

# U.S. Senior Open Championship

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SentryWorld

## Trip Kuehne

### Press Conference

THE MODERATOR: Welcome to the flash interview area, Trip Kuehne. Trip, add another USGA competition to the resume. What does it feel like to qualify and play in the U.S. Senior Open?

TRIP KUEHNE: It means the world. I just got goosebumps thinking about it. I've told everybody that for a long time, since I qualified. I'm excited. I'm nervous. I'm pumped up. I'm scared to death. Every single bit of emotion is kind of running through my brain and my body, and it's been an incredible few days being here so far.

Yeah, I'm scared. I'm nervous. I'm excited about the opening tee shot tomorrow. To compete in the USGA championship is everything. To be able to compete in the Junior and basically every event to the Senior Open, it means a lot. It means I'm older. It means I've been fairly good for a while.

I think it really means a lot -- I played a lot of golf, especially late in my career, to try to win the USGA Championship to match my brother and sister, being so close. I kind of played for that. I never really played for me. I played golf to be Oklahoma State, to be a state team champion in high school, to make Walker Cup. Those were the goals.

I looked up in this Senior Open and I was like, try to do that for me. That really all started with the 2021 Walker Cup, and here we are. Kind of dreams, I guess, do come true.

THE MODERATOR: Can you take us through your qualifying journey a little bit?

TRIP KUEHNE: Yeah, so hadn't played much golf. Really walked away after the Masters in 2008. I played a couple of events. Seminole Golf Club is my favorite golf club in the world, so I played the Coleman a few years.

I told somebody the other day, I said, I'm not scared to fail. I shot a 91 in, I think, 2012 or 2013. I know what failure



looks like. I know what it feels like.

It's like, hey, COVID came. I started playing some golf again. I wasn't going to go to the Walker Cup and I reached out to Robbie and said, hey, Robbie, is there any way that I can come to the Walker Cup at Seminole? It's my favorite place. It's my favorite event. He said sure. So he told me how.

I bought some hospitality tickets and my whole family went. My family being there and walking the golf course and seeing the best amateurs in the world play my favorite golf course, my family is basically saying, Trip, you're the mayor.

I said, what are you talking about? Like everybody here knows you. It made me realize that I was kind of important to golf. Made me feel good and it made me feel special.

It's like, hey, I'm going to try to qualify for the Senior Open. Maybe there's some things that I can do. I don't know if anybody else has done them.

At that point, if I can qualify for the Four Ball and qualify for the Senior Open and then play in the Senior Amateur, whether I was old enough. I was like, hey, I might be able to play every single event that the USGA ever offered a male, some of which don't exist. I was like, how cool would that be? Again, I'm getting goosebumps thinking about it.

Last year didn't go so well. I actually played really well tee to green. I didn't putt very well. Then I got off to a great start in New Jersey. I'm like, hey, maybe we can do this. Started thinking about it, and then it was a bad bogey from the middle of the fairway, another three-putt, and eventually I made a couple pars and called them and said, it's going to be really, really close.

Made it, cried, had a great dinner, flew home, and here we are.

THE MODERATOR: That's awesome. Now that you're here, how's the course, and what's your time in Wisconsin been like?

TRIP KUEHNE: Man, the course is incredible. I didn't really know what to expect. I didn't expect this. I was like holy four-letter word, this is a big boy, real golf course. It's



great.

It's one of those I wish I would have played more events than four in the last 12 years, this being the fourth.

If you drive the golf ball here you can play very, very well.

If you don't drive the golf ball, there's going to be lots of boxes and other boxes and bogeys and double bogeys.

I think it's incredible. I was lucky enough to play four other U.S. Opens, and other than Oakland Hills in '96 because of the rain, this is the thickest rough I've ever seen.

So it's going to take a quality, quality player from tee to green.

Chipping is pretty hard for me around the greens. These guys are professionals and the greatest plus-50 players in the world. I'm sure they'll be fine. But I hope I don't have to chip a lot.

