

U.S. Open Championship 2026

Thursday, June 18, 2026

Southampton, New York, USA

Shinnecock Hills Golf Club

James Nicholas

Quick Quotes



Q. Can you just talk about the experience this morning hitting the first shot and what that meant to you?

JAMES NICHOLAS: Yeah, I got my first taste of a U.S. Open last year at Oakmont, and that was a lot different than this year for many reasons, one being this is my home state. You dream about playing in your home state, your home U.S. Open.

Winged Foot is where I grew up. I won the Junior Club Championship there, so I always circle that one on my calendar. Then I realized that Shinnecock Hills was on the calendar even before that.

Obviously to get through regional qualifying, sectional qualifying, to have a spot out here and then be honored with the first tee shot is a dream come true. You dream of hitting the first tee shot under some pressure. I didn't hit the best one, but I ended up making a par and just to kind of continue the day with a lot of grit was pretty cool.

Q. A lot of people are struggling out there. You had a great round. What went well, and what was kind of the strategy?

JAMES NICHOLAS: Yeah, this is New York golf, and this is what I grew up on. A lot of these guys are the best in the world. There's no ands, ifs, or buts about it. I'm playing with these guys and trying to do my best, and I think that's more the mindset.

When I get on Korn Ferry and I play week in and week out out there, sometimes you doubt yourself, but out here you almost have like this let's just send it and see what happens. You put less pressure on yourself, put less stress.

Last year after round one I was T-6 in the U.S. Open. Then round two I struggled because I put all that pressure onto myself, and you have expectation.

I talked to my mental coach, Joe Perron, about fear of failure. It's something that I struggle with. It's like I want to do so well. Once I put myself in position, you get scared,

you have this fear of failure. When you're on Korn Ferry, it's almost like you should do well, because I feel like I'm good enough. Then when you're here, nobody thinks you're going to do well, they write you off.

That's sort of the beauty of it, and that's sort of the mindset I need to have for every round of golf, whether playing on the Americas Tour or no status at all or Korn Ferry or the PGA TOUR. That's what's helped me be gritty and bounce back after doubles.

I made two doubles out there today. One, I missed a putt this long, and the other one I missed a two-footer. I think just reminding myself this is a U.S. Open, it's tough for everybody, has helped me go forward.

Q. What time did you get up? How did you prepare to be here at 6:30 and be ready for all that?

JAMES NICHOLAS: I actually had my Meta Glasses on, and I made a little video. I said, I'm playing round 1 of the U.S. Open. Let's just go have a great day. I get to do this. I get to do all the hectic travel to be here. I get to come out here and play in incredibly tough conditions. I get to play one of the best golf courses in the world. Instead of saying, I have to, and sort of setting that perspective.

Then looking my family in the face as we are walking through the gates, look at this, guys, we're playing in the United States Open. Obviously to get here, and wake up at 3:55. I'll read through my schedule because Ryan French posted it.

It was a 4:10 wakeup, but I actually woke up at 3:55, so I was a little bit antsy. Yeah, shower, change at 4:45. Head to the course at 4:40. Got here at 5:00 to have some breakfast. Started our warmup at 5:20. Then 6:35 ball out, and that's sort of what I always say no matter what the round is.

I didn't put a finish time, but it would have been, like, 11:00. I wasn't expecting 1:59. It's going to throw a wrench in my afternoon beach plans, but you know, it's okay, it's okay.



Q. When did you wear these Meta Glasses?

JAMES NICHOLAS: In the morning, at 3:55.

Q. So when you woke up, you put them on.

JAMES NICHOLAS: Yeah, I have a YouTube channel. I'm trying to film some behind the scenes of what it's like to play in the U.S. Open. I put them on and talked to myself, talked to the fans, and try to share this with everybody else.

Q. You've been a pretty big figure on the Longest Day broadcast for two years in a row now. How has that changed your life?

JAMES NICHOLAS: They asked me to do the documentary for this year on how I prepare for the U.S. Open. I wouldn't say it's changed my life. Getting into the U.S. Open is great. Playing well is great. You get a couple more followers on Instagram, but your family still loves you the same. Your friends still think of you the same.

That's what I love about my friends and family is that, yeah, I'm a golfer, I'm playing in the U.S. Open this week, but that's not my identity. You hear a lot of guys talk about that more and more.

