

The Memorial Tournament Presented By Workday

Tuesday, May 27, 2025

Dublin, Ohio, USA

Muirfield Village

Jack Nicklaus

Press Conference

THE MODERATOR: All right. We'll get underway and welcome tournament host and founder, Mr. Jack Nicklaus, to the interview room here at the old venue, Muirfield Village. It's always fun to be here with you at this time of the year. May the 27th is a pretty significant day in this tournament in history. It's today, obviously. But it was the first round of the 1976 tournament on May 27th.

JACK NICKLAUS: Oh, was it?

THE MODERATOR: And also, it was the day two years before that when you played with Tom Weiskopf at the --

JACK NICKLAUS: Boy, you really went back deep to find that stuff, didn't you?

THE MODERATOR: I did go deep because it's a significant day --

JACK NICKLAUS: I bet you got that from Scott Tolley.

THE MODERATOR: I got it from Scott Tolley, Tom Sprouse, everyone. So it was good stuff. But I feel it's significant. You know, this is the 50th playing of this event. I would say, how does a that make you feel, knowing that --

JACK NICKLAUS: Old. (Laughing).

THE MODERATOR: The sense of accomplishment that you have to see where this tournament is today?

JACK NICKLAUS: Well, you know, we started it -- so I was, what, 35 years old or 36 years old, '76, yeah. 36 years old when we played the first tournament. It took 10 years to get there. We started the idea of the tournament and bringing golf to Columbus in 1966 at Augusta. So it took us 10 years to get the golf course built, financed, and move forward.

Of course, a lot of help from a lot of people, particularly Joe Dey from the TOUR. Joe Dey was head commissioner,



PRESENTED BY



and Joe came out here and walked in the mud with me. I don't know that y'all realize, but we ended up, to get the date we got, we ended up having to do two years of -- I don't know what you call it, serving -- whatever you want to call it. In Cincinnati, we had two years at Kings Island, which was the forerunner of the Memorial tournament. You didn't know that, probably.

THE MODERATOR: I didn't.

JACK NICKLAUS: Yeah. He says, If you want the dates you want, which is what that date, that's a prime date on the TOUR, he says, You're going to have to pay your dues someplace else -- pay my dues, that's -- pay my dues someplace else. So we had Cincinnati for two years. I think they maybe had that tournament again, then, for another two or three years, whatever it was.

But we had that, then we got the date, which was around Memorial Day. Walking with Joe out here, walking through the mud, frankly, which was what it was when we first got here, we were trying to figure out what kind of a concept we wanted for the tournament. Joe came up with the idea of -- he says, It's Memorial Day, he says, And around Memorial time, he says, why don't we honor the past people who have contributed to the game of golf in the past. I said, Fantastic. I said, I think that's great. I said, Now, I don't want to be selecting those people. I says, I don't think that's the right way to do that.

He says, Well, I have another idea. I said, what's that, Joe? He says, I think we ought to get a group of people, of golfing statesmen, which we'll call the Captains Club, and that Captains Club will be the guiding light and take the pressure off of you and off your shoulders.

I said, That's a good idea too. And I said, That means they will select the honoree, they will do the exemptions, they will perpetuate their membership, and they will be your guiding light. And of course one of the first captains we had was Cliff Roberts. And of course, Cliff Roberts said, Jack, you've got an opportunity to do here in 10 years what it's taken us 40 to do at Augusta. And he says, And my books are open to you. He says, Whatever you want to know and whatever we can do to help you, it's open.



I haven't had that many offers from many places like that, not particularly from Cliff Roberts. And of course, then Bob Jones was our first honoree. And of course, our first Captains Club -- I can't remember who always was captains, Byron Nelson, Gene Sarazen, Cliff Roberts, Chick Evans. I can't think of who all. But I don't even remember how many people there were in the Captains Club. Joe was one of them.

But anyway, that Captains Club was our guiding light and started us in the tournament, and I, for the life of me, can't think of what your question was (laughing).

THE MODERATOR: It was just the significance of how it makes you feel --

JACK NICKLAUS: Well, I mean, you look back on what happened and where it went and how it started from a very small, humble beginning and how that it's grown through, because the whole idea of the Memorial Tournament was to bring golf back to Columbus, Ohio, a place where I grew up, to thank the people in Central Ohio for the support they gave me through all my career. And that was the whole reason for bringing it back.

Charity became a part of that, although back in those days, charity was a very small part of tournaments. I mean, if tournaments gave a couple thousand dollars to charity in those days, that was pretty big to be able to give anything. That's gone to where you see tournaments now, good gracious, is Valero the highest on the TOUR?

THE MODERATOR: It's one of them.

JACK NICKLAUS: I went down to Valero earlier this year. What are they, 30-, 27,000 something, 27 million?

THE MODERATOR: Yes, annually, it's about --

JACK NICKLAUS: What was it, Scott?

