

# US Open Championship 2016

Monday, June 13, 2016

**Brad Faxon**

**Gil Hanse**

**John Zimmers**

**Mike Davis**

Press Conference

THE MODERATOR: Good afternoon, everybody. Welcome to the Media Center, and also welcome to the Oakmont by Design, our 2016 U.S. Open Media Center interview about our course here at Oakmont. Most importantly, welcome USGA members.

My name is Fiona Dolan. I'm the senior director of membership, and this event is for you. This is our opportunity to make you a true insider, really have an opportunity to learn a little bit more about what the USGA does and how we run a U.S. Open, and more importantly, to kind of bring you inside the ropes, or at least inside the media center.

As you can see, this is an active media center. So I just have a few housekeeping items before we start. First and foremost, we want this to be fun. This is your event. So we're going to have some questions that are going to kick it off and that were sent in by USGA members, and then this is meant to be an interactive session. You can ask questions, and we'll do our best to answer them in the time we have.

Our panel today is going to be moderated by our director at the USGA Museum in Far Hills, Mr. Mike Trostel. I promise this is going to be a fun event. We also have a surprise at the end, which I won't spoil, but let's just say we're going to bridge a little bit of history from what we're going to see this summer, perhaps down in Rio, with a little bit of golf's history that we have at the USGA Museum we're bringing to our members today. Let's get started.

MIKE TROSTEL: Thank you, everyone, so much for coming. It's a joy to be here. My name is Mike Trostel. I am the director of the United States Golf Association Museum.

It's my pleasure to be joined by the gentleman to my left. Starting with Brad Faxon, eight-time PGA Tour winner who played in the U.S. Open 20 times, including twice here at Oakmont.



Next to Brad is noted golf course architect Gil Hanse. We heard a little bit about Rio. Gil designed, or Gil's firm designed the course down in Rio de Janeiro where the Olympics will be played shortly. Both Brad and Gil will be on the Fox broadcast this week bringing us some insights.

Gil, I believe you celebrated your 20th wedding anniversary.

GIL HANSE: That would be 30.

MIKE TROSTEL: 30th wedding anniversary.

GIL HANSE: Thanks. Good try, though.

MIKE TROSTEL: Next up is the executive director of the USGA, Mike Davis. And the superintendent at Oakmont Country Club, John Zimmers.

Mike, I'll start with you. Each year we have a new course for the U.S. Open, and many of them are very different based on where we are in the country. What makes Oakmont unique?

MIKE DAVIS: Well, you think about U.S. Open courses. We started this in 1895 was the first U.S. Open. Every one of our U.S. Open sites did have one thing in common. They truly were one of this country's premiere golf courses.

In terms of Oakmont, it was started in 1903, opened in 1904, and it was designed by a fella, industrialist, named Henry Fownes. Henry was a one-hit wonder. He wasn't a Gil Hanse in terms of being an architect. Did no other golf courses. You think to design a golf course this good, he was passionate about the game, found some pasture land on the outskirts of greater Pittsburgh, laid the golf course right on the land, and that's why you look out there and all these holes just fit the land beautifully.

But I think what really makes Oakmont unique -- well, many things do, but certainly it starts with the putting greens and how they're designed and also how they're maintained. As many of us at USGA would say, there aren't faster playing greens that any of us have ever seen. The combination of the actual speeds along with the design is, I would say, the one thing that really sets

Oakmont apart.

Certainly, the bunkering does and the ditches and some of the other features, but it's these putting greens and the surrounds.

MIKE TROSTEL: Brad, let me go to you next. You played here twice as a player in the U.S. Open. What kind of mindset did you have going into a U.S. Open, and how did that differ from a regular week on the tour?

BRAD FAXON: That's a great question. The first year I played here in '83, I was an amateur, so I was just happy to be here. You'll see a lot of people that are getting to U.S. Opens, after three holes -- I saw Scott Piercy today. He's not happy he's here because it's so difficult.

We just did a little segment before, talking about the players are going to face a lot of choices this week, and it starts right away. When you're on the 1st hole, am I going to try to hit a driver and hit a 470-yard par 4?

