

U.S. Open Championship 2023

Wednesday, June 14, 2023

Los Angeles, California, USA

The Los Angeles Country Club

Mike Whan

Beth Major

Fred Perpall

John Bodenhamer

Press Conference



About a month ago, a group of us got to visit the Maggie Hathaway Golf Club, and it's in the community of south Los Angeles, a community just like the one I grew up in, one that struggles at times to get resources, but one filled with a bunch of great people.

We're proud this year to invest \$1 million along with our partners at the Los Angeles Country Club to restore this golf course, to provide an oasis in this community for the kids and the adults to have a place to play golf.

We're also proud to welcome 20 interns this year from underrepresented communities to have a wonderful internship experience, to learn more about golf and what golf can do in your life.

That's the power of this game. This is a very big game. This game can change your life because it puts you with great people. This game changed my life, and I'm sure like many of you, this changed your life, as well.

These programs kind of are at the core of Mike and our management team's unify, showcase, govern, and advance strategy, one we're proud of, and one that we continue to work tirelessly on.

On behalf of all my colleagues at the executive committee, we want to welcome you here. We're proud to be partnered with Mike and with John and with our entire wonderful team at the USGA, and we wish you all a wonderful week.

With that, I'll turn it over to Mike.

MIKE WHAN: I should have warned you that Fred may be as caffeinated and as passionate as me, so maybe not a great one-two punch for the next few years. Stu was actually very calm and I was crazy, but now they get crazy and crazy every day.

Before we get started I want to say to my friend and colleague, Jay -- I hope you're watching this, Jay -- I hope you're feeling better and just know that everybody at the USGA and everybody in the game of golf wishes you a

BETH MAJOR: Good morning, everyone. Welcome to the 2023 U.S. Open at the Los Angeles Country Club. Appreciate you being here with us this week and today.

It's my pleasure to introduce this morning the president of the USGA, Fred Perpall, the CEO of the USGA, Mike Whan, and the USGA's chief championships officer, John Bodenhamer.

Fred, I'd like to turn it over to you to start with some welcoming comments.

FRED PERPALL: Good morning. I want to thank you all for being here and I want to welcome you to the Los Angeles Country Club.

I want to start off by thanking our partners, the Los Angeles Country Club, Southern California Golf Association, NBC Universal, and our corporate partners and all of our partners for their incredible support.

I want to thank you all in the media for your interest in covering this year's U.S. Open. This is a big week for the USGA and for the game of golf. The U.S. Open is one of the USGA's 15 national championships, and this year four of them will be held in California, along with the U.S. Open.

We have the U.S. Women's Open at Pebble Beach, the U.S. Women's Amateur at Bel Air Country Club, and the U.S. Senior Amateur at Martis Camp.

This week is bigger than the 156 players that will be playing for the trophy. We last night had the opportunity to celebrate Johnny Miller's wonderful legacy in golf by awarding him the Bob Jones Award for sportsmanship.

We're proud of all the impact that we will have this week beyond the golf course.



speedy recovery.

I also want to recognize Fred's comments that this week is bigger than this week. Having spent Sunday at Maggie Hathaway and seeing that community come together, every once in a while you're reminded what we're really doing in this game, and what a great reminder that was on Saturday.

And thank Gil Hanse and the Southern California Golf Association, LACC, for making a real difference that's going to last long after the stakes of this place are taken up and you can park back in your member parking again. We're going to make a real difference in this community.

But as right as Fred is, this is bigger than this week. This week is pretty big, too. And I mean this particular week. It's historic to the USGA on a lot of fronts. First is, and you're sitting in one of them, this is the largest build in USGA history.

We'll play for the largest purse in USGA history. We'll play for \$20 million this week with the winner's check \$3.6 million.

It's the largest bridge in USGA history. If anybody has walked across that bridge, just think every step you take is about \$10,000 of steps. No, I'm just kidding. But it's pretty amazing. The first time I come out here and I said to Reg Jones and his team, how are we going to get 22,000 people over here? And he said, we're going to build a bridge over Wilshire Boulevard. I said, you're going to what?

And we did that at 2:00 in the morning on Memorial Day weekend so hopefully a lot of you who live in this area didn't know we were building the bridge.

Largest hospitality support in USGA history. If that sounds familiar it's because I said it last year in Boston at the Country Club. We set a new mark for local corporate hospitality, and LACC just doubled that mark. Quite an impressive feat.

Largest community impact program for us with what we're doing with Maggie Hathaway and the Pathway interns. I was thinking when you said all these interns from all over the U.S., I wonder if we told them that we start at 4:45 every morning. I bet you're right about how they are thinking this is not the greatest internship I thought.

And the most expansive TV coverage in USGA history. I want to thank NBC Universal, Peacock, Golf Channel, USA Network, and all the digital folks for what they've meant this week.

Before I kind of jump into that coverage, just to Reg Jones and to Tim Lloyd and Leighton Schwob. Thank you for making this incredible experience.

When we announced LACC, we knew that inside the gates was going to be fantastic. We just weren't sure what it was going to feel like to get inside the gates. We thought it would be one of those things if he had an 8:20 tee time you'd be leaving at 6:20, but this has been amazingly convenient outside and inside.

Just Reg and your team, I hope you take a bow at some point. I know you don't get to bow until Sunday night, but know that we're bowing for you.

So to NBC and all the folks that have helped make this -- obviously we started last Monday with the longest day in golf with 10 hours and 10 sites and telling some incredible stories of how people got here.

But this week alone, 200 hours of programming around this event; over 40 hours of Live From and Golf Central from the U.S. Open.

And all of that -- once we start actually television production, all of that with 30 percent less commercial interruptions than we experienced just a year ago.

I think for folks who want to try something different, there's a new supplemental broadcast called All Access. I'm not sure if this is how NBC would describe it, but I'd describe it as Manningcast meets Red Zone where think about being in the TV production booth and being able to shoot around.

We are going to have five hours a day on Peacock if you want to check it out with really limited commercial interruptions.