THE MODERATOR: 28 million.

JACK NICKLAUS: 28 million this year. I mean, what a number. We're not that here.

But, you know, we're doing what we can do. We've supported Nationwide Children's Hospital from day one. It's been a big part of this tournament. I don't know if you remember, but the TWIGs used to work at this golf tournament, where the girls came and were the volunteers, and they were paid an hourly wage. Their hourly wage was a donation to the hospital. I mean, it was unbelievable how these things happened and went.

But the growth of that, to see what we've got now -- what are we at, 3,000, 3,500 volunteers? We've got great coverage, we've got a great sponsor in Workday, we've got a great field, an elevated field, and we've got, you know, a purse of -- what are we, a \$20 million purse? I mean, we were 20,000 maybe then. It may have been a little bit more than that, but not a whole lot more. 20,000 may have been first prize then. But, hey, we've come a long way, baby. (Laughing.)

THE MODERATOR: Just before we take questions, I'd just like to comment on you honor a special person every year, and this year it's a very, very special person in Barbara.

JACK NICKLAUS: Well, it's a special person to me. And so you understand how that came about, my son Gary came to me, oh, I don't know, a couple months before the tournament, and he says, Dad, have you ever thought about honoring Mom? And I said, No, it really hadn't entered my mind, Gary. I said, But you're absolutely right. She's been as much a part of this tournament as I have. From day one, she's been the guiding light for good common sense and good judgment, and the TOUR wives have all, you know, looked up to Barbara and where she's gone and what she's done. The people that have come into this tournament, many, many have come here because of Barbara.

So I called Joe Dey -- Joe Dey. No, I didn't call Joe Dey. I couldn't call him. I called Charlie Meacham, and I talked to Charlie, and I said, Charlie, it's been suggested. He says, What do you think? He says, God, I hadn't thought about that either, but you're absolutely right. And so he called me back the next day. He says, I canvassed the Captains Club. Boy, unanimous. And so when I had the honor to be able to announce that on television, I couldn't even get it out because, you know, what Barbara's meant, obviously, to the tournament, what she's obviously meant to me and our family, and it's a very, very, very special year.

THE MODERATOR: Absolutely. It's wonderful. We'll take some questions.

Q. 50th tournament. A lot of memories. What memories stand out? I know it's a lot.

JACK NICKLAUS: Oh, come on, what memories stand out? They all stand out.

Q. Anything specific? Azinger's bunker shot?

JACK NICKLAUS: Well, I look at the thing, the first year Roger Maltbie hit a stake, you know, on the 17th green, and I think that kept him in the playoff that he won -- I think



we had a three-hole playoff that first year with he and Hale Irwin -- him and Hale Irwin, excuse me. Corrected my own self, Barbara. And that was pretty special.

Then Roger celebrated so much, he left his check down in -- I don't know what bar he was in town, but he left his check there. I think he got it back, though.

Then the second year, I won and, unfortunately, we couldn't finish it on Sunday. We had bad weather, and I finished it on Monday morning and won that. And I have always felt that that was probably the most difficult tournament that I had ever won, hardest because of what I did as it relates to the tournament. I was out picking up papers all the time, stuffing them in -- I don't remember who was caddieing for me, probably Angelo was probably caddieing for me at the time. I don't know. Stuffing them in his pockets and checking stakes in the ground, and if I saw something here, I wrote it down, and Barbara would come in with her checklist at night, I saw this out there, and that. So we would go through that, try to get it fixed the next day.

I mean, these were things we did in the early years. And, you know, this year I went around the golf course, and I saw the superintendent, Chad, and I said, The golf course is perfect. I don't have any comment. Not a comment on the golf course. Pretty good.

And the golf course is really good. But the early years, we didn't know. I mean, Ed Etchells was our superintendent. I remember, was it '79 that Watson won? Is that correct? And that's the year that Ed was more about making sure that nobody could play the golf course and had the greens get as fast -- he got the greens over 17 on Sunday. I think I shot 79 on the last round and picked up places on the field.

But I mean, finally got to Ed. I said, Ed, it's not about us. It's about the tournament. I says, I don't care what they shoot on the golf course. I want a fair, honest test of golf. And I said, not something for somebody's ego. I said, I think that -- you know, I just left the locker room, and the comments that come into the locker room from one of the fellows I just talked to, they said, The golf course is fair, it's fun, it's difficult. He says, it's the way it should be.

And you know, that's basically what I want. I want people to tell me that we've got a good stern test of golf and one that's going to produce a great champion. And I don't think this answers your question, but that's what we try to produce.

Sure, Azinger's shot was a fantastic shot. Tom Watson winning again was fantastic. I hit it out of bounds in '84 on

the 17th hole and still ended up tying and getting in a playoff and then beating Andy Bean in a playoff. All those were special moments to me. I mean, the way these guys have played, I mean, Scottie is your defending champion. I mean, he's been fantastic. He's been the star of the TOUR. I just talked to him in the locker room here just a minute ago. And, you know, we're delighted to have him back to be here to compete.

