

U.S. Open Championship 2026

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Southampton, New York, USA

Shinnecock Hills Golf Club

Jackson Koivun

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: Welcome to the 126th U.S. Open. I'm here with Jackson Koivun, the World's No. 1 ranked amateur player. Jackson, you put together an all-time college season this past season. Talk about that and how rewarding it is to see your hard work pay off.

JACKSON KOIVUN: Yeah, I mean, this college season was great. It exceeded all expectations. Obviously I cap it off with the National Championship, was so much fun with my teammates. Just to get out there and to enjoy college golf for one last year was really fun.

Q. You did play in the U.S. Open last year at Oakmont. Who were some of the takeaways, and what are you going to bring this week that you learned last year?

JACKSON KOIVUN: Oakmont was hard for sure. I've seen a little bit of this golf course, and they're different and the same in their own ways. I'm just excited to go out there with a smart game plan and go see what I can do.

Q. Have you played Shinnecock yet, and if so -- okay, you have not yet. What are some of your expectations about the golf course? What saw have you heard about it?

JACKSON KOIVUN: I hadn't played Shinnecock until this week. I played 18 yesterday and nine this morning. You look at the scores, and I think there's only been a handful of guys to ever shoot under par for four rounds out here.

Just getting into that mindset that making pars is a good score and managing your mistakes and accepting that sometimes you can hit a good shot and it not pay off. That's just kind of the mindset.

Q. (No microphone.)

JACKSON KOIVUN: Yeah, we played the back nine yesterday, and he's such a good player and so much fun to be around. He's still young, but he's got a lot of talent. I'm excited to see where he goes from his freshman to sophomore year.

Q. It's been a whirlwind month for you; you obviously spoke about that a little bit earlier. Talk about what this past month has been like.

JACKSON KOIVUN: Yeah, this past month has definitely been a whirlwind. Just a lot of travel, a lot of change, but all good things. All good things that I'm happy and excited about, and just happy to be here at Shinnecock.

Q. Having already won an NCAA title, what kept you from turning pro last year? You could have, right?

JACKSON KOIVUN: Yeah, I could have turned pro after sophomore year, but I just knew I wasn't ready. It was kind of a game time decision if I wanted to. I holed my putt on the last hole at nationals and got my 20th point there. I had about a week to make that decision, and I just wasn't ready, and I'm very happy I made that decision.

Q. What about you wasn't ready, do you think?

JACKSON KOIVUN: I think my golf game was there. I just think I wasn't ready to leave college, and mentally just wasn't ready for the potential hardships and the travel and everything like that.

But taking another year to really wrap my mind around that was good for me, and now I'm definitely ready.

Q. How long did it take you to get in nine holes this morning?

JACKSON KOIVUN: We played pretty quick, actually. We played in about 2:00, 2:15. We just had a twosome.

Q. What have you learned from yesterday and a little bit this morning? If you were to compare Oakmont being hard, and this is a hard test, how are they different in terms of their degree of difficulty?

JACKSON KOIVUN: I would say Oakmont is a little more penal off the tee. We got a little more forgiving fairways here, but these greens have a lot of slope. From what I've heard, they're shutting off the water soon. A lot of chipping



and putting practice these next couple days to get adjusted to the firm, baked-out greens that we've seen in the past in 2018.

Q. If you decided last year not to turn, at what point in this season was it that you said to yourself, I'm definitely going to go?

JACKSON KOIVUN: I kind of made that mental decision right around Christmas time, just sitting down, talking with my parents, and after playing in the fall. I had a pretty good run on the PGA TOUR that summer, and I just kind of wanted to get back out there.

Once I started to finally accept that I'm turning pro after this year, I felt a big weight off my shoulders and started to play pretty good this spring.

Q. What do you have to do, or what were you doing well when you're winning? What part of your game do you feel like is really churning when you're winning?

JACKSON KOIVUN: I feel like everything kind of starts working in its own ways. Mainly my mental game and the way I see golf courses. It's been very good as of late.

A couple of tournaments my iron play has been very, very good. That's just kind of what I see, and then I just give myself a lot more looks at birdies with my putter. Definitely my iron play and my mental game.

Q. When you decided to come back, now that you look back on that decision, what do you feel like you, I guess, learned or picked up or grew in the most over this last college season?

JACKSON KOIVUN: Just maturity. That's pretty much my answer. I just gave myself another year to grow, grow as a human being, mentally and physically and everything like that.

Q. In terms of preparing for these tournaments, you said you played PGA TOUR events before, you played the U.S. Open last year. Is there any part of it that feels a little different now that you know that it's about to become your job?

JACKSON KOIVUN: Not really. I'm just coming out here, trying to have fun and just enjoy it.

Q. When you're playing a big tournament on a golf course you've never seen before, can you talk about your preparation process? Do you go through Google Earth? Are you talking to people? Can you talk a little bit about what that looks like?

JACKSON KOIVUN: On the days coming up, I watched some YouTube videos from 2018 to see some lines and stuff, but I got out here pretty early this week, trying to figure out start lines off the tees and where my misses are and kind of go from there. Just doing a lot of chipping and putting work, but understanding that the golf course is going to change some Thursday.

Q. Reflecting on the past year, in what ways do you feel like you're a different player than when you played at Oakmont?

JACKSON KOIVUN: Like I talked about earlier, I'd just say maturity, just understanding how golf courses can affect you and where the misses are and what's a good score and what pins you can go at, what pins you can't go at, and just accepting that par is just a great score on some holes.

Q. How much golf did you watch as a kid?

JACKSON KOIVUN: A good amount.

Q. I'm guessing you were probably 11, 12 years old when this was played last time. Do you have any recollection of that, Mickelson hitting moving balls, anything like that?

JACKSON KOIVUN: That was one thing I did remember. I just remember it looked really hard. Obviously, guys are hitting moving balls on the green, it's dicey.

You watch some guys just hit some shots in places, and when you're younger, it's easier to say, well, how did he do that? Now you come out here, and you're like, okay, well, that makes a lot more sense now.

Q. In terms of mistakes, can you think of any examples, probably recently being Auburn time, where you really got yourself in a pickle and had to salvage a double, and have there been times where you didn't get yourself out and made a really big blunder?

JACKSON KOIVUN: Let me think on that one.

Okay, I got a good one. So in the final round of match play at the National Championship, we're on the 9th hole, and I hit myself in probably the worst spot, just short-sided. Like 1 out of 10 it stays on the green.

He's long of the green and kind of messes up, and I chip it way right and end up winning the hole with 5. So that was definitely one I kind of lucked out on.

Q. Or played smartly if you want to give yourself

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credit.

JACKSON KOIVUN: Yeah.

Q. Lastly, when you talk about being mature to handle hardships, what kind of hardships are you expecting in the next year, two years, that anyone would?

JACKSON KOIVUN: I wouldn't say hardships. It's just adjusting. Adjusting to being on your own a little more. Adjusting to traveling week in and week out to different places, time zones, different golf courses, different grass. Just all that adjustment is going to take time. I'm just really looking forward to it.

Q. (No microphone.)

JACKSON KOIVUN: I missed the cut at the Rocket Mortgage in 2024. Not as fun as making the cut.

Q. When you talk about adjustments, this is a sport where you lose more than you win. How do you deal with that?

JACKSON KOIVUN: For me, it's just finding acceptance in golf. Obviously coming into any event, I'm going to try to win it, but not pushing too hard and accepting that, like you said, it's not a game where you win every week. So understanding that and getting that through the head and just keep on going.

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