

# US OPEN

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## Brian Hainline

## Lew Sherr

## Stacey Allaster

### Press Conference

**CHRIS WIDMAIER:** Thank you for coming and joining us for the 2023 US Open Pretournament Press Briefing. I am Chris Widmaier, managing director of communications for the USTA.

We are joined by USTA chairman of the board and president Brian Hainline, who also serves as the chief medical officer for the NCAA.

Lew Sherr, our chief executive officer and executive director of the USTA.

And Stacey Allaster, the chief of professional tennis and, of course, the US Open tournament director.

We are going to hear some brief opening remarks from all three, then we will transition to a media Q&A.

Without further ado, Dr. Hainline.

**BRIAN HAINLINE:** Thank you and welcome, everyone, to the 2023 US Open. We are the last Grand Slam tennis tournament of the calendar year, and we're very proud to be a member of the Grand Slam tennis family, along with the Australian Open, Roland Garros, Wimbledon, and the US Open.

The four Grand Slams really represent the pillar of tennis and indeed the pillar of sport. Like any family, we have our commonalities but there are some unique features for the US Open.

First and foremost, the US Open takes place in the great city of New York City, where we have the best fans, the most passionate fans, and the most energy of any sporting event in the entire world.

The US Open also takes place in the borough of Queens, right here in Flushing Meadows, Corona Park, the borough of Queens where there are more languages spoken than



anywhere else in the world, and if you're a foodie, there are more choices for different kinds of food than anywhere else on this planet.

What else is special about the US Open? This year we are celebrating 50 years where the US Open was the first sport in the world to offer equal prize money to men and women.

The US Open takes its place in supporting sport as a public good seriously.

By being the first sport to offer equal prize money, we were also making a very important statement to society as a whole: offering equal opportunity and equal pay for men and women across the globe.

Other firsts for the US Open:

We were the first Grand Slam to hold wheelchair tennis as a competitive event. Last year we were the first Grand Slam to host junior wheelchair tennis. This year we're the first Grand Slam to double the size of the quad wheelchair draw, so quad wheelchair tennis and open wheelchair tennis are on a par with each other.

In 2020 during very challenging times, the US Open demonstrated to the world that taking a scientific and consensus-based approach, we could resocialize sport in a manner that was safe and good for everyone. We were the first international sporting event to take place during the pandemic.

We've also taken a lead in mental health. I really especially want to call out my colleague Stacey Allaster, the first female Grand Slam tournament director. Stacey, my friend, my mentor, who has been a leader in mental health.

The US Open was the first Grand Slam tennis tournament to offer comprehensive mental health services. Last year we hosted a mental health summit, which was the first sport-specific mental health summit in the world. The results of that are dramatically changing the mental health landscape across the tennis ecosystem in the world.

What else is unique about the US Open? Well, we are the economic driver for the United States Tennis Association. What is the USTA? The USTA is one of 50 national governing bodies that is part of the United States Olympic



and Paralympic Committee. As part of that, we are signatories to the U.S. Anti-Doping Agency, to the U.S. Center For Safe Sport, and to the American Development Model. We take that very seriously.

Turning to my colleague and friend and mentor, Lew Sherr, the CEO of the USTA, Lew and his senior leadership team have really looked at safe sport and have made the USTA a model for how to roll that out.

Just a brief word on the American Development Model, what does that mean? It means that sport at every level is developmentally appropriate physically, mentally, socially, spiritually. It means that if you're a beginner, whether you're young, elderly or you're returning from injury, maybe consider playing red ball tennis, Red Ball For All, on a multi-purpose court, especially on a pickle ball court.

The USTA is also one of over 200 national governing bodies that are part of the International Tennis Federation. As such we host over 90 pro circuit events and we're part of the International Tennis Integrity Agency, which is probably the most robust anti-doping and anti-corruption agency in the world.

It's noteworthy that tennis was the first sport to break away from the International Olympic Committee model and to have an independent doping program, and that became the model for the World Anti-Doping Agency.

Finally, the USTA is all about growing tennis at the section level. The 17 USTA sections are the USTA. Through a phenomenal collaboration between our national volunteer and staff leadership and our sectional volunteer and staff leadership, we have grown tennis since 2019 by 33%, especially within the public park system where, by the way, 55% of tennis is played.