So many things. It would be hard to pick one thing out.

Q. It's a little bit like asking somebody about their favorite child. Do you have a favorite hole after working on this place for 50 years?

JACK NICKLAUS: Well, you know, if you ask me about golf courses, I'd give you that answer, but, you know, I always felt like a golf course should be a blend, and sometimes you maybe have a hole that's -- you maybe go not real difficult at the first hole, which is not particularly -- our first hole is not extremely difficult, and then you maybe progress a little bit, and then you maybe go a little easier, then a little tougher. You try to get a balance within the golf course.

I love short par-4s. I think 3 is a great little short par-4. I think 14 is a great little short par-4. I always thought they were the most fun holes to play because anybody can play 'em. You don't have to be long. You have an option to do things. You could actually drive the ball at 3. I don't like to see people drive it at 3, but they can. And they can drive it at 14. They can do that. It's there if you want to do it, if you want to try.

I think our par-5s are probably -- only because I don't own the homes behind the hole, behind the tees, because I can't go back, they're on the shortish side. But they are what they are, and they produce a lot of birdies. They're good. I think our par-3s are a nice balance.

I suppose if there's one hole on the golf course you ask me about, I would probably say 14. Yeah, I think 14 is a really challenging hole, it's an easy hole, it's a dangerous hole, it's a pretty hole. It's got all the elements there that you could want. I made three 3s on that hole -- or three 2s on that hole. And I don't know any other hole that I've holed three shots from off the green to make 2s anywhere in the world. But, you know, none of 'em during the tournament, of course. One in a pro-am playing with Gerald Ford. (Laughing.)

THE MODERATOR: I bet he was impressed.

JACK NICKLAUS: He thought it was a good shot. (Laughing.)

Q. Speaking of stern tests of golf, where do you rank Oakmont as a U.S. Open venue? And is there one moment that you hold onto, aside from winning, of course, in '62?

JACK NICKLAUS: I think it a spectacular place to win your first tournament. I'm being facetious a little bit.

No, I like Oakmont a lot. Oakmont's a very stern test. It's a tough test. They have had the same spring we've had. So you're going to find Oakmont very much similar conditions to what we have here. You're going to find the fairways a little soft-ish, you're going to find the rough very deep, and you're going to find the greens very firm, which is you're going to find the same conditions here.

But Oakmont, it's a really stern test of golf.

Q. Is there one moment that you remember?

JACK NICKLAUS: At Oakmont? I won. I remember that.

Q. Beyond that?

JACK NICKLAUS: That was just, like, yesterday. What was that, 63 years ago?

THE MODERATOR: I wasn't born.

JACK NICKLAUS: No, I know that. 63 years ago.

Well, you know, I played with Arnold the first two rounds. I can't remember -- I think Arnold was, like, 140, maybe I was 142, something like that. I don't remember. We played 36 holes the last day. I do remember the 17th hole, that short par-4, I drove it into the bunker on the right and then hit it out on the fringe and played a poor chip past the hole about 5 feet, and I made this downhill slider that had it not gone in the hole, it would have gone off the green. And Bobby Jones wrote me a note. He says, I came right out of my chair when you hit that putt, which, obviously, he couldn't.

But that was the one sort of remark I remember about that. Of course Arnold was very gracious. He was the favorite. It was his hometown. You'll get a kick out of this. I remember him coming over to me. There's a picture of Arnold walking over to me while we were warming up, and he was talking to me, and he said, Jack, you know, the purse today from the gate from the playoff goes to the champion, to the winner. And he says, would you like to split it? I said, Arnold, that wouldn't be fair to you. I says, you know, I'm just here. I may play well, but I said, it's not fair to you. I says, We should probably just play for it.

Because I assumed that he would probably win.

And well, of course, I won. I got the gate, \$1400. (Laughing.) But anyway, Arnold was very gracious. Couldn't have been nicer. Yeah, I love Oakmont. I think it's a great place.

Q. I know you spoke with Rory McIlroy in advance of the Masters, and then you predicted that he would win successfully. I was wondering if you got a chance to watch that roller coaster final round and maybe what you saw that made you think he would win and what the experience was like watching it.

JACK NICKLAUS: Well, you know, I don't know whether he was going to win or not. After the Masters, I dropped him a note, and I told him, I don't think anybody's won by having four double bogeys. And I said, But that just showed me how much talent you have to overcome that to win and how you played some unbelievably spectacular shots, such as the iron at 7 that he hit over the tree that actually hit the tree. The phenomenal iron he hit at 15, the shot he hit at 17. Then, of course, to miss that little short putt at 18 on a pitch-out on his second shot with a wedge, which was not very good. But he played some bad shots. The shot he hit at 13, I can't believe.

