

U.S. Senior Women's Open

Press Conference

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Matt Sawicki

Shannon Rouillard

THE MODERATOR: We are here with championship directors Shannon Rouillard and Matt Sawicki here at the inaugural U.S. Senior Women's Open at Chicago Golf Club. I'm going to throw it over to you guys.

A big week, Matt. Talk about the experience here for the players, fans, and all the stakeholders.

MATT SAWICKI: Yeah, it's an exciting week, and we couldn't thank Chicago Golf Club any more. They've been an exceptional host. The city of Wheaton really has been phenomenal in supporting this championship and really all of Chicago.

You know, it's really exciting, this journey we've been on since we announced this in 2015, and one of the things we started with, even before we announced the championship, was meeting with players and taking the time to learn about what they wanted to see as part of this and what they wanted to feel as part of this championship experience.

And so I think one of the things we've told them since we've gone through this process is that it's going to feel like a U.S. Open. It's going to have all of those elements that you experienced and more, and I think we've heard from the players this week, overwhelmingly, from the minute they arrived at the airport and had someone from the USGA greeting them, all the way to arriving here at Chicago Golf Club, it's been that first-class exemplary experience that they wanted.

What's really going to be neat, though, is what we see tomorrow and when we have fans walking down the fairways with these players. One of the things the players told us is that they wanted this to be an intimate experience with the fans and everyone who attended, and as we've all seen, these are such great personalities.

To be able to walk, to be able to listen to the golf side, but I think as we've learned, anybody who's out there walking is probably going to hear a humorous side with some of the stories of banter that go back and forth. I'm not sure any of it will be printable, but I think the players are going to have a wonderful experience with that, and I think the fans are going to have an even



better experience. I think it's going to look great, it's going to feel great for everyone involved, and it's going to be a wonderful experience, and I think a lot of people as they see it on television on the weekend are going to say, gosh, I want to be a part of that in future.

THE MODERATOR: A big topic here in the media center has been the golf course, a phenomenal venue for the first inaugural championship, and also it's been brought up, kind of course setup and the challenges that come and the discrepancy in how some of these women are playing. Shannon, talk a little bit about course setup.

SHANNON ROUILLARD: Sure, thanks. We are super excited to be adding a fourth open championship to our schedule of events. Let's face it, we're here to identify a national champion, but we also recognize the fact that we have a very diverse group of women, and we have made strategic course setup decisions accordingly. But how have we gotten to this point, right? We've truly engaged this group of individuals on a number of different levels. We have looked at statistics and our own Senior Women's Amateur players. We have almost 30 amateurs playing in this competition that are very familiar with our senior Women's Amateur Championship, as well as attending a number of Legends Tour events, which as we know, a number of Legends Tour players are in this field this week.

Those that were exempt, a number of them, have come early, quite early, in previous months to check out Chicago Golf, and the caddies have taken some good notes for us and have shared that information with us, as well.

All in all, in coming up with yardages, the green speeds that we're looking to be at this week has all been a culmination of that work over the last number of years.

THE MODERATOR: Knowing Chicago Golf Club as well as you do, what is it going to take to play well out here?

SHANNON ROUILLARD: You know, this golf course is such a great venue. And with the diverse field, the players are really going to have the ability to play the ball in the air and really play the ball on the ground.

We all know and have seen out there that the golf course can play to either side of the game when it comes to that, which I think is important for this first venue. We're going to continue to learn and observe and watch play of this group, but something else is we really wanted to make sure this first venue was really walkable, and Chicago Golf Club, this iconic venue, the players having an opportunity to see this golf course, many if not all have never seen it before, is really, really special for this group.

Q. Just curious how fast the greens will be rolling, and what kind of score do you kind of have in mind?

SHANNON ROUILLARD: Sure. We're targeting about 12 on the stimpmeter for green speeds. You know what, to be honest, score is not something that is top of mind when it comes to course setup. It's more or less getting the course set up right. And whatever we add up the scores to be is what it is.

We have a plan in place, a strategic plan in place, and it's about executing that plan the best we can.

Q. And what was the most important information that you got from spending time on the range with some players in terms of how far they hit the ball? What was the most eye-opening piece of information that you got for setup?

SHANNON ROUILLARD: You know, these women can still hit it. You know, they still can. And I think that's what is most impressive. Even with the diverse age that we have from 50 to 79, they're still quite impressive, and I think many of them have continued to stay in shape. They've worked on their games. I've heard Pat Bradley from her prime to now has only lost about 15 yards off the tee. That's tremendous. Tremendous.

Q. It sounds like you're following a similar process that you did at Pinehurst where you gathered a lot of data, and you made a lot of adjustments on the fly that week. Was there anything that you learned in the run-up to this that made you change any of your approach to the course setup?

SHANNON ROUILLARD: Not necessarily. I mean, we have six holes out there where we're possibly looking to utilize alternate teeing grounds, and again, I think it goes back to the diverse group of women that are playing this week and the ability to have that ebb and flow and those options to move forward and back based on a number of different factors. Obviously the wind, which could be a major factor this week, as well as other conditions.

Q. Is it possible there might be a drivable par-4? Is that possible here?

SHANNON ROUILLARD: It's not in my game plan. (Laughter.)

Q. This might be a strange question, but when you look at the course setup and you're obviously trying to establish a fair test for the field, ranging from 50 year olds to 79 year olds, how much did cognizance of trying to give the players fun this week come into play?

SHANNON ROUILLARD: Yeah, you know, I think we've seen over the course of the last three days that these players are out here, there's no question that they're having fun, right? I think they're overjoyed and ecstatic to finally be here. We've been talking about this championship now for the last three years. It's finally here, and they're ready to tee it up. They're going to have fun regardless.

Yes, are they going to have the blinders on come tomorrow at tee-off time? Sure. And I think every player is probably here for slightly different reasons, right, and they're going to make the best of the situation and the reason why they're here. There's definitely going to be fun out there.

Q. Do you have any idea if there are going to be many local caddies in the field?

MATT SAWICKI: So this week I believe we have a little over 30 local caddies from Chicago Golf Club. Chicago Golf Club has got a wonderful caddie program. Of course Chick Evans was a member here. They've got a wonderful tradition with the Evans Scholarship here, and there's a lot of -- and what you don't see here at Chicago Golf Club, which you see across the country at a lot of clubs which they're going to, they use all kids. It's all college age or younger here. They don't have adult professional caddies. And so I think for them as a person who's caddied at a Women's Open and other national championships we've had, for these kids to get that experience is just as good for the people on the bag as it is for the players.