

U.S. Senior Open Championship

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Columbus, Ohio, USA

Scioto Country Club

Michael Block

Press Conference

THE MODERATOR: Welcome back to the 46th U.S. Open here in the Media Center. It's my pleasure to be here with Michael Block. Michael, played in a couple U.S. Opens, 2018 most recently, first U.S. Senior Open. Birthday just a little over two weeks ago. What are your hopes, your dreams, your expectations this week?

MICHAEL BLOCK: I made it abundantly clear in an interview about a week ago that I did have a dream about this exact event. I don't know, honey -- because my wife is over here, I told her about it. It was almost a year ago. I woke up one day. I had a vivid dream that I had won the U.S. Senior Open.

This is when I turned 49, but it started to become a reality that I was going to be turning 50 within the next year. I knew things could change quite a bit because I would no longer be the shortest guy in the group, which I've been for the last 10 years, which is a very frustrating.

You know, I don't care if you're out playing with your three buddies at your local club or you're playing in a TOUR event or a major, it feels exactly the same to be 25 yards behind the other three players.

Q. For you, obviously had a great PGA Championship 2023, Oak Hill. How much do you still get asked about that?

MICHAEL BLOCK: It's a lot. It's great. It's fantastic. Obviously for the year, just post that 2023 PGA, like I told people I got sick of looking at that video and seeing that hole-in-one. I started telling the PGA of America saying, no, no, I'm not posting anything else. I'm out for a bit.

So it's been great. I wouldn't trade it for the world. It was definitely a life-changing moment for me, a life-changing shot and week. It was very cool for that to happen in the sport that I love so much.

Q. What do you think has made you a fan favorite?



MICHAEL BLOCK: I wear my personality on my sleeve. I'm not shy. I'm not afraid to say anything I need to say.

I'm a club professional first. I'm not a TOUR pro first. I'm a TOUR pro probably third or fourth. So a club professional, basically my job is to go out there and make sure that everybody at the club is having a great time and customer service.

So that's what I'm kind of used to.

I love to talk. I love to go out, and I love to have a good time. Something that I like to do is to -- one of my big battles that I used to do is I used to have a lot of negative thoughts. I would be over the golf ball and question if I was going to hit a good shot. I started having a mantra of, why not? My first one ever was, why not? Why not be me? Why not hit a good shot? I used to write "why not" on my golf ball for probably three, four, five years.

Now I think more about how I'm going to react, making the shot or making the putt, which is what you see. I make a putt, I have a reaction, and that's an on-purpose thing because that was a premeditated thing because I'm thinking about before I even putt it.

I'm actually picturing myself make the putt, which is me psyching myself out in the opposite way, rather than me going -- which I've done many, many times, as we all have, thinking what's going to happen when I miss this putt.

Q. Scioto, here, this course, you've had a couple of chances to play practice rounds. What questions does it ask of the players, and what needs to be on to play well here?

MICHAEL BLOCK: If you're playing from the rough you have no chance. The fairways in the majority, 80 percent of them are plenty wide where you should hit the fairway, and if you don't, it's your own fault.

There's a couple of tight ones where you got to be a little more careful, maybe hit a 5-wood, 3-wood to get it in play. There's different quadrants on each hole. You need to leave yourself in the right spot.

I don't mind missing on the green on some of those false



edges where it can putt up, as long as it's on the uphill putt being -- you know, even on the back of the green on the wrong quadrant, putting down, it's going to break 15 feet and rolling at like 14.

So I don't want to be there, so I'd rather miss the green in some locations than be on the green in the wrong spot.

Q. I want to go back to the "why not" for just a second. Have you had a great fan story where they've sent you back something on social media, which is this is what's happened with why not. Can you share a quick one?

MICHAEL BLOCK: I've had so many -- more than any what's happened at an event, it's more of an inspirational part of it to be able to get back in the game. To get back to, you know what, I'm going to play in the club championship next year, and this could be a little 65-year-old woman just trying to play at next year's senior club championship at our club.

So it's been anything from that to a kid who didn't make his golf team his freshman year. I tried to tell him the Michael Jordan story that he didn't make it his freshman year either in basketball to try to inspire them that way.

Definitely I think that's something where the immense amount of texts and DMs and letters that I've received, just getting people to play golf again and to compete when they had given up previously is a really cool thing.

