

U.S. Senior Open Championship

Wednesday, June 25, 2025
Colorado Springs, Colorado, USA
The Broadmoor (East Course)

Justin Leonard

Press Conference

THE MODERATOR: Justin Leonard, welcome into the Cisco Media Center here, the 1992 U.S. Amateur champion, the 1997 Open champion. You had some roots here in Colorado, spent some time here. What's it like to be here playing in a national championship?

JUSTIN LEONARD: It's pretty cool. I circled this on my calendar way back when I saw it four or five years ago maybe, when we were still living here. We left Colorado three years ago, living in Florida.

But it is, it's nice to be back. Cooler weather, got the little reminder of Colorado weather yesterday afternoon. But it's a beautiful place.

We've stayed here at the hotel a couple times, but I wasn't really playing much golf so we didn't come here to play golf, so my first time seeing the course this week. It's nice to be back in the state. It's nice to be back here at the Broadmoor, and to get the opportunity to play in a USGA event, national championship, is always special.

Q. As you mentioned, you got to see the course a little bit yesterday. What did you think of the course, and what kind of skills do you think are going to be necessary out here to be in contention?

JUSTIN LEONARD: I really like the golf course. It's pretty much there in front of you. The greens, they're difficult. They're difficult to read because of a little bit of the mountain and valley effect. There's a lot of slope to them. Then you've got the altitude, and judging -- it's an educated guess of how far the ball is going and those kind of things.

So a few different factors. And then you've got -- to play well here, you need to put the ball in the fairway. The rough is very penal. It's tough to get the ball up-and-down from around the greens. So if you do miss greens, you've got to miss it in the correct spot.

A lot of holes you're just trying to make a par and keep



moving forward.

Q. You mentioned the altitude being a little bit of an educated guess. What kind of adjustments do you make? Do you have a percentage you do, or is it based on feel? You may know better than others given your time here in Colorado.

JUSTIN LEONARD: Right. We were living at 8,000 feet, so a little bit higher. Here I'm playing around 7 percent. When it's a little cooler, it's maybe not going quite the full 7, and then as it warms up -- I haven't seen low 80s yet, but it looks like it could get there on the weekend, and in that case the ball will be going further.

There's math involved, but there's feel as well, and just having a sense of the temperature and how far the ball is going. You may have to -- you're going to have to make some adjustments on the fly, that's for sure.

I feel like my caddie Sean and I, that's something we do well is making adjustments mid-round and things like that, and it'll certainly be necessary this week.

Q. You had a victory earlier this year in the Chubb Classic. How are you feeling about your game coming into this week getting that win under your belt earlier this year?

JUSTIN LEONARD: I feel good. It was nice to get the win under my belt. Of course then I think, okay, I'm going to win everything because I've got it figured out. That's not the way golf works.

But I like -- I struggled a little bit after that. I like where my game is. I think Senior PGA, I liked the way I was playing. Played well last week at Firestone. Not quite in contention, but I saw enough good things where it wasn't very far from it.

Then coming right off Firestone right into another major championship is a bit unusual, but at the same time, I've already put the prep in on my game. It's really a matter of getting here and trying to get to know the golf course and understand the conditions that we're playing in. That's the goal coming to a major championship is that the technical stuff is out of the way and it's just about playing the game.



I'm trying to embrace that and just see what the week has in store for me.

Q. Are you going to have any time either before or after this event to see some of your old favorite spots or check in with some old friends or do anything Colorado related?

JUSTIN LEONARD: I won't do anything really Colorado related, no big hikes or biking or anything, which I was really into when I was here, just because I'm here to play the golf tournament and focus on that.

Fortunately I've got a couple friends that are going to come down during the week, and we'll get to see them, so that'll be great.

Other than that, I didn't really come down to this area as much, a couple times for maybe a lacrosse game or maybe a junior golf tournament. But spent more time up and around Denver with our kids' sports and things like that.

But no, I won't be visiting any old haunts. I don't really have any in this area.

Q. Are there one or two holes in particular that stood out to you that might be the toughest or might be the ones you're looking forward to the most?

JUSTIN LEONARD: I just think it's a nice blend of -- I think we're playing two different golf courses. I'm not even sure which is which. But there's definitely -- you feel a little bit like you're on -- the greens change a bit when you cross the road and go up the hill a little bit.