But anyway, you know, I was very happy for him. It was a great win, and it got the monkey off his back. And to me, the monkey was not the Grand Slam. The monkey was the Masters. Now, the Grand Slam was a product of winning the Masters. If you ask him which was more important, I think he would have to say the Masters. That's because it was.

Q. Curious if there's a moment that you remember from your career where the expectation or the pressure felt the greatest, whether it was, you know, from within you or externally?

JACK NICKLAUS: Not really. The only time that I put pressure on myself, and probably not really the right thing to do, was after I won the Masters in '63, '4, and '6 -- or '63, '5, and '6, I sort of felt like I should win it every year. I felt like if I didn't win it, my year was a failure. And I went through three or four years of that before I realized that, hey, you're not going to win this tournament every year, and the year, it has got a lot of other golf tournaments in it and a lot more majors to play in, and you can't let one tournament ruin your year.

That was the pressure I put on myself. And sometimes it made it so that I had a hard time playing at Augusta. Once I figured out that that was not necessarily the case, then I got better, but...

 . . . when all is said, we're done.®

Q. Over 50 playings of this event, this tournament has become very special to a lot of different people, and I wanted to hear from you why it's special to you.

JACK NICKLAUS: Why it's special to me? Well, I think I went through a lot of that earlier, but you know, the Masters -- I said the Masters. We're at the Memorial tournament this week? Is that the name of our tournament this week?

Q. Yes, sir.

JACK NICKLAUS: And it's presented by Workday? (Laughing.)

Q. Yes, sir.

JACK NICKLAUS: Well, it's special to me because we started from nothing. We started with an idea. We came out and started looking at property. Found the property that I had known as a kid. Developed it into a golf course. Got the city of Columbus to bring us water past the city of Dublin, and then we fed the city sewer and water back to Dublin. We've been a catalyst to grow this whole northwestern side of Franklin County. The business that has come into the Dublin area, largely because of what we did here.

There's so many things that have happened because of what happened here. Not just the golf tournament. The golf tournament's been great. I mean, it's grown in stature, it's grown in the eyes of the golfing world and the players. The players love to come here and play. It's like, you know, hey, can we get in? How can we get in? I mean, I don't know how many of the young kids that were on the borderline wrote me notes, and I said, I don't have anything to do with the exemptions.

But, you know, that's one of the things I did. I made sure that went to the Captains Club and not to me. But I mean, the things that have happened. And then to honor Barbara this year, I mean, that's really, obviously, extra special.

But all the things that have happened have been certainly on the positive. It's been a huge part of the PGA TOUR. We didn't design this golf course -- or golf tournament to be a major championship. That was not our goal. Our goal was to do a tournament and be a service to the game of golf. And whatever we could do to help grow the game and further the game, and particularly in Central Ohio, that's what we wanted to do.

Q. Two things. I wanted to circle back on Rory. Did you have an inkling he wasn't going to play and did

you ever have a conversation with him on why?

JACK NICKLAUS: I didn't have a conversation with him, no.

Q. Did that surprise you?

JACK NICKLAUS: A little bit.

Q. You mentioned a little bit ago about Oakmont, that you thought Arnold was at 140 and you were at 142 --

JACK NICKLAUS: I don't remember if that was right or not. Is that correct?

Q. I don't know. I'll find out and let you know.

JACK NICKLAUS: And I shot 69. I shot 69, 72 the next two rounds.

Q. Players from your generation always speak in those numbers. Today they would be saying, Arnold was at even and I was at 2-over. Everything is always over and under, and it seems like -- like, Arnold once said, Doesn't 280 always win the U.S. Open? At what point did we get away from numbers, like making a 2 three times instead of an eagle and start saying over and under?

JACK NICKLAUS: Well, I don't know how to answer that question, but to me, even par was always a great score at a U.S. Open. And why was it a great score? Because, I mean, I go back to the days of Joe Dey. I thought that Joe Dey did just a magnificent job of setting up -- first of all, he set up the juniors, okay? He set the juniors with a modest rough and semi-narrow fairways and firm greens. He would then go to the amateur. And we had a little narrower fairways, a little bit more rough, and firm the greens. You go to the U.S. Open, we had the deeper rough -- the width of fairways that he felt like was fair, but the right width, and the greens firm.

I loved those kind of setups. And those setups were all designed to have par be fairly precious. Now, today, you know, I think that the USGA and the R & A both allowed the golf ball to get away from them in 1995 when we went to a composite golf ball. I've said that many times. And as a result, we now have holes that are becoming drivable. I mean, the third hole at Augusta. I mean, whoever dreamed you were going to be driving the ball on the green at the third hole at Augusta? You're going to have to stand on the green and wave the guys behind you through? I mean, come on.

