

# U.S. Senior Open Championship

Friday, June 27, 2025

Colorado Springs, Colorado, USA

The Broadmoor (East Course)

## Hale Irwin

### Press Conference

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THE MODERATOR: Please join us in welcoming honorary chair of the 2025 U.S. Senior Open, Hale Irwin. I know this place means a lot to you, Colorado means a lot to you. What has this week meant to you.

HALE IRWIN: Well, it's been a whole different perspective, coming in as a former player and then visiting here from so long ago from up in Boulder. I think I was down here during high school for a round or two, and then later on in college.

I've gotten to know so many people here that have been close friends for such a long time, and obviously our son still lives in Denver, so we still have a great affiliation with the state of Colorado.

I have a great fondness for not only Colorado but here at the Broadmoor. It's been a wonderful time. Russ Miller has become a really close friend.

It's like a coming-home time, and of course you've got Mr. Bean's here who's been here forever. I think he's been here longer than I have.

So more than anything, I think where I am in my life and my age and where I am, I'm more reflective about things. Looking back and remembering the good parts of my life, I don't like to dwell on the things that are maybe not so friendly, not so good, but go forward with life and man, it's so much fun to come back here and remember things. Oh, I remember this, I remember that. I remember you, maybe. What's your name again?

But to go out and see, maybe more than anything else, the guys with whom I've played with and against for so long and that are good friends and seeing how they're doing and seeing their families. They're kind of this one big family anyway, and their kids are still our kids.



That's always the fun part about going back now and seeing the guys playing. I'm just more than delighted to be here. Our youngest grandson is here to witness all this. He's becoming more of an aficionado of golf than I ever thought possible, so it's good.

**Q. We're hearing this is a proper U.S. Open test. Now that you get to reflect and not have to go through that test, what does a proper U.S. Open test mean, and why is the Broadmoor one?**

HALE IRWIN: The things I've always held up high to make a competitive experience and to make a tournament what it should be, you have to drive the ball on the fairway; let's check that box. You have to put the ball on the right part of the green; check that box.

It then you have to have great management of your game because not every shot is going to come off as planned and not every putt is going to be as planned. The greens are very exacting. All you have to do is go out here, and they're not even the toughest greens on the golf course and see the difficulty. So double-check that box.

This course, this tournament has met all the credentials of being a major championship. Even though it played at altitude, you think, well, there's going to be a lot of short irons hit. That may be.

However, you still have to be so precise when you're playing at altitude and playing with differentials and temperature. They did it right. It's really hard to do.

So patience and good planning and keeping your emotions together, I think, are very important ingredients in any championship, but particularly here this week.

**Q. Hale, given what you've accomplished in your golf career, three U.S. Opens, you played here in the Senior Open, what you did at CU, to be honored by the USGA as the honorary chair of this even this year, what does that mean to you?**

HALE IRWIN: When they called me, I thought they had the wrong number. It's terrific. I'm delighted. I'm honored. I feel like the position I am in the golf community is to be able to help where I am, and I enjoy that because I can't play with these guys anymore.



As much as I'd love to, I can't, but I like to give back to the game in whatever way I can.

Being honorary chair, I'm not sure what it means, but it's a terrific honor for me. So I tried to be available for whatever needs they might have and help where I can. So far it's been great fun, and I don't see where it's going to be different the last couple days.

**Q. One personal question and one about the competition. I saw Steve, and I think I saw Phil here this week; who as far as family members here this week with you, how many or who's here?**

HALE IRWIN: Well, let's see. Obviously brother Phil living just outside Boulder and his wife are here just for a day. It's always good to see him. He's not only my brother but probably my best friend. It's always good to see that.

Our daughter is here. She lives in Scottsdale. She and her husband drove a big bus up through Durango, Papago Springs, and they're kind of having a summer on the road.

And she has her -- Tyler, my youngest grandson, and his brother Dylan. They're here. They came up separately. But having them here.

Of course Steve then brought his youngest daughter Hadley. My wife is here. I have a cousin who owns the Peter Millar shop here, Dave Morton. He's been out of the country, but I understand he's back now. And his sister and my other cousin, Susie, she's going to come down from Denver, I think on Sunday. Have I missed anybody? I don't think so.

It's not been the entire family, but it's been great fun. It's also a lot of moving parts.

**Q. Now, as a competitor, having played in two U.S. Senior Opens here, Stewart Cink kind of downplayed this, but I'm wondering if you could put it in perspective. Through two rounds, he's hit 35 of 36 greens in regulation. How much of an accomplishment is that?**

HALE IRWIN: He's missed one green?