Q. You said being a club pro is one and TOUR guy is three or four. What's two and maybe three in your life?

MICHAEL BLOCK: For sure. Number one, my family; most important thing in the world. Number two, I have a job, and that job's been supporting me for 22 years. Then three is -- I don't know what three would be. Three would be -- I got my family, I got my job. I don't know what three would be. Three normally is just being a club pro, just me being a club pro, playing in my section and stuff like that.

Then the TOUR pro, part of it, which I get to go moon light as a TOUR pro two or three times a year, and I get to live that really cool life for those amount of weeks. Yeah, that's in reality my percentage of what my life is. TOUR pro is definitely in that three, four, five range.

Q. You're new to the senior thing. Was there any concern how you'd be received out here, and how have you been received even maybe compared to a PGA TOUR?

MICHAEL BLOCK: Hundred percent. I had no idea how

these guys would look at me, the club pro. Like I kind of said, had one great tournament and then for the last couple years missed some cuts and stuff like that. I didn't know how they were going to be.

But it was unbelievable last week when I showed up at Endicott for the Dick's, how receiving they were, how they all walked up to me, made me feel at home. They said welcome.

Then to be honest, after that 66 in that first round on that Friday, it became even more so. Then I was paired with Darren Clarke and Freddie Jacobsen on the second round. Unbelievable pairing, two guys I looked up. I knew Freddie before, I played with him at the Riviera once, but didn't know Darren.

Played with Darren; had an unbelievably great time on Saturday. Then as I'm walking in onto the putting green, going through players dining on Sunday, there's Darren Clarke. He's over there putting. He immediately looks up, comes over to me and gives me knuckles and goes, let's get after it today.

I mean, it's amazing how -- I'm just in there and I look back at my kid who's my caddie and he's walking behind me, is this crazy? Retief Goosen is walking up to me and giving me knuckles. It's unbelievable how cool these guys have been.

I think the current PGA TOUR players are built differently right now where it's way more cutthroat. Every person is their own entity/business. These guys have already done what they've needed to do. They're out here to have a good time.

You can tell they still take it very serious and they're still unbelievable golfers. But they're here. There just isn't that stress of the team atmosphere. Each guy doesn't have 12 guys following him around like they do at the PGA Championship. They've got family members. Most of the guys have their kid on the bag like I do.

So it's way more of a family-friendly atmosphere, whole bunch of good buddies. I've only been on this TOUR for a week and a half, and I already feel like I'm part of it, which is really cool.

Q. Padraig Harrington is in the middle of playing eight in a row. Is your goal to move up to TOUR pro, make that your number two job? If so, are you worried it might take some of the fun out of your other job?

MICHAEL BLOCK: I don't really want it to be my job, you know. Me personally, six, seven, eight events, something

 . . . when all is said, we're done.®

in that range would be absolutely ideal. Like I said last week when I was doing all right.

Who knows? If I was lucky enough, fortunate enough to win one, let's talk after that and say, you know, would I get out there and play 20 events, maybe I would. But in reality what makes me super, super happy is just being out here, be able to go back to my golf course next week, and I'll be back home for the next I think three, four weeks at the club, which is nice.

At the same time, I hope I get into Boeing, and I'll be there in three weeks. At the same time, it's kind of a day by day thing for me right now. I'm going to see how it goes this week here at the Senior U.S. Open, and hope it goes well.

Q. When we see you playing these TOUR events, you're an exciting player. You make a lot of birdies, make a lot of stuff happen. I just wonder how many -- you must be doing exciting stuff in all your club events and Pro-Ams over the years. Obviously a key is your putting. You still putt really well. A lot of guys don't get past the early 30s with that. Talk about how you -- how your putting has survived.

MICHAEL BLOCK: Yeah, the funny part is I'm always kind of -- yeah, I don't feel like I putt that great, but then I look at my stats at the end of the week, and my stats are pretty darn good. It's actually somewhat surprising to me that my stats are as good as they are on the putting side of it.

I see myself more as kind of a consistent player. I don't make triples normally out here -- I feel so bad, my wife told me the story where she was out playing on Sunday when she's watching the final round on the phone. I hadn't had a bogey the entire day, and she see all of a sudden -- I don't even know what a triple looks like on the scorecard on the PGA TOUR, it's three circles or whatever.

Yeah, so the putting, part of it I have to tell myself daily that I have to have soft hands, and I almost -- more so than even daily, almost every time I get over the golf ball. I have to go back to this -- I have this really cool regimen where I take my practice putts and I take my thumbs -- I have a cross-handed grip. I take my thumbs off the grip.

