

U.S. Senior Women's Open

Press Conference

Wednesday July 11, 2018

Juli Inkster

THE MODERATOR: Welcome again, everyone, to the inaugural U.S. Senior Women's Open. We are joined by Juli Inkster, three-time U.S. Women's Amateur champion and two-time U.S. Women's Open champion. She has won seven career major championships and was a member of the 1982 victorious USA Curtis Cup team. Juli, let's talk a little bit, you're still playing competitively. What does that do this week in this type of field?

JULI INKSTER: Well, that's a good question. You know, I still work on my game. I haven't played well this year. I've really struggled with my putting this year. I've actually hit the ball pretty good, but my putting has been horrible. You know, I feel like I've made some progress this week with that, but when you don't make any putts, you don't score well.

I feel good physically, and I think this is an amazing venue for this golf course. I think they can play it as hard as they want or as easy as they want. Everybody is getting a little roll out there, which helps everybody, and I just think it's going to be a fun week.

THE MODERATOR: Last night the players gathered; talk a little bit about the outside the ropes experience here this week seeing all these women competing in an inaugural event.

JULI INKSTER: Well, as Mike Davis says, it's about time. You know, I do feel like we're missing quite a few of the legends here, the Beth Daniels, the Meg Mallons, the Whitworths, but we've got a lot of good ones here with Pat Bradley, and JoAnne Carner is just my idol, and Betsy King, and these are the girls I looked up to playing, Jerilyn Britz. It's good to have them out here, and it's good that they still want to compete because that's pretty much all we like to do is we like to compete. We've done it our whole life, and then you get to a certain point where you can't, and you've got a big void left. All these women out here, they like to compete. A lot of them have brushed off their clubs and been practicing. I think it's great for women's golf.

Q. You haven't competed in a U.S. Women's Open in a few years for obvious reasons. You have another role going on. But do you miss that when you're in the booth, and is it sort of helping to fill that void?



JULI INKSTER: You know what, I really don't. The U.S. Women's Open is so tough, and I've done so many of them, I really don't miss it at all. You know, this is fun. It's not that long. You hit a lot of great shots -- I just think the Women's U.S. Open, it's tough, and I'm still broadcasting, I still get to be there, I still get to watch it, but I really don't miss playing in them.

Q. This particular golf course, do you feel like it suits you? And with putting, what have you done to make strides?

JULI INKSTER: Well, I went back to my old two-ball, and I went back to cross-handed. I was doing the claw. It just kind of worked on my path a little bit. My path was bad. I don't know how you get into these funks, but I do. I seem to work myself out of it, it just takes me a little longer. But I feel like it suits my game. I'm driving the ball well. I'm hitting my irons good, so I'm going to have some opportunities.

You know, here you're going to have to play the par-5s, try to get your birdies on the par-5s, and the par-3s are good. I think if you can get pars on the par-3s and then take advantage on some of the par-4s. But putting is where it's at. You're going to have a lot of last-couple-foot roll-outs, so you're going to have a lot of three- and four-footers for par, and you're going to have to make those.

Q. Who do you work with for putting?

JULI INKSTER: Brian Inkster. (Laughter.) He's been drinking a lot this week. The poor guy.

Q. It's probably been a while since you've come into a championship as one of the pre-championship favorites --

JULI INKSTER: Yeah, like 30 years. (Laughter.) I forgot how to get to a media center.

Q. What does that feel like, and do you kind of relish being back in that role?

JULI INKSTER: It's good. I mean, I don't really like it. I don't like the whole limelight thing. I just like to play golf. I think we've got a lot of good players out here that can win. I think Laura Davis is playing good. I think she's probably the favorite. Liselotte, you could have an amateur sneak in there. I mean, I don't know. The bottom line is you've got to play four good days of golf, and I feel like I have it in me. Can I do it, that's

going to be the best.

Q. Only five players have won three different USGA championships. You could become the sixth.

What would that mean to you?

