

U.S. Open Championship 2024

Monday, June 10, 2024

Village of Pinehurst, North Carolina, USA

Pinehurst Resort & C.C. (Course No. 2)

Webb Simpson

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: Welcome to the interview area for the 124th U.S. Open championship. We are joined by our 2012 U.S. Open champion, Webb Simpson. Webb, just talk a little bit about being here and how special it is for you.

WEBB SIMPSON: This place is my favorite place. Grew upcoming here from Raleigh, just a short drive. My dad built a home here. I think probably I was 12 years old. So most weekends, middle school, high school, we'd come up and play at the country club in North Carolina.

I played countless Donald Ross Junior championships, North/South Juniors, North/South Amateurs.

I love Pinehurst. We spend a good amount of time here. We're here a couple weekends a month as a family.

This was one I really, really didn't want to miss. It was a little harder getting here than normal for me. I had to go qualify. But Monday, last Monday, was super exciting and satisfying to get through and to come here and compete.

This is a golf course that I feel like I know really well. I feel comfortable on it. I just didn't want to miss the U.S. Open in my backyard.

THE MODERATOR: When you think about the test of a U.S. Open and test of a U.S. Open at Pinehurst, what comes to behind?

WEBB SIMPSON: This is pretty typical U.S. Open in the sense that par is a great friend to you all week. It's a brutally hard golf course. I think what Martin Kaymer did in 2024 was incredible.

I think if you take out his winning score, the second place that year and the previous two winners, it was somewhere right around even, one over or one under.

I don't foresee anybody doing what he did then. You never know 'cause guys are so good. We have Scottie Scheffler playing this week (smiling).

It's very long and there's no letup. You have to be incredibly disciplined. You have to accept 30-footers all day. That's something that I feel like is a strength of mine, is to not get greedy. I've never been an overly aggressive player.

I'm looking forward to that challenge. Certainly going to be a big challenge.

THE MODERATOR: We're going to open it up to questions.

Q. With the more native grasses they put in, have you noticed that at all? Is that going to make a difference this year?

WEBB SIMPSON: Yeah, I mean, last time I was here, before last Thursday, probably had been a year. Even in a year the native areas have grown in a lot more. So that's part of the prep we were doing, is one of us take the right side and one take the left and see which one's thicker. Quite a few holes, one side is a little more penal than the other.

It's hit or miss. The way we're looking at it, is if you hit, I don't know, 15 drives for the week in the native area, you're going to get some bad lies, some good lies; you just got to take it from there.

Can't get too down. You might play with a guy, y'all hit in the same area, he hits it on the green, and you have to pitch out. That's just part of it.

Q. You said qualifying was exciting. How stressful was it at Duke that day? If the Open hadn't been at Pinehurst, you might have skipped trying to qualify?

WEBB SIMPSON: I don't know. I hate to miss the U.S. Open. I had a conflict last year so I couldn't try for LACC.

The two rounds couldn't have been more different. I first round I thought throw under, very easy. The second round I made it very stressful on myself. I think I turned in 2-over.

There's no scoreboards obviously, but you can find the



scores on their website. I asked my caddy at the turn, What is it looking like? What do we need to do?

At the time when I asked him, it looked like I needed to shoot minimum three if not four or five on the back. I made a few birdies, but then I bogeyed 17. When I bogeyed 17, I thought for sure there was no chance even of a playoff with a birdie on 18.

So I asked him, we're out of it, right?

He said, No. Par you have a chance for a playoff. Birdie definitely a playoff, maybe even get in with no playoff.

I got all excited again. Made a 15-footer on the last hole. I knew making that putt I was going to have a chance in a playoff.

It's a long day, especially for someone who understands how sweet it is to be in a major, especially U.S. Open here at Pinehurst. It was like there was that pressure on me, but I think it was good and bad.

I think the good was it allowed me to really take the qualifier serious, do my prep work beforehand and don't take it for granted. I'm so happy. The scores weren't that good the second round. It got a little tricky, but it was good enough.

Q. When you think about Pinehurst, is there memories that come right to mind, a round or hole, something that pops in your mind first?

WEBB SIMPSON: Well, I said this the other day. I never won the Putterboy Trophy. So I never won the Donald Ross Junior or the North/South Junior or North/South Am.

My father and I, he won the Donald Ross Father-Son the one day -- they always did it the day after. It was alternate shot. We were in a playoff. In the playoff, my dad drove it in the fairway, I hit it to three feet, and then he made it for us to win. I was so excited. He looked at me like he was mad at me.

I'm like, what? We just won.

He's like, don't ever do that to me again. Hit it to 20 feet. Don't hit it to three feet (laughter).

We finally won. We had state championships here. We played at No. 6, No. 8, No. 4, No. 2. There's so much history whether you look at high school college, high school college, amateur golf, it was all here.

Q. A couple of past champions have made it in

through qualifying, including yourself. Having been on the other end of it, having to do it that way, maybe what kind of perspective that gives you, if it's satisfying to do it that way?

WEBB SIMPSON: Yeah, it's definitely a perspective shifter because when things are going well, especially when you're young in your career, and you're exempt for a few years, you don't even think about it.

You play your schedule based on the biggest tournaments, biggest purses or FedExCup points given. You really don't think about it. When you're not in these tournaments, and it's been a while since you just could look at the schedule and pick what you wanted, you realize scheduling is hard.

I don't know if I'm going to play Canada because now I have a qualifier I have to get ready for. I don't know if I'm going to play this week because I might get in that tournament.