We also through our sections, our national campus, working with independent coaches, we have a robust Player Development Program. What are some of the results? We're the only country in the world with two men and two women in the top 10. We have more men and women and boys and girls in the top 50 than any other country in the world.

That's the USTA. We promote and develop the sport of tennis. Why do we do that? Don't take my word for it. Let's look at the scientific evidence:

Tennis is the healthiest sport on this planet. The British Journal of Sports Medicine, the highest impact journal in the world, studied over 80,000 individuals for decades and compared tennis and other racquet sports, not including pickle ball, to other sports and other forms of exercise such

as jogging, running, swimming.

Tennis decreased mortality in all causes and from cardiovascular disease more than any other sport or form of exercise. That was followed by a study of over eight thousand individuals which was published in Mayo Clinic Proceedings, which showed that tennis, compared to every other sport, increased longevity by nine years. No other sport came close.

Imagine if I could tell you that I would give you a pill that you take just once or twice a week and it will improve your longevity by nine years. That's what tennis does, and so much more.

It improves cognition, mental health, musculoskeletal health, balance health. Indeed, tennis more than any other sport improves brain synaptic plasticity. So that's tennis.

Again, welcome to the US Open, the greatest sporting event in the world, showcasing tennis, the greatest sport on our planet. Thank you.

**LEW SHERR:** Brian, thank you. On behalf of our entire staff, I want to acknowledge your leadership and support. To our associations throughout the country, we also want to thank you for your partnership and support as we work to stage this US Open and grow our sport around the country.

Before I share your excitement on the verge of what will be truly a spectacular and historic US Open, I do want to take a moment and just acknowledge the horrific wildfires in Hawaii and let our friends in Hawaii know that our thoughts and prayers are going out to them.

Our intention is to provide support in the way we have with other natural disasters. There will be more information coming out during this US Open to talk about ways we intend to do that.

This is a milestone event. We are celebrating the 50th anniversary of equal prize money at the US Open. That was a decision that not only impacted tennis but also impacted society at large. It's why we are so proud to celebrate Billie Jean King and the US Open's leadership in this space.

2022 was a record year for the US Open on every possible front. For those of you who have long wondered about the future of tennis as we transition out of a golden age where you have had some of the best men and women of all time competing against each other simultaneously, we saw 2022 as a year of emerging stars. Certainly from a fan perspective we saw fans engaging with tennis at record

levels as a result of the emergence of new personalities, new stars into our sport.

'22 saw record attendance at the US Open, record broadcast viewership globally, and records being broken around social engagement, eclipsing more than one billion engagements through social media platforms.

As we head into 2023, the bar has been set high. There are a number of new editions and storylines that we will be following. Stacey will talk about those in just a moment as we start to talk in more detail about the tournament.

I do want to emphasize that you will see an increasing commitment and investment around Fan Week. Fan Week for the US Open, which will start on Tuesday of next week, is the opportunity for us to open our gates and allow any fan who might want to be influenced, inspired to pick up a racquet and play, the opportunity to get up close and personal with the biggest stars in our sport, and to experience all of the US Open entertainment, all of the US Open food and beverage, and all of the great tennis that happens around our qualifying tournament, all free of charge. I can't think of any other sporting event or property that makes six days of world class content available to the public free of charge.

That is capped with Arthur Ashe Kids' Day, the largest promotional event in our sport. Again, an event where we expect more than 30,000 families or participants to come on-site and experience tennis on court in real-time.

You're also going to see an expansion of our wheelchair competition. Again, Stacey will speak to this in more detail. But this is the third year in a row that we have expanded the wheelchair division. We're very proud of that fact. We look to continue leadership in that space going forward.

So the bar has been set very high. We're incredibly confident that in 2023 we're going to eclipse that bar. All of the early indications around this year's US Open are pointing up and to the right. Our ticket sales are pacing ahead of last year. Our hospitality business is pacing well ahead of last year.

We have continued to enjoy tremendous corporate support. There are 24 sponsors, corporate partners, associated with this year's US Open. Amazingly more than half of those partners have been associated with the US Open for over 20 years. That's groundbreaking in our sport. It's groundbreaking across the city. We appreciate the way those partners invest in supporting the player experience and the fan experience year in and year out. It's a big part of what makes the US Open such an incredible entertainment event.

