

U.S. Senior Open Championship

Wednesday, June 26, 2024

Newport, Rhode Island, USA

Newport Country Club

Billy Andrade

Press Conference

THE MODERATOR: Please welcome Billy Andrade to the interview room at the 44th U.S. Senior Open hosted by Newport Country Club. Billy, you're coming off a T6 last week at the PGA TOUR Champions stop in New York. What's working well with the game now?

BILLY ANDRADE: I think leading up to last week, I'd been playing pretty good but not putting it all together. I put a new putter in the bag a few weeks ago at the Senior PGA. I'm getting more comfortable with it. Completely a different whole setup with a longer putter, a L.A.B. putter it's called. That's been much more comfortable.

I put a new set of irons in last week, a new driver. It's not new. It's the same as what I've been playing. Just maybe more updated, I guess.

I've always had some success up at Endicott. It was nice to be in the mix. I lost by three shots. Paddy played a great -- he's won that thing three years in a row now. But just being in the mix is what we all strive for and we all want to do, is have a chance, especially on Sunday with nine holes to go.

Q. Was there kind of an anticipation of this week while you were playing last week?

BILLY ANDRADE: The week before we had off. I didn't want to have two weeks off leading into here. I really wanted to play well last week and not be fighting my swing and go and play a lousy tournament and then come in here with more doubts of not really getting it going.

Last week was huge for me for this week. I just love the way I played last week, and I'm really excited and just thrilled about being here. This is a magical place and a place that I -- I'm just so excited because all of my brothers and all of these guys that I played with and we try to beat each other week in and week out have a chance to experience a state, a town, a golf course this cool.



It's just a magical place, and I'm just excited about being a part of it.

Q. What do you think of the course setup? Obviously the wind has been a big story.

BILLY ANDRADE: Well, the wind is always a story here. The tides change and the wind changes, and you have to pay attention and all that.

I think the golf course setup in the practice rounds and what I've seen is fantastic. I thought when I first played it a few weeks ago that maybe the USGA would pinch in the fairways a little it a little more penal, and they didn't do that.

I think every player here is thrilled that you've got some holes where you've got a lot of driving areas. But if you do hit it in the rough, you're going to be penalized.

It's not that it's -- I'm saying the rough that's just off the fairway. By the naked eye, it doesn't really look, oh, geez, it doesn't look that long. But you get in there, and it's healthy, and it's all you want.

Obviously the setup of this place is fantastic. I think it's just going to be one of the greatest U.S. Opens in history.

Q. Billy, finishing T6 last week, how confident are you that you can repeat or even win the U.S. Open this week?

BILLY ANDRADE: Well, you always want to play well and play well leading into majors. I accomplished my goal last week at doing that, and now I have to go out this week and hit good golf shots and make a few putts and give myself an opportunity on Sunday.

Q. Curious, is there any place like Newport that you guys play on the Champions Tour?

BILLY ANDRADE: It's interesting, a lot of the European players that are here, we had a dinner at my house last night and they all came, and they're like, this is like home to them. They're so excited about being here because it feels like a British Open. It feels like playing in Scotland somewhere, the look of it.

They said, you can place me on it, doesn't matter what



hole, and you look out and you think, am I really in the United States? There's an advantage there. I think it's comfort level.

These are the best players in the world. We've got so many Hall of Famers that are playing great right now. I just think this place is magical.

Q. I think Ernie was saying yesterday that he flew into Rhode Island with you and Brett the other day. You said you some guys at your house. You're a ceremonial host, I guess this week. I know you've been looking forward to this for four years, since 2020.

BILLY ANDRADE: Yeah, and last night I have hats from the 41st U.S. Senior Open at my house in Rhode Island that I just found, so I gave a few guys some hats last night, which was funny because obviously we couldn't play this during the pandemic.

I'm just so thrilled with the USGA and Newport Country Club that they got it back here as quickly as they did. I thought my window was gone when we lost the tournament in 2020, and to have it back this quick is really cool for me and really cool for all of us.

Q. You made mention a few months ago that your career, it's winding down. What a great opportunity this is this week for you.

BILLY ANDRADE: Absolutely. Absolutely. I'm 60. I've been doing this my whole adult life. We've got guys -- when I first came out at 50, your window really was five years, six years, seven years. Then depending on how well you take care of yourself, Bernhard Langer is showing us, Jay Haas is showing us, guys that can play very well into their late 60s.

