

U.S. Women's Open

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Champions Golf Club

Mike Davis

Beth Major

Stu Francis

Shannon Rouillard

Kay Cockerill

Press Conference

THE MODERATOR: Good afternoon, everyone, and welcome to the 75th U.S. Women's Open Championship at Champions Golf Club. I'm Julia Pine, assistant director of communications for the USGA, and it is my pleasure to welcome you all to Champions for what promises to be a memorable week.

With me today from left to right, senior director of communications Beth Major, USGA CEO Mike Davis, USGA president Stu Francis, senior director of championships, Shannon Rouillard, and from NBC Universal, Kay Cockerill.

I'd like to start with you, Stu. We're here on the biggest stage in women's golf, which has seen exponential growth over the past few years. How does the USGA's future look like.

STU FRANCIS: Julia, thank you. First of all, we've seen tremendous growth in girls' and women's golf throughout the past few years. We've had record entries in three national USGA championships. The girls junior has had a record-setting entry group for the last five years.

The Women's Amateur four-ball has had records, and the Women's Amateur championship, and that's basically in part due to the investment the USGA has made in the women and the girls' game.

Our investment, which has totaled over \$30 million into several programs, has really helped fuel the participants in our major championships. We had 122 girls from the LPGA, USGA girls golf program compete in USGA championships last year. Drive, Chip & Putt also contributed a host of players into our championships, and



we had 18 First Tee past participants participate in USGA championships, as well. So it's really been very, very gratifying for us.

We are also working hard to expand the diversity and inclusion areas of golf and women's and girls' golf in the administration part of things, so we've spent a significant amount of investment into our PGA Boatwright Intern Program and several other associated programs.

So we're very happy with how things are going, and deeply appreciative of the interest level, which has come in through those programs. Thank you.

THE MODERATOR: Mike, it's really a milestone week here, 75th anniversary of the U.S. Women's Open. What does it mean to be here for you?

MIKE DAVIS: Well, Julia, this indeed is a milestone, 75 years. You know, when I think about the U.S. Women's Open, really I think about women's golf. And Stu, you talked about so many things the USGA has done over the years, but listen, we got started in 1895, the first Women's Amateur Championship was played. And by the way, that was the same year as the men's U.S. Amateur was played and the same year the men's U.S. Open was played.

You heard about all the things that Stu went through with Drive, Chip & Putt, girls golf where we partner with the LPGA and First Tee, but we really believe that -- when you think back on milestones, what this championship does to inspire golf, to inspire women's golf, you think about, Stu, the things that you brought up there.

They are making a difference. They are having an impact. It used to be generation after generation when you looked at junior golfers it was roughly one out of six junior golfers were female. Now we're better than one out of three. These kinds of things are working, and this event does inspire.

This is the one they all want to win.

In terms of some milestones, when you look back, this was the first event in the world of women's golf that was televised in 1965. It was the first event where the purse reached a million dollars. It was the first event where the winner got a million dollars, you know, the majors.



I think when we think about a USGA championship, you think about the qualifying that goes into it. We have roughly on a non-COVID year 1,800 females try to qualify for this championship. You know, venues, it's a big thing where you play venues at a U.S. Open, and here it's no different.

This week we're playing at Champions Golf Club. It's hosted a men's U.S. Open, it's hosted a men's U.S. Amateur, it's hosted a Ryder Cup.

I think about next year we're going to be at the Olympic Club, that's hosted U.S. Opens. Kay, I know that's your club, and we're grateful you're going to have us.

2023 we're going to be at Pebble Beach, venerable Pebble Beach. The women have never played a championship of significance on Pebble Beach.

A few years after that we'll be at Erin Hills. I dare say that you all heard about our partnership in Pinehurst and that Southern Pines community of us taking what we're going to -- we're creating Golf House Pinehurst there.

I dare say you're going to see us go there with U.S. Women's Opens. So stay tuned there.

So all in all, we have had a lot of milestones. We're very proud of how this has impacted.

In terms of some of the memories of -- I think this is 31 years for me at the Women's U.S. Open. You always think back at some of your first anything you do, and I know in 1990 and 1991, I think back, and Betsy King won her second of two U.S. Opens in Atlanta in 1990.