On the broadcast side, we're also very excited with ESPN making the decision to bring the US Open to its sister ABC Network over Labor Day weekend for the first time in our history.

We also have five new media rights holders globally in Sky Sports in the UK, Migu in China, Sports Deutschland, Super Tennis in Italy, and Telefonica Movistar in Spain, which just reflects the incredible demand and fan interest in tennis around the world, and in the US Open more specifically.

While that success is incredibly important and exciting, particularly now as we sit here about to head into the start of the US Open, it's what we do with that success, it's how that success translates that really energizes the organization, and it's why we exist.

The US Open funds the USTA's ability to impact communities, to work together with our 17 section partners around the country to inspire health and wellness and to bring communities and elevate community around the country. We do that through parks, through a commitment to schools, and a commitment to clubs across the country. As Brian mentioned, we have seen that impact being felt in a tangible way over recent years.

Today we have nearly 24 million tennis players in the United States. That is a 33% increase from where we were in 2019. Equally exciting for us, we've seen growth in key demographics. Today 38% of tennis participants identify as people of color. Hispanic growth has increased 90%. Participation amongst black, African American players, has increased by 44%. We're very excited about the reflection or making sure that tennis looks like America as we move forward.

Equally exciting, youth participation has grown by over 50%, far outpacing the national average. So our investments are certainly paying off, and the future participation and improving the wellness and health of individuals and communities certainly looks bright.

The USTA Foundation last year alone committed more than \$5 million through grants and scholarships to support youth and underserved communities and we had the ability to impact well over 100,000 kids using tennis as a means to teach broader life skills to kids in underserved communities.

Our impact isn't just felt in tennis around the country, but our impact is profoundly felt here in New York, in the borough of Queens, and across the state of New York.



The US Open drives incredible tourism and sponsor activation that manifests itself through hotel bookings, restaurant traffic, retail business, transportation. In fact, we employ more than seven thousand workers as part of this event. All of that benefits not just the borough of Queens, but New York City and New York state.

We are proud of the impact that we make, the positive impact we make on New York. We're also appreciative of the support that we receive from the city, from the borough, and from the state.

A study conducted 10 years ago around the economic impact of the US Open put that number at \$750 million in impact to New York City. Our expectation is if we now conduct a study 10 years later is that that number will likely double as we look at the impact that the US Open and its growth have had for this region.

As I close and transition over to Stacey, I just want to say that our huge excitement around this year's US Open is only matched by our excitement with the growth of our sport nationwide and the impact that tennis is having in improving lives and inspiring communities to be healthier and focus on wellness.

With that, Stacey...

**STACEY ALLASTER:** Good morning, everyone. Thank you for joining us virtually. I can't wait to see hopefully a majority of you here next week at the USTA Billie Jean King National Tennis Center.

The theme of the US Open is 'Spectacular Awaits'. After months and months of planning, I've got to tell you that the team here is just so excited to get this party started.

In just a day and a half, 600 of the world's best athletes in the world will embark here on-site, hundreds of thousands of fans will bring the USTA Billie Jean King National Tennis Center to life.

As we all know, in live sport we don't know what's going to happen. However, what I am very certain about is that our 900,000 fans will experience spectacular matches, spectacular beverages. Let's see if we can beat our record last year with our official drink Honey Deuce, and food from our celebrity chefs and spectacular one-of-a-kind special events.

Today as we kick off the 2023 US Open, I'd like to share one aspect of this year's Open that has special meaning for me, for our female athletes, and for little girls of all ages. This year we are celebrating, as Brian and Lew have mentioned, 50 years of the US Open becoming the first

major to award equal prize money.

We might take that for granted now, but the USTA was so far ahead of the rest of the sports world and society in 1973. Of course, central to this historic achievement was, of course, my shero, an American icon on the court and off the court, Billie Jean King.

Today in her 80th year, she remains a leader and inspiration to me and so many. It will be very fitting on opening night, Monday, August 28th, right here on this court, we will honor Billie as a special celebration of this anniversary. Trust me, you will not want to miss this special event.