In the old days maybe, with Arnie and the boys back in the day, that window was only maybe five years. Then after 55 your game slipped. I haven't seen any of that yet, and this is my 11th year on the Champions Tour.

This would be a crowning moment for me, to be able to have a chance to win and win this tournament here in my state where I grew up. All that would be a helluva story for sure.

Q. We all know your connection with Major League Baseball, but when you found out that Tito was going to be involved, what was that like to be able to have him around here this week?

BILLY ANDRADE: Yeah, he's just a special person, dear to me. I've stayed at his house in Tucson the last few

years for our tournament out there, the Cologuard. He's just a gem. When I found out that he was involved in being our chairman for this and being the host, it just brought a big smile on my face because I just love the man.

Just love what he did with the Red Sox to win and get the monkey off their backs. He's had an unbelievable Hall of Fame career. He's not in the Hall of Fame yet, but he will get in there. I just love him. He's just the best.

Q. Just wanted to ask you about this course. Do you have a favorite part, a favorite hole, something that you're really looking forward to seeing?

BILLY ANDRADE: Not really. It's an interesting question. You can ask every golfer that's a pro. There are holes that are great. There are holes that you have to pay attention to. But every hole, when you play a major, you have to pay attention to.

I'm not going to say the 10th hole is better than the 1st hole. For me it's screwed up because I'm usually playing that's 1 and this is 10.

No, I've never been big on like, oh, I have one favorite hole.

So what happens? You play your favorite hole, and you hit it in the water and you make triple. Now that's not your favorite hole. They'll change. Every hole is your favorite hole, and you birdie it and par it and get on.

Q. Just wondering, you're the home state guy and everyone's rooting for you, whether it's family and friends or casual golf fans coming, how do you handle that? Is it building some added pressure for you?

BILLY ANDRADE: No, not really. I'm local. Brett Quigley's local. It's just great that we're from here and that we can show off this unbelievable course in an unbelievable state, especially down here in Newport where it's just so beautiful.

But when the bell goes off tomorrow, it's back to business. It's back to -- everyone's nervous. We're all nervous. Then you hit that first shot, and then you go. You try to get into your zone and just try and hit one shot after the next and go.

It's nice to -- is there a home-field advantage? I've played here a lot, but you know what, these are the best players in the world. We have a lot of Hall of Famers. The one great thing about great players is you adapt quickly to your surroundings.

If we're in Florida, you adapt to Bermuda greens.

When you're in Rhode Island and we got this fescue and it kind of feels like you're in Scotland, Ireland, whatever, you have to adapt to this kind of golf.

The wind's blowing, which is great. I love that. I hope it blows all week, and I hope it blows different directions, because the golf course changes dramatically which way the wind is going.

I think the harder, the better for me, and the harder, the better for whoever is going to win this on Sunday.

Q. Do you have a rough estimate of how many friends and family you have coming?

BILLY ANDRADE: The great thing about when you get to my age, you can say no.

(Laughter).

You can also say go buy tickets.

(Laughter).

That will help the tournament too. You've got to cut it off at some point. When you have your Little League Buddy from 50 years ago asking for tickets that I haven't seen in 50 years, maybe he can go buy them, yeah.

Q. You just kind of talked about it a little bit, but what does it mean to have all of these people staying at your house? As a kid from Rhode Island, to kind of now, especially after the 2020 snafu with this, what does it mean to finally have this tournament here? You just have so much passion for the course.

BILLY ANDRADE: I do, and I just love the fact that we had a great dinner last night at my house. All the players came, and that was a lot of fun.

Q. How many people roughly?

BILLY ANDRADE: A lot of the players this week, not like normal, brought their families because of how beautiful this area is. I think it was well over 100. I don't have a very big backyard, but I can just throw them in the bay if they get nasty to me.

No, I don't have anybody staying with me because I told them that it's a little bit of a drive from Bristol to here, especially with the little bit of traffic, beach traffic. I just told everybody to stay at the Marriott, stay at the Brenton, stay at the Viking, enjoy this town so you can walk around and

have fun, and then you don't bother me back in Bristol.