It might be an interesting -- for my kids who seem to have attention deficit disorder when watching TV, they're going to love that telecast because it's going to fly all over the place.

I want to say to my digital team, my web team, that I really challenged everybody a couple years ago to make sure that our digital experience, web, app was really state-of-the-art, and I can tell you that in 2023 the experience here, whether it's on your phone, on your computer, through an app, is really going to be unbelievable. Scoring, GPS, way finding, featured teams, ShotCast by Cisco, featured groups. It's a huge upgrade and I just want to say thank you for really putting us really in state-of-the-art.

I'm not going to avoid the elephant in the room. In fact, I

 . . . when all is said, we're done.®

thought last Monday was the longest day in golf, but it turns out last Tuesday was the longest day in golf. All of us got together on Wednesday and said, gosh, all these stories we wanted to tell, maybe it's going to be harder to tell because media will be focused elsewhere.

And then it hit my driving home Wednesday night, that we lived through -- this is déjà-vu a little bit for us. If you remember Boston last year, the weekend before we got to Boston LIV played its first event.

Before that, LIV had been a lot of press releases and a lot of what ifs, but actually played. And following that there was player suspensions and we were kind of depressed thinking this great country club setting here in Boston that really deserved to be talked about wasn't going to get its due.

But I'm fairly certain now having lived through this déjà-vu that the same thing will happen this week that happened last week, which is once the balls go in the air the athletes take the narrative back.

And if you asked anybody to describe what was the 2022 U.S. Open all about, I don't think anybody would talk to you about the weekend before. They're going to talk about Zalatoris and Matthew Fitzpatrick, an incredible 9-iron out of a bunker and that incredible theatre that was created on 18 thanks to the folks at the country club.

I am pretty sure when we recap 2023 we're going to be talking about what happened on the golf course and not what happened off the golf course.

Just as a quick reminder, probably not for the folks in the room, but maybe for listening to us all over the world that this is a championship that began in 1895. 1895, before there were professional tours, before there were teaching associations, before most U.S. golf courses really existed here in America, and it's been our national championship since then. It will always continue to be, and it's always been open.

That doesn't mean everybody likes how open it is, but we protect the openness of this championship. We love that virtually anybody can come here if you've got the game.

10,187 entries tried to get one of these tee times here on Thursday. They came from all 50 states, Puerto Rico, District of Columbia, and 87 countries. It's our national championship, but it's got a pretty significant world invitation. We've got people here from multiple tours, colleges, countries, backgrounds, but 156 of them have a tee time on Thursday.

We're a little different. We pay you even if you miss the cut because we really believe that making the cut at the U.S. Open is getting one of these 156. Think about it, of 10,200, only 156 are here. A couple of stats that I read yesterday that you guys probably know but I was excited so I wrote them down, 24 USGA champions in the field, 29 Walker Cup players in the field, six NCAA Division I champions, and 48 World Team Amateur folks in the field.

I'll just wrap my comments by saying personally this is my second year in this role and my third U.S. Open on the other side of the ropes. I'm just really, really personally proud to be part of this incredible tradition. I feel the responsibility of 123 playings, and I feel the responsibility to make sure whoever follows us feels like we took it to another level, as well.

As Fred said, we spend all of our days thinking about four things: how to unify, how to showcase, how to govern, and how to advance this game. We do that with a really impressive group of teammates.

I wish they could all sit up here some day and you could hear from them, and I'm sure they wish they could sit up here and hear from them and not me, but one of the teammates I've been partnered with is sitting to my left.

I would tell you that over the last two years I've learned a lot about U.S. Open setups because I've virtually offered no value in coming in, and J.B. will be the first one to confirm that I offer no value.

J.B. always talks about three things and he drives them home. Fred knows in our board meetings there is nobody more passionate about three things. He is committed that we will play only at the absolute best venues in America.

And sometimes that's going to offend some folks but err going to play absolute best. As J.B. says, when you play at the best, 80 percent of your work is done.

J.B. always talks about tough but fair. Every club in their bag, every day, including the club between their ears. We want to feel like if you raise the trophy on Sunday night here, you feel like you played against the best and you had to actually find the best in you to raise the trophy.

The thing that I think is really unique about J.B. and his team, and I think I don't want you to miss, is he really believes that when we pick a venue, we ought to have the best players in the world play that venue the way the architect envisioned that venue.

These guys this week are going to play LACC. Not the USGA's version of LACC. They're going to play LACC,

and I'm proud of them for that and I'm excited players get to experience that. I'm proud that the fans all over the world get to experience that, as well.

I virtually never say this to you, and as my kids would say, I don't say this enough to them either, but I am proud to be your teammate, I'm proud of you bringing us here, and I'm really proud of the show you're about to put on for the rest of the world.

JOHN BODENHAMER: That's very gracious, Mike, thank you.

Good morning, everyone. Just really great to be with you. I'll just say and put it out there from the very beginning. We feel the golf course is in a very good place. I'll share with you a little bit more about that.

I think about Los Angeles Country Club and my experience goes back to 1985, when as a 24 year old BYU golf team player, that summer I came home and played in the Pacific Coast Amateur Championship here many, many years ago.

I'd always heard a lot about what a great place Los Angeles Country Club was, and even back then I had heard that for many years the USGA had wanted to bring the U.S. Open to this special place.

Really didn't know why, but when I first stepped foot on this wonderful playing field I knew that it was unique, and I saw some things that I never had seen before in all my life. It started with the three finishing holes. In those days I had never seen three finishing holes like 16, 17 and 18. Those were the days of persimmon and balata.

It's even worse today. They're just the same. They're going to be a great finish, and whoever wins their U.S. Open this year is really going to earn it on those three finishing holes.

I think the other thing that kind of dawns on me about Los Angeles Country Club, it's new. It's really something that a lot of people are familiar with. That's players, that's fans, that's really a lot of us at the USGA, because we've never been here before in all of our U.S. Open history.

