

# 2015 US Senior Open Championship

Tuesday, June 23  
Press Conference



## Natalie Gulbis

## Kevin Sutherland

**THE MODERATOR:** We're here in the media center with Natalie Gulbis, Sacramento native turned professional in 2001 and is in her 14th season on the LPGA tour. 37 top ten finishes and winner of the 2007 Evian Master's and three-time Solheim Cup participant. Natalie, no stranger to a microphone, starting on Fox earlier this year with the U.S. Women's Amateur Four-Ball at Bandon Dunes and more recently last week at Chambers Bay. Talk a little bit about those two experiences and your first foray into broadcasting.

**NATALIE GULBIS:** This one is going to top both of those. For me, growing up in Sacramento, I've been really excited to come back to Sacramento. Since I played on Tour, I travel quite a bit so I don't get home enough. I'm just excited to be back here in Sacramento. But it's been really fun working with Fox and getting to see a completely different perspective. I've been to the last ten U.S. Opens, and just seeing the behind the scenes. My favorite part of last week was I got to walk on the golf course for 18 holes with Phil, and I know Phil well from working with Butch. But to get to watch him play in major championship form and just get to walk alongside of him and see just how incredibly good the male players are. You see them on TV, and I'd see them on the range, but when you see them in a major championship like what we're going to see this week, it's just raised to another level, and you see how difficult the golf course is. I'm pretty familiar with Del Paso, and going out there and seeing it this morning and seeing how beautiful and tough and just how fast those greens are going to be, U.S. Open changes everything.

**THE MODERATOR:** Absolutely. And we'll get into Del Paso a little bit more in a few minutes. Chambers Bay walking with Phil, you just said you walked 20 miles in one day. You're used to playing courses, and you're walking six or seven miles, but to walk 20 miles in one day.

**NATALIE GULBIS:** That golf course is very hilly, and my job on Sunday was I went out early with the Phil group and walked the rest of his group. And my producer had said, well, why don't you go follow Rory for a few holes, and we'll see how he's doing. Because a lot of it's on the fly. You don't know how players are going to play and what you're going to do. So I go out with Rory, and I was only supposed to go out a couple holes. After five holes, he's like 3 under. They're like, just stay with the front nine and see how he's doing. After ten holes, he's 5 under. Well, just stay with Rory the rest of the round and see how it goes. I had never watched Rory play golf before. It was just incredible to watch him play. The galleries were incredible last week at Chambers Bay. They always are at U.S. Opens. Been very fortunate to play 14 U.S. Opens for the women, and been to quite a few Men's Opens, and haven't been -- this is my first Senior Open. Looking forward to being here and seeing a completely different week and being here in Sacramento. Did I say that yet, how excited I am to be home?

**THE MODERATOR:** I can tell. What drew you into broadcasting, first of all, getting into it this year with Fox?

**NATALIE GULBIS:** What's interesting about Fox and which is exciting about Fox is Fox covers all the different aspect of golf; the women's side, showing the U.S. Open, showing the U.S. Amateur, showing the four-ball, the men's side, the Champions Tour side. And I am a huge fan of golf. I'm been fortunate through Lexus and through Taylor Made to work with a lot of my different marketing partners with the different tours. And with Fox, they share that same passion. They show all the tours. This was a unique opportunity because they were going to be getting into golf in a big way, and they were going to be here in Sacramento. And I'm usually at the Men's Open, so it fit really well. I don't play a full schedule on tour. I still am playing 20 events on the LPGA, but there are some gaps in my schedule, and it just fit really well. I'm very excited and honored to be part of the team.

**THE MODERATOR:** And you announced that, as a player, 2015 will be your last full season. How did you end up coming to that decision?

**NATALIE GULBIS:** This is my 14th year, and I'm 32 and

married and want to start having a family, and the best way to do that is to limit some of that international travel. The tour has changed quite a bit the last few years. We do travel an extensive amount outside the United States. I usually go outside the U.S. about 13 times. I'm still going to play on the LPGA, and I'll play as much as I can, but I won't do as much international travel. I wasn't really even ready to announce that. I kind of got asked that in Dallas, when are you going to start having kids? I said, well, I'd like to start trying this year and the next year. And are you going to be able to play on tour? So that is definitely true. I don't know, it might take me a couple of years to have a kid. I might be out here another five, six years. We'll see.