On Monday night, and throughout the three weeks of the US Open, we will recall the historic year and the achievements of the last 50 years. Most importantly, we're all committed to continuing the work that remains today to ensure that we achieve equality for all in tennis, across all sports, and in society.

This celebration is very personal for me. As Brian and I sat down, he said to me, This brings back memories from 2020. It was in 2020 that I heard my name being introduced for the very first time as the US Open tournament director, the first woman in 140 years in the house named after Billie Jean King.

Simply no question that Billie's courage and her leadership and the USTA's unwavering 50-year commitment to equal prize money opened the door for me to become the tournament director of the US Open.

It opened the door for an amazing all star female US Open team. I'm going to give a shout-out to Kirsten Corio, our chief commercial officer. Lew challenged us to a nine-month campaign to celebrate equal prize money. Nicole Kankam has led a very inspirational and visionary effort. I can't wait to share it with everyone.

Just before I leave equal prize money, at this stage of the game for me, a lot of people ask, What's the purpose? Where are you at? I am just so energized, Lew and Brian, and proud to work for this organization that just remains a leader in championing women, and is constantly striving to make tennis inclusive and accessible for all people of all ages, of all backgrounds and abilities.

So with that we're going to fast forward 50 years. USTA has continued to lead and grow the amount of prize money awarded to the athletes. This year total player compensation as we reported will reach \$65 million, making the US Open the largest purse in all of tennis.

 . . . when all is said, we're done.®



At the same time we took on the players' feedback and we've taken important steps to reduce their costs of competing. Increases around housing, food and beverage, stringing and travel. Additionally all of this additional support applies to all players: singles, doubles, mixed, wheelchair equally, also in the spirit of that historic act of equal prize money 50 years ago.

On 'spectacular'. Well, Brian has touched on it, spectacular athletes for our fans and for your viewers and readers.

One of the things that makes the US Open special is that we are the culmination of this year's tennis calendar. Our competition will capture and build upon the drama that has been set in motion at the Australian Open, Roland Garros, Wimbledon. I'd love to go on and talk about those matches because some of them were just epic. In the interest of time, I'll keep going.

Brian also touched on it's fitting that the culmination of the year happens here in New York, one of the greatest cities in the world, on the biggest stage, with the most dynamic and electric, passionate fans.

I can't wait for six days of US Open Fan Week that starts next Tuesday. Everything for free, legends matches, getting on the court to play, stars of the US Open in Aid of Ukraine with Carlos, Frances, Elena, Iga coming back to support that. Flavors of the Open, everyone can have a taste of our great celebrity chefs. Free concerts with Sebastian Yatra. I'll be honest, I didn't know who Sebastian Yatra was. What a star he is. He's great friends with Carlos. One of the things when we announced Sebastian, Carlos' team said, I want 20 seats, I want my family and friends to be able to come out and watch. We hope you all come.

Lastly, the very inspirational Arthur Ashe Kids' Day with The Dudes Perfect. I never experienced The Dudes until last year. Arthur Ashe Stadium was filled. I never saw so many kids so excited.

A few innovations in the competition area. A coaches tablet that will allow real-time stats and video and ball tracking, helping our coaches enhance and optimize the players' performance.

Another first for the US Open, video-assist review where we will have the ability for a player to challenge some of those decisions like ball up, hindrance, touch, that we haven't had before where the chair umpires will have ready at their fingertips the review.

We've already talked about the expansion of wheelchair

tennis is available for everyone.

Lastly, Lew mentioned we're booming, our sport is growing. That's thanks to all of you. We really appreciate everything you do year-round and for the next three weeks to inspire a love for tennis.

For many months we've been promising 'Spectacular Awaits', and now at least we're here. Thank you.

**CHRIS WIDMAIER:** Thank you, Stacey, Lew and Brian.

We're going to go into our Q&A.

**Q. There's been a lot more conversation over the last couple years about how late matches are being played, not just at the US Open but at a lot of other events as well. Australian Open fits in this category. Who benefits from matches finishing at 2 and 3 in the morning? Is the US Open going to look at anything going forward to try to limit the amount of times that happens?**

**STACEY ALLASTER:** Thanks for that question.

Look, each year after a US Open, we all sit down as a senior leadership team and talk about matters that came up. Without question late-night matches was heavily discussed and reviewed after the 2022 US Open.

