

# U.S. Amateur Championship

Press Conference  
Friday August 17, 2018

## Cole Hammer



**Q. Cole Hammer, you advance to the semifinals of the U.S. Amateur. That's two straight USGA championships in a row to the semifinals, and in between a Western Amateur victory. Quite a streak. Talk about that, what that means to you.**

COLE HAMMER: It means the world. I just heard an interview out there that the first one to make it to the semis of the U.S. Junior and the U.S. Am in the same year since sometime in the '80s. That's pretty cool to have that by my name. It's been a great summer so far as I've talked about the last couple days, but I'm excited for tomorrow.

**Q. Do you still feel that everything is there and the next step is just another step along the journey, or do you get yourself the ability to maybe think a little bit further down the line?**

COLE HAMMER: I'm trying not to think any further down the line. I try to take each shot, each hole, each match as it comes. But it's been a great year, and sure, there's implications to that. You can look ahead and what I might be able to have in the future, but I'm just trying to stay focused on the moment.

**Q. Do you remember a specific moment when you really felt like you were more than just a junior golfer and could compete with the best amateurs?**

COLE HAMMER: I do. I think when I won the Azalea earlier this year, when I came out on top in a playoff against Hugo Bernard and Joe Pagdin, even though Joe is a junior golfer, I just felt like I belonged in amateur golf rather than just in junior golf. Actually even going back before that, last year at the Jones Cup, I came in third, and I mean, that's a pretty solid finish for -- I think I was 17, 16 maybe even -- no, I was 17. So no, it was really good to have that happen.

But this whole year has just kind of gradually been a rise to the confidence that I have now.

**Q. How have you grown up just as a person?**

COLE HAMMER: There's been a few changes. I think just being a senior in high school, kind of everything that comes along with that socially is a change from previously in high school. I really -- I don't think I've changed like as a person. I've always kind of been a humble person and someone who is like quick to be

nice to others. That really hasn't changed. I've just tried to become better at that.

**Q. Just mainly like frustration with how you play or -- has that changed?**

COLE HAMMER: Yeah, I mean, it has. When I was really -- not really young but probably when I was like 13, 14, I had a little bit of an issue with getting frustrated. But I've learned that just does no good at all when you're out on the golf course, especially in match play. You don't want to show your opponent that you're frustrated because they can kind of use that as momentum for the next hole. This past year has been great for that. I kind of take bad shots in stride and good shots in stride. That helps.

**Q. There was a huge roar through the golf course today, and I believe it was in reaction to your shot on No. 9. You put yourself in a bad spot. Can you take us through what sounded like an incredible up-and-down or hole-out?**

COLE HAMMER: Yeah, so I didn't hit a very good drive, kind of toed it, but it stayed in the fairway. It's a big fairway on the 9th, and I had like 246, and it played downhill. So I hit 4-iron and came up just a little short left, just short-sided as can be. He plugged in the bunker, hit it to about 15 feet. So I knew I needed to hit it at least to where I could give myself a putt at par. But I had a good lie. It was downgrain in the rough, and I had a shot if I land it right over this kind of crest, it was going to go in. I was probably 20, 25 yards away from the hole, and I just kind of sent it straight up, and it hopped and took a great bounce. It was just kind of one of those one-in-a-million shots that happen to go in, and it was pretty cool to see that drop.

**Q. Do you know much about your opponent tomorrow, Viktor?**

COLE HAMMER: I do. I know he's gotten a lot of rest these past couple days. But no, I played with him a couple years ago at Sage Valley Junior Invitational in the first round. I don't remember a whole lot about his game, but I remember he's a solid player, and he's done a lot of great stuff the past couple years. He's one of the top amateurs in the world. I think we're both playing well, so it should be a good match tomorrow.

**Q. What do you think makes you a good match play player?**

COLE HAMMER: I just am really never out of the hole. I put the ball in play on about every hole and feel like I'm always looking at a birdie putt to either halve or win the hole. I stay real patient out there, which I think is huge because if you get a couple down early or you're just not seeing putts go in, there's a lot of golf left.

I think experience helps, as well. I've played a ton of match play this year, and I've seen myself come back from deficits in the last few holes, and I think that just kind of speaks to a little bit of confidence and knowing that I can get the job done when it counts.

**Q. Switching topics, you said you worked with Cameron McCormick starting in 2015?**

COLE HAMMER: The end of 2015.

**Q. What kind of player were you before you got to him, and how would you describe yourself as a player now, kind of the evolution of your game?**

COLE HAMMER: Yeah, well, I qualified for the U.S. Open under Kevin Kirk, so I mean, I was still a solid player, but I didn't hit the ball very far. I had a good short game then, as well. There was aspects of my game that needed improvement, specifically my iron game. I just wasn't striking it the way I needed to, and I went to Cameron, and it was like an immediate fix. Just needed a little more lag in my swing, and I started like compressing the ball a lot more than I had, and I think over the last two or three years, it's just gotten better and better.

**Q. Do you have a local caddie this week?**

COLE HAMMER: I do have a local caddie.

**Q. It seems like you were really comfortable out here. I think you're 14-under through your six matches. How have you gained such a familiarity and been so comfortable with Pebble?**

COLE HAMMER: Yeah, well, I played Monterey Peninsula last Friday. The greens were really fast. And so that kind of was my first taste of poa annua greens other than tournaments in Washington and Sahalee Players earlier this summer. The greens weren't that big of a change for me, and it was just kind of getting used to the way the ball bounced on iron shots, and Lincoln, my caddie, was a great help for me in the practice rounds, and I was able to figure it out after that.

**Q. Was there any specific differences between how you played today and the previous days?**

COLE HAMMER: Well, I got off to a really hot start. I think I was 3-under through my first five. I hit it really tight, and I think I was 2-up through 5, and it's always nice to have an early lead, early cushion. I hit the ball better than I had, than I did yesterday, and I figured

something out on the range in between matches yesterday, and kind of carried that into today. My stance was a little bit too wide and I was kind of getting out of balance. So that helped a lot, especially with my longer clubs.

**Q. Can you talk about how one goes about getting match play advice from arguably the best American match play player in Patrick Reed?**

COLE HAMMER: Well, it's pretty simple, actually. He works with Kevin Kirk, and when I worked with Kevin, I texted him and asked him for match play advice back in 2015 at this tournament actually. He just told me to kind of keep my head down and play the golf course until 14, and if you're 2-down or more, then you can press, but if not, then you've just still got to play the golf course.

**Q. Do you still do that?**

COLE HAMMER: I do. I still focus on the golf course the entire time, and obviously when you're 2-down with a few to go, you start thinking about it and start thinking about how can I make birdie here.