A year later, Meg Mallon won her first of two. Also remember that was just up the road in Dallas at Colonial Country Club. I remember that because it was so oppressively hot then that the grounds staff was literally dumping ice on the bentgrass putting greens trying to keep them alive.

I think about that and say, you know, some of the monies is nonprofit monies that we use go into develop different strands of grasses that can withstand the heat more, less water and so on.

Now if it was 1991 again and it was bentgrass we wouldn't have to put ice on the greens there.

I think about 1998 and Seri Pak. That was a transformational U.S. Open. That's one where you think about what that did for the global landscape, and certainly

the country of Korea. We watched the success and have watched for the last handful of years or few handfuls of years of the Korean players, but now look what they're doing on the men's side.

I think what Seri did, who by the way happens to be our Bob Jones Award winner this year, our highest award, was again transformational.

Paula Creamer in 2010 at Oakmont. What I remember about that is the year before at Saucon Valley she was leading the championship and tried to get aggressive on a drivable par-4 and it didn't work out so well for her.

The next year she played a bit conservative at Oakmont and the 71st hole and she won it.

The last thing I'll say on memories is 2014, the back-to-back championships we did at Pinehurst with the men the first week and the women the second week. Not only was that a great moment for Michelle Wie, but listen, that was a great thing for both men's and women's golf.

I look back and say, That may be in my time the best Women's U.S. Open we've played, simply because it proved to the world that these female athletes are every bit as good as the male athletes or counterparts when you set a golf course up in like manner, same hole locations, same green speeds, same type of clubs off tees, into greens, and if you look back at the data, almost exactly the same stroke average for the week.

That was great.

And the last thing I'll just say, Julia, this is a special week this week because like we did in 2012 by honoring the great Jack Nicklaus, who really is the best U.S. Open player ever on the men's side, we're doing the same thing on the women's side this year and honoring the great Mickey Wright, who won four U.S. Opens and passed away several months ago.

We miss Mickey, but she indeed on the women's side was as good as anybody that ever played, so we're very honored to name the gold champions medal after Mickey Wright.

Julia?

THE MODERATOR: Shannon, this Women's Open is going to look a little different. Just talk to us about how we got here this week playing two golf courses.

SHANNON ROUILLARD: Sure. Well, first and foremost, the U.S. Women's Open is critically important to the USGA,



but what we also know is how important it is to the players, as well.

They continue to tell us that it's the one that they want to win. Let's face it; it's been an unprecedented year for everyone, and as we're sitting here on the eve of the 75th U.S. Women's Open, it's taken collaboration, creativity, innovation by so many of our partners, but especially Champions Golf Club.

So we were very fortunate that champions is a 36-hole championship facility. When we approached Jack and Robin Burke about the use of their Jackrabbit course, they raised their hand. They were willing to help us out. They wanted this championship to take place just as much as we did, and we're so thankful to the partnership, to the friendship that we have with Robin and Jackie, as well as to the membership for us being able to conduct this championship over both of their championship golf courses in the month of December during their holiday season.

THE MODERATOR: Beth, we had a lot of celebration this year around the history of the championship; the 75th anniversary allowed us to take a look back. I know some of our plans were altered due to COVID, but talk about what was planned and what we'll still execute this week.

BETH MAJOR: Thanks, Julia. As I'm sure you can all gather, we are very excited to be at Champions Golf Club this week for the U.S. Women's Open.

Marking this championship's diamond anniversary called for special celebrations throughout the year. Every club that has ever hosted a U.S. Women's Open received one of the championship 75th anniversary flags that you see flying on the flagpole here around the country.

We wanted them to all be a part of this noteworthy celebration and feel truly included for their role in the history of the U.S. Women's Open.

We also lodged a history experience on uswomensopen.com powered by our friends at Rolex that offers fans an in-depth look at the spectacular history of this championship.

There, as well as on our social media channels, you'll find a number of new interviews with champions, as well as broadcast highlights that many have not seen before, including me, and I thought I had seen them all.

And although we could not gather all of the women who have hoisted the U.S. Women's Open trophy over the years here with us this week for a reunion of champions, we were able to celebrate them all year long through

various contexts, content, and interactions.

We do look forward to gathering with everyone as soon as it is safe to do so.

In addition, we wanted to highlight the wonderful athletes who compete in this championship like never before. That's why today we are thrilled to officially launch our Women Worth Watching Campaign.

