bought a silver trophy and named it some profane name, which I can't say on the phone. But I didn't win it. The last of two words on that trophy was Cup. The first, I cannot say. It began with a "C."

We played all summer for that cup. And we started and ended at St Andrews. It's hard to believe, but we arrived on the 18th tee after the whole summer dead even. Paul pushed his tee shot to the right and broke the window of a milk truck. I played safer to the left, hit it up on the green.

There was a time when punk rock was all the rage, and the green was surrounded by a punk rock group. All of them had purple and red and green mohawks. I stood on the green amidst the Mohawks, and I watched Paul get in a fight with the milk truck guy, and I thought what a waste of a summer game; it couldn't end more bizarrely than that. I did win the cup; I still have it somewhere.

I fell in love with Muirfield most of all that summer. I came

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back in 1987. I'll never forget, I actually just looked it up because I wasn't sure what I shot in qualifying, but I knew it was good. I shot 64-66 to qualify for Muirfield. My wife and I just played there yesterday, and it just brings back memories. I get misty-eyed about it.

I was lucky enough to go to dinner with Paul and his father and Jack Nicklaus, and we talked about great Open champions, what it takes to play great in the Open, and it's everything. It's experience, it's working the bubble with directions, it's working it low, working it high, looking at the artistry and the architecture and the lay of the land, and the crowd just appreciates it.

I'm often asked what's your favorite tournament to cover, and it is a bit like asking who your favorite child is. I certainly have a reverence for The Open Championship. I used to come out and hang out at the bookstore for hour upon hour. I'd hang out in the Bollinger tent with Paul. I can remember so many luminaries like Donna Reese and Peter Alliss coming in and buying us college kids champagne and regaling us with stories of long misty-eyed-ago Open championships.

I first started covering it in the media. I was at Royal St. Georges in 2003, when Ben Curtis won. There's only one that is not directed about covering The Open. Rich alluded to the showers. I can easily fit in the showers, and I love baths, so I'm fine in that regard.

But I am very, very fond of sleeping in temperatures of about 65 degrees. When it gets hot here -- I go down, and I'm like, look, you had a 10,000-year head start on us, and you don't have air conditioning.

They always say the same thing. Yeah, we're having a bit of a hot spell. I'm like, yeah, it's called summer. I would love some A/C over here. But other than that, I love everything: The food, the people, the golf, the history. When I sit down and watch and cover The Open, it's a bit like sitting down to watch "Casablanca." It seems black and white when you watch over here. It's just nostalgic, and every single thing that's great about golf is embodied by links golf and The Open Championship.

RICH LERNER: One more thing, John. I just want to jump in. I put a button on this. Your late colleague of all of ours, you remember Bill Blighton. Very simply he said, we're well-fed and well-watered.

Q. You mean you are. I'm glad to hear we feed you well and water you well.

BRANDEL CHAMBLEE: You do indeed.

RICH LERNER: Congrats, John.

Q. Given the fact that players on the PGA TOUR don't often play these kinds of courses, how does that play into your predictions going into this upcoming tournament?

PAUL MCGINLEY: I would agree, I think it is. I think it's a very difficult tournament to try to pull a winner on. The point that was made earlier by Brandel about luck plays more of a factor in the Open Championship than it does any other. Generally the others are played in pretty generic conditions, barring maybe a U.S. Open at Pebble Beach where it's 70, 75, 80 degrees, and very little wind and American style golf, target golf.

This is obviously a lot more on the ground. Luck is more of a chance. The bumps and the hollows and the inclement weather can bring a lot more people into it. Yes, I would agree it is very, very difficult to choose.

We have people like real quality players in America and come over here and don't really raise a gallop on these style of golf courses. Scottie Scheffler is still to win on links golf courses. He's still finding his way around. He's playing the Scottish Open this week and trying to get a little bit more versed in playing this style of golf. He's not the outright favorite, in my mind, the way he would be on an American golf course because of obviously the different style of golf that links is.