There's a certain mystery and allure, almost a curiosity around this place that I think is really going to make it even more special. You turn on the television or however you consume your U.S. Open, you're going to see something a little bit different.

And what Gil Hanse and Jim Wagner and Geoff Shackelford have done here to restore the brilliance of

what George C. Thomas created more than 100 years ago is spectacular.

Think about it. It's this natural, gnarly oasis, rural oasis in this urban Metropolis, the entertainment capital of the world. All the glitz and glamour that is Beverly Hills and Hollywood, and this wonderful playing field sits right in the middle of it. It's just magnificent.

I think that newness, that allure, that mystique is just going to add to the special elixir that will be here at this year's U.S. Open. I'm excited about it.

As Mike said, we really think of a few years. We're really focused on a short list of things as we think about the U.S. Open. We dig deep on them, but I'll just give you the highlights.

We do focus heavily on going to America's greatest venues and celebrating them when we go to them. We think of them as the cathedrals of the game, and this is one of them.

Our openness. We're incredibly proud of that. Mike mentioned 10,187 entered this great championship, 26 right here from this club, to pursue their dream, to play in a major championship, our national open championship.

The way I like to think about our national open, all of our USGA championships, doesn't matter the shape of your swing, where you grew up, where you come from, the color of your skin. If you can get your golf ball in the hole, you can play in the U.S. Open. That's a great thing we can all be proud of.

I think another thing that I looked at when I looked at the field, as Mike did, I saw something that I think bodes well for the future of our game and the future of our national junior championship.

There are eight U.S. Junior Amateur champions here in the field. Think about that. The last four are in this field this week. Some by exemption, some earned their way through qualifying, but that's a great testament to the national junior and where young players are in our country. They are at our national championship.

The third thing we focus on are the players, and that's new for us. Six years ago we created a new capability. Scott Langley, who played for 10 years on the TOUR and one of the finest human beings I've ever known, and a team of nine really have created a bridge with the players in both the men's and the women's game.

They listen and ask the players what they think, and it fuels



our thinking in many instances. We're not out to be everybody's best friend. We want to earn their respect, but we need to know what they they're thinking.

We take the time to explain what we're doing and explain our decisions, no matter what it is. I'm proud of that. Scott does a heck of a job.

And as I mentioned, our junior champions, it starts there. It starts with both our junior championships up through our amateur championships, the Walker Cup, the Curtis Cup, and by the time these great players get to the U.S. Open, we know them, we know their families, we know all those that influence them, and we're proud about building that bridge. That's an important strategy.

The final one is, tough but fair. What we do with golf course setup. It is about the great venues we go to and the world's greatest players and letting them showcase their skills. Every club in the bag dirty. It's that simple. We want them to hit it left to right, right to left, high, low. We want to challenge their mental aspects, the physical aspects.

Everything about a golfer we examine and we want them to experience here at a U.S. Open. That means a lot of different things, but that's what we focus on.

So what does that mean here? What is our golf course setup philosophy? Again, America's greatest venues and let them be what they were intended to be for the world's greatest players.

The intensity architect, George C. Thomas, Jr. worked with all the Masters. MacKenzie, Tillinghast, Wilson, Ross, all of them. He was truly one of the greats, and what he intended here was intentional. The captain.

We could have come in and really put a cookie cutter approach, a USGA thumbprint on this golf course and narrowed up all these fairways, grown a bunch of Bermudagrass, narrowed the fairways, put rough around all these greens.

We weren't going to do that. We did narrow some fairways. Narrowed eight of them, but we held true to the architecture and what Mr. Thomas intended.

We actually widened two fairways as part of that process. It's really been quite fascinating, and we've been fueled by what we learned from the 2017 Walker Cup match.

Yes, we'll have some tall rough, but we have wide fairways; 43 yards on average is the fairway width.

It's wide, but I promise you when you get off those fairways it'll be tough. It'll look like a U.S. Open, and the tall fescue around the bunkers and around the greens, it's not unlike what we endeavor to do at all of our U.S. Opens.

So it'll look a little different. It'll look a little gnarly, a little natural, a little wider, but I promise you, it will be tough. It will be a U.S. Open, but it'll be firm and fast. It'll be true to what George Thomas intended.

What do I mean by that? Well, you're going to see things here that you don't see at a normal U.S. Open in a lot of different ways on this golf course. It's not often we go -- in fact I'm not aware of anywhere we go where there are five par-3s, but not just five par-3s in the sense of all of them playing similar. They will play much different.

We're going to give the guys yardages anywhere from 80 yards upwards to 300 yards, from different angles and a whole variety each day. We've done a matrix in how those pars 3s will play, and we will give them a different look on each of them every day, and that variety is something that Mr. Thomas wanted to create.

Those angles and how the players approach them. It's brilliant, and we're going to give it to them, and I that I they're going to appreciate it. We're already hearing that.

I think the other thing I would share is the ebb and flow, the crescendo of this great golf course. We heard from the players, we knew it coming in, there are a lot of short holes here where you're going to have scoring clubs in your hand.

But there are some monsters on this golf course. There are some brute par-3s and 4s and there's really an ebb and flow like I don't think I've ever seen before. And typical to George Thomas, when you look at that ebb and flow of this magnificent golf course, it starts out like some of his other gems do, like at Riviera and at Bel Air.

A scorable par-5 in No. 1 and then he punches you in the nose on No. 2 with that 497 yard par-4 over the barranca, risk-reward. It's really quite something, but it is a trade.

And think about this: I watched some of the player comments the last couple of days. Brooks Koepka made an astute observation. He said, if I were coming to watch a U.S. Open I'd plant myself out on No. 6 and watch it all day long. I think he's probably right, if you've seen that hole.

Think about this: It is a driveable par-4; it measures 330 yards on the scorecard. But as the crow flies it measures about 270 yards. That barranca, that wonderful green, wait until you see what we're going to do with it.

It's just as Mr. Thomas intended.