We looked at the start time of the match. Could we start the evening session earlier, instead of 7, start it at 6? We decided that's not really a possibility because it's hard for New Yorkers to get here even by 7. There could be then the collision course within the afternoon.

We talked about one match at night. We really felt that that was not a fairness thing to our fans.

I think one of the challenges that we just have as a reality of tennis, we are not defined by a start and an end time. That unpredictability of a match, sometimes we can have a short match or we can have that long, five-hour match.

At the moment we're staying the course with two night matches. We'll continue to evaluate it. I think until we were to dramatically change a feature that we offer our fans, we'll experience this late-night moment here.

The one thing we do know, in New York City, and we talk to the athletes, there's nothing like a night match in Arthur Ashe. They are some of the most historic and memorable moments for athletes.

**LEW SHERR:** I'll just add, Stacey takes great pains to ensure proper rest, recovery periods for athletes. We factor that into decisions that are made about scheduling subsequent to.

She also mentioned late-night tennis in New York City is synonymous with the US Open. It's part of the excitement. In some respects it's something that our fans love, right? The city that never sleeps.

Having said that, we have an obligation to make sure the athletes' health is put forward. But we also know that New York fans are energized by night matches.

**Q. Getting to the subject of pay equity, you talk about your 50-year history as a leader in this. I'm curious how you reconcile that record with I think about a decade of when you were owning Cincinnati until last year when there was a vast pay discrepancy between the women and the men. I'm curious if you regret not being a leader in that space, given where the sport has gone to in terms of laying out goals for getting some pay equity in the highest-level tournaments, I guess how you sort of rationalize and pat yourselves on the back for being leaders when you weren't for the last decade? I was especially interested in this because Billie Jean King told the story in London at the celebration saying the USTA only did pay equity 50 years ago because she came up with the money from Bristol Myers. I just want to make sure that the history is right here and how your recent history comes into play in your thinking about this celebration.**

**STACEY ALLASTER:** Certainly the 50 years of equal prize money, there's no doubt that Billie was the catalyst back in 1972. She did bring Bristol Myers to Billy Talbot at the time.

For 49 years the organization has been unwavering. It did take 34 years for the other majors to come in line, particularly at that level.

Certainly with Cincinnati, it was and still right now is a different player commitment system, different broadcast agreements. We know now, together with Steve Simon's leadership, the CBC's partnership, Cincinnati, Canada, Rome are now on a pathway for equal prize money.

**Q. The return of Novak Djokovic to the tournament after not being able to play last year, just your overall thoughts on his return. Stacey, since you were in the WTA for six years, any plans for the Original 9, besides Billie Jean, for the 50-year anniversary of that momentous launch?**

**STACEY ALLASTER:** I can't wait for Novak being back here on Arthur Ashe Stadium. We've missed him. His fans have missed him. I watched his match last night in Cincinnati, incredibly fun.

Novak, his record is speaking for itself. He's chasing every record in the book. We'll have this amazing opportunity to watch history unfold as he performs on court.

The anniversary is 1973, 50th anniversary also of the WTA. We did celebrate the Original 9, their 50th anniversary, last year or two years ago. It was 1971.

There will be many WTA former champions at the WTA's gala next Friday night. Certainly many of them will be our guests during the tournament.

**Q. On equal prize money topic, as well. Just curious, after 50 years what your observations are on the most significant business impacts on the 50th anniversary of equal prize money? That could be for the sports world at-large or the USTA's business specifically.**

**LEW SHERR:** Something that separates tennis from any other sport I can think of, certainly any other sport of scale, is the level of gender parity that exists. Whether you're looking at participation, whether you're looking at viewership, attendance, prize money at the US Open, we are 50/50 down the middle in every aspect.

It's more than just equal prize money, right? When you look at how we schedule matches, we're conscious of who's playing in prime time, who's on Arthur Ashe, are we treating all of our athletes, male or female, equally in that presentation of the sport.

I think the presentation of the sport and equal prize money being secured 50 years ago has come a long way as to why women in tennis have achieved what they've achieved.