As a golfer, you'll get up there, you'll notice there's trees out of bounds and to the right and there's bunkers on both sides of the fairway that are far enough out there that you never can hit a shot over them. There's heavy rough to the left and even a ditch further left. It's imperative to be in the fairway because you know your second shot is straight down the hill. To stop this ball and keep it on the green surface from the fairway is difficult, never mind from the rough, and forget it from the fairway bunker. But the players are going to face this type of decision.

What I love about Oakmont is every single player, whether they're the longest hitter or whether they're the straightest hitter, is going to have to make a decision from the 1st hole. Then they're going to have to start over again on the 2nd hole, am I going to hit a 5 iron here? Am I going to get more aggressive for a shorter second shot? Am I going to try to drive the green? I think this is what the USGA always wants to do is mentally stress the players out after their 18 holes.

MIKE TROSTEL: And one of the things you won't see on the course are many trees. As part of a tree management program, 15,000 trees were removed over the past couple decades.

John Zimmers, you were the superintendent for a good chunk of this, or at least the second part of it. What spurred that decision for that tree management program?

JOHN ZIMMERS: Well, the decision really was spurred by the Board of Governors here at Oakmont and the

grounds committee to really restore the golf course back to Mr. Fownes' original design. And, of course, there's other benefits to that as well that come my way agronomically. So it's really their vision to really get this thing started.

MIKE TROSTEL: What has the effect been, and what's the reaction been, even just among the members here at Oakmont?

JOHN ZIMMERS: The reaction has been absolutely positive. You can stand at the back of No. 9 and look at 16, 17 flagsticks, see the church pews. It's as close today as it was back when Mr. Fownes was here. To see his work that's just pure lay of the land, and as we were talking earlier, there isn't streams and fancy things out here. It's just the amazing contours of the land. To be able to see that, it's magnificent.

MIKE TROSTEL: Gil, I'll go to you next. You've been busy, certainly, the past decade designing new courses but also restoring old courses. What goes into a restoration, similar to what Oakmont did, to get it back to how Mr. Fownes intended for it to play?

GIL HANSE: I think, first and foremost, it's incumbent on the architect to present to the members what that vision is and do the research, get the old photographs and look at the design, try and understand the original intent.

Here, the Fownes, Mr. Henry and his son William, were unapologetic in saying they want it to be difficult. This membership has continued that, and historically the presentation of the golf course has been that way.

But I think ultimately it comes down to the willpower of the membership to forge forward with this sort of commitment. I mean, taking down however many trees you took down could not have been easy, and I'm certain it sparked a lot of commentary and debate amongst the membership. I think, at the end of the day, it takes the courage of certain members, certain leaders to truly believe that what they're trying to accomplish is the right thing in restoring these great old courses. And I think here it's a perfect example for every other classic course in the country to watch this week as to how it can be done successfully.

MIKE TROSTEL: Mike, many trees were removed prior to 2007. Since then, many more have been taken down. Do you think the tree removal will have any effect on the strategy that some of the players will employ this week? So not just the agronomic conditions, as John and Gil mentioned, but also the strategy the players will be attacking the golf course this week?

MIKE DAVIS: Mike, it's a good question. Before the 2007 U.S. Open, most of the interior trees of the golf course were taken down. To me, I think that beyond the aesthetics and beyond the agronomic improvements that John's spoken to, I think what it's done also is it's allowed Oakmont to be a windier golf course. It sits up on a hill.

At least the times I've been here, versus -- you know, the 1992 Women's Open and the '94 U.S. Open, it's a different golf course, and I think that definitely plays into the difficulty. It's interesting how it's changed since '07 and the trees. Yeah, it's aesthetic, but what's interesting is there's so much about Oakmont that is the same, and I think we should all embrace that.

We came in here and really had to do very, very, very little to Oakmont to get it ready for the Open. And that doesn't mean that John and his staff, who have done a marvelous job, don't deserve a lot of credit. But the reason I say that is we're basically playing the same golf course as we played in 2007. It's the exact same yardage. It's the same fairway widths. In fact, it's the same fairways that the members have played for many years. So it's not as if we're coming in here and narrowing.