But then you move on to No. 7, and that hole combined with No. 6, you're going to see a hole that as a drivable par-4, 270 yards, and a par-4 is going to play shorter as a par-4 than the seventh hole as a par-3 on a couple of days in all likelihood.

Where do we ever get to see that? Not very often. Then you think about the 6th hole. I wonder if some of the players have figured this out. We've seen a few divots, but you think of the players that don't try to drive it and lay up down that long fairway towards the barranca, as Mr. Thomas intended.

Best angle to that green is playing past the hole and backwards into that green to some of the hole locations behind the bunkers. Think about that. That is just brilliant. Nowhere else that I've been around -- well, very few places that you see that type of architecture.

We're giving it to the players. I think it'll be fun to watch how they figure it out and manage their way around this golf course.

One thing that I really thought was a great comment yesterday, I was with Gil Hanse, and he said, you know, I think about Los Angeles Country Club and the brilliance that's here. Every single hole on this golf course is a unique examination for the players with multiple choices in how to play the golf course. That's exactly what it is.

6 and 7 embody it.

You move on to the back nine and you're going to see the ebb and flow of 14 with a boomerang-shaped green, and then a short par-3, the shortest on the golf course, that we'll move up and down and you'll see eagles and birdies flying all over the place.

And then you'll turn the corner and go into 16 and 17, and 18, and they're three of the toughest par-4s that a U.S. Open could ever have.

I think it's going to be one of the more exciting U.S. Opens, and the way that I've thought about it is a quote that Jeff Hall shared with a few of us in a meeting. As you watch those young boys and girls, standard bearers walking around the golf course the next few days, I think they're going to be real busy changing numbers with all the birdies and bogeys that are out there, so watch for that.

One thing I did want to share with you, Mike talked about we come in, it is our strategy. We go to the greatest

venues and we let them be what they were intended to be. One thing you will see that's just part of the architecture, we weren't going to change it, is pace of play.

We talked about 6 and 7, the 11th hole, long downhill par-3. We know we've done the study with our colleagues in the equipment standards department, the scientists and the engineers in the USGA, those really smart folks that figure out things like where pinch points are on golf courses that host the U.S. Open.

We know it's going to be around 6 and 7 and 11. But what we've done, we've done over 520 simulations. We know where those pinch points are. We know what we need to mitigate, and we've got the best referees in the world to do that. We're on top of it, proactively addressing it.

We were not going to come in here and change any of that. We were going to live up to what Mr. Thomas intended, including some of those pinch points. But we'll manage it appropriately. It's like being out on the 405. With 156 players, you can only get so many folks on the highway, and when something happens there's nowhere for them to go, but we'll manage it. We're on top of it.

I guess I would just sum things up and say, probably the most frequent question I've received in the last couple of years leading up to this championship, not that we don't get it every year, but more so this year because of the unknown, what is the winning score going to be.

I genuinely, more than any other Open, I don't know. But after all that I've read and all that I've learned from others about George C. Thomas, Jr., he was a Renaissance man. He was amazing. How he intended this magnificent golf course to play, I'm convinced that the Captain would be very proud of what is about to unfold at our national Open Championship.

Thank you.

Q. This is regarding the rollback. I know this is a period for comment. It seems from our perspective that the overwhelming tenor of those comments has been one of dissatisfaction from the players, from the manufacturers. I'm just wondering what's the state of collecting those comments, and is there a scenario where the comments are so negative or the professional golf community feels so against something that you guys would actually abandon the plan?

MIKE WHAN: So first, we've to come up with a better name for it regarding rollback, but I appreciate your comment.

I remember saying this to Fred about a year ago. I thought this was going to be hard, and it's going to be hard. I think I can speak on behalf of the R&A when I say both the R&A and the USGA believe doing nothing is a bad idea for the long-term future and health of the game.

But part of doing something means you've really got to be out there and really asking for and taking direct comments, and that's what we've been doing.

This process is really strange. I've said it a few times publicly. We don't have the ability in this process to walk around and talk to everybody individually and then come to the podium. We have to go to the podium, say what we're thinking, and then spend the six months walking around and talking to everybody individually.

Even though I think you probably only get one tenor in the general. I would say that over my first two years doing this I feel like we've gotten real quality comments, and I feel like we'll dial into the right long-term solution.

But I think if your question is do you think the right long-term solution is nothing, highly unlikely.

Q. With the increase in money, I guess, across professional golf, obviously you guys have a record purse this year, I was just wondering how you balance the purse side required for a prestigious major championship with everything else that you guys like to do with money?

MIKE WHAN: I think in general for us, we want this to be big. We want this to be big for you. We want this to be big for the fans. We want this to be big for the players.

We have to find the right balance of bigness, right, in terms of where we play it, how we televise it, how many people we let on this golf course. We could've sold 40,000 tickets a day but we sold 22 to make sure the experience here is still a quality experience for those that get on the golf course.

I think purse is part of that. So we actually -- I want to say it was November of last year that we budgeted 20. We thought 20 was what was probably going to be right for us to feel like a purse as part of everything else is big, and I think we're glad that we did. We made choices to get it to 20.

But it's choice, right? We have a business just like you have a business, and if you're going to spend more on a purse you're going to spend less on other things, and we made that choice. A year ago or maybe two years ago we

announced essentially doubling the purse on the U.S. Women's Open, and we knew that was a choice and we had to come up with some solutions.

I think we feel great about the purse. We feel great about the size of this event.

We understand that purses can be relative, and in order to be big we have to understand what else is going on in the world, and we do.

We're not in a chase to be the biggest check, but we want to make sure that the money and the opportunity here, whether they're a TOUR player, college player, amateur, how they got here, that's still part of the bigness, and we believe it is.

Q. This question dovetails nicely. You mentioned that you guys are cutting commercials this year on NBC. I'm wondering, last year you had said that you guys were working on this, you were going to fix the problem. Why was that a focus for you guys this year, considering the other sort of business difficulties you're facing?