If you were to look, you publish a list of the 10 highest paid female athletes in sports, my guess is eight or nine of them are probably female, women's tennis players. That's a function of the decision that was made 50 years ago, now what has transpired since.

We know from a corporate partnership standpoint, from a broadcast standpoint, a big part of the proposition around supporting tennis is it appeals to men and women equally. Wives bring husbands, husbands bring wives, whatever the case may be. Women watch men, men watch women. This event is singular in sports in terms of a men's and women's championship happening side by side on the same court in the same facilities with the same presents.

Our partners support that, endorse that. They benefit from the expanded audience and following that the sport has equally amongst men and women certainly here in the U.S.

**STACEY ALLASTER:** Maybe I'll add, if we're looking at the dynamic of women's professional sport today, the parallel and things that we can take away from the US Open with 50 years of equal prize money, it's really been our commercial partners that have given us the financial engine to continue to offer that, along with the board's decision.

The conversations with our commercial partners for 40 years, it's never been about men's tennis or women's tennis, it's been about men and women on the same stage. As other sports now we're starting to see the rights being bundled with men's or separate, sponsors really stepping up to support women's sport.

It's single digits right now, the branding committing to women's professional sport, but we are starting to materially see corporations saying, We're going to spend equally on women's pro sports as men's pro sports.

As I said in my comments, this celebration is not just about 50 years of equality, but really using it as a moment. We have three weeks of your coverage, our broadcast coverage in the United States and around the world to celebrate women, female athletes and talk about the importance of equality for all female athletes and all women on and off the court.

**CHRIS WIDMAIER:** I would encourage you all to go to usopen.org and check out Champions of Equality. You will see a host of voices in sports and beyond sports, entertainment, politics, et cetera, women sharing their ideas of the impact of equal prize money, the impact of Billie Jean King. The list is incredible. We were blown away by how many women wanted to contribute to that series. It's pretty impressive.

**Q. Sort of a different area of things being equal is the ball. Last year there were some women's players who complained. The plan now is to use the same ball. What went into that? How long did you have to work on that shift? Was there any cost to doing it different?**

**STACEY ALLASTER:** Every year the WTA informs us of what Wilson US Open ball they would like their athletes to play with. We have been unwavering, that's been their decision.

Last year during the tournament, we had some players that wanted to change the ball. I met with some of those

players and said, Look, talk to Steve Simon, talk to your player council representatives. If the WTA wants to change the ball, no problem. Wilson accommodates that. No extra cost.

The only condition we gave to the WTA was we need to know what ball you want to play with in 2023 at the end of the 2022 US Open. That's how far the lead times are for Wilson to produce the volume of our US Open ball.

Right now this is a trial. The WTA is polling the players. They've been playing with the ball in Canada and Cincinnati. We'll expect the WTA to tell us at the end of the 2023 US Open if they'd like to continue with the Wilson Extra Duty or they prefer to go back to the regular felt balls. 100% in the athletes' decision. We're happy to do whatever the athletes want as it relates to the ball. So is our long time, 45-year partner Wilson.

**Q. My question is regarding 'ball in play' time, a very live issue, downtime in tennis. Can I ask whether there are any further steps being taken ahead of this year's tournament to emphasize to players the importance of this? Obviously we have shot clock, the new toilet break rules. Enforcement remains an issue. Are there any further steps being taken to avoid unnecessary delays in matches?**

**STACEY ALLASTER:** We went after 'ball in play' in 2018. We changed the warm-up, one minute, et cetera. Introduced the shot clock.

Look, there's nothing new happening. Certainly our tournament referee, Jake Garner, will meet with all of the chair umpires. We want to enforce our time regulations. Changes were done with toilet breaks, et cetera.

As the rules are for the 2023 US Open, they stay in place. But I think it's something we always have to be looking at because we know our consumers, they just want the action more quicker and so forth. Some people say we should go to a 20-second shot clock. That conversation is going on, but no change for '23.

**Q. Brian, over the course of your career you've been an advocate for overall health and wellness. I'm curious, where do you feel personally the US Open stands as a pillar for people to be inspired for their own health and wellness goals? As well, in terms of what the US Open has done, if you can expand upon your points about player mental health.**

**BRIAN HAINLINE:** Thanks for that question.

I was actually the US Open chief medical officer in 1992. I

saw at that time that the four Grand Slams weren't speaking to one another, they weren't speaking with the International Tennis Federation. What we've seen evolve since that time, really with the US Open's lead, that everyone is speaking to one another about players' health and making sure that is addressed not only at slams but the ITF pro circuit level and at the junior level.

