

# U.S Senior Women's Open Championship

Sunday, August 4, 2024

Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, USA

Fox Chapel Golf Club

## Leta Lindley

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: We welcome Leta Lindley, the champion of the sixth U.S. Senior Women's Open. How does that sound?

LETA LINDLEY: It sounds amazing. Amazing. There's no words.

I've been dreaming about this day for so long, three years now before I turned 50, and I've imagined myself hoisting this trophy and winning this championship, and I dared to dream big.

It's just so satisfying to stand here now as your champion.

**Q. How satisfying is it to set the championship record with a 64 in a final round and come from behind and you win it with a 9-under total?**

LETA LINDLEY: That's amazing. I don't know that anybody would have thought to write that kind of story for me. I've always been an underdog player, sneaky, under the radar. I have dared to dream so much bigger this season than I did when I was playing on the LPGA Tour.

That's a pretty amazing feat, and I'm proud. I knew if I played like I was capable of that I would possibly hold this trophy one day.

I felt like as each year ticked by, there would be a new group of 50-year-old rookies coming out, and it would just get tougher and tougher, so third time is a charm, and I'm excited to go back to San Diego Country Club where I grew up in San Diego and to be the reigning champion and play there next year.

**Q. Is there even more satisfaction when you were runner-up the last two years and had to work so hard in this championship to get to this point?**

LETA LINDLEY: Yes. To some degree there was maybe a little bit of a pressure because everybody would say, come on, Leta, third time is a charm, you can do this, you

can do this. I really did try to come into this championship just calm and taking it one shot at a time and not trying to put too much pressure on myself because it would be easy to do that and maybe crumble.

I knew there was a lot of golf that had to be played. I wanted to come into this patient, focused, and just try my best, and whatever happened happened. And here I am.

**Q. You hit all 18 greens in regulation, but can you talk about the putting. Have you ever had a round where you putted better?**

LETA LINDLEY: I don't think so, not under that kind of pressure. I was nauseous all day, to be honest. And I was doing yoga breaths all around the golf course to try and bring my heart rate down.

I putted amazing yesterday. I made so many clutch eight-footers for par that kept me in this championship. So if I have to look back at something, some days aren't going to be perfect, and I was just grinding it out, just trying to hold my ground and not give up too many shots.

I was really pleased, and I had said last night, I said, I think maybe today is going to -- with yesterday's round and the way I fought was going to pay off today, and it did. I putted so well today. I don't know that I've ever putted better.

**Q. Did you just feel the greens? Was that what it was? Or you just were in the right rhythm with the stroke?**

LETA LINDLEY: Well, I did hit it closer to the hole today, so that helped, compared to yesterday when I felt like I was putting cross country. I just tried to -- I just kept picturing myself doing my drills, trying to put myself someplace else, not necessarily here I am at the U.S. Open and trying to put that kind of pressure on myself. I'm like, just like at home or just like the game of horse that I play with my husband or just like you're doing in your drills. I really tried to put myself someplace where I was more comfortable.

**Q. Talk about the start. Did you know after that torrid start that you had that you were near the lead or in the lead?**

LETA LINDLEY: I figured I was doing well, and then when Kay Cockerill showed up and the cameras started showing



up, I figured I was doing okay because she was with the final group for five, six holes and then she showed up on 8. So I knew I was doing well.

My husband said, don't look at the scoreboard, just keep playing, keep firing at pins, keep pressing. I didn't want to back down. I didn't want to know it was comfortable and then do something silly. I just wanted to keep being aggressive. I felt like when I'm aggressive I swing better at it than when I'm defensive and trying to guide it. I never really looked at a scoreboard until 18 and saw where I was and coozied that putt up there.

**Q. You said earlier, you talked about just playing Fox Chapel and not worrying about who was on the leaderboard and who you were chasing. Talk about how you stay in that mindset.**

LETA LINDLEY: I practice that a lot. I always tell my students and even myself, I can't control anybody else. I can only control me. I'm paired with Annika. I've played with her before. I think I played with her at NCR. I played with Juli the last three days. I've played with these ladies a lot and know that I can match them when I'm playing well.

I can't control what they're doing. I can only control what I'm doing and play my game. I'm not going to hit it as far as Juli and Annika, but I can certainly hit laser-like woods and irons and I can putt.

**Q. Since you go back to college with Annika, is it more relaxing to be paired with her in the final round?**

LETA LINDLEY: I suppose. I mean, I think, yeah, we played together at NCR, and she's very gracious, and she's a great competitor, but she's also gracious. She's a gracious competitor. It was easy to play with her and Mike, and it was super comfortable. They were very -- as we were coming down the stretch, I think Annika asked my husband, is she enjoying this yet, and I wasn't going to let my foot up off the gas.