MIKE WHAN: Yeah, this is one of the unfortunate outcomes of your CEO being on Twitter. I'm sure most of my staff would like me to give up on my social media presence. I am sure my wife would like me to give up on -- she always says, why do you have to read it in the morning that you're an idiot and then go to work? I don't know, somehow it grounds you.

To me last year when you're here all day and you're in meetings all day and everything else, sometimes you don't really understand the fan experience until midnight and reading social media.

I shouldn't admit that because I can only imagine the amount of crazies that will come out this week. But I was reading in Boston last week and I thought there was an overwhelming amount of -- for me overwhelming, and who knows -- of comments about commercial interruptions.

So I would tell you the really cool thing about that is, first off, I probably shouldn't engage because engaging in social media is like sticking your face first into the fan. That's exactly what I did.

But regardless of that, we got together with NBC on Saturday morning and we actually cut our commercial interruptions on Sunday of last year, and really just followed that logic through.

I'm proud of NBC. They've really cut back on some of their



in-broadcast programming. So have we at a similar level. They've got bills to pay and so do we, so I get that. Now I can comfortably day -- and there will still be millions of people that don't like the commercial interruptions because no matter how low you get it you'll get that feedback.

But yeah, we made an effort between both of us to make sure that -- when I talked before about being big and wanting the experience to be different, we wanted to make sure the experience is different whether you're here or not here, whether you're watching it on your computer, your phone, or you're watching it on TV.

It was an effort we made. I think fewer commercial interruptions, especially -- we typically the last couple hours don't have any interruptions and everybody forgets that. Thanks to Rolex we stopped commercial interruptions at the very end, but by that point nobody remembers. But I think it'll matter.

I think if you run a major like we do, we have a responsibility to make everything feel better. I don't think that's going to stop the Twitter conversation, but I'm really proud of what's happened not just this year but what happened in 24 hours last year.

Q. John, what's one detail setup-wise that you learned from the Walker Cup in '17 that you changed for this week?

JOHN BODENHAMER: I think that really how quickly this golf course can firm up. It was a different time of the year. It was September. It was warmer than we're going to have this week based on the weather forecast we've seen.

But I think that that was probably the one thing that we kind of expected, but it confirmed it.

But I also think that just watching those players -- you think about that Walker Cup team, and you have Scottie and Collin here but you also had Maverick and Cameron and so many others. I could go down the list, Stewart Hagestad, and just the way we set up the golf course, what the hole locations were, a number of different things that we used there we will use again here in every way.

But I do think it is different. There's more rough here, and we knew we needed that where it is.

But I think overall it was just really the firmness and how quickly it came to us, and we hope we get it again.

Q. How do you keep it the ideal level of firm with these conditions specifically?

JOHN BODENHAMER: You have one of the finest golf course superintendents in the country in Chris Wilson and his team and 100 of the greatest volunteers who have come from all over the world to come and help us do it.

I think it really gets to the use of technology which Chris and this great club have, and just today -- you know, golf course superintendents are the ultimate keepers of the game and of the environment and their venues, and they just know their golf course better than anybody. We've really leaned on the LACC team.

Our experience at the Walker Cup was part of it, but I think just dialing it in. The thing that makes the most difference is that we get to control the water. I'm a Seattle guy. That's where I kind of grew up, and people tell me we go somewhere it's not going to rain, I'm skeptical.

This spring made us pretty darned -- in all honesty, that's been a challenge with the firmness, with the rough. This has been a very unusual spring, winter/spring. But we're really pleased with every aspect of this golf course that's come to us, and it is in large -- largely due to Chris Wilson and his team here at the club.

Q. Fred and Mike, I could be wrong, but it appears there are no Black players in the field this year. Wondering how you feel about that, and moving forward is there any long-term plan to increase the numbers?

FRED PERPALL: I think what happens in elite golf is a reflection of the choices we've made in the past, and I would love this to be like a shortcut, like that we could just press the magic wand.

I think what we're doing with Team USA and investing in more inclusion and more opportunity and more accessibility hopefully changes this trajectory.

We know golf is better when all of us are included, and so we hope, like the results of what we're doing will show up. It is disappointing, but I think it also is exciting because that's the opportunity.

When you see the balancing between how much we spend on purse versus how much we can invest in a community like south Los Angeles to restore a golf course, where these are the kind of golf courses like a Tiger Woods grew up playing on, that accessibility is part of our issue, and if we're going to have elite golfers of all backgrounds, we've got to improve the accessibility. That's part of what our commitment is.

We look at the challenge that we have today, and we see

 . . . when all is said, we're done.®

that as an exciting opportunity, and I think Mike and the team and our unify showcase govern and advance, that's what we're working on.

MIKE WHAN: At the risk of hitting play and me talking for 45 minutes because this is a topic that's close to the heart, is the diversity of the game at age 12 is amazing and the diversity sometimes at age 20 isn't nearly as amazing.

I've said this for a lot of years, but now I'm sitting in a seat where we can do something about it. We are going to be all in on the U.S. National Development Team, and we're going to make sure that talented kids, no matter what they look like or where they come from or how wealthy their parents are in the States, have chance to go -- every other country in the world has a country program to foster and grow their youth pipeline.

We have incredible youth pipeline. We just sort of ask everybody to figure it out on their own. Between MegaGrant programs, national coaching programs, development programs, I was amazed as the LPGA commissioner how every woman on that tour came out of a country program except Americans. I was amazed what they were taught at age 12, 13, 14, getting them ready to compete at a professional level.

The Americans were at quite frankly a disadvantage there, and sometimes the cost of raising a young kid can sometimes be a limiting factor in this sport.

The last letter on United States Golf Association, we've kind of changed to advance as opposed to association. And one of the ways we are going to advance the game is really invest in a better pipeline.

That will be all kinds of diversity, but I think you're going to see a stronger pipeline in the next 10, 20 years. That doesn't make us better than the rest of the world; it just makes us catch up.