JULI INKSTER: It would mean -- first of all, to win two different USGAs is amazing. I never thought I'd win the U.S. Amateur, and I tried really hard to win that U.S. Open for a long time and didn't do it, and then finally in '99 I did. You know, I never got to play in the U.S. Junior, but to win -- just to be able to compete in the U.S. Senior and have a chance to win the U.S. Senior would be amazing. I just think we work really hard, just like the guys. We put a lot of time into our golf. We love golf, and to have the opportunity to win a USGA championship as a senior I think would be amazing.

Q. And you've been a really great USGA player. You play well in their events. Is there something about the demands of the events that fit you?

JULI INKSTER: Well, yeah. I grew up on a USGA golf course, Pasa Tiempo. They've never had a USGA event there, but it's a tough course. Very undulating greens, very demanding second shots, and I think usually in a USGA event, there's a rare moment that if you can shoot around even par or 1-under, you're going to do well. Well, if I could shoot even par at Pasa Tiempo I had a good round. So I really had to learn to shoot the other way when I went to college. All of a sudden I got 4- or 5-under and I was throwing up on myself. So I had to learn how to go low. But I think Pasa Tiempo really prepared me for USGA events, grind-it-out events.

Q. Chicago Golf Club obviously oozes history. Does this course remind you of any other you've played anywhere around the world?

JULI INKSTER: So it's a senior tournament, so our memories aren't that good. (Laughter.)

But I have to say Sunningdale, it reminds me a little bit of Sunningdale, a little more generous in the fairways, not as bunker-oriented. But this is kind of unlike a lot of tournaments we play. It's more linksey. I was very surprised when I got here how linksey it is. But you've got to drive the ball well because you can't be coming out of the rough on to these greens.

Q. You've been a mentor to a lot of LPGA players, but is there someone in the field that was a mentor to you or something you can look back on at your younger years as a pro?

JULI INKSTER: Well, I would -- she's not here, but Patty Sheehan played at San Jose State, and when I first got out there, I was a freshman and she was a senior. I relied a lot on her about what tournaments to play and where to stay and stuff like that. She was

probably one of my big mentors.

I have to say I really never grew up watching the LPGA. I kind of just fell into golf, and I got good at it, and I played. But I mean, my lifetime -- I didn't start until I was 15. My lifetime goal wasn't really to be an LPGA golfer, so I didn't really know a lot about it. But once I started playing in college and doing pretty well there, it kind of changed my focus a little bit. I was going to be a rocket scientist, but I had to give that up. (Laughter.)

Q. For those in the field who are rusty from a competitive standpoint just from not being able to play too much, what advice would you give for playing in a major for the first time in a long time?

JULI INKSTER: Well, I just think -- you could probably see it last night. A lot of people are just having fun, meeting old acquaintances, catching up on people. You know, playing practice golf and competitive golf is two different things. But I'm going to feel nervous on the first tee, and I'm sure Laura and Liselotte -- I'm sure everyone will. But that's good. That's why we play in these things, to have those jitters. I think everybody will have it, and I think everybody will be excited to hear their name called on the first tee.

Q. Next year this championship moves back to North Carolina, Pine Needles. It has obviously a great history with Women's Opens. Are there any other sites or years beyond that you're hoping the USGA might revisit sites that have hosted U.S. Women's Opens in the past that all of you that have played those sites before might want to go back and try again?

JULI INKSTER: Yeah, that's a good question. Again, the memory thing. Well, let's just -- let's try Shinnecock. That would be a good one to play. I would give USGA another chance at it. But yeah, I think Shinnecock would be great. I'd love to go there and play.

National would be good. They probably won't let us on there, though. Pine Valley would be good. I'm not sure they'd let us on there, either.

You know, I think -- I really do think this is the perfect place to have the first one. I mean, it's got the history. You're going to get some roll out there. The USGA can set it up as hard as they want or as benign as they want. They've got a lot of possibilities out there, and I just think this is a great one to start out with.