No, I don't have any favorite holes. Maybe ask me at the end of the week. I just think it's a really good test. It played a lot softer today from the rain yesterday, so I know we may have some rain come through today, and then it looks like pretty dry.

I think that's going to be one of those things where you're going to have to make adjustments on the fly because the golf course is going to firm up each day, and then throughout the day it's going to continue to get firmer. Another thing to factor into all the things you have to do well this week.

Q. I'm curious, having moved from 8,000 feet to sea level, zero feet, do you miss Colorado at all in the time you've been in Florida, or was that just a change that needed to be made for playing full time?

JUSTIN LEONARD: Well, sure. It's hard not to miss living in the mountains and in a mountain town. The nice thing is

now we're on the water, so we replaced one beautiful scenery with a different one.

I would say we haven't really looked back because my family has been very happy. One of our daughters finished high school in Florida, her senior year, which is never ideal, but she really had a great senior year, and then our boys have really thrived in Florida.

One of my sons is headed to college at Villanova in the fall, and he's playing on the golf team. If we had lived up here, I don't know that that would have been possible just because of the time -- he was kind of a late starter with golf, so the time he's been able to put into the game through the winter months and things like that.

Our other son is playing lacrosse, and we love getting out on the water, things like that. We kind of traded the bikes for the boat and that kind of thing. So everybody has been very happy, but it's hard not to miss the mountains.

We didn't ski this last winter. We came up two years ago and skied. My oldest son came up and stayed with some friends and skied this past winter. I didn't ski this winter, but I hopefully will next winter or sometime to come because it's so much fun. It's a great family activity. It's one of the reasons we moved to the mountains because we just wanted to be more -- do things as a family, and it's just a great place for that.

Q. Was the skiing by the family recently, was that in Aspen?

JUSTIN LEONARD: Yeah, which honestly was a little strange, coming back to the town where we lived and staying in a hotel, but we knew all the restaurants and things like that and we were able to see some friends.

Anywhere in Colorado -- we skied a lot along I-70, and it's just a great place to be, summer, winter, doesn't matter.

Q. Regarding your game, did the win this year change the approach going forward or free you up at all, or does it make any difference whether you had won or not as far as going forward?

JUSTIN LEONARD: I think it's freed me up a little bit just because -- well, A, it had been a while since I had won anything, unless you count the flight at the Winding Bay member-guest a few years ago.

No, I think it definitely freed me up. If anything, just reminded me what it takes, the things that I don't need to do in order to win, which are try too hard and press and all those things.



So learned some good lessons, good reminders, and hopefully I'll get that next one here soon.

Q. Just want to ask you about the greens here. Jack Nicklaus made a comment a while back about he thought the greens were very challenging here, and he almost ranked them up there with Augusta National. Is there maybe another course they remind you of?

JUSTIN LEONARD: The greens are very challenging. I think anytime you've got a kind of mountain-valley effect, it's hard to be really truly committed to putts. So I think that's a big key this week is keeping the ball in the right place and then giving yourself the right putt, not just hitting the ball on the green, but hitting it in the right area.

That effect that I've talked about, it starts back from the fairway, where you're going to land your second shot and all those things and places where you can get the ball up-and-down from and others where you can't.

It just adds another wrinkle into an already challenging week, and I think that's part of why this golf course is so great, because yes, it's demanding off the tee and it's long enough, but it's not going to beat you up that much with the length. It's strategically putting the ball in the right area on the greens.

With them being soft, it plays very different. As they continue to firm up through the week, I wouldn't be surprised if we see some lower scores early in the week and then it gets more difficult as the week goes on. I think that's how you guys at the USGA kind of prefer things to go. So I think it's kind of in your favor so far this week.

Q. Course conditions in general, I know you talked about the greens. With the rains, anything else that you're noticing? Is the rough thicker than you may remember playing here before because there's been so much rain in past months?

JUSTIN LEONARD: Well, this is my first time to be on the golf course this week, so I don't have anything to compare it to. I played nine holes Monday. It was pretty firm. I played yesterday before the storm, and it was firm-ish, but I was playing in the morning. Then today it was quite soft.

Yeah, that's just one of the variables you have to work through and one of the things that's going to change and flow during the week. We may have some more rain today, but then after today it looks like we should be pretty clear. The golf course will firm up, and by this weekend I think it'll have some teeth.

The rough is very thick, and it's a true penalty if you hit it in the rough. One of the goals is to stay out of it as much as possible.

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