Q. Was there a missed opportunity with Tiger Woods back in 1997? He wins the Masters; people think this is going to be a game changer; wait for 10 years and see what happens. It appears to some degree not a lot happened, and just looking back what might have been done and --

MIKE WHAN: I actually think -- so to first answer your question is you're 100 percent correct. I feel like we all watched the Tiger Woods parade go by and then when the parade left, it actually left. Like it was a great five years.

I actually think having lived through it myself -- Seth Waugh and I have talked about this a lot -- like COVID gave us

parade No. 2, and if you look at what's happened in American golf right now, we're over 41 million people playing this game, and just seven, eight years ago it was 34.

And when you really talk about what's changed -- because a lot of people see their golf courses being full again, but primarily the difference, what's happened here in the last four years, is juniors, women, and people of color. You take that out of the mix and we wouldn't be talking about the greatest golf boom we've ever seen.

We're in parade No. 2, and so how we handle parade No. 2 better come out of our learning from not handling -- I don't know if parade is the right analogy, but that's what I use in my head.

From that analogy I think we are better prepared, and I can tell you that as an industry we're more aligned on parade No. 2. Back then first parade came by we didn't really talk to each other that much, but now we're sort of all in, whether we're talking about our Golf, Inc. projects, what we're doing together on First Tee, Girls Golf, Drive, Chip & Putt and Junior League, it's a pretty exciting time.

I feel pretty good about how long -- parade No. 2 has already lasted longer than most skeptics thought would last. We're out of COVID and the game stayed, so it's pretty cool.

I hate to admit it, but I think it probably took the first miss to have the second one be so successful.

Q. John, in terms of the setup, I don't think it's unfair to say that preserving the sanctity of par had been a mainstay objective of the USGA for many years. You just indicated you're going to have the course play as it is intended to play. That seems to be in alignment with the R&A's philosophy with the Open Championship: play the course as they find it irrespective of weather conditions. How much of a factor has it been for the USGA to have somebody like Nick Price sit on the executive committee, and what role have past champions played from years back in terms of the feedback that you've been getting beyond the current players that you talk to?

JOHN BODENHAMER: A couple things there. Again, I think that it really boils down to just -- I don't know if it's anybody's -- any one sort of strategy other than just going to our country's greatest venues and letting them be.

I would say this: You think about a U.S. Open and the venues that we go to, they all have their own character, their own personality, and LACC is much different than

Winged Foot or Oakmont or Shinnecock or Pebble Beach.

That's really all we're trying to do. I don't think it's anything like any other major. It's just letting what's there, the brilliance of what has always been be.

Make no mistake, we've made modifications here. There's a lot of rough. It's going to be tough. Just buckle up because there are going to be some lies where it'll be a good ol' fashioned U.S. Open. So make no mistake about it, we haven't thrown in the towel, that's for sure. It's going to be tough. That is what we do.

But I think that Nick Price was a game changer for us in a lot of respects, and I'll tell you why. America's greatest venues, it came out of a meeting that we had six years ago. We were sitting around a championship committee meeting and we were talking about where do we go for the U.S. Open, what is our strategy, all the different variables, and Nick looked across the table from me -- and this is about a two-hour discussion -- and he said, John, it's important where players win their U.S. Open, men or women.

Now, you look at what we've done since that moment in time and where we're going and how far out we're going with the women and the men. It started right there. That's how important Nick Price was. He was with us on golf course setup. He was just involved in everything we did. He's a great friend, and he made a difference.

Q. What year was that?

JOHN BODENHAMER: It was about 2018. I think we all aligned around that very quickly. Everybody that was in that room will remember that time. We talk about it all the time, so he meant the world.

I don't know. I think we're still evolving, but I think we're listening. This is what Scott Langley and his team -- we've got eight or nine of a player relations team and player services team that really are closely engaged with the players.

We want to know what they think, and I think they are telling us that, you know, we do have an appreciation. We want it to be tough. When we win the U.S. Open, we want to achieve something special, and it needs to be.

We really want to feel like we accomplished something. And being tough, we really feel like we do when we shoot 67 in a U.S. Open. We really feel like we've done something special like Hogan did and Jones did and Tiger and Jack and Arnie and those that have been great champions.

I think that's all we're trying to achieve, and the players are -- we feel it from the players that we're on the right track.

Q. Mike, last week obviously you mentioned we somehow fixed the fracture in golf by an agreement that was made on Tuesday. My question to you is how much do you feel golf was fractured coming into that Tuesday, and how much does it affect the USGA what happens in an agreement going forward?

MIKE WHAN: Well, you say golf fractured. I think we're talking about men's professional golf, right, so I think golf itself as an industry probably has never been this strong ever, both in the U.S. and around the world.

What the outcome of this will be -- I'd be lying if I said I feel like I have some insight or information relative to what you may have. Exactly the way this plays out, I don't know. I think from the USGA's perspective, like I said, I just remember a year ago when LIV started its first event that everybody turned to us and said, are they going to play? Are they not going to play? Are you going to let them in?

John was the first in the meeting to say it's called the U.S. Open, and if somebody qualifies for the U.S. Open, they play in the U.S. Open. I think we sent a message a year ago about the openness of the championship, and nothing has changed in the last year.

Exactly what happens in the future of men's professional golf we'll certainly be paying attention, but I'm not really sure it changes the USGA or the U.S. Open or our championships.

Q. Mike, clarification on the ads on TV. Are they going to be really 23 less or are they going to be the play-through ads where you're still seeing an ad but you're still seeing golf?

MIKE WHAN: Both. Both.

Q. Not quite 23 less ads?

MIKE WHAN: If you know 23 less adds you probably have talked to Jon Podany who probably knows more than I do, so probably follow up with him on the specifics.

But we'll break away from the action 30 percent less than we were doing a year ago. Exactly how many number of ads that are more or less I don't know, but I'm not concerned about the -- we did it on that Sunday, so I know it made a difference.

It made a difference both in terms of viewing, and we made



some real choices to reduce, and we have.