THE MODERATOR: You still have a little bit of game. Next month, we're going to Lancaster Country Club in Pennsylvania for the Women's Open. You qualified. You'll be playing in your 14th championship, medalist at Galloway National with a 3 under, 139. Shot a course record 66 in the first round of qualifying. How did that feel? Had it been a long time since you went out and qualified?

NATALIE GULBIS: I qualified for the U.S. Open when I was 16 at Lake Merced. I got injured last year actually at the U.S. Open at Pinehurst, missed a couple of months on tour, had hip surgery, and I wasn't qualified for the U.S. Open. So I went to go and qualify. There was 90 players for two spots, and it was in between like a stretch of three LPGA events, and I played well and just feel really fortunate to be on the U.S. Open train this year. I'm just going to all the Opens. It will be fun. I love U.S. Opens. Everything about them, there's no greater test of a player's mental game and endurance and just the quality of shots they hit and the perseverance. We saw that last week in the men's U.S. Open, and every single U.S. Open is like that. It's our nation's championship. And being an American, they're the greatest event. So I'm thrilled to be at all of them.

THE MODERATOR: We're thrilled that you'll be playing next week. You played in others, the girls junior, the women's amateur. You were a medalist in 1999.

NATALIE GULBIS: Good stats. I don't remember those.

THE MODERATOR: How is your game right now? What are some of the expectations you have for next month?

NATALIE GULBIS: I practiced this morning. I hit it pretty good this morning. After qualifying for the Open, I played well the next week, and then I went straight to Seattle. I will have next week to continue to work on my game to get ready for the Open. I'm not just

playing the Open. I'm playing two LPGA events and then the British Open at Turnberry. I have a lot of golf coming up. In between Fox and Lexus, I've been stretching in practice. Thankfully, Haggin Oaks has a night range. I'll be spending time at the night range there to make sure I'm ready for our U.S. Open and the next stretch of golf. We're right in the middle of our season.

**Q. I'm from the Sacramento Bee. Nice to see you.**

NATALIE GULBIS: Nice to see the Sacramento Bee this morning. I know you guys can tell how excited I am to be home. I haven't been home in a year. It's pretty awesome to see the things I missed.

**Q. I started covering you when you were 12 years old. Now you're announcing your retirement, making us all feel old.**

NATALIE GULBIS: Not retired yet, so you can't feel old yet.

**Q. Now you're transitioning away from your playing career, doing things with broadcasting, you see a course like this holding a U.S. Senior Open, are you going to maybe try to get the LPGA back here or try to work a little bit more in trying to get Sacramento to get back into the LPGA game?**

NATALIE GULBIS: You guys know me well because when this announced it would be in Sacramento, typically when a U.S. Open or a Solheim or a Ryder Cup comes to an area, and wearing my Sacramento hat, this is a good opportunity for the LPGA to get back and to capitalize on all the good vibes that are going to come out of this week. It's going to be a huge event. There's going to be a lot of people that are going to be excited about golf in Sacramento. A lot of the golf courses are going to benefit, but it also opens up the opportunity and the conversation early to get an LPGA event back here. I miss playing in Sacramento. It's always the stop, when I get conversations with the commissioner, of why we don't play here. This is an incredible sports town. The LPGA was always supported here. Every bit of golf has been supported here, whether it was when we had the Raley's Senior Gold Rush, when that moved around. I don't see any reason why we don't. We need to put the pieces together, and we have openings on our schedule. So I will definitely be, when I see our commissioner in a week, we need to figure out. Hopefully, maybe there will be some contacts or some conversations that are started here this week. I would love, love, love to see an LPGA event back here in Sacramento.

