

# U.S. Open Championship 2026

Thursday, June 18, 2026

Southampton, New York, USA

Shinnecock Hills Golf Club

## Retief Goosen

## Corey Pavin

### Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: Welcome to Thursday at the U.S. Open. It's my pleasure to be joined by two U.S. Open champions here to my left, the 1995 U.S. Open champion Corey Pavin, and two-time U.S. Open champion, including right here at Shinnecock Hills in 2004, Retief Goosen.

Retief, let's start with you. We talked the other day. This is your first time back since you won 22 years ago. What's it like to be back here at Shinnecock Hills?

RETIEF GOOSEN: Well, yes, 22 years, I can't believe it. Yeah, it was quite a bit of an experience walking around here yesterday and seeing some of the holes and remembering some of the shots and remembering some of the bad ones, too. Especially Sunday, you remember everything.

Yeah, the course has changed quite a bit. Much longer than it was, and the fairways is much wider. The greens still looks about the same. Tricky, very tricky.

It was rather weird walking around outside the ropes. I would have liked to have been inside the ropes, but it was a great feeling and good memories. I just can't believe how much time flies.

THE MODERATOR: Corey, for you, you had one of the most famous shots in U.S. Open major championship history on that 18th hole. How much do you still get asked about that 4-wood shot?

COREY PAVIN: Gladly, I get asked about it a lot. It's a good thing to be remembered for. Yeah, it seems a lot of times there's not a day that goes by or at least when I'm at a golf course where somebody doesn't say something to me about it. It's always a very positive thing to have to talk about, so to speak.

Yeah, it was probably the most important shot of my life and most memorable in many ways. Like Retief said, coming back here is always pretty cool. Just even this year -- I've been back here multiple times, but to come out

here and the first time you look and you see the clubhouse, it's so iconic. It's just a flood of memories comes back. It's pretty fun.

THE MODERATOR: What was it like for you to step back out on the 18th hole and live from the U.S. Open. You got to hit that shot again and hit a pretty good one. What was it like to be back out there 228 yards away on 18?

COREY PAVIN: Yeah, oddly enough, it was much easier in '95 to do it under all that pressure. It's pretty strange to just walk out there and drop a ball and hit one shot. I was probably more nervous doing that yesterday than I was in the tournament.

But I was very glad I hit a good shot. I hit it on the face. I hit it solidly. It was all very good.

But it was fun. It was fun to do, but it was a little nervy out there doing it just out of nowhere. It's pretty hard.

THE MODERATOR: Retief, in 2004 on that back nine you had a series of important shots. Made a big birdie on 16, but also had a series of par saves and even a bogey save that would seemingly be crucial to you taking home the title. If you had to pick one of those shots that maybe was most important to you to win in 2004, what would that be?

RETIEF GOOSEN: All of them. I'll pick all of them.

The birdie on 11 was key after I just three-putted 10. Then yeah, I did make a few good par saves, but I think the birdie on 16 to get back to even with Phil was key.

I didn't realize until I walked onto the 17th tee that he actually made double bogey, or even after I teed off, that he made double bogey.

So then I proceed to hit it in the bunker, too, on the left and hit a bunker shot probably 3, 4 feet above the hole. I managed to make my putt where he pretty much three-putted from. That was the big turnaround for me.

That's the thing that stands out the most. I'm standing over

**ASAP** . . . when all is said, we're done.®  
sports

there with a little trickler down the hill and tell yourself, come on, make a good stroke, and you've got a two-shot lead coming down the last.

THE MODERATOR: Weather has been a big part of the discussion this week. We had a little fog delay this morning. Winds are supposed to pick up throughout the day. For both of you, when you play a course like Shinnecock -- open, not too many trees, firm and fast -- what are some of the adjustments you would have to make if the wind was blowing to control your golf ball?

COREY PAVIN: They're going to have a battle today, that's for sure. It's blowing pretty hard. I remember the first round in '18 it blew pretty hard, too, if I remember right. It blew pretty hard in the last round in '95 when I won, as well.

It's just very difficult to control your ball into these greens. It's still firm out there. I watched a couple shots on TV this morning. So it's still going to be the same challenges. Trying to figure out how to hit your shot into these greens and keep it in a spot where you can play from, it's going to be tough.

I saw the hole locations are a little benign today. I think they're expecting -- with the expectation of the wind. I think the scoring might be okay, but it's going to be really tough to have to hit good shots into these greens. That's going to be the biggest challenge.

THE MODERATOR: Retief, for you, did you make any changes when the wind blows to try to control your ball a little bit better?

RETIEF GOOSEN: Well, instantly you start thinking gripping down on the club and taking one or two clubs more and just swinging it easy trying to keep it down and the main thing is keeping your spin rate down, stop the ball from getting up in the air.

