

# U.S. Senior Open

Press Conference

Thursday June 29, 2017

## Kirk Triplett



THE MODERATOR: It's my pleasure to welcome Kirk Triplett into the Media Center. Rounds of 31 and 31 for an 8 under, 62 today. That is the competitive course record here at Salem Country Club -- not bad, right -- and ties the lowest score in a USGA championship with a 62.

Kirk, let's just get right to it. Can you put in perspective what it means to shoot 62 in a U.S. Open Championship?

KIRK TRIPLETT: Well, it's not the U.S. Open, so let's start with that. Not to, you know, say anything.

But, yeah, it's pretty special when, typically, par is an outstanding round in a USGA championship. I had the good fortune to play in, I don't know, 15, 16, 17 regular U.S. Opens, so I know what it's all about.

And then coming out here, I've played in a handful of Senior Opens now. I certainly have never shot anything like this.

So, yeah, I do know what it means. But it's so dependent on the conditions. Everybody wants to talk about scores. Some scores -- you know, some 68s are better than 62s, right? You can look on the leaderboard, and there's a lot of guys who shot 4, 5, 6 under today. So you know that the course was susceptible to scoring.

The greens were receptive. They weren't real fast. There's room to play off the tee. Some good scores in the morning. I think those of us in the afternoon went out with a more aggressive mindset.

THE MODERATOR: Did you see those good scores in the morning, and did that factor into how you approached your round in the afternoon?

KIRK TRIPLETT: Yeah, I did. You have to look away to not know what people are shooting. Typically, for me, when I come to a big tournament where we're playing a course that we've never played before, I like to kind of know what the other guys are doing. I know what they're capable of. I know what I'm capable of.

If there's good scores out there, I've got to go try and shoot a good score. If you were in the first few groups out there today, you could have maybe played a little

too conservatively the first five or six holes and maybe left some shots out there.

THE MODERATOR: If you don't mind, let's run through your card and just tell us about your birdies, the approach shots you hit in, the putts that you had. You started off with a birdie on your first hole, the 10.

KIRK TRIPLETT: I hit a little chip 9 iron from 125 yards, just two feet right behind the hole. Fortunately, I don't know the course very well. The pin is right behind that knob, and it's trouble left, trouble short, trouble right, and I went right at it, not really knowing that, and had a good result.

Next hole is probably one of the keys to the round. I hit two mediocre shots on the front right part of the green and left my first putt 20 feet short and made that for a par. Sometimes, a hole like that is more important than a birdie.

THE MODERATOR: And then you birdied three in a row, 13, 14, and 15.

KIRK TRIPLETT: 13, oh, the dogleg right, I hit two nice shots, maybe 15 feet pin high right. But the putt has extreme break in it, and I was just kind of lobbing it up there to the right of the hole, and then it really almost came in even past three o'clock. So that was a wonderful putt. It wasn't one you were really trying to make. You were just trying to get it up there close.

14 played pretty short. I think it's going to play fairly reachable most of the week. I hit two shots on the green about 30 feet, made a birdie.

Hit a really nice 3 iron on 15 and went about 20 feet past the hole, but I was thrilled with the shot. So I think I was in a really good mood walking down there, and I just rolled that right in the jar.

My partners are looking at me, okay, all right. It's going to be that kind of day.

THE MODERATOR: Turned in 31, and then you got started with another birdie on the 1st hole.

KIRK TRIPLETT: Two good pars on 17 and 18. I think this golf tournament's probably going to have a very

interesting finish, regardless of where players are at on the leaderboard, because those are two holes where you're just kind of looking at them, and you go, how am I going to make a 4 here, right?

You're going to hit two good shots, and it's not going to be on the green. You're going to hit maybe a mediocre iron that's going to turn out good. But you're just going to have to find a way to make 4s there, and I did.

We made the turn, went to No. 1, drove it down the hill, hit a wedge on about three feet, made a birdie.

Really nice two-putt on No. 2 from the front edge again, after not a great iron.

And then No. 3, I hit, again, a short 9 iron shot, you know, five, six feet behind the hole. And then right after I hit -- and that was the worst shot in our group by a significant amount. Right after I hit, Duffy Waldorf made a 1. So he holed it out. Then Billy Andre made a birdie on that hole as well. So we played it in 5.