Astonishingly, only 4 percent of sports coverage features women's sports or female athletes. To help drive change of this statistic, the USGA is leveraging its partnership with the SheIS Sport collective to participate in the Women Worth Watching Campaign.

Women Worth Watching provides a compelling way for the USGA to further its long-standing commitment, as Mike mentioned earlier, to women's golf, and more broadly to elevate women's sports, celebrating female athletes and role models while promoting equality and diversity in sports and society.

Throughout the course of this week and the months ahead, you will see content across USGA channels and our partners at NBC Universal spotlighting extraordinary women, both inside and outside the game of golf.

The campaign will feature players, influencers, athletes, leaders, both male and female, to bring this important message to life. You will see these special tee-shirts and the women worth watching hashtag everywhere this week, and we are excited to see the movement finally take off.

We have been thrilled at the reaction that the campaign has seen over the past few days from both the players here who have been incredibly supportive, but also from their counterparts on the PGA TOUR who have been sharing messages of support that have not gone unnoticed and are greatly appreciated.

And to all of you, some of you who have been supporting this cause for quite a while, others who are joining in this week, we appreciate your commitment to covering this championship, both those of you who are here with us this week, as well as those of you who are covering remotely from around the world.

All of you are helping us bring more well deserved attention to these phenomenal athletes. We are sincerely grateful for your support of the 75th U.S. Women's Open, and we look forward to a wonderful week of women worth watching.

THE MODERATOR: Thanks, Beth. I know that's



something that resonates with you, Kay. Talk a little bit about the emotions when you learned that USGA and NBC were reigniting their partnership.

KAY COCKERILL: Yeah, I was extremely excited when I got the call from both Jack Graeme and Tommy Roy, my bosses at NBC and Golf Channel.

It had been -- it felt like a big drought. It felt like something was sort of ripped out of my soul, not being able to work the USGA events that I've been so fortunate to be a part of, either as a player or on the broadcast side.

I know I speak for Tommy Roy, Doug Grabert, our longtime director, and over 180 people that are here this week to put this telecast on. I love and I know we love USGA events. They're considered the top championships to play in at both the young amateur level and at the professional level.

I have a close relationship with the USGA having played in a fair number of the championships myself and being lucky enough to have won two U.S. Women's Amateur championships, so I know how important the USGA is and how just the connection that I have personally to work these events. I know my fellow commentators and everybody that's involved with our telecasts feels the same way, because they're just great events that are on great venues, and everybody wants to be a part of a USGA championship.

When I got that call I just remember being so genuinely excited, and I couldn't believe the news. It just was like, Yes, we're back working USGA championships. I was originally supposed to have been in Toledo working two LPGA events. I worked the first one and then gladly changed my plans to zip to Washington, D.C. area to work the U.S. Women's Amateur.

Yeah, I think we picked up right where we left off and things have just been really smooth, the transition to get NBC and Golf Channel back in to televise all these events. I mean, we're doing 27 hours this week, which included an hour and a half preview show today that went really well.

Yeah, I can't say that -- I'm just delighted, and I look forward to 2021 when we get to go to Olympic Club for the U.S. Women's Open. I thought I might be working the range or working as a marshal, but instead I get to call the golf there. I also look forward to the other USGA championships that we end up covering.

I know that schedule is yet to be determined, but excited to work all those events, as well.

Q. Kay, as a USGA champion yourself and also having

competed in a number of events, what does it feel like when a player walks in here for a U.S. Women's Open week? What stands out and what's different?

KAY COCKERILL: It's just the level of professionalism and all the special elements that are a part of a USGA event. I mean, when I think back to my first U.S. Open that I played in, even my first U.S. Amateur, I think, was in 1982 at Canoe Brook, '82 or '83, and the fencing and the ropes and -- well, we don't have grandstands this week, but just the level of heightened experience and also the history.

Everyone here knows some portion of the history and all the players that have won various USGA championships, and the USGA acknowledges and pays tribute to their past champions. So you know if you win a USGA championship you're going to be included in this club and you're going to be remembered and celebrated.

So that feeling really permeates, I think, across to all the players that are here playing in their first U.S. Women's Open, or whether it's their 23rd potentially for Cristie Kerr. So that feeling never goes away.

