

# U.S. Senior Open

Press Conference

Friday June 30, 2017

## Kirk Triplett



THE MODERATOR: It's my pleasure to welcome Kirk Triplett here into the Media Center. Kirk, with rounds of 62 and 67 for a 36-hole total of 129, that's 11 under par. And the 129 is a 36-hole U.S. Senior Open scoring record, breaking the 130 shot by Michael Allen in Omaha in 2013.

KIRK TRIPLETT: Yes, I beat Michael Allen! That's awesome. He was my college teammate. What can I say? University of Nevada.

THE MODERATOR: Are you close with Michael?

KIRK TRIPLETT: Go Wolfpack. Yeah, we live about five minutes apart, but we only see each other when we're on the road. We are very good friends.

THE MODERATOR: Another very solid round today. Actually hit two more greens today than you did yesterday. I think one of the hardest things that I've heard from players is that it's really hard to follow up a great round with another good round, but you were able to do it today. How did you feel about your round overall?

KIRK TRIPLETT: Yeah, I'm very happy with how I played. I had a few rough spots and some nice saves, a little bit of good fortune too. Made some key putts. U.S. Open, any tournament, you've got to make the putts.

THE MODERATOR: The weather seems it's changing a little bit. A little more humid out there. A little more wind. How did the course play today, as opposed to yesterday?

KIRK TRIPLETT: I would say the course is a shot or two more difficult, maybe pushing three shots, but I think you'll see good scores in the afternoon. There's room to play. The greens are still receptive. You have some difficult pins, but you have some accessible pins also, and you have a number of short shots. The scoring will be good again.

THE MODERATOR: Let's go through your card. You started off with a birdie on 1. If you could take us through some of your approaches and the length of the putts.

KIRK TRIPLETT: Hit a nice drive, and I got that

downhill lie. There's about three spots where I get it out here. I'm going to have to go find a place to practice before we keep going. I hit a wedge about 30 feet right of the hole. Just trying to lob it up there and start with a two-putt, and it went right in the jar. I mean, it went right in the center. My playing partners are just looking at me, shaking their head. Got off to a great start, very comfortable.

Nice two-putt par on the next. Hit it close again on No. 4. Had about 125 yards again and chipped a 9 iron up the hill just behind the hole and made that from about three feet.

THE MODERATOR: Then the 8th hole, you were in good position off the tee but had another one of those lies that you mentioned.

KIRK TRIPLETT: Yeah, I had that kind of straight downhill lie. Typically, I think when the fairways are a little firmer, those balls are always going to go to the flat spots or through into the rough. Right now, they're hanging up on the hillsides a little bit, at least for me. I had that wedge with the downhill lie and kind of an awkward -- the pin's right on -- just over that front shelf.

Then I hit just a very poor wedge shot, and it buried in the lip of the right-hand trap. I was really fortunate to get it out of the trap and onto the green and two-putt for a 5. The position I was in, it would have been very easy to make a 6 so I was quite happy with a 5.

THE MODERATOR: Then as you're making the turn, you had a great par save. Was that right on 10?

KIRK TRIPLETT: Oh, yeah, No. 10 I hit it kind of pin high right. I'm sort of finding that these putts from 30 feet pin high, there's always something between you and the hole, some kind of shoulder or a slope.

A horribly difficult putt. Duffy Waldorf and I had the exact same putt. I left it ten feet short, and he hit it ten feet past because it's really hard to pick the break and the speed. You're out there playing six, seven, ten feet of break. The more it breaks, the more breaks and the faster it is around the hole. So you're just trying to find a happy medium.

I think, if the course gets a little firmer and a little faster,

you're going to see a lot of those kind of three-putt bogeys. But, yeah, I made a beautiful second putt there, 10-footer with a lot of break, and rolled it right in the center. I walked over to the 11th tee, felt pretty good.

THE MODERATOR: Then you went to the 12th, the par 3 12th, and made a birdie there as well.

KIRK TRIPLETT: I sort of felt like I'd kind of been playing the last five or six holes where I was trying to get the ball to the big parts of the green. And standing on 12th tee, I really felt like it was a good fit for the club. I knew sort of where the pin was towards that back. I felt like hitting that 7 iron, it wouldn't go over the green. I hit it beautifully, cut it, the wind held it, and it just ended up very close.

THE MODERATOR: And then on the 14th, the par 5, you were, I believe, just in front in two?

KIRK TRIPLETT: Yeah, 14, hit a driver and 3 wood on the front edge and two-putted from there. Just a short tap-in, maybe a 3-footer.

THE MODERATOR: Pars the rest of the way. So a 67 today, a great round.

Let's open it up for questions.

**Q. Kirk, I saw you on the practice tee before the tournament started talking about 2001, even par. And you said, well, little different now. The brand of player might be a little better overall and the fairways a little more receptive. I think you did say hitting into greens. I think you said 10 under. You wouldn't be surprised if 10 under won this. Do we have to readjust that number a little bit?**

KIRK TRIPLETT: I think we just have to wait and see what comes. If there's no moisture that hits this golf course all weekend, USGA courses end up -- when the greens get firm, it's kind of a torture chamber out there. Good shots turn into bogeys, and then the challenge, the mental challenge of a U.S. Open begins.

Right now, that hasn't been so much a part of this tournament. You still have to play good golf, but right now your good shots, they turn out good. And as long as that's the case, guys are going to shoot under par, right? They're going to shoot 3 or 4 under if they play well.

THE MODERATOR: Usually, "patience" is a word you hear at USGA championships. Par's a good score. Really, the first couple of days, you've needed to be a little more aggressive, given how receptive the course has been, especially yesterday.