THE MODERATOR: And then not to be outdone, you on the 4th hole.

KIRK TRIPLETT: Then on No. 4, I kind of had no idea where that pin is sitting up there. That green's got so many nooks and crannies. I was just trying to skip one in there so it wouldn't spin. I hit some shots in the practice round that just kept, no matter where I landed on the green, they were coming out in front.

So I only had about maybe 115, 120 in there, and I just hit a low 9 iron, and it went right in the jar. I think it was getting a little spooky there, that part.

THE MODERATOR: You ran off some pars at the end, and then the 9 hole, did you think you had that putt for 61?

KIRK TRIPLETT: I hit it right where I wanted to. I was trying to hit it left edge for some speed. The greens aren't -- that poa annua can get bumping a bit if you just try and lag them in there. I hit an uphill putt. Probably just hit it too hard.

THE MODERATOR: We'll take questions.

**Q. About how long was that putt on the last green, Kirk?**

KIRK TRIPLETT: I don't know, 10 feet.

**Q. Kirk, despite what you saw on the scoreboard, as you were getting ready to tee off on your first hole, any feeling within yourself, any sense that you might have a special round in you today?**

KIRK TRIPLETT: I believe that every day. Do you really believe that, though? Do you think I believe that every day?

**Q. I don't know.**

KIRK TRIPLETT: No, I don't. No, no indication. I haven't been playing particularly well. I've been spending some extra time on the range. I've been driving it okay. My iron play has been kind of mediocre. Just really hadn't put things together.

Today I just got some momentum. At one point during the round, I said, okay, this is your day. Grab it, go.

I've always been a player that could shoot low rounds. I don't shoot a lot of them, but when I do kind of get it going, I'm not afraid to kind of keep going, and it helps when they come in bunches.

When you go from 1 to 4 under, bang, bang, bang, before you know it, you go from 4 under to 8 under in three or four holes, those are the kind of things that help.

For some reason, for me, I'm not really too conscious of the numbers. I'm kind of more likely to get in trouble by, okay, you know, let's keep playing aggressive. Let's make another one. Let's have a chance.

But I'd rather kind of go -- if I make some mistakes, I'd rather be doing that than, okay, let's get into the barn with the ones that you've made.

And there's all different kinds of players out here. Some guys can't get it down there in that lower range. They're really good, but they can't get that low one.

**Q. You just mentioned a little bit about maybe not playing particularly well, and we hear that a lot from guys who maybe they're struggling for a while and then all of a sudden, boom, something like this happens. Was there maybe one thing that you found at the range or doing something where you said, okay, this is going to work for me?**

KIRK TRIPLETT: No, I don't think so. Over the last couple months, I've had great warmup sessions and played well. I've had some crummy ones and played lousy. But I think the answer to your question lies in the fact that, as a player, if you have a sense that you're not playing well, what is it that you go do? Not a rhetorical question, Dave. It's for you. What do you do?

**Q. You go practice.**

KIRK TRIPLETT: You go practice. What happens when you practice?

**Q. You get better.**

KIRK TRIPLETT: You get better. Most of us are at the point where, if we go practice, we get better. Not always, but I think when guys are struggling, you put some more time in, maybe on different -- maybe it's more focussed time that you put in, and I think that's why you see sometimes that jump of, hey, this guy wasn't playing very well. And now, all of a sudden, he's unbeatable. Right? You see that kind of all the time.

**Q. But you also have to practice the right things too. You could be going in the wrong direction.**

KIRK TRIPLETT: I understand that. Most of us who are playing the Champions Tour have learned how to play the right things because we've played 35 years competitively.

We haven't gone off on too many dead-ends. We've gone off on a few, but none that we couldn't get out of.

**Q. Kirk, did you know if that putt on 9 was for the tournament record? Did you have any idea?**

KIRK TRIPLETT: No, I did not.

**Q. And what does that mean to you, to tie the tournament record for the lowest round in a U.S. Senior Open?**

KIRK TRIPLETT: Do they pay you for that? Sorry.