**Q. Yes.**

HALE IRWIN: Sick. The guy's sick. He must be a psycho. That's terrific. Stewart is a great player. Undoubtedly, he's one of our better players now, and he drives the ball quite long. He drives it very straight. So I think with that length, and at altitude you get that much extra length.

Let's say if I were to hit a driver and a 5-iron here, he might be hitting a driver on that green. It's much easier to hit that green from up close distances. He may downplay it, but I think that is unbelievably good, really, really good on this golf course to do that.

Granted, the greens are large. You can aim in the middle of the green, but in some cases you might as well have missed it because you play it well on these greens, and you've got some diabolical putts. He may downplay it. I think that's great. If you hit a green but you're 65 or 70 feet away on these greens, that's not very good.

**Q. You talked about being more reflective at this point in your life and about maybe coming down here in high school. When you think about whether it's playing at Boulder High or CU football or golf, what sort of comes back to mind when you're in Colorado and going through a week like this?**

HALE IRWIN: Friends. I think friendships, relationships. In the end, that's what matters. I could take the other side and say it's the competition, but at the same time -- when I get out of the car and I get into the hotel and I see the people that I've seen -- for instance, my wife and I are coming back here the end of July for a couple weeks. We come back here because we enjoy it. We enjoy going to places not only for the weather and the scenery, but we go to places that there are friends and we can chill out.

If we want to go up and see the kids in Denver, we can. But I think when I come back here, it brings up an awful lot of where it all started for me. The successes that I had, not just in golf, but I think in football really kind of helped mold the competitive spirit, which you have to have against these guys. I mean, they're just too good. If you don't have that spirit and the belief itself, you're not going to make it.

That always instilled in me through the years. Del Fonsterwall. Del was my football coach; Eddie Crowder. I hurt my shoulder and missed the last two games, and I thought, boy, I'm getting my butt kicked every week. I've got the red cross jersey hanging in my locker every Monday.

Maybe it's time to give this up and try to play golf. Eddie, we called, he helped me with calling Coach Williams at Houston, the golf coach, and Coach Harris at Oklahoma State, those two were kind of the teams in this part of the world.

Neither of which -- and it was kind of maybe a real awakening for me that they were interested, but nothing --

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my record was, yeah, you've maybe won a tournament or two here in Colorado, but what did that mean? It wasn't like I'd done it in Florida or like I'd done it in California, where there are more players, more name players, or Texas.

So it really helped me establish the future and meaning. My dad once told me, don't start something you can't finish, and that decision to keep on playing football really meant a lot in the long run, as I found out, and that's what I encourage my kids, all of them, to keep that in mind whatever you do, finish it. Good or bad, finish it.

So that probably is what helped me get -- talent? Everybody has talent. There's not a guy that can't hit a golf ball. That's not it. It is but it's really not. It's what do you do with it? How do you live away from home? How do you get a score that's reasonable when you're not playing well? How do you follow up a good round with another good round? That's sometimes really hard to do. You shoot a low round, how do you follow it up with a reasonable round the next day?

So all those things that go into making the product of what you become.

**Q. Did football help mold that? If you're not playing well, find a way to get a good score. Or maybe just the toughness element of it, like help maybe sort of set that in your golf career?**

HALE IRWIN: Absolutely, absolutely. Well, I mean, probably more weight now than I had then, but at the same time, you're playing against bigger guys, faster guys. So I had to do something better than they. I had to prepare better. I had to do something more intensely than they. Otherwise, I was going to get run right off the field.

I think I got the respect of the other teams because on my team I gave it everything I had every time. I think that's what carried me when we went to the PGA qualifying school way back when. It was eight rounds of qualifying, 18 Thursday, 18 Friday, 36 Saturday, they gave us the Sabbath off, 18 Monday, 18 Tuesday, and 36 again on Wednesday. When you look at that schedule, it didn't bother me because I was in pretty good shape, but what I found out was that, yes, I can physically get through it, but these other guys can play really good golf. I just was in better shape for that particular segment of that much golf and that, it was tiring, plus the mental fatigue.

So that really showed me each time the success and coming down the Broadmoor. ^ ^ it was more of a one step, next step, next step, and I think a lot of that really helped me. But I can attribute all of that going back to it

being raised athletically in boulder.

**Q. How did your first Senior Open change your life, and how did the third one feel compared to the first one?**

HALE IRWIN: The Senior Open or U.S.?

**Q. First U.S. Open change your life and how did the third one change it even more.**

HALE IRWIN: Well, I tried not to allow it to change my life. I had one at Hilton Head in '71 and '73, so that first win as a pro is always -- you think it's life-changing. Well, it has stature, and that changes your perspective of what you're able to do and can continue doing. That's the trick is to continue doing it.