**Q. Last question. When you were a junior golfer coming up, a lot of these players here for the seniors were on the PGA tour. Is there one particular player that's in this field this week that is**

**kind of a hero of yours that you're kind of giddy and excited to not only cover but actually talk to?**

NATALIE GULBIS: Well, I love these guys. Remember I've been on tour now for 15 years, and I'm really fortunate to have been able to get to know a lot of these players so much. With Langer, I played in a Wendy's 3Tour with him. Peter Jacobsen has been my mentor throughout my entire career so I'm excited to go out and spend as much time with him and watch him prepare for this week. I love Freddy Couples. I'm bummed he's not going to be playing this week. I love the Sutherland brothers, both of them, Kevin and David. It's going to be really fun to watch our hometown guy. But there's so many great story lines here. Fred Funk, he's a friend of mine. I can't wait to watch him play. I feel like I know these players so well, and I'm excited to follow them and to watch them tomorrow. We get to go out on practice rounds. When you are working for Fox, you go out and actually chart the golf course, chart the greens, just like you're playing. So tomorrow morning, I'll go out and walk the golf course as soon as they figure out what time they're going to go play and see how these players are playing it. The long answer would be Kevin Sutherland and Peter Jacobsen.

**Q. Are you playing alongside?**

NATALIE GULBIS: I don't get to play. Maybe Peter will let me hit a couple of shots. I think that's illegal, not supposed to do that, but I'll go out there and spend some time. If I look at this sport, these players, I've gotten to meet so many of these players. Mark Brooks and I did TV together last week. I've been fortunate. Golf is a small community. When you're doing different charity days or you're sharing marketing partners, you get to do a lot of cool events. There used to be an event, the Wendy's 3Tour Challenge, that represented all three tours. So I've been fortunate to get to know players on all the different tours.

**Q. Natalie, what are you going to share with the viewers this week about how to play Del Paso, and what are you looking for it from the seniors as they wind their way around the golf course? What are the keys?**

NATALIE GULBIS: Staying out of the rough. Quite a different change from last week, where we didn't have rough, we had fescue. Here we have rough. It looks healthy. And I think that that is going to be a key part to this week. This is a little more of a traditional style U.S. Open golf course with firm greens and lots of rough, and this rough is just going to be growing and growing. I'm sure it's going to be very penalizing.

**Q. What's your low score here?**

NATALIE GULBIS: I have no idea. I haven't played here since I was a teenager. I'm sure that you guys

pulled the stat. You probably know it.

**Q. 61, 62?**

NATALIE GULBIS: Yeah, probably.

**Q. Just checking.**

NATALIE GULBIS: Just out breaking your course record.

THE MODERATOR: What's your role going to be with Fox this week?

NATALIE GULBIS: I don't know. We have our first meeting at 3:30. We are going to be just looking at the golf course and just getting started here on what our game plan will be. I'll be around all week, and I'll also be doing stuff with Lexus, which is a major partner of the U.S. Open. I'll be signing autographs with them and just enjoying being home.

THE MODERATOR: Kevin Sutherland just walked in and will be joining us up here on stage in a minute. Natalie, just talk a little bit about playing your high school golf here. You played all your high school matches here at Del Paso.

NATALIE GULBIS: We actually didn't play our high school matches here. I'm sorry to correct you. We'd play our regular city events. But being from Sacramento, you would kind of make your rounds around the golf courses. I played on a boys team in high school, and we would play against the different high schools in this area. Once you would get into the city events, you would start playing them at Del Paso or playing them at Northridge. This has always been one of the premier golf courses in Sacramento. So I never turn down an invitation to come and play here.

THE MODERATOR: Now I'll introduce the gentleman to my far left. It's Kevin Sutherland, playing in his second U.S. Senior Open, tied for 38th last year at Oak Tree National. 48 top tens and one win in his career that's spanned nearly two decades and 450 PGA tour events, with a victory coming in the 2002 Accenture Match Play Championship. Kevin, like Natalie, was also born and raised in Sacramento and also still resides here. Kevin, I just wanted to get into the course. Playing a home game this week is kind of fun. It's been a while before you've been able to sleep in your own bed.

KEVIN SUTHERLAND: It's never happened. Have you ever had a home game?

NATALIE GULBIS: Yes, I did. We had an LPGA event in Sacramento. It's going to be the best.

KEVIN SUTHERLAND: I know.