That's definitely a harder piece of it. I think having not been in the majors, the last few majors, I'm definitely more appreciative to be here. Kind of more excited to be here, compete against the best players.

I think all of us golfers would agree, all we want is to play against the best players in the world in the same week. I have a chance this week.

I guess my last major was last year, the PGA Championship, but I received a special exemption to get into that.

Definitely satisfying qualifying knowing I earned the spot, I guess.

Q. In your business role these days, I'm sure you saw where Rory said the other day that he was actually fairly pleased with the way that their talks went on Friday with that transactional committee. I realize you're not part of that, but you're part of the bigger picture. Do you have any update or sense from your perspective of where things stand right now?

WEBB SIMPSON: The only update that I really have is basically what you just said, that Friday went really well. I think there's positive momentum going right now. I think both sides seem to not only be engaged but want to continue to be engaged as much as possible.

That feels good. It feels good that we're finally at a place where I think we all want similar things. We all recognize that the game of golf is healthier when we're moving in this direction.



There's so much excitement with so much guys playing well; Scottie dominating. I almost feel the excitement in the air this week already on a Monday.

I think Rory is right. He knows more than I do at this point. I'll know a lot more come Tuesday next week after our board meeting.

Q. You mentioned Scottie a couple times. In your perspective, as someone who has been doing this for a while now, what has he done really even just this summer, the way he's come out on the hardest courses and played as well as he has, how hard that really is?

WEBB SIMPSON: Yeah, it's probably what happened the early days with Tiger. You kind of get used to it, so it becomes less of a big deal. It's almost like an afterthought. Scottie won again this week.

Yeah, he's doing everything exceptionally well. I think what people don't talk about enough is, like, his attitude, the way he thinks. He makes less mistakes than everyone else. He does what you would expect a pro to do. He capitalizes on wedge shots and par 5s. He just doesn't make mistakes.

He's so hard to beat. Probably makes Davis Riley's win at Charles Schwab that much sweeter to him because he was able to get him. The rare time we all see it...

To play this well for this amount of time, I mean, been a couple years where he's for sure the guy to beat every week. It's fun to watch. I don't see any reason that he's going to slow down anytime soon.

And he just had a baby. I think all the players are like, Man, maybe he's sleep deprived.

Even if he is, he's still winning. So good for him.

Q. What have you seen with the preparation of the greens, same as 2014? What are your thoughts to play on those recovery shots when you miss a green?

WEBB SIMPSON: They're pretty similar to '14 from what I remember. I'm using 3-wood, which I never used throughout the year. But I did it in '14. I saw somebody doing it, they made it look really easy. I tried it. Put it in play that week. I haven't done it since the 2014 U.S. Open.

Already I'm realizing it's easy. I got a lesson from chess ton Hadley. He's really good at it. Why it love it is it comes off the pace a little quicker than the putt. It's hard to have

consistent contact chipping the ball because every lie around these greens, everywhere you go, side, front, it doesn't matter, it's into the green.

You chip five balls you're probably going to chunk one of them.

Q. Having known the golf course from years past, the fourth and fifth holes have been flopped from pars on the two holes; what were your thoughts on that? How does it affect the way those two holes play now?

WEBB SIMPSON: I think the correct order is how they have it now. Four is more of a par 4 green. It receives shots a lot better. Five is a little more diabolical, which I think par 5 greens should be a little harder.

So I think it makes sense. They had the land to do it on the fifth hole. And so, look, 4 is still 525, I think, so it's still a very hard hole. But definitely makes more sense I think with the flow of the golf course to do it that way.

Q. You mentioned your dad, Sam, winning with him the tournament down here. US Opens are always on Father's Day weekends. What do you think your emotions will be this week? What lessons did you learn from your dad?

WEBB SIMPSON: Well, I think about him every day. I really do. Pinehurst was where he was his happiest. We lived in Raleigh. He worked really hard. But when he would come to Pinehurst on a Friday, you'd really see him kind of decompress. He loved to play golf.

So I do think about him every day.

I probably think about him more here than anywhere, especially in CCNC, where our house is. He would be thrilled to death that I qualified. I think he would have been a nervous wreck on Monday. He would have been here walking with me in the practice rounds.

I think what did he teach me? He taught me so many things. I was actually thinking about that recently. I had a friend text me yesterday, who's on tour, and he said he's watching his son play in a junior tournament. He saw another kid move his ball in the rough and the kid didn't know that anyone saw it. My friend is texting me. You think I should go tell his dad?

I'm like, yeah, definitely tell his dad.

That was one thing my dad taught me, always do the right thing. Golf is a game of integrity more than any other sport probably. You have to call penalties on yourself. Do your

best. Don't quit.

There were points on Monday where it would have felt nice to go to the car. I kept going. I think he would have been proud.

Q. Did Dowd have vacation plans this week?

WEBB SIMPSON: No, she believed in me. She didn't have anything planned. In fact, she was planning to come here. So the girls get out of school Wednesday, she's coming down.

Q. What are you feeling more, the comfort of being home or the pressure to perform well while you're home?

WEBB SIMPSON: I think the comfort of being home. I mean, kind of like Bob asked. The perspective shift is I felt more pressure in '14, my first time playing in a major here. Whatever I was in the world, top 15. But now being here, I kind of see it as a gift to be here.

I didn't get in. I had to go qualify. So I feel like it's all upside. My game is so much better than it was a year ago. As weird as it sounds, I feel like I can compete.

I'm not going to be happy unless I play well overall. But I am thankful to be here. I think I used all these things, the comfort of being here, to my advantage.

THE MODERATOR: Good luck this week.

WEBB SIMPSON: Thank you.

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