So I think guys that are naturally lowball flighters today will do well. All of the high hitters are really going to have to adjust today the way they step up to the golf ball to get the right flight.

In a way, when a golf course is open like this, I think at least you know the wind is there, and it's going to be a two-club wind or a three-club wind shot. Unlike Augusta with all the trees and the swirling of the wind, it gets really tricky to judge and control the distance.

I think with this openness, it just helps a little bit knowing that it's going to be two clubs, and you're just going to have to hit the right shape and try and hold it up against the wind

or draw with it depending on the position of the pins.

Like Corey said, it's going to be tough, but I'm sure they've thought about this and trying to make it reasonable. I think if 4-under or so is leading by the end of the day, they'll be happy and just the way they wanted it.

COREY PAVIN: I think you've got to look at guys that play really well in the wind. I think it might be a good day on the leaderboard for European players, or players that have played in Europe a lot, because they play in some pretty tough conditions. I wouldn't be surprised to see a pretty good European contingent up there today because of these conditions.

THE MODERATOR: We'll keep an eye out for that.

**Q. Retief, 520 golfers have played in the last four U.S. Opens here at Shinnecock. You're one of three to finish level-par or better. What are your thoughts when you hear that, and do you think the champion on Sunday is in red figures with these conditions?**

RETIEF GOOSEN: Well, I wanted to be one of those three. I didn't really think about it until I saw it also a couple days ago. Yeah, it just shows you the pedigree of this golf course, how hard it can be.

Who knows with these conditions? We could see something. It's supposed to get better, the weather, but it's still going to be breezy, and they could firm it up. It could be something well over par that could win it. Who knows? They can do that if they want, really make it really hard.

Always the goal is somewhere around par or just over par is what they like to see.

**Q. Corey, you were talking yesterday, because you played in 2004 when Retief won, you made a comment yesterday about how he had it tougher than you did when you won in '95. Can you talk a little bit just about how this course plays differently based on the wind and the wind direction and why Retief had it more difficult than you did?**

COREY PAVIN: Well, I might have been a little tongue in cheek in that.

Yeah, in '04 the last day was brutal. It was probably the hardest day I've ever seen anywhere, any tournament, let alone U.S. Open. We were talking about it, 78.6 was the average score on Sunday, which in the modern era, it might be the highest average score in a last round. I'm not sure if that's accurate, but it's got to be close.

So that's why I said that because it was so hard. The conditions were so difficult, it required a tremendous amount of patience and perseverance. That's why Retief's day in winning was so special. As he said, he had 11 one-putts? 12? What was it, 11?

RETIEF GOOSEN: Enough.

COREY PAVIN: That's what happens when you get conditions like that. You're not going to hit greens. You're going to have to chip it up there, and it's very hard to get the ball close because the greens are so firm and fast.

Retief made a bunch of 8-, 10-, 12-footers, and that's what you have to do on a day like that. You have to be strong mentally, and that's what's so cool about what Retief did.

**Q. We had about a two-hour delay, I think, this morning. Wondering for each of you, how do you balance that mix between practice and taking a break? How much practice is too much practice? Or how do you get through potentially if you're on the golf course and you have to come off? What did that look like for each of you?**

RETIEF GOOSEN: These young guys, they have physios and nutritionists and all that stuff with them. I'm sure they will find good use of their time in between rounds.

Sometimes when you've gone out and you've played a few holes and you struggled a little bit, having that little break could help you. You could get back on the range, maybe work on a few things. You've had a bit of a feel for the course and the weather and what to expect, so you can make a few changes hopefully on your swing and just dial your swing in a little bit more.

So a break could benefit you sometimes, and sometimes when you're really on a roll, 8-under or something and you suddenly have a break, it could stop the momentum. So it will be different for every guy that's out there in that delay period.

COREY PAVIN: It's tough. As Retief said, there's two sides to that equation. Sometimes it can be good, and sometimes it's not good. The hardest thing is just waiting. Especially if you've already warmed up, and then you have to go back, stop, and do it again.

I was watching the TV this morning, and Padraig came on and said that he started -- he warmed up, and then he had to stop and come back. Padraig was making a joke. He's in good shape, but he said, you know, it's kind of tough on an old guy like that to have to warm up twice. You only have so much energy. I'm sure he was joking, but that's

hard.

It's hard to warm up, even play a couple holes, then stop and have to warm up again, and you don't know when. There's a lot of things.

Most of these guys have done that a lot, so you kind of have an idea of what it's going to feel like. I think, if I was playing right now or in the field, I'd be pretty happy to have an early afternoon time today. I think that's probably the best break to have because they can just -- they know there's going to be maybe a delay for the afternoon, go out and play, and then they can just play tomorrow. So it doesn't really mess up their routines that much.