NATALIE GULBIS: This week is going to be great because you're the hometown guy.

KEVIN SUTHERLAND: It's been a total treat. To play a course I've played just about every day when I'm at home, it's been a great experience. Something that not all LPGA or PGA players get a chance to do. It's a special treat.

THE MODERATOR: You're a member here as well. What kind of insight can you give some of these other 155 players who are coming here who may not be as familiar with the course? Maybe you don't want to give them that sort of insight.

KEVIN SUTHERLAND: I kind of think it's get the ball on the fairway and don't miss the greens because the rough is just so severe. You're really going to need to be playing from the fairway to hit good shots into the green and to be able to keep it out of the rough around the greens. The rough around the greens is so severe that it just makes it really tough to kind of scrape it around this golf course right now. So you're going to have to play really good golf. As far as course knowledge goes, there's a little bit out here, but for the most part, it's pretty much right in front of you.

THE MODERATOR: I'll ask both of you this question. For people who aren't quite as familiar with this course, what are some holes that you think may determine the championship as we're coming down the stretch?

KEVIN SUTHERLAND: Well, the last six holes are very difficult. Whoever wins this tournament is going to earn it. The last six holes are very demanding. 16 and 18, you're going to have to get the ball on the fairway off the tee. Maybe a little bit on 18, maybe you'll be able to get away with it, but to be able to get it even not to have to lay up to like 100 yards. So you're going to have to earn it and hit good shots on the last six holes and get the ball on the fairway and on the green. And if you do that, you can actually make some birdies on those holes. It's not like -- you're just like, oh, my gosh, I'm just trying to survive. If you hit good shots, you're going to have good looks at birdies on all six of those holes. I think it's going to be determined on those holes. I think some of the guys are going to play the holes 1 or 2 or 3 under par, and some guys are going to do the opposite. I think those are the determining holes for this tournament.

NATALIE GULBIS: I think this is quite a bit different than what I saw last week at Chambers Bay where the toughest stretch of holes was 4 through 7 and then a couple on the back nine. This is a course where you can make some birdies early and then just hang on and try not to give. It's really set up more like a U.S. Open is, where you get to that 13 through 18, and it's

just the hang on and try not to give too many back. And if you get a look at birdie, it's a bonus.

KEVIN SUTHERLAND: Natalie is right. The 1st hole, there's a lot of birdie holes early in the round. There's a stretch, 9, 10, 11, 12 are all -- you're hoping to play those holes 2 under par, 3 under par, because you can really get good looks at birdies on those holes. The rest of the way is tough.

THE MODERATOR: There's a little bit of length, par 70, almost 7,000 yards. The 3rd hole and the 13th, you're looking at almost 490, par 4s. Then it's the 15th hole playing at 636, the longest par 5 in history. But there's also some holes, as you said, that you can make some scores on. 9 and 10 are both par 4s that are short, just over 300 yards. 10 could be drivable this week in some of the rounds. So it sounds like the real scoring part of the round is going to be in the middle of the round.

KEVIN SUTHERLAND: Yes, I would totally agree. The 1st hole is a good opportunity to get off to a good start. It's an awkward tee shot, but it's a very reachable par 5. And then 4 is a -- depending what they do with the tee, it could be reachable, or it could be just a 100-yard wedge shot. You're looking at making another really good opportunity for birdie early in the round. And then we have that stretch in the middle of the round. So you could very easily get yourself in really good position. Again, the last six holes are hard, but if you hit quality shots, you're going to have looks at birdie. Don't be surprised if guys are making birdies on those holes too. It's a well-rounded golf course. It has a lot of variety. A lot of length on some par 4s and a lot of short holes. It makes it interesting. Every player I've talked to seems to love the place. The course is in amazing condition too.

THE MODERATOR: Natalie, just want to thank you for coming in and best of luck in the Women's Open coming up, and enjoy broadcasting the Senior Open here in your hometown Sacramento.

NATALIE GULBIS: Thanks. Good luck, Kevin. I'll be seeing you.

THE MODERATOR: Now, you're a member here, growing up in Sacramento. Where did you start playing golf?