**Q. Your brother Hank was here this week. Anything that he helped you with in preparation? I know he's a big hitter. He's a great player, U.S. Am champ. Any advice that you guys worked on this week that you think might help you?**

TRIP KUEHNE: Yeah, there's a lot. So he was supposed to go home yesterday, or first thing this morning, and I had to beg him to stay. I really wanted him to -- the more and more I thought about it is I'm going to be nervous. I'm going to be fast. I'm going to be quick. I need him here as long as I can have him here.

I really wanted him to kind of caddie for me, but the more I thought about it, I was like, being the director of golf at Vaquero, he needs to be home. I was like, hey, you need to go home. If something happened -- we're having our Fourth of July fireworks on Saturday. It's like you're responsible for that division. If something happens, it's going to be you.

So he made the correct decision to go back, but he's helped me incredibly. I think Hank just has a great gift of making people feel comfortable, and he made me feel very comfortable. Watching him with the guys so far leading up to this, I'm nervous now, as you all can probably tell, but I became a lot more relaxed because it kind of felt like family. It's been people I'm with the whole time.

He's very knowledgeable with the holes. Like the 15th hole, I've kind of always liked to draw the golf ball, and when he was caddieing for me yesterday he was like, Trip, you cannot draw the ball into this green. You have to hold

it or hit a cut shot into this green or you're going to be chipping from down there. So little things like that.

Little things about, hey, you don't look comfortable on this side of the tee box. Just trying moving to the other side. Just all the knowledge he gained playing professional golf and knowing my game so well.

Finally at one point towards the end of yesterday's round I was like, Hank, I got it. Just let me hit. He was giving me all these numbers, draw this, cut this. I was like, just tell me what the number is and I'll try to hit it towards the flag.

But he's really good.

On Tuesday I was struggling, so yesterday first nine holes I was struggling a little bit. He took the bag and said, let's just play golf. Ultimately that's what it is. It's fun. It's a game. Just go play.

That's Hank's greatest attribute too, and he helped me with it.

**Q. Trip, can you go back in time a little bit. There's probably been only a handful of amateur players who were at the top of the heap that didn't decide to go the professional route. You chose a different path and it's worked out for you. Can you explain that decision process and what happened since then?**

TRIP KUEHNE: Yeah, it was a fairly easy process for me. I grew up playing with the greatest golfers in the world. Phil Mickelson and Justin Leonard and I were five days apart. David Duval, I was pretty close to. All these guys had one thing in common.

They all dreamed about playing professional golf. We were on the putting green, we'd be putting, and they were like, hey, this is to be on the PGA TOUR. I was like just putting to putt.

It might be to win the U.S. Open, but they talked about playing professional golf. At 10 years old, we took a family trip to New York and I fell in love with two things, the Statue of Liberty and the New York Stock Exchange. Ever since I was in the fourth grade I wanted to work in the financial industry, and I was lucky enough to work at a fund and then at Legg Mason was able to start Double Eagle Capital in 2005, so I got to live my dream.

I say it all the time. If you have two people that one's living their dream, the other one's just kind of going through the motions, those living their dream are going to win over time and especially over the long run. So God looked out for me with Tiger beating me and leading me down the path,

 . . . when all is said, we're done.®

but I also had an injury my sophomore year of college when I was at Arizona State.

I tore my left rotator cuff, being ranked No. 1 college player in the country at that time. So I sat out for nine months, didn't have surgery, but I sat out.

At that time, Coach Loy, the year before, when Phil and I lived together, he was our golf coach, basically told me I need to divide my life into four buckets, and I've always lived my life that way.

It was one of the reasons why it was very easy for me to step away from golf to raise Will in 2008. That was a very important bucket that my wife was very nice and my son were very nice to let me go play golf and be very greedy and not be at home. They did everything that they could to support me to play golf.

It was time for me to be a dad with Will being 8 years old.