I mean, the golf ball goes too far. It has gone too far for a

 . . . when all is said, we're done.®

while. Then they continue to lengthen things. But to me, lengthening only does a couple things: One, it takes longer to play. It costs more money, it costs more money, it costs more money. The whole thing, it just gets expensive.

So, you know, the game has gotten to where all of a sudden it was 4- or 5-under par, then 10-under par, then 15-under par. Personally, I never liked that. I always -- and I hate to use the example of Hartford, but you've heard me use it before. And Hartford, it's a nice tournament and the people are very nice, but it used to be played at Wethersfield. And I never played because I didn't like the scores.

And finally, they said, Jack, you need to play. I said, Well, I've never played. I'll go play. I think you're right. I got to try to go to places that I haven't been. So I went to Wethersfield, and I shot 68 the first round, and I was in 17th place. I shot 67 the second round, and I was in 25th place. I shot 67 the third round, and I was in 35th place. I finished with 67 and finished 42nd. That's why I didn't go to Wethersfield.

Now, it had nothing to do with Wethersfield. It was a very nice golf course. I just didn't like the putter being what -- I've never believed that the putter should dictate what the golf game is. I never believed in the thing you drive for show and putt for dough. I always believed that part of the game is being able to get the ball to the green, on the green, and if you make some putts, that's part of it.

Sure, some guys are better putters, some guys are better hitters of the ball, but it's the combination. And when it becomes a putting contest, that's where I wanted to get out of it. Even though I was a good putter, I just didn't like it being a putting contest. I always thought that what Joe Dey did in setting up the U.S. Opens, where -- you know, we went to the Oakmonts, we went to -- let's see. We went to Brookline the next year, then we went to Congressional, then we went to Bellerive. All those required a couple under-par-type scores, not very much under par. And par was a precious thing. Do people probably like birdies? Yeah, I can understand that. We got a lot of tournaments that make birdies. Let's have some we don't have to make so many birdies. That's just sort of the way I look at it.

And I mean, we've had conditions here. Tom Lehman shot four 67s here. That's a pretty low score. That's what, 18-under par -- or no, wait, 20-under par. I mean, yeah, shoot 68, that's 20-under par. That's a low score on this golf course. But I didn't mind that because the conditions dictated that. I mean, our rough was plenty deep that week. We had a little bit of rain, but not a terrible amount, and the greens were just were perfect for holding a golf ball, so it allowed you to shoot a low score.

I have no problem with shooting a low score when the conditions allow that to happen. What I don't like to do is artificially see a golf course taken to a level where you play good shots and you get bad results. So there's a fairness in it. There's a right and there's a wrong about how good golf needs to be played to get a good result. And I was always a little bit on the edge, and I always like to stay a little bit on that edge because I think it really produces really good golf. And, frankly, I always thought that's what a golf tournament was all about, try to be the guy that's going to play the best golf that week.

Q. You mentioned earlier growing up here and knowing the area so well. What has it meant for you throughout the history of this tournament, throughout your playing career, to be someone in Columbus at Ohio State, just in the area as a whole, that's a role model to a lot of people and what's it mean to give back to those people?

JACK NICKLAUS: Well, I feel very blessed that the people have allowed us to do that. The City of Columbus has embraced this golf tournament, the City of Dublin has embraced this golf tournament, Central Ohio's embraced it, Ohio has embraced it, the PGA TOUR has embraced it, the entire world has embraced it. I was just another golfer. Yeah, I made a few 4-foot putts, maybe more than somebody else, and maybe because of that, that put me in a little different category. But, you know, to have people accept that and embrace what we did has made me feel very, very special and very -- it humbles me. You know, I want to say thank you. Thank you for the help you've given us.

Q. Newly named U.S. Presidents Cup team captain, Brandt Snedeker, is playing on a sponsor's exemption this week. You have more captaincies than anyone. What's the biggest piece of advice you would give Brandt as he embarks on this next journey?

JACK NICKLAUS: Oh, he'll enjoy it. I mean, of course, I always took captaincy a little differently than most people. I always took it to make sure that I had plenty of tees and extra spikes for the shoes and towels and sunscreen, and, you know, let them go play golf. That's sort of the way I did it.

I never was a, I never tried to make a big strategy out of being a captain. I thought the captain was the guy who makes the speeches and gets out of the way. Only thing I ever did was I got the guys that, I said, Okay guys, start of the week, tell me who you would like to play with, but also give me a list of who you don't want to play with. And so I honored that. So that's basically all I did. I didn't do



anything real special. I tried to get everybody playing time, if I could, where it was possible. If a guy told me he didn't want to play, didn't feel he was playing well, I honored that. I just think, I think Brandt has to listen to them.

He's going to love it. He's going to love it. Good guy, all the guys like him. He'll have some moments where he'll say, This is a tough decision. That's all right, that's what the captain's supposed to make. But he'll have a great time.