KEVIN SUTHERLAND: In Sacramento. My parents still live -- I grew up in a house 300 yards from here. I was not a member here growing up. I grew up playing at Haggin Oaks, a public facility, 36 holes. It's maybe a mile from here, and there was a lot of other kids there kind of like a bunch of rats hanging out playing golf. It was a lot of fun, and that's where I grew up playing golf,

and that's where I grew up loving to play golf. It's a special place for me.

THE MODERATOR: Scott Verplank had this last year in Oklahoma. As a host, do you feel like there's more pressure on you or more going on as far as hosting friends and family, as opposed to playing a normal week, or do you like it being here and being home?

KEVIN SUTHERLAND: There's definitely more going on. It's been an incredible amount of fun, but it's also an eye-opening experience to -- there's so many people who are giving you so much support, but there's a lot going on, and that's fine. It's about getting your priorities straight, and this is time where I'm serious about getting prepared for the tournament and, when the tournament comes around, being serious about competing in the tournament. Then there's this other side about just enjoying what it is. It's a great opportunity to play in front of my friends and family and play on a golf course that I love to play. So it's been different, but it's been incredibly special at the same time.

THE MODERATOR: Now, you had just turned 50 last year, about to turn 50 when you played in the Senior Open. So this is your second one. Since then, you shot a 59 in a Champions Tour event with a bogey on the last hole. Pretty amazing run, 11 under through 11 holes. Just talk about what was going through your mind in that fantastic round. Had you been close to that before, whether in competition or just playing around?

KEVIN SUTHERLAND: I shot a 61 once in a Pro-Am. It was like a local Pro-Am kind of a deal. So I always say I had a shot at 59 with a 6 iron from the middle of the fairway. So it wasn't a great opportunity, but nothing that was even close to what I did there at the Dick's Sporting Goods tournament. It was just a surreal day. I made the comment at the time -- I was 9 under after eight holes, and it had this video game golf feel to it. If you weren't making a birdie, it was like what are you doing? You got to keep making birdies. So it was an amazing experience. It was just kind of like -- you just feel like birdies were so easy that day, and I know that's not the case.

THE MODERATOR: Now, I've talked about the course a little bit and you being from the hometown, but you're playing well to start the 2015 season. No wins, but a pair of runner-up finishes, including a playoff loss to Jeff Maggert at the Traditions. How do you feel about your game coming into this championship?

KEVIN SUTHERLAND: I feel good. I like kind of where I'm at. I had a top ten at Boston two weeks ago. It was our last tournament we played out here. We had last

week off because of the U.S. Open. So I had a top ten there, and I felt good about how it went. I feel like I was getting better as the week went on. Kind of growing from there. I had a nice practice session before I came in here. I was happy with how I hit on the range. So I'm optimistic about how I'm playing. And you can have all the course knowledge in the world, but if you're not hitting it where you want to hit it, it doesn't really matter. So I feel good about how I'm swinging at it. The greens are spectacular. They're just incredibly good. Mark, the superintendent here, has done an amazing job of getting this course in incredible condition and has been getting praise from all the players. So the putting is going to be a big part of it. That's one reason why we talked earlier about the course being tough coming in, but the greens are so good that if you're hitting quality shots, you're going to get good looks at birdies. Don't be surprised if guys start rolling a lot of birdies on those last six holes. I feel good about where I'm at, though.

**Q. Kevin, good luck, first off.**

KEVIN SUTHERLAND: Thank you.

**Q. Compare the course that you're a member of with the course that they're going to play this week.**

KEVIN SUTHERLAND: Obviously, the thing that stands out the most is the rough is nothing like what it normally is, although some of the members would say that the rough is too long generally. But the rough is nothing like it is right now. The USGA came in here about two years ago, and they made some, I would say, significant changes to the fairway width two years ago, which is pretty much what they are today, with very subtle changes maybe along the way. So we've kind of gotten used to that being the way it is. This is a course that I know from the last couple years, as far as the width of the fairways. One big difference between today and what we normally see is the greens aren't normally this quick. They're usually incredibly smooth and very good putting surfaces, but they're probably a good two or three feet faster than normal. For me, it's a bit of an adjustment. The putts that I'm used to being a certain speed are obviously quite a bit quicker. So I think slowly, as I've been playing the practice rounds, I'm getting used to the different speed of the greens. I'm going to have to make sure that I just don't fall back on what I've done in the past here as far as lag putting goes and be conscious of the fact that they're going to be faster than I'm used to.