It's been a great week. Again, I'm just thrilled that the USGA and Newport Country Club got it back as quickly as it did because being 60, my window's coming up here. To not be able to play here would be -- for me, it would be really sad that I wouldn't be able to do it.

I'm excited. Can't wait. It's going to be a great week.

Q. Was there like an I-told-you-so moment when -- it's been four years in the making -- but when you were describing how beautiful Newport is in the summer when they got here?

BILLY ANDRADE: You can describe anything to anyone, and they've got to figure it out. Who knows? Some guys are like, yeah, I don't really know much about it, but everyone that's come here so far has come up to me and said, oh, my gosh, everything. From the course to where I'm staying.

A few guys just complaining about traffic, but who cares? You're in Newport, Rhode Island. I think everybody's really, really enjoying this venue, enjoying this week. I haven't heard anything negative, especially about the golf course being so awesome.

Q. As much as you obviously want to win the tournament, is there a part of you that just wants to take everything in with it being here in Rhode Island?

BILLY ANDRADE: Winning is the ultimate goal that every player wants to do here. It would be awesome. But I just want -- with nine holes to go, I want to have a chance. That's what every player here wants in every week that we play.

A lot of stuff's going to happen. You're going to make birdies. You're going to make bogeys. You've got to handle yourself and not get too excited. But we all want to have a chance with nine holes to go, and that's all our goals.

That's my goal, and with nine holes to go, if I have a chance, I like my chances.

Q. I know what you just said about your favorite hole, but in terms of like the fans that are coming here and whether you're giving them tickets or not, where would you recommend them watching?

BILLY ANDRADE: Well, you start off on the front nine, you're only going to see a couple holes and then you're come back. I think just being around the clubhouse, being

up on this hill. You've got 5 here, 4 here, 18 right here, you got 10 teeing off here. Just hanging around this area is pretty cool.

And then if you want to walk, I'd go walk the back nine towards the ocean. We've got some great holes there.

Leading up to Ocean Avenue, where the 13th hole is, the par-3, that's as far as you can go. Then you're going to have to come back.

This is not a huge walk. We play a lot of golf courses in residential communities and such. If you go to the front nine, you're gone for seems like ten miles before you get back. Here you can bounce around a little bit and it's contained, and you can see a lot of great golf.

No. 9 is right here too. So there's a lot in this area. That's what I would recommend for fans.

Q. When the champion is crowned on Sunday, what do you think they're going to have to do over four days, not only from a physical standpoint?

BILLY ANDRADE: Majors are different. They're different than regular events. You have to try to not make mistakes, try to limit those. Bogeys sometimes are good. If you hit it in the rough, you've got to make that decision. Do I try to go for the green? Where am I going to hit it?

I think the winners of majors, especially, I think, in U.S. Opens, are guys that their tactics of how they go around the golf course and where they leave their shots, where they leave their bad shots. Are you going to short-side yourself? Then you have no chance of getting up-and-down. Are you going to -- short seems good here versus long because, if you're in front of the green, you can -- like great links golf, you can get it up-and-down. If you miss long here, you're in trouble.

I just think the guy that can handle his emotions, not get too up and down with his emotions, and just execute and not make too many mistakes.

Q. Finally, if we're going to get wind like this today, some people think you get on the green and you're just putting well. How much does the wind affect the green when you're putting?

BILLY ANDRADE: It affects a lot. Sometimes you have to play a little more break if you have a sidewinder. If it's downgrain, downwind, that putt is going to be extremely fast. All that computes into the brain of how you want to handle it.

I just love the fact that we're going to have different winds this week. It's not just going to blow one way the whole time.

That brings out the best test of this great golf course, is that, you know, I played two practice rounds two weeks ago when I came up to Rhode Island from home in Georgia. It was straight down on 1 the first day and then it was dead into the wind on 1 the second day. I played two days in a row.

It's just incredible the difference between No. 10 here, hitting driver and utility the first day, and the next day I hit driver and a 9-iron.

So you're going to have big discrepancies depending on the wind, and that's what makes this place such a great test.

Q. What's the rest of your prep look like?

BILLY ANDRADE: I'm going to play nine holes this afternoon, play the front nine, and then just practice a little bit. Then I think I'm ready to go.

It's been a fun three days, and now let the games begin.

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