That's just an example of why so many more people come into it, that it's not just other players who you might know about is very good, has a very good skill set for it. It's also some of the top players in the world, and their games are not particularly suited or are versed in playing this links style of golf.

BRANDEL CHAMBLEE: I'll just add to that. The Masters is the easiest major to predict the winner. The U.S. Open is usually the youngest, and with the exception of this year, it's mostly based upon power. That's a trend that I think will continue because of the preference for just a different, more -- unless they change the way they're setting up the golf courses going forward, it seems to me they've taken a more democratic approach to their setup. Those are easier to pick a winner on.

The PGA, because conditions are so soft, you can get some pretty unpredictable winners for sure because it just makes the fairways play wider and the greens play bigger. It's easier on the nerves.

The Open Championship, because of the bad weather and the slow-ish greens, makes it a little bit harder to pick a



winner, but it is the average age is the oldest on average winner. So you can begin to look at guys sitting in their mid-30s and late 30s and even early to mid-40s with a little bit more optimism than you otherwise would.

Again, you can be on the wrong side of the draw. It can cost you as much as three or four shots from an average score. So luck plays a big factor at Open Championships for sure.

RICH LERNER: I would just jump in. If you go back to 2010, I would say Oosthuizen, of all the winners in that time frame, was probably most off the radar. We know now he turned out to be a high level player. Fair to say he could have won three majors.

At least at that time, he wasn't a prominent figure in the game, but after that it was early 40s guys but they were well established and certainly capable -- Clarke, Els, Mickelson, McIlroy, Zach Johnson had already won a major, Stenson was at the height of his power, Spieth was in his flush run. Molinari was just outside in '18, the handful of name brand players, but he was playing the best golf of his wife. Lowry similarly was sort of good but not an unknown quantity. Morikawa in the first Open he ever played.

And then Cam Smith, Brian Harman was -- I hesitate to call him a long shot, but he wouldn't have been in the discussion on a Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday before The Open of '23 at Liverpool. Then Xander was -- had already won a major. So you're not talking like super long shots here, a few that were just outside of favorite status in the last 15 years.

But yes, certainly Harman, Els, Clarke, Mickelson, experienced players, length not always the determining factor, give those guys a chance on links golf.

Q. Bryson DeChambeau has not been able to figure out the riddle of the Open at all yet. Have you seen anything in his game that makes you think this year could be different or that the venue could be a good fit?

BRANDEL CHAMBLEE: I would say no, not as it relates to the Open. His only top 10 came at St Andrews, which is understandable, the fairways are 150 yards wide. He missed the cut here in 2019. He was a different player. That was pre-COVID. Since he's come out of COVID, he's certainly transformed his game, but it's just so important to have control on the fairway at Portrush.

I'll be curious to see if Paul agrees with that. It just takes a different style of golf. Having said that, he's a smart guy.

Maybe he goes out there and attacks it with the iron play because his length coming into the green means he's coming in there with shorter clubs, et cetera.

The high, really high ball flight, you don't see him working his ball flight down as much. I don't see him hitting as many left-to-right shots when there's hard right-to-left wind. If you can't fight the crosswind, you're very limited on what you can do coming into the green, especially if there's a hole location on the windward side.

It just requires a lot of nuance and savoir faire, just playing an Open Championship under windy conditions, and especially so, I would argue, at Portrush.

RICH LERNER: Brandel, I would jump in with a quick question for you, and maybe Paul wants to add a little something. Do you think Bryson needs to figure out how to be a more nuanced and polished iron player before you would consider him a truly great all around player? I know he's been a great player in spots obviously, but do you need to see more with his iron play for you to advance him up in status?

BRANDEL CHAMBLEE: Yeah, definitely. If he wants to be the player -- if he has any chance of being the player he wants to be, he's got to improve his iron play. That is certainly a weakness of his. It is the weakest aspect of his game, and it is part of the game that matters the most.