Q. Two separate things. First, just to clarify, were you not aware until basically the rest of us that Rory wasn't coming?

JACK NICKLAUS: I was sort of aware of it about the middle of last week.

Q. So it sort of surprises you, I guess, that he's not here?

JACK NICKLAUS: Yeah, it surprised me. But, you know, guys have got schedules and got things they do. And, you know, I haven't talked to him for him to tell me why or why not. It's just his call. I made a lot of calls that I had to make when I played to play or not play, and sometimes it wasn't as popular as people thought it was. But, you know, sometimes you have to make those calls.

I don't hold anything against Rory for that. He did what he likes to play. I know he likes to play so many in a row. He likes to play the week before a U.S. Open. And so he, that's what he's doing. So, you know, I really don't have a comment on it. It's very difficult, very difficult.

I mean, I'm a big Rory fan, I always have been. I'm sure that I will remain that way. I just, I was a little surprised, yes.

Q. Then separately, last year obviously the tournament was the week before the U.S. Open, and you told us in here that you would prefer to have this week.

JACK NICKLAUS: Um-hum.

Q. How much lobbying did you do personally? I mean, was that a hard thing to get them to switch it back?

JACK NICKLAUS: Um-hum. Wasn't easy. Part of it comes from our sponsor, Aneel. I mean, Aneel will tell you very simply, last year we had the tournament two weeks before, the week before Memorial Day. To get his people here for the pro-am, his clients, he had about a 50 percent

acceptance for his pro-am. Is that about right? About a 50 percent acceptance.

This year, the week later, after the Memorial Day, virtually a hundred percent acceptance. That's a big number for your sponsor. Your sponsor has to be happy with what he's doing and what is his part. He did not want that. He wanted it the week after the Memorial. We wanted it the week after the Memorial. We wanted to two weeks before the U.S. Open. That was what we felt was the right place to be.

We've been there traditionally. The TOUR was trying to bunch things together, and you know, we fought that. Finally they agreed that we would do it this way. I think they agreed because of our sponsor, because of our history, because the name of our tournament, and I think I had a little bit to do with it, but, you know. I think that you understand what I'm saying. I think the TOUR, the TOUR's quite happy with it. I don't think they're having an issue with it.

THE MODERATOR: Not as far as I know.

JACK NICKLAUS: No, I don't think there's any. Once we got it scheduled and got it back, you know -- frankly, I think Canada preferred the week before the U.S. Open. And then it was a week, a week -- at least that's what they told us. Now whether that is the truth or not, I don't know. But they said that, from a weather standpoint for them, the week later was better for them being up in Canada. So, you know, I think, and they will have a good tournament, they always do.

Q. Did you ever have your equipment tested or looked at by Joe Dey back in the day before a U.S. Open or anything like that?

JACK NICKLAUS: No.

Q. Pete Dye used to talk about how sometimes Joe would take people's irons and rub his hands over them and see if they were something that needed to be sanded down a little.

JACK NICKLAUS: Who said that?

Q. Pete Dye.

JACK NICKLAUS: Pete did? (Laughing). Okay. I never heard that.

Q. Secondly, has there ever been a situation where you were so confident --



JACK NICKLAUS: I love that.

Q. Where you were so confident that when you walked on the grounds of a tournament that there was no question in your mind that you were going to win that week?

JACK NICKLAUS: What is the question?

Q. Were you ever so confident.

JACK NICKLAUS: No. I never, I never, I never was confident I was going to win any time. I always -- I never -- any time I walked on a place saying, Heh, this is mine, you never win. You know, I have always tried to feel like I was climbing a mountain. I did that through most of my career while I was playing and was trying to, always trying to get better, always trying to improve, always trying to say that, You know, this is a hard mountain for me to climb, I got to really work hard to get myself ready and prepared for it. As long as I got myself prepared and ready to play, and I gave it my best effort, I didn't always win, but I gave it my best effort.

I gave it my best effort at Turnberry in '77, Watson just beat me. I gave my best effort at Pebble Beach in '82, Watson just beat me. I gave my best effort in a lot of tournaments, somebody just beat me.

But there's a lot of tournaments I gave my best effort and nobody beat me. You know, but I think that the game of golf there's usually a hundred some odd players that start a golf tournament, and when, and I always have taken the philosophy, maybe I just said that, the philosophy, as long as I'm prepared, as long as I, then, you know, well done.

I mean, Barbara knows. At Oklahoma City in, I think it was '87, I think we played the PGA Championship, and I, for some reason I really wasn't ready to play golf, and I didn't prepare very well. And I got exactly what I deserved, I missed the cut. And the one thing bad about missing the cut when I was working, I was working for ABC at the time, and I had to go stay around for the weekend and announce and talk about the other guys. Just what I didn't want, you just don't want to do.