I think I struggled with that as a kid. I played a lot of sports. I was a hockey player, a football player. I played lacrosse, basketball, kind of you name it. I defined myself as an athlete. That was sort of the only thing I did. I didn't hang out with friends. I studied, and I played sports.

As I get older, you sort of have this perspective change. We're playing a silly game. I hit some great golf shots out there, and I was not rewarded whatsoever. I missed a one-footer. But the more you can laugh it off, the less you can define yourself as a golfer, the better you become.

To answer the question, it didn't change my life, but it's pretty dang cool. This is my dream, and this is what I aspire to be.

Q. There was one time you were at the top of the leaderboard at the U.S. Open. Did you take a chance to appreciate that?

JAMES NICHOLAS: I figured if I birdied the 1st hole, I'd be top of the leaderboard. I'm the leader in the clubhouse, so I've got that going for me. Actually, I don't know if I finished before the guys on the other side, so that was a thought.

You want to be the last guy to hit that final putt on Sunday, and I think my wife and I have talked about it a lot, and

she's been my therapist, mental coach, supporter. She's the best. She kind of says, like, it doesn't really matter. Yeah, you can shoot yourself out of the tournament on the first day, you can't win it.

I think reminding yourself that, like, I shot 1-over today, I'm really happy with the way I played, did a couple things well. I want to go clean a few things up, but I'm going to come back here tomorrow and do the best I can. It's a long, long tournament, but it's a great start. Hoping to move forward and keeping it the same.

Q. You said you thought you'd be done by 11:30-ish. I'm curious, what do you do for the two hours? I think you got two holes in.

JAMES NICHOLAS: Got two holes in, yeah.

Q. And you're sitting around for two hours, what do you do? What's going through your head?

JAMES NICHOLAS: I went to the range immediately because I thought it was going to be quick. So I started hitting some balls, just getting ready for that 3rd tee shot, just playing the course that way. Then 15 minutes later, 15 minutes later, it's like, okay, I'm going inside.

I went upstairs and hung out with my wife and my mom and a couple of other friends that were just hanging there. Maxwell Moldovan is hanging out this week with his wife, Korn Ferry guy. Said hi to Barbara and David Young, friends of mine from (indiscernible) section. David and I grew up playing together. Just kind of hanging out, keeping it light.

It's the U.S. Open, but you've just got to relax and hang out. So I was killing time. Once I knew the 9:05 tee time, I went out and hit some balls and went right back out.

Q. Did it feel like there was any sort of, I guess, leeway you need to give yourself to get back into the rhythm?

JAMES NICHOLAS: No, I hooked my first shot into the fescue, hit it up there, and made like a 15-footer for birdie. That was kind of when I settled in for sure.

Q. I'm curious about specifically the 14th hole. It's playing incredibly difficult, but it's a pretty short par-4. What makes it so tough? I don't see how you did on it.

JAMES NICHOLAS: Yeah, I made double.

Q. Oh, good one to ask.

JAMES NICHOLAS: Actually, 14. I've got to remember



the holes. Let me see my yardage.

Q. Sorry, I must mean 13 then. The 367-yard par-4.

JAMES NICHOLAS: 13. Yeah, 371, I made double, so that was great. I hit it in the right fescue. Thought I had a decent enough lie to go to the green, and I ended up getting it closed down, went way long left. At that point, you're just trying not to make triple.

I tried to hit it in the bunker to give myself a chance to hit up-and-down, and if not, walk away and keep battling.

Q. What is it about that hole? You're not the only one. It's getting people. When you see 367, you go, oh, they're going to feast on it, but they're not.

JAMES NICHOLAS: It's straight into the fan today, and it's blowing 25 sustained out here. You've got to hit a wood, and you've got to keep it low. Put a spin on it, and it's going to go absolutely nowhere.

I talked to my caddie off the tee, and we're like, we either take our risk here or take it going into the green. We decided to take it off the tee. So hit mini driver, hit a great shot, but it just kind of went up and soared right into the fescue.

Tried to get something in those bunkers, closed over, went left of the green. Hit it in the bunker, hit a good bunker shot that barely stayed on the green, but the green's like this. So if you're in the fairway and it lands short spin, it's coming off the front. You go over with no spin, it's going off the back.

Then once you're on the green, it's a tough two-putt. So it's just playing tough.

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