

U.S. Senior Open Championship

Wednesday, June 28, 2023
Stevens Point, Wisconsin, USA
SentryWorld

Joe Pavelski

Press Conference

THE MODERATOR: Please welcome to the flash area ambassador for the U.S. Senior Open championship, Joe Pavelski.

Joe, you went to high school in Stevens Point, you're from the area. What's it like to have a major golf championship come back to your town?

JOE PAVELSKI: It's exciting. I was really excited when I kind of got the call and the invite to be a part of this. Right in the backyard, it's pretty special.

I think the community will definitely have an understanding of how big of an event this is and what it means to golf. To have it here at SentryWorld, of course, got to play growing up a little bit and see the remodel and how it's evolved over the last handful of years.

Just really excited to see these great golfers, how they're going to attack it and play it, and it should be a great weekend.

THE MODERATOR: I know you've played the course over the last few months. What is your first impression of it, and what are these golfers going to be facing?

JOE PAVELSKI: We played it last year once before we headed back to Dallas, and it was great. It's like -- I've heard the comment it's like a stadium out there. There's no divots anywhere.

And then little bit of knowledge I've heard from this weekend is just the rough's thick and it's a little bit more coarse than some guys thought they were coming into.

So really excited. It's going to be great. I know Sentry's been taking care of this place, and it's going to be a great event and a tough challenge for these guys.

Just excited to see some of the Strickers and Kellys and these guys and the different players I watched growing up,



and to be here and be a part of it, it's pretty fun.

Q. Joe, you've literally grown up here in the golden era of golf here, from SentryWorld opening in '82 to all of the stuff happening over at Sand Valley. What is the golf like you've played here now versus when you grew up?

JOE PAVELSKI: It's been great. I grew up, I think I had my first Friday lessons at Tree Acres. That course is not around anymore. First job outside of working with my dad was probably bag room boy at the country club.

To see Sand Valley be around, Erin Hills, Whistling Straits, some of the big events they've hosted, and Sentry really throwing their name in the mix as one of the top courses in the state now is pretty cool to see.

The place you've got to give a little credit to is that Stevens Point Country Club and what they've done the last couple of years.

I grew up playing a ton of golf there, and to see how they've redone it is pretty awesome.

So golf in this area is strong. People are spoiled, I think, with the quality of courses that are here. I spend the summer in Madison now and have been there for a while, so there's some great courses there.

But it's not too far of a drive to come up and play these nice tracks.

Q. Joe, are you taking any time up here in the North Woods? Obviously you're from here, but are you relaxing, taking any off-season time here, or are you on the move after this?

JOE PAVELSKI: We'll be on the move back to Madison. Spend a week there and then off to Tahoe to play in the golf tournament out there, which is just the highlight of the summer.

This is a great leadup to it, be around the energy of a golf tournament, have all the feels, see the guys grinding away.

Go back, get a little lake time, have a good week of training before we get out there. Get on the lake, catch some fish.



I'd love to have a little extra time and get on the river and catch a Muskie, something like that.

We'll maybe slide out to the country club and play a round if we get the time.

No, I love the area. It's great being back.

Q. What's your current handicap, and in about 10 or 11 years, you'll be old enough to maybe play in this tournament. Is that something you ever actually dreamed about?

JOE PAVELSKI: Current handicap I think is literally a flat 0 right now. Dropped a score out the other day, maybe threw one in. The game's -- you know, it gets good at the end of the summer, then the start of summer it starts going the other way.

It's just I've seen that trend for a while with the hockey season and the golf season, and that's fine. I would love to see myself playing in here, but I'm fairly realistic as well of these guys are good.

These guys are really good. I know what goes into getting ready for a hockey season, getting there. I can't imagine what fully throughout growing up and the time they put into it to compete at this level and all the achievements in their careers, they put a big time effort, and they're pretty good.

We'll see how much time we get to play, how much time we dedicate to it, and go from there. Yeah, it would be awesome to play in something like this one day.

Q. I read somewhere that you actually had to beg your mom to get a season pass at Tree Acres. Can you take us back to your starting golf and how quickly you were hooked?

JOE PAVELSKI: Dad wasn't a golfer. Came home, I think, one day and just asked if anybody wanted to do the Friday lessons at Tree Acres, you know, the three-holers. All the same junior golf type stuff.

Went there, younger brother started coming with. Within a year or two I think we were -- yeah, I probably got the pass for my birthday, and I think it might have been \$1.75, \$2.25, somewhere in there.

It was money well spent besides the fact she had to drop me off in the morning and pick me up in the afternoon.

There were a lot of days we spent walking 36 holes and getting out there, trying to be the first tee time so you can buzz through 18 holes. Then that second 18 being nice

and slow.

Those slow rounds, I remember walking through the woods, finding golf balls, all this type of stuff that kids do. Spent a lot of time out at Tree Acres for sure.

Q. Joe, why do you think so many hockey players can make that transition to golf seemingly seamlessly? And why do you think a lot of those hockey players are also hooked on the game?

JOE PAVELSKI: Well, hockey players love to compete, especially with each other. So you see it around the league right now in teammates, it's fun to get out there.

I think, one, the seasons line up as far as playing, training in the wintertime and then having a little bit of off time in the summer to kind of work at your game a little bit. I would like to make the quote that there are some really bad golfers that play hockey as well, but there's a lot of really good guys and good players.

It definitely lends into a similar how you hit the puck and shoot the puck and hit a golf ball. There are some trends, but it's a sport where you definitely have to practice and play to improve, and we'll go from there.

Yeah, it's a great sport. Timeline, I think, is a big factor.

Q. I saw you on the range today before, hitting some balls. I think your son Nate, known as Tuna, I think he won closest to the pin competition. How does that make you feel? His game's catching you.

JOE PAVELSKI: It's pretty good. When he listens to dad he can be a pretty good player. He has this trend of wanting to swing like Bubba Watson and then Jordan Spieth and then Scottie Scheffler and then Wolfe. When he dials it in, he can hit the ball pretty good.

Yeah, he might have got me on closest to the pin.

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