So I take them off, and that's where most of the tension is ever created. The thumbs are down on the grip. That creates tension up on your forearms on your shoulders. It creates tension in general.

I take my thumbs off, I take two practice strokes, one to two, and I have that grip pressure. I go up to the golf ball, take a peek at it. My thumbs go down, and I take that same grip pressure and do the stroke, and that's how I do

it. I have to think about that on every single stroke I make.

Now, on the last hole last week at The Dick's I didn't do that, and I three-putted from four feet.

Q. You said at the beginning you had a dream about a year ago about winning this tournament. Based on this conversation, it seems like you also plan quite a bit. Do you have a dream board of where you want to be, or do you have goals written out where you want to be in the next year or two? Because it seems like you're a planner.

MICHAEL BLOCK: I mentioned to my family that I kind of want to do a two-year thing out here. I kind of want to do two years and then give up the whole tournament golf part of it after that.

I know for a reality that 50 to 55 out here is kind of the prime. So for me personally, I think, if I could just do whatever I can for the first two years, like I said once again, we can look at this again and see how I'm doing.

But if I'm out here struggling, I'm out here getting 45th every time, I don't really want to go spend a week away from home and a week away from my family and a week away from my club finishing 45th and struggling and not having fun. If I'm out here playing decent for a living and having fun with everyone out there, it makes it a lot better and then you'd probably see me more often. I don't plan on doing this for that long.

Q. Do you ever get tired of the attention that's come your way over the last few years?

MICHAEL BLOCK: You know, the tough part -- I've never been used to that whole part of it, the social media aspect of it, which I never see in real life.

But there's a lot of guys out there on the screens that like to talk. That's been the weirdest part for me because all I ever do is go out and have a great time, have a great time with the members, have a great time with the amateur partners and pro ams, have fun with the volunteers and have a great time with the players, and that's all I do.

If certain people don't like my reaction on me actually showing a little bit of emotion, then they've got a problem with themselves.

Q. And the B part of that is you've gotten this attention. Can you imagine like what a Tiger Woods, say, has gone through in terms of attention and just constant? Would you ever want that?

MICHAEL BLOCK: No chance.

Q. You'd want it but not --

MICHAEL BLOCK: Tiger, he can have it. What they go through, those upper echelon sports heroes, I see how sometimes they've shut down, how they don't talk like how I talk. I get it because a lot of things -- the biggest thing that's been tough for me too is how little things are edited out and all you see is four sentences out of a 20-minute talk. Not even four sentences, four words.

The people that are looking at those four words don't even know what I was talking about, more or less the question I was even answering. So it gets taken in so many different ways.

Those are kind of the strange things, I've gotten used to it now. These people are always like -- I always get these DMs and stuff that say, screw the haters. Don't worry about the haters. I'm like, I have so many more people that are fans and people that come out and see me and clap for me and root for me. If you were at the Dick's, I had such a huge crowd out there that was rooting for me on every single shot and I was having so much fun with them, looking at them.

Yeah, I have so much fun. I hope it happens her this week and I get the Columbus crew out there this week and everyone comes out and I'm making some good par saves and a couple birdies here and there.

Q. I am noticing the script on your shirt, whatever that is. Do you have your own line of merchandise? If so, is it available somewhere on line?

MICHAEL BLOCK: No, Malbon is actually my sponsor. Jason Day, Charley Hull.

Q. Why don't you have your own line? You're Michael Block.

MICHAEL BLOCK: I don't know. Only my family would buy that. You never know what's going to happen in the future. I love what I have. I love the clothing Malbon has, and it's cool being with him for this year.

Q. The haircut, how did that come to be?

MICHAEL BLOCK: Monty the Barber, who is here onsite this week for all the players. In 2018 he was the barber at the U.S. Open at Shinnecock, and I'd had my haircut by him at that U.S. Open as well.

I just saw yesterday he had posted something, because we

follow each other on Instagram, and he posted something and he was here.

I said, you've got to be kidding me. Could my son and I come in at noon tomorrow before I go in for an interview? He's like, let's go. I was walking down 18 fairway here, and I was like, dude, I've got to get USA shaved in my head somehow. We've got the World Cup at 8:00 p.m.; Saturday is July 4th; I'm playing the U.S. Open. This is all meant to be.

Now I've got a USA shaved on my head. Should be there for about a week.

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