

U.S. Open Championship 2024

Tuesday, June 11, 2024

Village of Pinehurst, North Carolina, USA

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

Tiger Woods

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: Please join me in welcoming back to the interview area three-time champion Tiger Woods.

Tiger, how does it feel to be back at the U.S. Open but especially one here at Pinehurst?

TIGER WOODS: Well, it's great to be back. I love U.S. Opens. I love the tests of U.S. Opens. I've had a little bit of success here back in '99 and 2005. I'm looking forward to this week and getting it underway.

Q. We were talking to Collin Morikawa last week at the Memorial, and he said doing that clinic with you, that your game, the shots, it's all there. It's still there. Do you feel like your body right now is in a spot that you can win this tournament? Has it improved enough to where you feel like you have the strength to carry it for four rounds?

TIGER WOODS: Yeah, I do. I feel like I have the strength to be able to do it. It's just a matter of doing it.

This golf course is going to test every single aspect of your game, especially mentally, and just the mental discipline that it takes to play this particular golf course, it's going to take a lot.

We've been working on that and making sure that I understand the game plan and be ready in two more days.

Q. Since the PGA, what have you had to focus on the most? Is it more your fitness? Is it more your game, the sharpness part of it? How much did coming up here last week help?

TIGER WOODS: Oh, we've been always working on fitness. Fitness is always a part of it. I did a little bit of work on chipping and putting. But nothing can simulate what we have here this particular week, the amount of little shots and the knobs and run-offs, and either using wedges or long irons or woods around the greens or even putter. There's so many different shots that you really can't simulate unless you get on the property. That's one of the reasons I came up here last Tuesday, to be able to try and

do that. Quite a bit of work. The golf course has firmed up and gotten faster since then.

Even this week, even with the rain we had the other night, the golf course is still faster.

Q. In the last few years, at times when you have struggled, the elements have been an issue. Augusta was obviously a difficult walk. This week where it's going to be hot, what do you like about that, and how much a taxing walk could play into your potential success?

TIGER WOODS: It's like home. Hot and humid is what we deal with every single day at home in Florida, so that's nothing new. It's just making sure that I keep hydrated and the mental tax that the heat will bring. It's going to bring it to all of us, not just me. Everyone is going to be tested.

It's going to make for long rounds with the falloffs and run-offs on the greens. The rounds time-wise are going to be a little bit longer. Then when you're out in the heat for that length and period of time, that's going to take a little bit of wear and tear on you.

Q. (No microphone.)

TIGER WOODS: Well, I would rather play in hot, humid conditions any day than anything cold. I think pretty much anyone my age to your age will definitely like it a little hotter.

Q. Rory described the meeting in New York with Yasir and the PIF as good and productive. How would you describe it? Do you see a light at the end of the tunnel in this thing getting done?

TIGER WOODS: It was productive. And is there light at the end of tunnel? I think we're closer to that point than we were pre-meeting. We discussed a lot of different endings and how we get there. I think that both sides walked away from the meeting, we all felt very positive in that meeting.

As I said, both sides were looking at different ways to get to the end game. I think that both sides shared a deep

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passion for how we need to get there. And yes, there are going to be differences of opinion, but we all want the same thing.

Q. This is the one thousandth USGA championship. You're tied for the record with most USGA championships with nine, with Bob Jones, and this week you're receiving the Bob Jones Award. What is the significance of all that to you?

TIGER WOODS: Well, I think anytime you're in association with Mr. Jones, it's always incredible. What he did in his amateur career, winning the Ams and the Opens and then obviously creating Augusta National, the fact that I get a chance to be honored with his award tonight, it's very special.

I've been able to play in this - not in this championship, but in the USGA championships - since I was 14 years old. It's been a long time, and I've always enjoyed it on all levels. Tonight is going to be very special.

Q. How different is the surrounds around the greens different from what you remember from '99 and the '05? What sort of thought process goes into how you're going to play it, whether it's putter, wedge or a 7- or 8-iron?