So anyway, that, Friday night after I missed the cut, Barbara went to McDonalds with my son Michael for dinner, and they came home and the next morning I had a little glass of orange juice in front of me in a sippy cup that she got from McDonalds. And it said, There is no excuse for not being properly prepared. She was right, absolutely right. Still got that sippy cup, incidentally. Because there isn't any excuse.

As long as you go out and you make an effort and you make your effort to be the best you can be, and you give it your best effort, then you have nothing to be ashamed of. You just might get beat. And you might win.

Q. You've always been great with the media, but there have been instances so far or in this season I should say, where some players have opted not to talk to the media for several different reasons. Most recently Rory at the PGA Championship when he didn't talk at all. Do you feel stars have a responsibility to talk to the media, which is a vessel to the fans?

JACK NICKLAUS: I'm not going to talk for Rory or anybody else, I'll talk for myself. I've always felt that you guys have a job to do -- and gals -- and for you to do your job you need to talk to me. And whether I played well or whether I played poorly, if you still want to talk to me, I'll talk to you. And I always have.

Q. You've done a lot of work on this course over the years, do you feel like with the way the ball's going that it's ready to stand the test of time for another 50 years?

JACK NICKLAUS: As long as the golf ball doesn't change too much. I think that this golf course, when and if they ever enact their new golf ball rule, it will only help this golf course. I guess they pushed it back two more years, did they? They pushed it back from what, '26 to '28. I really don't know. I mean, I don't follow it as much as I used to follow it. But they pushed the golf ball back, and as I understand the ball is about 14 yards shorter for the longest of hitters out here, maybe two or three yards shorter for the average golfer.

I think that only will help sort of put a line in the sand, hopefully the line doesn't go anywhere. We can't just keep buying land. You can't, you can't just buy the golf course next door. Not many people can afford what Augusta did at Augusta Country Club, you just can't do that.

We don't have any land to buy. I mean, I can go buy houses and knock 'em down. I obviously can't do that, but, you know, that's what we would have to do. But I don't think -- the game's controlled by how far a golf ball goes. If you control it within some reason then we know that a golf course that is here today will still be sufficient 20 years from now.

I mean, they talked about, well the golf ball is only increasing, you know, a yard a year. Well what happens in 40 years? That's 40 yards. And I don't think that there are many golf courses that can sustain that kind of a change. Insane is not the right word, but can't allow that to happen.

 . . . when all is said, we're done.®

It just doesn't work.

So my feeling, obviously, is that the more that the USGA and the R & A get to bring it back to where it's -- I don't care if the standard doesn't change from here -- I don't think we're ever going to go back to where I think it should have been. I mean, right now we probably have, in this country, maybe a hundred golf courses that really could handle a significant event. We used to have a couple thousand. If we brought the golf ball back to where it was in 1995 when we went from a wound golf ball to a composite golf ball we would have a couple thousand golf courses that could hold a major event without totally having to redo 'em, you know, but we don't. And so the ball is what it is. As long as it doesn't go any further this golf course will be fine for a long time.

Q. I thought it was interesting you mentioned writing a letter to Rory after the Masters. I always think like Arnold used to write letters to the winners. Is that something you picked up since Arnie or has that been a thing of yours too?

JACK NICKLAUS: I don't know how long I've done it, but I've written every major championship winner for as long as I can remember. I sit down and did a handwritten note to every one of them, ever since I can remember. Barbara, do you remember how long I've been doing it?

Q. Why was that important to you to do?

JACK NICKLAUS: I just thought that -- I got, I got quite a few letters when I won tournaments from Bobby Jones and people like that. And I just thought that -- I appreciated it, and I thought that they might appreciate it. I just saw Scottie in the locker room, he said, I said, Have you gotten my letter yet? He says, No, I haven't been home, but I'll get it. But, you know, it's -- and, you know, I wrote Rory after, I said, right after the Masters the same thing. But I don't think I've, I don't think I missed anybody for 30 years anyway. I can't remember how long I've been doing it.

Q. When people talk about some of the great par 3s in golf they're always fairly short. There's got to be some good long ones out there. I wonder if you, A, can think of any.

JACK NICKLAUS: Good long ones?

Q. Yeah. And what's the value of a good, long par-3, however long is in your dictionary?

JACK NICKLAUS: Well I think the 16th at Cypress is probably the most famous long one, and it probably isn't even long by the standards anymore. I know last time I

played it I could reach the front fringe with a driver. And did. But the -- I think that's a good long par-3.

I think the -- I think it's difficult to make a good, long par-3. I think it's a very difficult thing to have a hole where you're standing back hitting a wood at a par-3.

I always liked the 4th hole at Riviera. I thought that was a nice par-3. That's about 230, if I'm, somewhere in that area. You take, you can take it out to the right of the hole and bounce it down in, or carry it into the green. I thought that was a nice philosophy.