Q. Are you receiving less of a TV fee?

MIKE WHAN: No. Sorry to NBC.

Q. During COVID you delayed things on the golf ball. With what's happening in the golf world right now, any thoughts of maybe pushing this back until things get settled in that environment?

MIKE WHAN: It's funny you say that. We started this in 2018. It's 2023 and we're talking about implementing something not earlier than 2026. I was talking to a friend the other day who's like, why are you rushing this through? I'm like, how slow do we have to go? Started in '18, talking about a '26 implementation. He said to me, can't you just slow this down? I'm like, slower than an eight-year process?

I don't know what the final outcome will be and what we'll come in. If anybody feels like this is in a hurry I don't think they're really paying attention. We're talking about we've been back and forth in a listening process and we are now again, and we've told everybody recently that no earlier than 2026.

We're not talking about this season. We're not talking about next season. We're not talking about the season after that.

I think if people feel rushed by this, I worry for them because this is a pretty slow process.

Q. Why do you have to wait until '26?

MIKE WHAN: Yeah, I don't know that we have to wait until '26, but we feel a real responsibility to make sure that whatever decisions we make don't fracture some of the strongest pieces of the game.

I've said this from the beginning and maybe it's my fault of working in the equipment side for a while, but we take for granted sometimes how much money and excitement our manufacturers create in this business. We could have one ball that everybody plays and that's just -- we could have a tennis ball and that's our ball that everybody plays and all the R&D and branding and all the excitement stops in the game. I'm not sure that's good for the game.

I've seen my own kids come down on Christmas Day and see a box that looks like a golf club and be pretty excited, because this is the year, right, the fix it.

I think that's part of the allure of the game. When you

watch a professional event, 25, 30 percent of the advertising is probably around equipment. It's a huge advantage for golf that quite frankly a lot of other sports if you think about it don't have.

If we were to make a change, giving our manufacturing partners time to adjust to that change and make sure we don't rush them into something that they're not comfortable with, making sure that our PGA of America and LPGA teaching professionals don't feel rushed and have enough time to think those things through, and quite frankly the players themselves, if the change affects them.

Yeah, I think it's our responsibility to think about the game long-term and then make sure the changes that we make aren't rushed for them.

FRED PERPALL: I feel like I want to also mention, being part of the executive committee and the lead volunteers, we're at a time in our history where governance and government has been like at an all-time low. No one loves to be governed.

We all love to be popular, but sometimes I think you have to really think about what's right. Equipment manufacturers, they've done their jobs. The elite players, they've done their jobs, too. They're getting better, stronger, faster.

But with the USGA and the R&A as governance organizations, like we're the folks that have to wake up and think about the long-term health of the game. This is directly connected to all the things we just talked about in terms of inclusivity and accessibility, the expense we're embedding in the game, et cetera.

A lot of my friends that I would play golf with would say no one really wants this. Sometimes you have to have the courage to really do what's right.

I wish I could say to the public, our intent is pure. It's not malicious. We're not trying to do something to damage anyone. We're thinking about all the good that this good game has given us, and we're thinking about what is our responsibility to make sure that this game is still strong and healthy 50 years from now for our children's children.

That's one thing -- my buddy, Mike, and the whole team, they have to stand in the face of the fan and take all of this fire, but I wish sometimes we could just say we're really doing what we think is right for the game 100 years from now, and really that is our job.

Q. It's obvious that the Public Investment Fund of Saudi Arabia wants to be involved in golf at all levels.



Has anyone from the Sovereign Wealth Fund ever approached the USGA about any potential partnership or funding, and would you be open to that conversation if they were?

MIKE WHAN: I don't know. I don't know if -- I can't think of anything offhand. Saudi investment fund and Saudi Golf has been involved in the game as long as I've been commissioner of the LPGA, and then this role with events and opportunities and supporting players. That doesn't feel as new to me as it maybe does to some other fans.

But I don't know if we have been.

At the United States Golf Association we're pretty focused on the United States, so maybe that makes us less interesting to some other folks. But I don't really know if we have been.

Q. Do you think the governing body of essentially golf as you guys spoke of has any responsibility to stay removed from some massive wealth kind of interest in the game?

MIKE WHAN: I don't really know what responsibility we have there. I think for us, if somebody wanted to have more of a significant influence on our outcome, I don't think we'd look to our partners for that.

We don't really have any current partners that want to change our decision making, and I don't know if they do, either. But I think probably if we were contacted, we're pretty full up from a partnership perspective right now. As you know, we don't have a lot of partners. We have a few select partners, and we sort of add partners as others go away.

We're probably not as attractive to outsiders and maybe some other entities might be.

Q. With both the rollback or whatever we want to call it and the merger from last week, we've heard a lot from players that they don't know what's going on, that they don't feel like anyone has asked them their opinions, and what they would like to happen is not necessarily what is happening. I wonder if it concerns you that there's large things happening in the game and players feel like they're not a part of those conversations?

MIKE WHAN: I mean, you mean on the distance topic as opposed to the rollback topic? I'm just kidding.

Yeah, we have to listen to all stakeholders of the game, and professional men's golf and professional women's golf is one aspect of a large game, so they are not the only

ones we're talking to, listening to, and we have to appreciate the amateur side of the business, all the manufacturers, as well.

But somebody said to me the other day, why do you go to the PAC meeting and ask a bunch of current PGA TOUR professionals how do they feel good a ball being shorter. Like do you really have to fly there for that? That's part of the governance. That's part of the process.

I think that's -- I may not like everything they say but I heard everything they said, and I heard everything they said a year ago as we made changes going into this time.

Yeah, if you're going to have something called notice and comment, you'd better be open to comment. I've said this many times. If Thomas Pagel was in the room he would be rolling his eyes or worse. This process wasn't built for me because it's slow and it's methodical and you really have to take in a lot of pieces, but I'm almost glad this process is what it is because it really requires you to think, be public about what you're thinking, and then really take in the comments in terms of the next step.

I wouldn't say I've enjoyed the process, but it's been a great learning experience.

