

# U.S. Open Championship 2021

Wednesday, June 16, 2021

San Diego, California, USA

Torrey Pines Golf Course

## Lee Westwood

### Flash Interview



**THE MODERATOR:** We are pleased to welcome Lee Westwood to the interview area. Lee, you played extremely well here in 2008. When I mention that year and Torrey Pines, what comes to mind?

**LEE WESTWOOD:** I played really well. This is a tough golf course, and it tests every aspect of your game. I think I led scrambling that week, which anybody who's up there at the top of a U.S. Open leaderboard, I think, needs to get up-and-down well and putt well. Also, you can't afford to do that very often.

So you've got to hit it well tee to green as well, hit a lot of fairways, give yourself as much pain-free golf as you can. Try not to make any double bogeys. Double bogeys are a killer at a U.S. Open. Keep your patience. Don't panic. Everybody is going to go out there and make a couple of bogeys and try not to make a string of them and get on a run. Just be very patient and approach it one shot, one hole at a time really.

**Q. What are you seeing from the course this week, and how has your preparation been?**

**LEE WESTWOOD:** I can't really remember 13 years ago. There's a lot that's happened. It feels pretty similar. There's obviously a couple of new tees out there. I don't remember 11 and 15 playing so long and 17 as well. It feels fairly similar, and you look at the golf course, and break it up, and there's runs of holes where you feel like you're going to have a couple of birdie chances in there, and then there's obviously some tough holes.

Yeah, I just like the place. I think it's a good, honest test of golf.

**Q. Have you been here since?**

**LEE WESTWOOD:** No, I haven't, no. I said to one of the guys Monday morning, the last time I stood on this tee, there were about 20,000 people on this hole. That brought back good memories honestly.

**Q. Speaking of that, what do you remember about the**

**18th hole on that Sunday, which I guess was the last hole you played here?**

**LEE WESTWOOD:** Yeah, missed the fairway, really needed to hit the fairway. Both of us did, myself and Tiger. We both laid up. Tiger laid up in the rough. I can't remember where I was. I think I laid up in the fairway actually but was between clubs. Hit the easy one rather than going flat-out with a lob wedge, and it came up about 18 feet, 20 feet past the hole, and had a left-to-righter down the hill. Hit what was quite a good putt, and it just hit something. The greens were getting a bit iffy at that stage of the day, and it hit something and went a bit left instead of carrying on and breaking left to right. Obviously missed on the left-hand side, then stood there and watched Tiger hole his putt.

That's one of the loudest cheers I've ever heard on the golf course, and then got out of here, up to L.A. and flew home. Just got home in time for the playoff.

**Q. A lot of conversation already about the rough. Can you talk about it, especially around the greens, and have you had any examples of how you played out of it?**

**LEE WESTWOOD:** Yeah, that's one of the changes. I don't remember the rough being as thick around the greens in 2008. I remember it being as thick off the tee. In fact, I think it may even be a little bit lighter this year in patches. It certainly, I think, gives you a chance. I missed the fairway on the 1st down the right-hand side and was surprised I had a shot. Last time I was out there, it was kind of a gouge-out shot and try to get it up-and-down.

But certainly around the greens, it's going to be an extreme test. You don't want to be long on most of the holes out here. Ideally you'd like to get it in the fairway and get as much spin on the ball as you can and land it in the front third of most greens and see it release up the green and not go over the back. I think over the back of most of these greens is not good, especially coming out of this rough.

**Q. A lot of weddings in Las Vegas are spur-of-the-moment. Was that the case for you, or**

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**were you always planning to get married there last week?**

LEE WESTWOOD: No, there was a huge amount of planning that went into it, about four weeks. It was amazing how easy it was to do. They obviously have a lot of weddings in Las Vegas, and it's a finely tuned machine. Picking up the licenses was no great trauma. I think we were in and out in about ten minutes. Fortunately, Helen said I do, so yeah.

**Q. Lee, you've had some great form this year, especially in March. Have you found any secret to keeping great form going as the year continues?**

LEE WESTWOOD: Well, I haven't played that well since March, so no, I haven't. I feel like over the years I've changed. I think I was a lot more consistent when I was younger. I think it's just a case of getting older and not being able to peak as often. I know when my game's there, it's still world class, and I'm still going to have a chance in the big tournaments against the best fields. It just doesn't happen as regularly.

I'm a little bit sort of blasé about it and turn up to tournaments and do as much good progression as I can. If my game's there, it's there, and I might have a chance. If it's not, it's just one of those weeks where I just try and enjoy every week I'm playing. Fortunately, I had those two good weeks in March where I finished second, and that was enough to get a card for the rest of this year and all of next year.

When next year's season's over, I'm 50 pretty much. So there's the Seniors Tour as another option. I'm always going to be able to play in Europe. I'm exempt there until I'm about 68, I think, or something like that. Then there's other short-term goals; Ryder Cup captaincy I've got my eye on as well. Going to have a busy few years, I think.

**Q. What was there in March that you're trying to get again?**

LEE WESTWOOD: Like I say, my whole game, every aspect of my game is at a high level. I guess I putted well in those two tournaments in March, and short game was pretty good, which it feels like it is now. I'm hitting the ball well, and everything feels like it's in the right place. Mentally, I'm in a good place. There's no reason why I shouldn't play well this week. I know the course well. I've proved myself round here before, and if I hit that first fairway, I make it up as I go along from there.

**Q. Was that the first hockey game you had attended? Who did you see play, and what did you think?**

LEE WESTWOOD: It was the first NHL game I've ever been to. I've been to a hockey game in Britain before. I used to watch the Sheffield Steelers a little bit, but it was the first game I've been to here. I don't know whether I'll actually go to another one. It sort of peaked at that, didn't it, the Golden Knights in Game 6. 18,000 people there when nobody's been allowed previously. Everybody was just happy to be there and having missed watching live sports. So the atmosphere was incredible.

**Q. What did Phil's win at the PGA mean to the, in quotes, older players?**

LEE WESTWOOD: Well, not just before that. We are all individuals, so you've got to really take it as an individual. How Phil plays really bears no relevance to how I'm going to play, but there's been great performances by the older guys previous to that. Stewart Cink, who I'm playing with this week, has won twice already this year. Padraig Harrington played really well that week, and he's nearing 50. Obviously, it was a great result for Phil, and it just proves that golf is a game where, if you keep yourself in shape, which I think kind of Phil's and mine and Padraig's age group, we were kind of just the start of looking after ourselves a little bit more than maybe our predecessors, and now we're seeing the benefits of that as we do get into our late 40s and 50s. What we did back then is paying benefits now.

**Q. What are the benefits of having your now wife on the bag?**

LEE WESTWOOD: She's good mentally for me. She can't really comment too much -- although she does now and again. She starts to over-caddy and tell me what club she thinks it is. But mentally she's very good for me. She knows me better than anybody. She's sat in with sessions with my psychologist and keeps me in the right frame of mind and concentrating on the right things.

**Q. Does the relationship seem the same always, or does it change?**

LEE WESTWOOD: Well, this week's going to be new. It's going to be husband and wife, so it might change. She might kind of give me the elbow a bit more often, but it's a very relaxed relationship anyway. We just enjoy ourselves, trying to have a good time out there.

**Q. Does this count as your honeymoon?**

LEE WESTWOOD: Should do, shouldn't it? I keep telling her that, but I think she's got her eye on somewhere where I don't take the golf clubs.