Q. Beth, you touched on it a bit, but this week we've seen a lot of public support from PGA TOUR players and a lot of the female players here have been talking about it. Why do you think that's so important for elevating women's golf in general?

BETH MAJOR: You know what, I think whenever you talk about getting involved with something, I think somewhere along the way there's an "aha" moment, and for many of us at the USGA, the "aha" moment actually happened earlier this year when we saw a lot of the NBA players so publicly declaring support for their counterparts on the WNBA, and to see how powerful that was and to see the attention that those male NBA players were able to bring to the WNBA was incredibly powerful.

So we realized that there was a great opportunity to see that on the golf side, as well. You know, there's an interesting dynamic in golf whereby everyone is playing the same game, and there's a tremendous amount of support in many ways across the male and female players. We felt that this would be a natural fit for the male players to really show their support, and we've not been surprised at all but have been incredibly grateful to see them really jump in and support the cause.

Certainly we've heard so many great comments from the players who are here with us this week in terms of how grateful they are, realizing that the power, that the platform that their counterparts on the PGA TOUR can bring to the effort are really powerful and can make a huge difference.



THE MODERATOR: Shannon, we've heard some of the players describe the greens here at Cypress as extremely large. They've even mentioned that over at Jackrabbit they maybe look small in comparison. What is a player facing when they're looking at these greens this week?

SHANNON ROUILLARD: Yeah, you know, on Cypress, these greens are so large. The average sized green is over 44 yards deep, whereas over at Jackrabbit, those greens are on average about 36 yards deep, which is really an average size.

But the players are going to experience what is going to feel like a much smaller green on Jackrabbit, but really on Cypress the player is going to need to really place their ball and look at placing their ball in the same quadrant as the hole is located.

It really is a second-shot golf course. A player who can play the par-4s well and be able to have the distance control required on the greens is going to be on the top of the leaderboard.

THE MODERATOR: Mike, talk a little bit about the USGA's relationship with the LPGA.

MIKE DAVIS: It's wonderful. I mean, it starts -- I consider Mike Whan, the commissioner, a good friend. He and I sit on a number of boards together, and it works the whole way down. I think beyond just the long relationship with the Women's U.S. Open that we've had, think about girls' golf. That's something that we not only think but we know has been impactful, and we did it together.

Listen, the data is clear that it is making a difference. It's growing the women's game. We have more women in the United States playing the game than ever. We have more girls playing the game than ever.

I just think it's such a -- it's such a quality organization, the LPGA, from leadership down, that we're very proud to be a partner.

THE MODERATOR: Kay, the Women Worth Watching Campaign is driving people to watch more women's golf, and between your LPGA broadcasting and USGA, what would you tell people who aren't typically tuning in, and this week without a PGA TOUR event it's their first opportunity to see the women's game?

KAY COCKERILL: Yeah, it is a great opportunity. This is an unusual position in the year to have the U.S. Women's Open, but there's really not a lot of other golf going on and this is the premier event.

I think a lot of people will be interested, number one, seeing how the women play this golf course, which is typically for the most part the men have played; and Mike alluded to it, for us to go to courses where men have primarily played I think is really huge because it's like a curiosity factor. How are the women going to handle Champions Golf Club? How are they going to handle the lake course at Olympic Golf Club? So I think that's a good hook is the course.

But people, I think it's just a matter of changing habits and getting them used to turning on the TV when the women are playing, and they're going to really be pleasantly surprised and see really a diverse cast of players.

We have players in all shapes and sizes, all ages, from all over the world. If you can't find someone that you are attracted to just by the way they look or the way they hit the ball or the way they carry themselves or the way they chip, I think you're crazy, because we have a lot to teach and a lot to show the world.

We have some of the longest hitters, in fact three long bombers are going to be paired together that all average well over 375 yards. Then you have shorter hitters that are more accurate and kind of rely on guile and finesse.

So I just think it's across the board there's a style of play or a player that you can learn a lot from.

We're going to be on so many different hours, and again on the website, there's so many opportunities to tune in and either read about, see interviews, read the stories. It's going to be a week that's really important to hook people to women's golf if they don't already know about it.

THE MODERATOR: That's a perfect place to close. We'll be on air tomorrow starting at 10:00 a.m. eastern time on Golf Channel, and thank everyone for tuning in today.

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