I think with some of the other innovations that the US Open has made, especially with regard to mental health, that really is impacting all of sport.

Of course, we're in an era where athletes have been much more vocal about their own struggles, how they're personally having to cope with the trials and tribulations of daily life. The US Open has addressed that seriously.

Even the way we have the media room now, having a respect for players' health, and even having a way that if a player is injured or is feeling that his or her mental health is challenged, they're actually excused from having to be in front of the media.

It's really looking at being at the forefront of making certain that all players, that their health and safety are taken care of all events internationally in the world, and being a showcase especially for mental health.

I think also behind the scenes you see what the players are experiencing with regard to their physical health. We've been at the forefront of that. But the Grand Slams have all come together. The bottom line, the messaging, as Lew stated earlier, is we make certain that the players have adequate recovery time.

I think the biggest move we made in that regard was moving away from Super Saturday and ensuring that the players have a day of rest between every match.

I think it's all of those things combined that hopefully is a showcase for other sports and all tennis players and all athletes, that taking care of your physical and mental health is important.

**STACEY ALLASTER:** Maybe I'll add on athlete mental health, Brian.

Another new introduction for 2023, working together with the T7, the four slams, the ITF, WTA and ATP. We've come together on a new social media tool that will be looking at all of the athletes' social media handles. Any threats, disparaging language, et cetera, that the athletes experience, we'll be monitoring that 24 hours a day from the time we start. That is new.

It's my understanding that threat mix will be used by the ATP and the WTA and the Grand Slams year-round, so there will be a consistent platform. Athletes don't need to do anything. We just have their handles and we begin monitoring that for them to help protect them from that kind of abuse.

**BRIAN HAINLINE:** That's an outgrowth of the T7 Mental Health Summit last year. Certainly is in line with our surgeon general, Vivek Murthy, talking about social media and its potential negative impact on mental health.

**Q. I'm wondering, you've been around the sport for a long time, the US Open. Is there one moment in each of you that crystallizes the importance of what you're doing? If you had one wish for this year, what would it be, other than good weather?**

**BRIAN HAINLINE:** I'll always remember 1999 when Pete Sampras was to break Roy Emerson's record. He would have come in and had potentially 13 Grand Slam victories.

He was warming up and hit a simple backhand against Kuerten and developed severe lower back pain. It's public information, he suffered a herniated disc.

He and I spoke for hours about the fact that we could make you pain-free for the tournament, but that's seven grueling matches, and it could really impact negatively on your health. Pete withdrew from that tournament.

There was also a reflection of putting things in perspective. That's what was most important for me because we discussed the fact that if he recovers from this herniated disc, he has another Grand Slam in him.

Indeed, in 2000 he won Wimbledon. In 2002 he won the US Open. He had 14 Grand Slams. He retired at the peak of his career.

There were many moments, but that one was truly special. I think it spoke to the power of really putting things in perspective, full recovery, and still reaching your goals.

**LEW SHERR:** When I reflect, I think this is my 14th US Open, the moment that stands out most prominently for me, you're going to fact check me on the year, '15 or '16, Serena played Venus, a Tuesday night, right after Labor Day.

It wasn't a sporting event, it became a cultural event. It was news coverage, front page news coverage, being discussed everywhere. I think it was emblematic of what that organization has tried to accomplish for years and years: the opportunity for anyone from any background to



play this sport, benefit from this sport, compete at the highest levels of this sport.

You had two incredibly strong female competitors, leaders, big personalities from the same family no less. I recall seeing Oprah come in. On the scale of Ali-Frazier in some respects in terms of cultural impact.

I was just so proud to be a part of this organization in a sport where something like that could happen, recognizing how much they had to achieve to get there and what tennis had been able to do for them in their lives, the global citizens and leaders that they've become as a result.

**STACEY ALLASTER:** Tough question.

There's no doubt 2022 US Open, opening night with Serena, speaking about transformation. I remember the press that was out in the South Plaza. It was a worldwide event. It's special.

