

U.S. Open Championship 2024

Wednesday, June 12, 2024

Village of Pinehurst, North Carolina, USA

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

Nick Dunlap

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: We're here with our reigning U.S. Amateur champion Nick Dunlap.

Can you talk a little bit about the state your game.

NICK DUNLAP: Feels great. I'm slowly learning how to play some of these very difficult golf courses that demands a lot.

It takes a lot of me. There's a lot of patience that goes with that that I've had to learn on the road a little bit. Yeah, playing great. Game feels good. Noise is starting to calm down a little bit. Look forward to having a good week.

THE MODERATOR: You had a great amateur summer last year, then you made history. What did you learn about yourself since then?

NICK DUNLAP: Honestly it was really, really cool for me to see everything that I kind of worked for come true. Playing out on the PGA TOUR, making that putt at AMEX, it's kind of what I always dreamed of as a kid. Like every putt was to win something. For me to have that putt was really cool.

I always kind of thought coming out here that I would have to learn a lot. I thought that my good was good enough. But these guys are so good consistently week in and week out. I knew I needed to do a couple things to be able to maintain my game, compete week in and week out.

I'm three, four months into it. Kind of starting to get a grasp on it.

THE MODERATOR: Some may call you the Prince of the Sandhills. How does it feel to be back?

NICK DUNLAP: It feels great. I got a lot of history here. For whatever reason, I play good in North Carolina. Good vibes. I've got pretty much the only place I eat at CharBar around here. Be visiting that place a good bit throughout the week.

No, feel great. Happy to be back.

THE MODERATOR: Open it up for questions.

Q. Nick, what has been the most frustrating part of this few months as a pro? Who and what kind of bit of advice got you through it?

NICK DUNLAP: That's a good question.

Honestly, the most frustrating thing is that I've had to realize that I can't attack pins with sand wedges sometimes. I think last week was pretty eye-opening for me in realizing that sometimes you're not going to hit the green, even if you are on the fairway. It's taken me a little while to realize how to play some of these golf courses. Even par is a great score. Most of the time on the weekends it gets even harder.

Honestly, a lot of the guys out here have been very, very nice to me, always offering up support and help in anything they do. It was a little bit of an odd situation, but I'm 20, and there's not a whole lot of my peers out here currently. It can be a little lonely at times. Feel like you're on an island a little bit.

A lot of the guys have been very grateful [sic] and reaching out, making sure that I don't feel that way.

Q. 11 months from winning out here, what can you take away from what happened here, and how is the course playing a little different in your eyes?

NICK DUNLAP: Yeah, tack on about 500 yards, 400 yards, way firmer, way faster.

No, it's still the same principles of this golf course. You can't short side yourself. You have to leave it below the hole. Sometimes miss the greens sometimes 25 feet above it. A lot of putting.

Something that is different, around the greens, left it a little bit longer than they did last year, making putting a little bit more challenging. I think you might see a lot of 6-irons, 5-irons, hybrids, woods, instead of putting because you have to hit it pretty hard. Once you get on the greens, it's extremely fast. Tough to judge that.

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For the most part it's the same. You miss the fairway, it's hit or miss whether you have a lie and a chance to advance it. Yeah, just very, very challenging.

Q. The Junior Am two years ago was grueling. How can you sort of take those lessons, memories, and channel it here this weekend?

NICK DUNLAP: Yeah, I think it's so different, honestly. I take the good shots, and I always try to remember those. Whenever I'm in an uncertain or uncomfortable situation, I try to always look back on something good that's happened, a good shot or good putt.

The challenge it wasn't a U.S. Junior and a U.S. Open like this, it's the toughest thing in all of golf in the U.S. Open. I think that's going to be shown by some of the scores this week.

Q. Besides the obvious, your status as a professional, what are the biggest differences between the Nick Dunlap that arrived at the U.S. Open a year ago and the one that's arriving here this week?

NICK DUNLAP: The platform that I've been on the past couple weeks has helped tremendously. Like you just said, I played juniors and amateurs before. But playing a U.S. Open is different than those two. The golf course is longer, more difficult. Your bad shots are penalized a little bit more. You have to be way more patient. You have to be okay about bogeys, avoid doubles.

Some of the golf courses I played on recently have helped me a little bit more and prepared me for that. I'm starting to kind of understand what I need to do week to week to prepare myself in what I need to do this week to keep my energy high, make sure I don't wear myself out.

I think 18-, 19-year-old me, it's hard not to stay out here all day, enjoy the crowds, enjoy everything this place has to offer. At the end of the week it will wear yourself out. You're out here too long. I'm starting to do a good job that my time is well spent out here, I'm well-rested to play my best come the weekend.

Q. In a strange way, did the fact that Alabama season ended a few weeks ago at regionals, did that kind of clear your mind a little bit more because now a lot of those guys have also turned pro, moved on playing summer golf?

NICK DUNLAP: No. I mean, I don't think that decision's gotten any easier, to be honest with you. It was tough for me to see them miss, especially in the way it happened.

Hunter and I were watching pretty much I think it was Wednesday of Valhalla or Tuesday maybe. We were watching that all day.

It sucked because I think everybody had kind of counted them out for the year almost, given Auburn a run for their money at SEC. They played great at regionals. I think they played really nice honestly since AMEX.

But, no, I still in a way feel bad. I feel like I left them hanging. Would have loved to be with them at regionals, NCAAs the week after.

Q. Earlier this morning a bunch of the USGA people were up here talking about whether amateurs should be paid prize money for playing in a tournament like this. Four months ago, you being an amateur, where do you stand on that? Should amateurs be paid for playing in tournaments like this?

NICK DUNLAP: No, I honestly don't think so. I think there should be maybe some kind of end of the week to help out with some of the expenses maybe. Weeks like this are expensive, especially at Augusta.

It does kind of suck that you can't make any money, so you're kind of out of whether it's five, 10, 15, 20 grand, whatever it is. Some kind of help at the end of the week would be nice.

I think teeing it up with an A next to your name, you know you're not going to be paid, which is a little bit unfortunate.

I wish we could, now saying that after AMEX. Like I said, you know you can't get paid. Like I said, end of the week would be nice to get something back.

Q. You mentioned you got your favorite spot to eat here in town. What level of comfort do you have here?

NICK DUNLAP: Yeah, I don't have to use the navigation around here. That's nice (smiling).

As simple as it sounds, it's knowing where you're driving. I just kind of gives you that comfort of a little bit of a home feeling, honestly. Like I said, I've been here a lot. Even through junior junior golf. Just gives you a little extra comfort when you're on the golf course.

Q. Thinking back to the U.S. Am, how unique was that experience physically walking the fairways with fans?

NICK DUNLAP: Yeah, I think that's something during that junior and during the am that honestly makes it so special, is you can get so close to the fans. You can feel their

excitement, their energy. You can draft off of that a little bit, honestly. It can be a little hectic at times. I think that's kind of what those last two matches of those two events, what makes it really, really special.

THE MODERATOR: Thanks. Good luck this week.

NICK DUNLAP: Thanks. Appreciate it.

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