

# U.S. Open Championship 2021

Tuesday, June 15, 2021

San Diego, California, USA

Torrey Pines Golf Course

## Gary Woodland

### Flash Interview



**THE MODERATOR:** Welcome 2019 champion Gary Woodland to the media center. Gary, it's your second time now playing as a champion. Talk about that feeling and how it differs ever since Pebble.

**GARY WOODLAND:** Yeah, it's nice to show up with a lot of confidence. Last year was tough. I wasn't physically able to play. I just wanted to defend. It's pretty special to do that.

This week coming into it with a lot more confidence. Game is in a lot better spot, and body is definitely in a better spot. Coming to a golf course that we're familiar with, I think I've played this tournament more than any other tournament on TOUR, a golf course that I like a lot, so sets up good to my eyes. So I'm excited about this week, spent three days with Butch last week fine tuning some things, and I'll be ready to go this week.

**Q. Talk a little bit more about your familiarity with this course but how it's also playing different in June.**

**GARY WOODLAND:** Yeah, for me the golf course, there's a lot of holes that go left to right, so it sets up really good to my eye with driver, which the golf course is long so there's not many, I don't think, too many options. I think there's a lot of drivers. You've just got to hit it, try to keep the golf ball in play. But it sets up nice for me with the left to right holes.

There's a couple holes that do go right to left, but they're shorter, which allows me to hit 3-wood. From that standpoint, I have a lot of confidence coming in. It'll be different than January because it's firm. Fairways will be a little shorter because of that, but driving the golf ball in the fairway is huge this week. If not, I'm going to try to miss in the fairway bunkers because you can at least advance it.

**Q. Did Butch come to south Florida, or did you go to Vegas?**

**GARY WOODLAND:** I went to Vegas, spent three days with him Thursday, Friday, Saturday, and then came over on Sunday.

**Q. As far as being healthy, is it just a matter of finding a way out of those patterns that were hurting you before?**

**GARY WOODLAND:** It is, and that's what Butch said. Usually when I go see -- I've been on and off with Butch since 2011. It's literally one thing he sees in one swing. Last week there were four things that were off. That's a lot for me, and it was all stuff that I wasn't able to do last year and stuff that I started doing because I was hurt.

That part is a little frustrating, so usually I'm one day with Butch. I spent three with him. And by Saturday -- Thursday he told me I was horrible, and Saturday he told me I was pretty good and I had a chance to win this week. That's what I like about Butch. He keeps it honest.

But there's a lot of video that we could go back on. I saw him right before San Antonio, and I played well in San Antonio, but I still wasn't able to move like I was able to two years ago when we were working together.

I'm cleared to work out now. I started working out again two weeks ago, which is amazing, so body is feeling better and definitely with that comes a lot more confidence.

**Q. Can you describe the rough especially around the greens?**

**GARY WOODLAND:** It's brutal. Sunday, I think they've mowed it a little bit since Sunday because you were losing balls around the greens. But it's tough. We don't usually see rough like that.

That makes driving the golf ball in the fairway even that much more important. I think you're almost better sometimes just short-side yourself because if you get too long out of that rough, it's so hard to control it. Sometimes you can just chop it out if you're short sided. I think you'll be a little more aggressive into the greens.

**Q. There's been some chatter about this, but did the USGA ever approach you about playing with Brooks and Bryson this week?**



GARY WOODLAND: No, I wasn't approached by the USGA at all. I think it would have been great. I think the fans -- all my friends back home, everybody was talking about it. I think it's good for the game. Brooks didn't play for two weeks and he's all over ESPN, all over the sports news. I think that's good.

I would have loved to have played. I think the energy in that group would have been amazing. I would have instigated and tried to start fights or whatever I could have done. I would have loved it, but I think they separated -- I think they're on opposite waves to be honest with you. I was never approached.

**Q. Did you ever hear any of the chatter about how maybe you might be part of that?**

GARY WOODLAND: I did, and obviously being the last three champions, I had heard a lot. I saw it on social media. I think it would have been great. The energy would have -- the fans want it. That's the big deal. I don't know if the guys want it or not. I haven't talked to either one of them, but I definitely think the fans want it.

**Q. I'm going to lean on your knowledge of Torrey Pines. What do you feel are pivotal holes for you on this golf course for success?**

GARY WOODLAND: Yeah, the par-5s are massive because they're just birdie opportunities, but 10, 11, 12 I think is a massive stretch on this golf course. You're coming off hopefully making birdie on 9, and you come into that back nine stretch. 10 you have to drive the ball in the fairway or it's tough to get it on the green. 11 is the longest par-3 out here, and 12 is just a brutal golf hole. You get to the next, you get to 13, you've got a par-5, finishing on 18 with a par-5, so you have some holes after that. But I think 10, 11, 12 will be massive holes this week.

**Q. Is this your most important stretch of competition to be considered for the Ryder Cup team later this year?**

GARY WOODLAND: There's no doubt for me. I think I would have made the team if we would have had it before COVID, and then I battled injuries and battled a lot -- I dropped way down.

I'm happy with where my game is. I'm happy where the confidence level is. I don't think I'm too far off where I can play my way back in. I think I can do that, and that starts this week.

**Q. You've played in a lot of U.S. Opens. What do you**

**think Mike Davis' legacy is going to be?**

GARY WOODLAND: He's done a lot. He's done a lot of good things for the game. I think the graduated rough is an awesome thing that he's added to the game. Mike Davis has always been super nice to me. He was the first person to congratulate me when I won in 2019.

He'll be missed, but he's had a massive impact. I think he'll enjoy, though, probably not being crucified so much on some things that he's done, but he's done a lot of good things. I think the graduated rough is a huge deal. You don't think you should be penalized for missing the fairway by a yard, especially when some of us miss it by 10, 15 and get good bounces hitting into the fans. I think he did a good job with that.

FastScripts by ASAP Sports