I'm pressed hard. I'm going to say 2021, Leylah-Emma. During that match we had the Original 9. We paid tribute to them. It was two real moments.

The first one was Leylah was coming off, having won. The Original 9 were lined up. As she was coming out the door, I said to her, It's the Original 9. These are the women who sacrificed everything so that you could play in the US Open. She knew exactly who they were. When I introduced Leylah to the Original 9, you could not have seen six, seven women with almost tears in their eyes. It was so incredibly special. Leylah was respectful. It was everything that the Original 9 epitomized.

After that, then Emma was walking out. I had the Original 9 on the side. Emma goes by and she kind of waves to them, like a teenage little girl. It brings it all home, right? It brings what it's all been about. It's about the Original 9, Billie part of it, putting themselves out there, the courage and leadership so that any little girl anywhere in the world could play at the US Open.

**Q. You all have been in tennis for a long period of time. We've had discussion about gender equity, health. Of course, tennis is the sport of a lifetime, international. What's the one thing that either you love the most about this sport or you think gives it its greatest strength?**

**BRIAN HAINLINE:** I think one of the most exciting aspects of tennis now is the introduction of the world tennis number, where you can have boys and girls, men and women, anyone from any background, any age, and they can play against each other in the same event or same

tournament, and they will be equally paired.

You're taking away this binary equation and you're saying, Brian Hainline, a man in his 60s, might be in a tournament, he has the same world tennis number as a 15-year-old girl and they're competing against each other, and it's a tough competition. It's that opening up to everyone the ability to compete across generations.

But I will add to that, wheelchair tennis. When I was recently in Portugal for the World Team Cup, which is essentially the Davis Cup and Billie Jean King Cup of wheelchair tennis, I discovered one of our top junior players lives less than a mile from me in Queens. I live in Queens. He's in Bayside. I'm in Douglaston.

We do drills against each other. As an able-bodied athlete, I'm doing drills with a wheelchair athlete. He gets two bounces, I get one bounce, but we're pretty even.

It's just that ability for cross generations and everyone to be on the same court together. I think tennis is exceptional in that regard.

**STACEY ALLASTER:** Well-said, Brian.

I will just add that for me, what I love the most about tennis, is it changes people's lives. Whether it's that little kid who gets a racquet in their hand the first time, ultimately becomes the US Open tournament director, or wins a national championship, wins a league championship, meets new friends, comes to this amazing house and leaves and wants to go play tennis that transforms their lives with fitness, friendship and fun.

It is the sport of a lifetime. It is the sport that is welcoming for all. I think that's it for me. Men and women on the same stage each and every day of all levels of ability playing and having a good time.

**LEW SHERR:** Real briefly, I've worked in sports for a long time but was not a tennis player growing up through childhood. The opportunity to join this organization, understanding that the reason we exist is to grow the game, not because we're the industry association or that we love tennis and we think you should love tennis, too, but because tennis is a way to improve people's lives. It's an opportunity to inspire health, wellness, not just for individuals, but for communities. That is very much top of mind.

The US Open is a huge commercial endeavor. The US Open, pardon the expression, is the bake sale that funds the organization's ability to grow the game and impact people's lives in an positive way by doing so. There's not

an owner, we're not publicly traded, not part of a conglomerate. Our proceeds go to support growing this game.

If you have the opportunity to see the work that the USTA Foundation does, like I have, be on a court, watch someone who wouldn't have the opportunity to play tennis, to see the joy, to have a safe space to go, where tennis can be used to teach broader life skills, and for those that take an interest in the sport, to be coached up to a level where they can achieve a college scholarship, potentially play professional, all of those things are possible because of what we're able to do off of this event. It's extraordinary and why I get up every day.

I know my colleagues want to do more because we're part of an organization that gives back, yet we get to be part of what is the greatest sports and entertainment event in the world.

**CHRIS WIDMAIER:** Members of the media, thank you for joining us today. I want to thank Brian, Stacey and Lew for being with us.

Any member of the media that needs some follow-up, reach out to myself, Brendan McIntyre, Pat Mitsch, we will make sure you get what you need.

We look forward to seeing you at the 2023 US Open.

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