You said you changed your mindset a little bit after seeing some low scores yesterday morning. How do you feel about it this morning, on Friday?

KIRK TRIPLETT: Well, in the position that I'm in, you have to adjust a little bit, right? You just can't go willy-nilly and fire at every single one and hope your good ones outweigh your bad ones. But there will be guys that are trying to do that that are four, five, and six behind you.

So you have to recognize that the number you're sitting on may still not be good enough to win the championship. So you just kind of have to take the same mindset.

And as we get to know the greens better and better, we can see, hey, that's a place you don't want to go, right? You may think it's safe in the center of the green, No. 7. It has two shoulders two-thirds of the way back in the green, and you may think it's safe in the back center, but it's not because you've got to putt over those shoulders.

So those two corner pins, you're really better off shooting at them. And those are the subtleties, I think, that we're starting to learn with this course. And there's more places where, hey, you should be shooting at this pin because playing safe is no bargain.

**Q. This Tour, over 50 Champions Tour, et cetera, has meant a lot of things to a lot of guys. You've had a lot of success here. Obviously, a U.S. Open would be a nice notch for your belt. What has this meant to you personally, getting this opportunity after 50 and doing this in a place like this?**

KIRK TRIPLETT: Oh, you mean, the Majors or just the chance to play altogether?

**Q. Overall.**

KIRK TRIPLETT: Well, I think it's amazing, right? I was able to plan for it. Some of the guys, it just kind of landed in their lap, but I had a nice career on the regular Tour and tried to kind of pace myself, especially the last five-plus years playing the regular Tour, make sure I stayed healthy. I tried to really pay attention to the guys that were coming out here ahead of me, seeing what it took to be successful. I tried to kind of gear my game towards that.

I also have really enjoyed just competing on the Champions Tour week in and week out because it's the same guys that I've been playing golf with since college, most of them.

When you're playing the regular Tour, it's all about you.

How good can you play? How good can I play this week? Everything else doesn't mean anything. It means nothing.

Champions Tour, we show up on a Tuesday. Hey, this is 3M's week. Whatever 3M needs us to do, appearance party, two pro-am days, you know, awards party, you kind of have that mindset of, hey, I'm sharing my career or my knowledge of golf with people. And I enjoy that. That's fun for me.

And then on Friday, we get to go try to beat each other's brains out, which is what we've always done. It's what we know. I tell my kids Monday morning, 9:00, you guys are all off doing your own thing, taken care of, you know where I would rather be, the place I want to be the most? Back at the range at the TPC Scottsdale running through my three, three-and-a-half hour preparation. I still enjoy doing it.

That's why I'm still out here competing. There are some guys that they've worked so hard, they didn't want to do it anymore. I get it. I understand. But for me, it's still what I like to do.

**Q. Have you and Michael Allen been competitive since you've known him? Is there a friendly competition going?**

KIRK TRIPLETT: I used to beat him so bad. He's been a fabulous player from when I very first met him, always been a great player. Never really got his due on the regular Tour, kind of on and off.

Then when he got a sponsor's exemption to play in the PGA Championship at Canterbury and he won, I was so excited for him. He's done great out here, seven or eight victories, I think. Just been a wonderful player.

So, yeah, I always keep an eye on how he's doing. I love to beat him, but he beats me probably more than I beat him. I'm sure he looks at me and goes, how did that guy beat me today?

**Q. Now that you've knocked him out of the record books, should he expect a call or a text or something?**

KIRK TRIPLETT: The second I see him, I'm telling him. Oh, absolutely.

**Q. Now, the Major, what would it mean? You mentioned the U.S. Open, that's the national tournament. This is the U.S. Senior Open. I know your record wasn't like you'd hoped it would be in the Open. What would it mean to win this?**

KIRK TRIPLETT: Do you think anybody's record is what they hoped it would be at the Open? The Open is really hard.

No, it would be one of my crowning achievements, certainly, golf-wise. Absolutely.

**Q. Kirk, I was just wondering, your son obviously is a competitive golfer at the collegiate level and a fine amateur. I'm sure you've shared your thoughts with him on certain things to help his game. Have you observed, or has he shared anything that's maybe helped you as a senior golfer?**

KIRK TRIPLETT: Ooh, that's good. He mostly just shakes his head, right? And goes, man, how do you get a score from where you're hitting it? He's at a level where he's just that one or two steps below where the best players his age are, and it's really difficult to see what needs to be done to make those steps, but he works diligently at it, very hard at it.

Yeah, we do share. We have give and take. Mostly, it's about you have to create a game that's your own game, right? You can't play like me.

I guess the best example is he first went to school, and the coach there is a fine instructor, Pat Goss. Loves to teach the short game, and he teaches the kids how to spin their chip shots. And Sam called me up, and he goes, they're teaching me how to hit these spinny pitches. He goes, what do you think about that? I said, well, do I do it that way? He goes, no. I go, am I a good chipper? He goes, yes. I go, do you think I do it wrong? He's like, well, no. Well, do you think coach is wrong? No. I said, well, there you go. You have to make a decision. What kind of player are you going to be?

That's really what our discussions revolve around is defining what kind of player you're going to be and staying committed to that because it's so easy to chase the latest swing theory, to chase, hey, this guy putts like this. Maybe I should do that. This guy uses that driver. Maybe I should do that.

It's really more about can I execute what I can do when I need to do it? That's a skill that -- the only place you can find that is sort of the range or tournament experience.

THE MODERATOR: 11 under par, 129. Best of luck on the weekend.