PAUL MCGINLEY: I would echo what Brandel said. I think the high ball flight doesn't play into his strengths. He struggles to knock the ball down and play three-quarter chops. Again, that's not a strength. He struggles to hit the ball left to right with his irons, that's not a strength. You look at the winners, the past winners of The Open Championship, and you bring guys like Brian Harman in, he's a guy that you wouldn't be surprised winning another. He could well win another Open Championship, but you'd be really, really surprised if he won a Masters.

It goes back to horses for courses. At this moment in time, certainly with the strong crosswinds last year at Royal Troon, that Bryson was left wanting. It's interesting to see what he's going to bring to the party this time. But what we can't do is leave him out here.

A lot of us have been wrong over how consistently he's competed in these major championships, especially considering he's not flying at full power in terms of his limitations with his iron play and finds himself in contention 4 of the last 6 major championships. It's been a phenomenal run he's been on as he comes to party in these majors, and credit to him on that.

He does look like he's got limitations to his game that are playing away from him being a good Open player. Having said that, the forecast is pretty benign. We don't have a lot of wind forecast up there, and this is a golf course that you can get at.

As much as this is my favorite golf course in Ireland, I don't think it's our most difficult golf course. I would put two courses ahead of that, Portmarnock certainly and probably Waterville as well. It's a fun golf course to play, and you can get at it. With benign weather conditions in terms of wind and not the heavy crosswinds you had last year at Royal Troon, maybe this is an exam that will suit Bryson better.

You know how good his short game is. He showed us that at Pinehurst with the chip and runs.

RICH LERNER: I have one other question, and that is about Harry Colt. How is he viewed in ways that he might not be in the states?

PAUL MCGINLEY: Harry Colt is one of the great old fashioned designers who doesn't get enough credit for what he's done in my opinion. He's my favorite guy. He's done a huge amount of golf courses here and in the UK, not so much America. He makes golf courses that are fun to play. That's what I like about him. Sunningdale is the obvious one, that the one he's most famous for. He did Royal Dublin here in Ireland and has obviously done Royal Portrush.

What I like about him, he genuinely gives you an opportunity to chase a ball on the green. He very rarely closes off the front of the green. He gives you options of playing holes. That's what I liked. I talked earlier about Calamity, and then having an option up the left-hand side. That's what I like about Colt is he gives players options and he doesn't make golf courses way too demanding. They're certainly playable for all skill levels.

Q. Who do you think is the player who should walk away with the Claret Jug? The LIV player.

BRANDEL CHAMBLEE: Jon Rahm.

PAUL MCGINLEY: Jon Rahm would be the one that would come to mind. I ran the Irish Open when it was in Lahinch, and he won. His shot making around Lahinch was phenomenal. He's also won in Portstewart, which is next door. He's won two Irish Opens on Irish golf courses. He's got a three quarter swing, as we know, and three quarter swingers are great at knocking the ball out of the air.

With his short game as well too, he's got all the skill sets.

I'd be really surprised at the end of his career if Jon Rahm hasn't probably won more Open Championships as he adds to his major total. He's got a game and a skill set that's really suited to play links courses.

BRANDEL CHAMBLEE: It would be hard to argue that point with Paul. You look at, not just any LIV player, but any player that could best challenge Scottie Scheffler, and it's hard to look past Rahm. He's done very well in the Irish Open as Paul has just documented. A second at The Open, a third at The Open, a seventh at The Open, he was 11th in 2019 at Portrush, and he's got -- he very much reminds us all of Lee Trevino but with a little more punch and power. Obviously Trevino was very good in the Open Championship.

RICH LERNER: LIV dark horse might be Patrick Reed.

BRANDEL CHAMBLEE: He played well there in 2019.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you very much, everybody. Thanks, guys. As a reminder, we will have a transcript of the call available at a later day or tomorrow morning on [nbcports.com/press box](https://nbcports.com/press-box). Additionally, if you would like to speak with Paul, Rich, or any of our other commentators covering The Open Championship early next week, please reach out to me, and we can make those happen.

As I mentioned, Golf Channel has got all the coverage starting Monday morning next week, and championship coverage bright and early Thursday morning.

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