TIGER WOODS: Yeah, it's all different. I played it under bentgrass. So now having Bermuda, it's very different. It's grainy. We had the grain on the greens during those Open Championships, and they were softer than they are now.

Granted, I know the surrounds were burnt out in '05, but the greens were not like what they are right now. That's very different.

The shot selections around the greens I think are more plentiful this year from either putting it to wedging it. As you said, 6- or 7-irons. I've used long irons and woods around the greens, and I've seen a number of guys do the same thing.

There's a lot of different shot selections, and the grain is going to play a big part of it. The last few days playing practice rounds - I'm guilty as well as the rest of the guys I've played with - we've putted off a lot of greens. It depends how severe the USGA wants to make this and how close they want to get us up to those sides.

But I foresee just like in '05 watching some of the guys play ping-pong back and forth. It could happen.

Q. How has it been having Charlie out here with you, and what are his responsibilities as player support out

there?

TIGER WOODS: Well, I think having Charlie out here is very special. To have the father-son relationship that we have and to extend it into this part of both of our lives, he's playing a lot of junior golf, and I'm still playing out here.

It's neat for him to see the guys that he watches on TV and YouTube and TikTok, whatever the hell it is that they do. At home he's with JT and Rick a lot. But to see other guys hit the golf ball, it doesn't really do it justice until you actually see it in person.

He was very excited today to watch Max and Min Woo and watch them hit golf balls. They've talked to him quite a bit, especially Min Woo and him. I think they're closer in age than I am to anybody else. It's great. It's great for us to be able to share these moments together.

As far as his responsibilities, it's the same. I trust him with my swing and my game. He's seen it more than anybody else in the world. He's seen me hit more golf balls than anyone.

I tell him what to look for, especially with putting. He gave me a couple little side bits today, which was great, because I get so entrenched in hitting certain putts to certain pins, I tend to forget some of the things I'm working on.

I just want to see the balls rolling. He reminds me every now and again, which is great. We have a great relationship and rapport like that, and it's a wonderful experience for both of us.

Q. We talked about the renovation, first U.S. Open since we did the reno here. Up and downs around the greens, we've seen the putting, the chipping, the 3-woods. How do you see yourself approaching it this week?

TIGER WOODS: I think all of the above. There are a few areas in which I would putt. There are also a few areas in which I would use my 56 or 60. I have used up to a 4-iron bump-and-running it, and I've tried a few woods out there. I didn't like the way that reacted.

But some of the areas are more grainy than others. I think that's one of the things, me in particular, I need to watch out for, is some of the chatter that you might get coming up the hills and how much speed you're going to have coming up and then over the next ridge.

That's the beauty of playing Donald Ross golf courses: he tests you. And since the renovation here, I think they've done an amazing job of doing that.

But we were talking about it the last couple days, when Donald did this golf course and made the greens this severe, I don't think he intended it to be running at 13 on the stimpmeter. They were the speed of fairways.

That's one of the differences when we go to most golf courses, is they're very severe, and we're playing under faster conditions. It's more of a test. It's going to be a great test and a great war of attrition this week. It's going to be a lot of fun for all of us.

Q. Was last week the first time you were here since '05?

TIGER WOODS: That is correct.

Q. We obviously have talked about the greens, but from your architect's perspective, the look off the tees and the changes since you were last here, what do you think?

TIGER WOODS: The look off the tees are about the same. I know it's more native and more open looking. But from when I watched from '05 and what I saw in '14, yes, there is a bit of a change. But that's really no big deal. The surrounds are very different. Going from bent to Bermuda, it is a significant change.

We were half joking that by the end of the week, it might be one of those Bermuda greens when they get so slick that you bend down to read a putt or bend down to fix a ball mark and your putter slips. I think it has that kind of look and that kind of sheen that it could get there by Sunday. The only thing would stop it would be the humidity that's coming in.

But it has that look and feel that this could be one of the Opens where whatever the leading score is, that's probably as low as we'll ever go after the first day.

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