**Q. Rather than being here talking to us, wouldn't you rather be out there playing?**

COREY PAVIN: Right now? Absolutely not. My game's not good enough to get out there and play at a golf course like this.

I remember coming out here in '18, and I wanted to play that year because it would have been my fourth Open here. I didn't get in the tournament. But I remember I walked out here at 7:30 in the morning in '18, and the wind was howling. I was, like, you know, maybe it's a good thing I'm not playing today.

My time has passed to play out here now. The course, I don't even know what it's playing this week. What is it, 74 or something?

**Q. 74.**

COREY PAVIN: That's really long. We play a lot on the Champions Tour. We play a lot of 7,100, 7,200 yard courses. They're also par 72 courses, too. This place is way longer than when we played. It's probably 400 yards, 350 yards longer, and it makes a big difference.

So I'm fine watching, you know. I can be a fan and watch it. It will be fun to watch today and see how everybody does with the wind and how they play.

I love the strategy of the game. So it will be fun to watch how they play, where they hit the shots, what they do.

I think, Retief, when you won on Sunday, you hit six greens? Five? Seven? How many greens did you hit on Sunday? How many greens in regulation on Sunday?

RETIEF GOOSEN: Yeah, probably around six, but that's a U.S. Open for you. A lot of them were just on the fringe or on the edge of the green.

Yeah, I would have loved to have played this week and give it a go.

COREY PAVIN: Yeah, but you hit it 320 yards still.

RETIEF GOOSEN: I would have loved to have played and being out there, but that time has been and gone. I would have liked to have played in '18, but it didn't happen for me. No, the golf course looks great. It would have been nice.

**Q. Can I have a follow-up? Corey, what won it for you?**

COREY PAVIN: What won it for me? I could give the easy answer, having the lowest score of the week.

I think for me it was just course management was really important. It was the most important factor. I was playing really well when I came in here. I'd lost a playoff the week before, so my game was good.

But I controlled my ball really well. I put myself in positions where I could get it up-and-down when I missed a green. I'm pretty sure I hit 37 of the 72 greens in regulation. So short game always has to be good in a U.S. Open, and mine was exceptionally good that week.

It's hard to point to one exact thing, but probably just my patience and kind of perseverance out there and just keeping my head on straight and not getting upset about anything, any bad bounce or anything like that. That's a critical factor in winning the U.S. Open is patience, and you have to play really well, that's for sure.

**Q. Obviously the game has changed so much, both with distance and other things, but what have you seen out of young players today that impresses you? Retief, when you see these great, young South African players that I'm sure you inspired, what are the types of qualities in their games that impress you that you see coming out today?**

RETIEF GOOSEN: I mean golf now is more of an athletic sport than it's ever been. The guys drink protein shakes and stuff, and we used to drink wine and all that stuff, you know.

COREY PAVIN: Speak for yourself (laughter).

RETIEF GOOSEN: The exercises the guys do now is so around golf, to strengthen the golf swing and make the golf swing faster. When we grew up, there was none of that science around, or early on, all the launch monitors and all

that stuff. It wasn't that easy to dial in your stuff like they can now.

The guys are definitely much more athletes now than they used to be. As you get older, with us flexibility is the main thing. We work on trying to stay flexible and stay away from injuries is the main thing to keep going, but when you're young, as we all know, you just swing away. There's no issue. Eventually it will catch up.

**Q. Corey, just as an American, just with our U.S. National Development Program and the things that we've been doing over the last few years, what are your thoughts on that? What kind of benefit would that have been if you'd have had that when you were a junior golfer?**

COREY PAVIN: I think the programs are getting better and better for the young people, young men and women, to have an opportunity to play golf. I think a lot of places around the world it's like that. The U.S. is doing much, much better with that.

Any time you can get young people playing, wherever you are, it just builds the base pool of talent, and it's great to see. It's a little tricky, I think, for like junior players. Once they're older than 17, there's kind of a little bit of a gap of trying to get these young people out there playing.

Most of the best players end up playing in college or doing something like that, but there's kind of a group that maybe don't play but can still have an opportunity. I'd say there's a little bit of a hole there.

But it's much better. You see programs in Korea, especially over there or other places around the world, where it's like a machine, and I think the U.S. is catching up a little bit with that, with all the programs with the different organizations. I'm not going to start mentioning them, but it's good to see.

It's a great game. Even if these young players don't play professionally, it's obviously a great game to play as you grow up and you're an adult. It opens a lot of doors in the business world. Just socially, it's a fantastic game.