Now I'm enjoying it, and tonight I'll enjoy it and tomorrow and the rest of the year while I have this beautiful trophy in my house.

**Q. The last three years -- you finished runner-up the last two but you also had to come from behind all three times. What's it like this year being able to get over the hump and take the lead and ride it out?**

LETA LINDLEY: It's amazing. I just am in shock. I'm dead serious that for the last three years I've had Post-it notes on my mirror saying U.S. Senior Women's Open champion, you can do this, why not you. I have several Post-it notes,

and I brought them with me. They're in my calendar.

I've been thinking about that literally for three years, about hoisting this trophy and telling myself that I was good enough to do this and good enough to win this championship.

**Q. On 15 you hit that chip to about 15 feet. Instead of going over the bridge you went right through the gallery and went on the cart path and went through the ropes. What was going through your mind? You don't see many players go through a gallery to get to a green.**

LETA LINDLEY: It was the path of least resistance. It seemed flatter. There was no other thought process. I'm just trying to find the flattest route to the hole and the quickest route.

**Q. What's this mean for you now to finally say you are an Open champion?**

LETA LINDLEY: This is the cherry on top of my ice cream sundae. I was an underdog player. I had a nice solid career on Tour. I won one LPGA tournament after having two children, which I thought was a pretty amazing feat. But to hold this trophy now in this season of my career when I didn't ever think I would play golf again when I left the Tour in 2012, and really it was teaching that brought me back to competitive golf, I figure if you're going to teach then you'd better do because I think that makes me a better teacher so I can remember what it felt like, so I have to credit my students and the opportunity that I had to start teaching that brought me back to competing, along with some of my peers encouraging me to come back. They said, Leta, you've got to come back, it's fun. There are times when I'm working so hard and I'm in a bunker and it feels like 120 degrees or I'm nauseous coming into the tournament thinking, what am I doing.

But this is all worth it, all those days of blood, sweat and tears, to win this championship. It was worth every minute, every hour that I've put into this.

**Q. They say the adage is experience is the best teacher. How have your experiences taught you to get to this moment?**

LETA LINDLEY: I really think that, as I say -- I say a lot of things to my students, and I have to practice what I preach. See the shot. See yourself having success. Be kind to yourself. Be your best cheerleader. Those are things that I really do believe and try to do inside the ropes. That takes a lot of practice. It doesn't necessarily come naturally to everybody. But I give them a lot of credit, too,

my students. They keep cheering me on. They share this with me.

**Q. You had your son Cole with you who just started picking up golf within the last couple months. What does this show him when he dares to dream that such legitimate things like this can happen?**

LETA LINDLEY: He's such a great kid. Both my kids are so great. He picked up golf. He's just kicking himself that he didn't pick it up sooner.

I told them both, I tried my best, so don't come back to me and say that you're mad at me that you didn't play golf. That was on you.

But it's fun to see him enjoy the game, and I think now he has a greater appreciation for not only what I do but what his father does. Kind of the running joke in the house was that daddy just carries the bag, which is just so not true. He literally is the right half of me. He knows exactly what to say to me to bring out the best in me on the golf course and off the golf course. He really is a secret weapon and my 15th club in the bag. So I share this with him, and all the hard work -- we did this together.

**Q. How much of a convincing job was it to get Matt to come out for the one start a year and it be this one?**

LETA LINDLEY: I don't know that he really had a choice. Then I saw that Martha Leach's husband was caddying for her, and I said, honey, you should be inspired. You've got at least 15 more in you.

I don't think he really had a choice. I just said, you're caddying, and that's all there is to it.

**Q. You talked about yoga breaths on the course. In a week with so many trials and tribulations with Mother Nature, green speeds, the grounds crew keeping things together, what does it say that you kept your cool to get through these 72 holes?**

LETA LINDLEY: Yeah, I mean, it was, it was challenging. Mother Nature was not kind. There was a lot of mud balls, and I could only control what I could control. It is what it is, and I just tried to do the best. Everybody was encountering the same trials out there. I just think that instead of getting upset about it, you just have to embrace it and just try your best. Getting upset isn't going to make you play any better.

**Q. There are a lot of benefits to winning this championship, but one of the benefits comes next year, that you're exempted into the '25 U.S. Women's**

**Open at Erin Hills. How does that feel?**

LETA LINDLEY: My husband told me, I'm like, oh, my goodness, I'd better start speed training so I can hit it further. Those ladies are amazing, and they play the golf course really long. I got the straight part down. I got the putting down. But to my team at home, we'd better start speed training tomorrow.

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