**Q. The USGA strives, when they set up a course for a major championship, to make it fair for the entire field, to even the playing field for the longer hitters, the shorter hitters, whatever aspect of a certain player's game is good. You've certainly made a lot of great points about what they've done to this golf**

**course. Have Mike Davis and his staff succeeded in doing that with Del Paso for this week? Have they made it a tough but fair golf course that is even for the playing field as we tee it up on Thursday?**

KEVIN SUTHERLAND: I think they've done an amazing job. I know some of the guys are concerned about how long it's playing. We're not getting a lot of roll on the fairways at this particular point. I think we need to wait and see how it plays in the tournament. I would assume that's going to get a little bit faster. I know the weather later in the week is going to be -- on Thursday it's supposed to be in the 100s, and I think Friday is close to that. I know that some of the players are concerned about the length of 16 and 3 and 13 and 18, if I remember right. I know they're a little concerned about that. For me, I'm not concerned about that. It's not something that I've remotely even given any sort of thought to. It is what it is, and we play the course that they're going to set up for us. But I think, as players, we need to wait and see how it plays when it gets to Thursday because one thing about it is that we're playing the tees as far back as they can go. They can't move them back another foot. So this course isn't going to play any longer than it did today. So I think, when we get to Thursday, it's going to be perfect. To answer your question -- I know I'm rambling a little bit here -- I think they've done a fantastic job. I think Mike Davis and Jeff Hall have done a fantastic job of setting up this golf course. It's incredibly fair. If you're hitting good shots, you're going to get a good look at birdie. But if don't, the rough is tough, and you're going to struggle with it. But if you're hitting good shots, you're going to get rewarded.

**Q. Kevin, two questions. First, you have your brother on your bag this tournament. Talk about that dynamic. And also, looking back, this is your home course and obviously his home course as well. Who owns the best record head to head here at Del Paso through the years on up? And the second question is, talking about the heat, you might have some course knowledge advantage here. But being from Sacramento, used to the heat in the summertime, is that any kind of advantage playing in this dry, triple digit temperatures?**

KEVIN SUTHERLAND: I think it can be. I'm definitely used to playing in this kind of heat. I wish that it wasn't the case. I wish that we would have weather like we did yesterday. That was a beautiful day. Again, I can't control that. So I think it could be a small advantage. I'm just used to playing in 100 degree weather that's dry. So I would say it's a bit of an advantage. The first question, my brother and I head to head, wow, I would call it even.

**Q. Do you like having your brother on your bag?**

KEVIN SUTHERLAND: The question was what's it like to have my brother on the bag. It's fantastic. I banded this about for the last year, knowing that we were coming here and if I should have my brother. I have a full-time caddie, a guy named Billy Lewis, who's actually caddying for Skip Kendall this week. He's done a fantastic job. I talked to Billy three weeks ago and said, hey, it's not about what you've done. I'm going to have my brother caddie for me. It's going to be a great experience for the two of us. He caddied for me at Merion at the U.S. Open, and he caddied for me the week before that, and we just had a great time. It was truly special. We had played a lot of tournaments on the PGA Tour. We played a lot of practice rounds together and played a lot of tournament rounds together, but it was also a lot of fun to be on the same team, for lack of a better word. It was a lot of fun then, and I'm sure it's going to be the same way this week.

**Q. Kevin, can you just talk about what it might mean for you not only to win this tournament but to win this tournament here?**

KEVIN SUTHERLAND: It would be incredibly special. I mean, it would be -- I won the Accenture Match Play, the world match play in 2002. And in the golf world, that would be a bigger win, theoretically, than this. But I don't think I would have it at the top of my list if I was to win this week. This would be special. Winning a national championship on your home course in front of your friends and family would be the highlight of my career.

THE MODERATOR: With that, best of luck, Kevin Sutherland, this week. Hope to see you again.