Q. 8 at Oakmont?

JACK NICKLAUS: I haven't played it since they lengthened it to be a short par-5. (Smiling) I don't know how long it is. It's about 275 yards or something like that.

Q. 299.

JACK NICKLAUS: Well that's crazy. But that's what they do. But it is downhill.

Q. Why do you need them?

JACK NICKLAUS: I don't know. I don't have any on my golf courses. But do you need them? Probably not. I can't answer your question because I don't like them. How is that? I always liked -- I always liked to take -- on a golf course I liked to have one par-3 in the 220 to 235 range. I liked to have two of 'em right in the 190 to 210 range. And then one usually somewhere shorter, 170 or shorter. I like to get a short par-4, a three, a longish one, and two middle ones. And then hopefully play in different directions so the wind conditions will be different.

Q. Taking the conditions leading up to this --

JACK NICKLAUS: Where are you? I can't see you. Okay. I'm sorry.

Q. The conditions leading up to the tournament, it's very lush out there, the rough is very thick. Just how difficult do you think the course will play this year, and what do you think is the winning score we'll see?

JACK NICKLAUS: Well, I don't know how -- frankly, it will depend largely on how firm the greens are. I understand the greens are fairly firm; is that correct, Chad? Now if I can keep Chad's ego down a little bit and have him so that the greens will hold a good shot, then I think we'll be all right.

I think you'll see -- we played the first maybe 10

 . . . when all is said, we're done.®

tournaments here, nobody broke 280. I think you're going to probably, you'll probably see 275 to 280. That's about what our average score for the last few years, hasn't it? 10-under par, some type of thing. I think that's fine. Essentially, you look at the golf course, we're really not -- we are a par 72, but we're really, we're borderline not. Because you've got all four par 5s can be reached. If you got all par-5s that can be reached, under certain conditions, that almost pulls you back to a 70 or 71 realistic par.

I happen to not like, I happen to like, like it from a golfer's standpoint to post a 4 on a hole that's a difficult hole and say, Gee, that was a nice birdie. Oh, no, no, that's now been changed to a par-4. I got a par-4 out that? I mean it's, I always liked the idea of -- I felt it, I -- internally I like birdies. So I always disliked a little bit the par, taking the par down to 72 down to 70 just for the, to do it. And I don't know if that answered your question or not. I didn't answer your question. I did answer your question? What did I do?

Q. Obviously when you were deciding to build this course a couple things, first of all, was there always the intention to have a tournament here, was that the long-term goal? And also how quickly did you settle on the name? Like was it obvious immediately I'm going to name it after the golf course where I won the British only or did that take awhile?

JACK NICKLAUS: No, well, first of all, we did the golf course, yes, we always wanted to have a tournament, from its inception. And probably from a design standpoint I would never, I wouldn't have designed the golf course this way. What I mean by that is I designed this golf course basically for a tournament, and spent the next 50 years trying to ease it enough so the average member can play it.

I would have done it the other way around. Had it a little bit more user friendly to start with, which is what I do now, more user friendly now, and if I want to lengthen a hole here or there to handle a tournament, I would do it that way. But we didn't do it that way.

And my early golf courses, the early golf courses that I did, which were you know, here, Shoal Creek, Castle Pines, Glen Abbey, Annandale, they were all golf courses that people wanted to play tournaments on. So I got known for the guy who was doing tournament golf courses.

And frankly I don't really, you know, I don't think that serves usually the purpose of a -- well, in those days that's what the owner wanted. But most owners today really want a golf course for their membership, and if they want to have an event, to be able to stretch it to be able to handle that

event. I think that's a much more practical way of playing golf for 51 weeks of the year. And then that's the first part of your question.

Secondly, the name Muirfield Village, we had a lot of name. One was called the New Course, we had, at Muirfield Village. We named the area Muirfield Village. I didn't want to name it directly Muirfield because I didn't want to be a dead copy after Muirfield.

But I was so, I was so happy with what happened with me at Muirfield, winning the U.S. Open on a place -- or the British Open -- at a place where I wasn't supposed to win. It was a golf course with very narrow fairways, very high rough, not typical of what Jack Nicklaus would, they thought in 1966 could win at. And, but I was so proud of that, that this place became Muirfield or Muirfield Village.

So the golf course has never been Muirfield, it's always been Muirfield Village. And then we finally just settled on, you know, Muirfield Village Golf Club.

And then, of course, across the street I think it's Muirfield Village Country Club or The Country Club at Muirfield Village, I didn't know which it is. Probably Muirfield Village country club I think. It's the Country Club of Muirfield Village is it? Okay.

THE MODERATOR: All right, thank you all for coming, appreciate your attendance. Mr. Nicklaus, good luck with the 50th playing of the tournament you founded.

JACK NICKLAUS: Well, thank you for your questions. I thought you guys, I thought you guys can did a nice job today. (Laughing).

FastScripts by ASAP Sports.