**Q. Can you talk a little bit about your family life. Some folks wouldn't know that you've got two other siblings that won USGA Championships, just like you. Was there -- what kind of camaraderie was that like growing up? Was there a competitiveness within the family?**

TRIP KUEHNE: We were always very competitive. It's like we were talking a little bit about yesterday, how did this happen? I don't think it happened by accident really. It was one of these things that we were all very good athletes.

My father pretty early on realized that the game of golf was important, but if you could take very good athletes at that time, put them in good instruction, teach them how to practice and work for things, they could be pretty competitive at golf.

In playing a bunch of different sports we were already fairly competitive, but it ended up not being a competitive thing. I can't think of many times that my brother and I were pitted against one another. When he was playing amateur golf, it was one of my greatest fears, is what am I going to do if I have to play my brother? That's not good.

It's like people don't realize in '94 I played my best friend in the semifinal match, Chris Cox, and that was very, very difficult. Teammate, best friend. Being my brother, I didn't know what I was going to do. Growing up we always played at home. We played in matches. It would always be me and my brother, me and my sister.

We had this great thing going, if one of us was playing poorly, Kelly was winning tournaments. If they weren't

playing well, I was winning tournaments. Same thing with my brother. We always had something positive to look at. My sister was a very good ice skater growing up, and at one point, she said, hey, listen, I don't want to ice skate anymore. I want to be with my two brothers. So that was kind of the family dynamic.

Mom and dad did everything in the world for us, and mom would drive us to the course and pick us up. Dad gave us the opportunity to do whatever we needed, but we had to work for it. If we worked hard and kept good grades, then we could go play tournaments. If we didn't, we didn't get to go.

**Q. And I'm also wondering about, now that you've gone through -- and you're not done yet -- but through a successful business career, how do some of the things you learned in business maybe help you this week as you play in this championship?**

TRIP KUEHNE: I would say golf helped me in business more than my business is helping me with golf. The game of golf, you just have to stay patient, which I'm not the greatest in the world at.

I've never thought about that or never tried to -- you know, I think it would -- having a business, having a son that did very well growing up playing in a competitive sport in the position that he played, I think it's taught me to be grateful.

In 2007 when I was fortunate enough to win the Mid-Amateur, it was a relief. This is -- and it was nervous because going into tournaments because I felt like I needed to do this. I was good enough to do it. It was just a ton of pressure.

I'm here now, and I'm grateful. I think that's why I was a little bit emotional yesterday walking down the 14th fairway. I get goosebumps here. I'm able to reflect and look back, and this is amazing. I think, if I count Walker Cups and the World Amateur, this is my 29th or 30th USGA event.

I had exemptions for 12 or 13 others that I didn't do. It's amazing.

You read these stories about, hey, it's the first USGA Championship I played in, and I kind of felt that way when I walked in. I was like a kid in a candy store. Oh, what do I do? It was old hat, but now I'm grateful.

I remember qualifying for the U.S. junior in 1989. I didn't know what the USGA was. I played in AJGA events. I got fortunate then to play in that USGA event, so I then knew what it was. But I didn't understand what the USGA, what the Western Golf Association, what TransMiss, what the

Southern Golf Association mean to this game. If we didn't have those associations we wouldn't have the game of golf we have today.

Be it playing well in the amateur and playing all the events I have, this is special. We have to have somebody that governs the body and governs the game. That's what you guys do. To be put on 15 incredible championships for men, women, boys, veterans, people that are injured, it's incredible.

So that's what business has taught me. It's to look further into, hey, it's just a tournament. I get to show up and play and everything's taken care of. I look around, and I'm thinking all the infrastructure that's put into the event, all the stuff that's gone in to produce this tournament, what goes on in media. What Reese and Jenny are doing for all the players. We don't have to do anything.

We show up and get to play an incredibly conditioned golf course. Pros get to play for a lot of money. Amateurs get treated like kings and queens, and we pack our stuff and go home and say thank you very much. Thank you all. This is incredible.

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