**Q. I think they give you a million dollars.**

KIRK TRIPLETT: A million dollars? Beautiful. I'll see you guys later.

You know, that stuff's nice, and it's great. I'm not going to pooh-pooh it, but this thing's about -- this is the biggest tournament on our Tour, right? Any USGA championship is really big, in my mind.

It's Thursday night, and there's a whole bunch of guys that are really close. So I'm more about the tournament than about the individual rounds accomplishment. I just feel great to be in the thick of it.

It was fun when the TV guys showed up, right, because they were all on the other nine. So when they showed up, it was, all right, there actually is a golf tournament going on here. I'm just not out here playing.

So for me to do well the rest of the week, I'll have to manage all of that stuff and all of those things. The record part is the least important of those things. It will be maintaining the focus on my shots and trying to make the best score on the hole. You know, all the cliches, right? The reason they're cliches is because that's what it takes to get it done.

That wasn't really an answer to your question, but

yeah.

**Q. Kirk, you played a lot of golf out here. You played with guys who are going to get a low number and just try to get to the barn. What is it about you or your personality that wants to keep the pedal down in that situation?**

KIRK TRIPLETT: Well, I think I recognized that because we all feel it, right? At some point, you're like, man, this is a really good round if I just don't screw it up. And if you stop there in that mindset, you will.

You'll change your focus. And just by thinking of that, you've already lost the connection that you had. The reason you had the low round is because you were trying to execute the shots that you thought were the best shot to hit.

The minute you start putting the outside expectations on them or weighing them differently because I want to shoot 9 under or I want the USGA single round record or I want the Salem Country Club course record or whatever it is that you pile on there, that distracts you from what you're really trying to do, which is to pull that swing out of your brain that's needed to execute the shot that's right in front of you.

So I think, for me, when I've been in that situation and I've succeeded at having a low round, I think I've recognized that, accepted it, and moved on from it and gotten back into that process of trying to hit the best shot that I can hit.

Now, if it's a 3 iron over water to a tucked pin, hopefully, I'm not trying to stuff it in there too deep. Hopefully, I'm playing the shot that you would want to play day in and day out to statistically give you the best chance of making the best score possible.

So there's all that stuff that goes on that's external to playing the game. And at this level and with these players, sometimes -- well, not sometimes. Typically, almost all the time, the guy that handles all that stuff the best is the guy that wins the golf tournament, right?

So the skill level -- there's some tremendous players out here, unbelievable skill level, but it still is about what can you do? How can you manage your game? Can you plot your game out there better than they can plot their game?

And that comes to those kind of things. Can you deal with those external things? Whether you're Bernhard Langer trying to win your -- how many Majors has he won?

**Q. Nine.**

KIRK TRIPLETT: Nine. Bernhard Langer is trying to win his tenth Senior Major, right? So that's an external thing. Do you think he's thinking about that on the 4th tee on the shot? He has to find a way to not think about that, I guess is my point.

**Q. Kirk, obviously, you don't think about it going in, but 8 under with five to go, were you thinking, say, 60, 59? Because you did have good runs --**

KIRK TRIPLETT: I never did think of 59. Man, you should have been caddying for me. You should have said, hey, three birdies, and you'll have 59 in a USGA event.

**Q. 7, 8, and 9, you had good runs at it.**

KIRK TRIPLETT: Yeah, I had good runs. I butchered 6. I had a funky lie in the first cut, and I was trying to hit a real hard hybrid off a funky lie. I'm probably lucky it turned out as good as it did.

Yeah, I wanted to keep having chances to make birdies. I felt like I was putting well enough. If I got it within 20, 30 feet, I was putting good rolls on it. For the most part, I did that. I didn't make any but --

**Q. Do you envision being able to go at pins the way you guys were able to today for the rest of the tournament?**

KIRK TRIPLETT: Tomorrow I'm sure the course will play similar. May play a little longer. I don't know what the weather forecast is, maybe some storms tonight.

That's the thing about a course, a new course or a course we don't have a lot of history with. There's an adjustment every day, and you sort of have to match your strategy to what the course is giving you.

THE MODERATOR: 8 under, 62. Great round. Good luck the rest of the week.

KIRK TRIPLETT: Thank you. Hope to be back.