So the Open in '74 was just diabolically hard. To me we look at the scores at Oakmont -- Oakmont, sorry, it didn't hold up to Winged Foot. We had no rain at Winged Foot in '74. It was just the hardest golf course I had ever played with weather being a non-issue. So when you score 7-over par you understand that it was pretty difficult.

But I think all of that prior to that '74 helped set up that win in '74 because you're playing an opponent that's better than you are. He's big, he's tough, and how are you going to get through.

So did it change my life? No. Did it reaffirm what I kind of believed in and what I believed in myself? Yes. And that, I think, helped carry me through to another U.S. Open and other wins, but more importantly, it kept me believing in what I'm doing is the right thing to do.

Then winning in 1990 after an 11-year hiatus, I had won some other tournaments, but in '89 I had started my design company. I had won the Memorial Tournament and thought here, gosh, I'm 40 years old and people were talking about you're over the hill at 40. I didn't believe it because, jeez, I was still hitting the ball pretty well, but I wanted to do something else. I took a lot of the thought and effort from playing and put it over here in this column, design.

Yes, I was hitting golf shots, but I wasn't posting scores because it wasn't up here. I wasn't giving it what I needed to give it.

In the winter of 1989 before the '90 season I sat down at my desk with a yellow pad I wrote down tournaments I had won and thoughts. So I wrote down the tournament, what was I thinking that week. Oh, yeah, it was posture, tempo, just whatever I could remember. And that got me back to

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thinking like a player again.

So when the '90 season started, it wasn't immediate results, but I could feel it coming. The scores are now a little bit lower, I was a little bit more consistent, I was taking those good shots I was hitting prior to that and converting them into good scores.

So when you get to 1990 and the USGA kindly giving me a spot, my objective was don't make their pick look bad, don't embarrass everybody. Did I ever think of winning? No. But what gave me a little pause really, and a good thing, was that Billy Ray Brown came up to me I was going to the first tee and Billy Ray was coming on to the putting green and he was I think a co-leader and he asked me how should he be player.

I said, BR, the best thing to do is just remember fairways, greens, and hit the shots you feel comfortable hitting but don't take unnecessary risks, don't beat yourself. I'm walking up to the tee thinking, that's pretty good advice, why don't you try that, and that's what I thought all day and I walked up to the 11th tee and I looked at the scoreboard and the top 15 get invited the following year, and I was one shot out of the top 15.

So I just kind of, excuse me, thought, okay, you've got to play 1-under, you're in. Just boil it down to that.

I birdied 11, and I thought, okay, new goal, top 10. Birdied 12. Okay, top 5. Birdied 13. Oh, where you going with this? Just keep going. Birdied 14.

So for that one little moment in time of consolidating making it simple, four holes later I'm one shot out of the lead. And then the big putt at 18 -- even then I never thought I would win outright ever, but it was a goal achieving success. Whether or not it happened, it was successful.

Ultimately with the playoff and all that.

All that was just kind of confirmation that I'm still there, I can still do this. Where it might not have been as easy, but it was still the same basic principles.

**Q. Do you think you can still play, and do you have that itch still today?**

HALE IRWIN: If you would have asked me that a couple years ago I'd have to say yes, three years now. Now I'm 80 years old. The body isn't what it used to be. The mind isn't what it used to be. I'm not focused like I once was. I don't practice with the intensity.

This kid right here takes me out on the golf course and just hammers me. Does that keep me going? Not the way it used to. I enjoy life now. Golf doesn't make my life. Golf has made my life.

With that, it's trying to enjoy it and give back. The ol' let's give back. I'm really trying as best I can to give back to the community of golf as best I can.

**Q. Related to that, you're known as one of the most competitive people in golf over the last decades. Now removed probably five years or so from any TOUR competition and a little further than that back to your full schedule; do you miss the competitive side of things?**

HALE IRWIN: Absolutely, there's no doubt about it. I wish I could go into -- like going into the locker room here and seeing the guys and their clubs and -- yes. There's no doubt.

But realistically, it's a dream. But like in 1974, dreams come true. But I'm not fooling myself. I might have fooled myself five, six, seven yards ago, but not anymore. I enjoy it for what it is, and my contribution now is from back here, not out there.

**Q. Do you still follow CU?**

HALE IRWIN: Yeah. I don't know, there's the whole NIL, all this stuff. It just sickens me. So not like I used to because it's such a -- my way of thinking, it's a mess. I just don't like the direction it's going.

I think kids need an education, and we're not getting that. Enough said.

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