If you're going to take on significant governance decisions that you think are going to help the game be stronger in 20 and 40 years, you can't expect everybody to like those decisions, and that's part of governance. You have to decide whether or not you can stand up for what you think is the game long-term, knowing that maybe 20 percent or 30 percent or 50 percent like it and the others don't.

But I think the feedback process is important and it makes us better. Even when we don't like the feedback we get, it makes us better.

Q. You've talked in the past about the importance of the bodies in the game being in communication with each other and working in partnership and things like that. I was curious about your reaction last whatever it was, Monday or Tuesday to kind of see that news that was basically a deal worked out behind closed doors over seven weeks and then just kind of out of thin air. How did you respond to the moment?

MIKE WHAN: I think I had a similar response to probably a lot of people in the room. I was surprised. I wasn't shocked that there was conversations, I was just surprised conversation had reached that point. I certainly didn't expect to be invited into the room. I didn't have much to probably add to those conversations. I wasn't offended that I was surprised, I was just surprised.

Then like a lot of you, I'm sure I'm not on the top 5 list of let me make sure you understand every detail, but I've had conversations with many from the PGA TOUR, so I think I'm getting my head around it, but there's a lot to learn, and I'm sure they would agree that there's a lot to learn.

I'm going to reserve judgment in terms of let's see where this goes.

Q. A lot of talk about the barranca here. I know it greened over for a long time many years ago. Can you just kind of -- maybe not the entire history of the world but your knowledge of the importance of getting it restored and the process and why having that feature here sort of makes this course what it is?

JOHN BODENHAMER: Well, I think there are others who are more qualified than I am to talk about the barrancas. Gil and I think Geoff Shackelford really dug in.

But I'll tell you what, when I played here in 1985, I fell in love with this place. It was a different golf course. First two holes were par-5s. There was very limited barranca through this property. It was more manicured Bermuda wall to wall, but it was still magnificent. I think what Gil and Jim and Geoff did was just restored what was here.

George Thomas really had a -- risk-reward was something that was really part of what he thought. You see that meandering. It is a natural barranca, and how he used the land, the risk-reward sort of part of this golf course, it just flows throughout, just the brilliance of how the barranca is used.

I will tell you when we were here in March, there was three feet of water running through those barrancas. When we were here in May, there was probably two feet of water running through those barrancas. We weren't sure we were going to be able to get the barrancas in proper condition, but we have.

Again, that's thanks to the club, Chris Wilson and his team and a whole lot of hard work. I think they're brilliant. You look in them, we've worked hard on them, so has Chris.

You'll see players playing out of them; that's how they were intended. You'll see a lot of heroic shots, a lot of excitement, but I think you'll see some others, as well, out of them, and that's how they were intended. That's what Mr. Thomas intended.

If you don't hit it in the fairway on No. 2, you're going to be busy, and you'd better get it up and on to that green or you're going to come back in, and it's just going to get

harder.

But that brilliance of that risk-reward is what he did, and those barrancas are magnificent.

I think the other part of it is you look down at a hole like No. 4 and all that sandy, natural -- it's just the way the game was meant to be played. It's just always been here, and it's just been restored. It's brilliant.

Q. Mike, on the model local rule proposal, can you characterize the sort of tone or theme of the presentations that were counter to yours at that meeting from the manufacturing community? Also, some players who are not closed minded to it have questioned some of the parameters. I'm wondering if there is room for adjustment based on their feedback on the proposed rule.

MIKE WHAN: Let me go in reverse order because my mind is thinking about the second part of your question. I've said to these people from the beginning, if you don't think your feedback is making an impact, then you haven't been following the process.

If you'd listened two years ago, I would have been on a press conference like this telling you where we were going, and I was pretty convinced that's where we were going. A year later it was pretty significantly different, and most of that just came from quality feedback from all different aspects, including manufacturers, and some of that feedback kind of drove us to model local rule.

I think in the world of model local rule and the feedback with some of the PAC players, I would characterize it under two factors, whether it was players or manufacturers. I think players are a little concerned about having a different product than the consumers can buy. They know they have an influence on that. They know that actually generates good business opportunity for them and for the sport.

The whole, what's he playing, the new product, the what's she playing, the new product, actually generates excited and awareness, and that's a fair comment. We don't want to take any of that out of the game. We don't want to take financial opportunities out of the game for the members and for the sport. So I think we're listening to that.

A model local rule approach, to be perfectly honest, allowed us to be a little bit more aggressive because you could be more aggressive with distance at the highest level of distance and therefore not have an impact.

We've got to balance over the next step of input whether or

not one ball for all or model local rule is kind of a right approach.

I have yet to be in a meeting, whether it's with a manufacturer, a TOUR player, an association that hasn't resulted in making us think and in some cases rethink. I'm not always proud of that because I'm sure it drives some of my team nuts when I come back and say, I've got a different idea, and we start kind of going down a different path.

But I would -- I think it would be impossible to say that this process and this feedback process hasn't resulted in change along the way, and I believe it will continue to do that.

Q. And the presentations that were counter to yours, just to -- how would you characterize them? What was the theme? Can they make the equipment? Will they refuse to, that kind of thing? Was there any message that way?

MIKE WHAN: I wasn't in the manufacturing part of the presentation. I can only -- can they make the equipment? We've received product against a model local rule proposal already asking us to equipment test it, so we've received balls from multiple manufacturers, so I know they can make product. It may not be their finished version, but in months they were presenting us versions that they wanted to test.

And it's a proposal, so we're not going there yet.

I think they can make it. I think depending on who you talk to in the manufacturing community, there's a different point of view on bifurcation, but I think in general, they like the formula, and I understand why, of what we test, research and put in play out here is really -- it's really a powerful link back to what happens at retail, and I think they're asking us to be careful to break that link, and we will be careful.

BETH MAJOR: Fred, Mike, John, thanks so much for your time today. Here's to a great U.S. Open at the Los Angeles Country Club.

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