**Q. Obviously we spend a lot of time talking about wind, talking about the greens. What is one particular challenge that you guys both have seen out here in your time playing that maybe we haven't talked quite as much about? A physical challenge, a mental challenge, what do you guys think?**

RETIEF GOOSEN: Well, it's the game plan around this course. Missing -- sometimes it's good to miss the green,

but make sure you miss it on the right side. Don't go for the flag, because if you miss it on the left, you make bogey or double bogey.

I think today is going to be one of those days. Hitting greens doesn't actually mean you're going to score well. It's where you miss it that you're going to give yourself the chances to get it up-and-down and score.

Probably the same off the tees, you know. Obviously the fairways are much wider now than it used to be, and the rough, obviously try to stay out of the rough. But if you do miss, at least miss on the side where you can maybe have a half an angle.

The USGA is so good at setting all of that up that it forces you to miss on the wrong side the whole time, and that's what a U.S. Open does. So it's really a good game plan, and miss where you can score from.

COREY PAVIN: Yeah, I think the mentality this week is so different than regular events on TOUR, and that's what kind of differentiates the U.S. Open, for sure.

So you have guys going out there and on regular TOUR events they're just aggressive, they're going for pins. You see a lot of 64s, 5s, 3s, 2s, and then you come out here, and it's a whole different ballgame. I always felt like almost half the field was eliminated just because they don't have the constitution to play an event like this. They get frustrated. They have this mentality of being aggressive, and it backfires at a U.S. Open, for sure.

And the patience is unique. There's so many players in the field that will have it, and you can look down over the years who's played well in U.S. Opens, and you can see that character trait in the players.

So it's different. A lot of the majors are like that, but especially the U.S. Open. Patience is very hard to learn, and that's why you usually don't see the younger players winning a U.S. Open, because it takes a few years to kind of figure it out.

**Q. Retief, when you were driving around yesterday, we were talking about some of the changes that have happened to the course in the 22 years since you've been here. We talked about widening fairways, a couple more trees. Curious from each of you, were there any particular holes that have changed dramatically or ones that you're interested in watching this week that have changed a bit since you both won here?**

RETIEF GOOSEN: Yesterday, looking at only those few

holes I looked at, I mean, 18 -- the one thing you notice a lot is the tee boxes that are 50 yards back to where they were 20 years ago.

I mean, 18, I was standing on the 18th tee, and I was looking at the stand here behind 17, and I was saying to myself, if you got a left-to-right wind on 18, you're going to have to start it over the stand. It's almost in the way, so far that tee is back.

So it's quite visually intimidating, the tee shot already, just with you almost have to hit it over the TV tower. It's quite a thing to see some of the holes.

Obviously, the first thing you notice is where the tee boxes are now from where we played from. Like 13 and 14, I was hitting 3-iron off the tee, and now the guys are hitting drivers. So it's totally different holes length-wise.

But they've got all those tee boxes to move it around and do whatever they want, how they want the hole to play.

COREY PAVIN: Certainly the length of the course has changed. The fairways are much wider. I'm not a huge fan of that personally, but it is what it is.

Another big difference out here is when they redid the course, around the greens, when I won, it was all rough around the greens. It was long rough right off the edge. Now there's the run-off areas, which changes a lot of how you play. You can miss the green by 5 feet, or even on the green it can roll off and roll 20 yards.

So your short game ability and what you need to do has changed out here, at least since '95. There's those chipping areas, I guess they call them, is different. It's just a different setup than if you want to call it a typical U.S. Open. So those are the things that stand out in my mind.

**Q. Winning a major championship has to be a highlight of your career. Now as you look back 20 years ago, 30 years ago, to win a U.S. Open at Shinnecock Hills, one of the cathedrals of the game, what does that mean to you now that you've had a little time to let it set in? Retief?**

RETIEF GOOSEN: Yeah, this is the ultimate in golf for us, the U.S. Open. There is nothing tougher. It's supposed to be the hardest golf tournament, and it shows that it is the hardest golf tournament to win, and the scoring shows it.

Yeah, it's a great honor to win at this course that's been around for such a long time. I would have liked to have won it at other great courses, too, but Shinnecock would be one of the top ones for me.



COREY PAVIN: I'll steal what you said yesterday. Shinnecock is one of the most iconic places in the world. I think if you probably ask any golfer where would you like to win, Shinnecock would be one. Probably Pebble Beach, St Andrews. Maybe Muirfield in Scotland would be another one.

For me, Pebble and here and The Old Course would be probably my top three. So having won here is very, very, very special.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you both for being here. We appreciate everything you continue to do for the game, and we're proud to have you back as U.S. Open champions.

FastScripts by ASAP Sports