Basically, same green speeds, same general hole locations, and that really gets to what Gil was talking about. It's a mindset that Oakmont Country Club really set this culture back in 1903 that they wanted this to be a championship golf course. And think about the historic championships that have been played here at Oakmont.

So I think that, for us, just to continue to get invited to have national championships -- for me, personally, it's my sixth championship at Oakmont since working here, and then I actually attended the '83. I may have watched you, Brad, probably cheering you on as an amateur as well.

BRAD FAXON: Are you that old? Wow.

MIKE DAVIS: It's a great place.

BRAD FAXON: It is.

GIL HANSE: And I think to follow on to that, we constantly have this argument, discussion about trees and their impact on strategy. And really I think, when you look at a golf course that's designed this well, there's plenty of strategy out there without the trees. There's the ditches, the bunkers, the greens, the contours, the slopes, and the trees really just pile on to that. I think they detract from the thought process because if it you get behind a tree, you're just playing out sideways, and you're really challenging golfers to

take on shots that maybe they shouldn't take on. I think that's the essence of great architecture, and I think without the trees here, you might start to see players take chances, and that will truly reveal the character of the design.

MIKE DAVIS: You know, Gil, to that point, what's interesting is, if you walk Oakmont, roughly half of the holes out there have some form of blindness to them. Most have semi-blind. But since the trees have come down, it's not framed the way it once was. So you stand up with, say, the 15 ground, used to be you knew how you'd play based on a tree on the right. You stand up there now, that tree's gone. So you really had to have studied it before you get out there the first time, you know, what is my line of play?

And when you can't actually see to where you're hitting, you've got to really commit to it. Brad, from a player's standpoint --

BRAD FAXON: I was going to say that. From a player's standpoint, most players, when they get out here and see this course for the first time, they stand on a tee box, they're trying to pick something out in the horizon, whether it's a tree, a tower -- a lot of times it's grandstands now, sadly enough, for just the week. But it's hard. It's always easier to find a tree to aim it away from or towards.

MIKE DAVIS: Right.

BRAD FAXON: And that changes a lot for these players. The 5th hole, like you said, it's one of the holes that you get up and you go, ooh, I don't know where to hit that shot.

Gil's taught me this over the years. You should never have a tree, number one, that makes the hole good or bad because if that tree does come down, if you've made a fair hole with one big tree that gets in the way and that tree goes down, it's not a good thing. But I think when players don't have that horizon, when it's an empty horizon, that always gives you a little bit of uncertainty, and that's what gets in the player's mind. Uncertainty wreaks havoc, and when the player has that over a shot, good things aren't always going to happen.

GIL HANSE: To keep this family friendly, the two F words for architects are fair and frame, and I don't think Mr. Fownes really appreciated either of those. They weren't in his vocabulary. That's why the golf course is so great.

MIKE TROSTEL: Brad, as we mentioned before, you played here in '83 and 1994 and made the cut both times. What do you remember, beyond there being

more trees, what do you remember about those experiences from playing here at Oakmont?

BRAD FAXON: Well, my favorite maybe golfing experience in 1983 -- you know, typically the Sunday is Father's Day Sunday, and I had a buddy of mine from college. I went to Furman University and had just graduated and qualified to play. Played Walker Cup and came over here, and I was having a great little run.

My buddy from Furman was going to caddie for me, and he had made his plane flight to go home Saturday, knowing that I was going to miss the cut. I ended up making a 15-footer for a bogey on 18 to sneak in.

My dad was around, so he caddied for me the last two days. On Sunday, I was playing with D.A. Weibring. We were off relatively early that day. We had been warned that we were out of position by one of the officials. D.A. was kind of a slow player. I had no idea what I was doing. My dad didn't either. So we were on the 14th hole, and now we're trying to scamper through.

And on 15, another blind tee shot. We both hit our tee shots and go scrambling down the fairway. My dad, when I looked back, was standing on the 14th tee watching Arnold Palmer hit his second shot from the 18th fairway, and I'm like, dad, come on. So he comes running down with my Furman golf bag rattling. He said, I've never been that close to Arnold.

So I remember that. And Titleist just did a great story. They put that piece -- we have some pictures from being here, and having your dad caddie for you at any tournament, never mind the U.S. Open on Father's Day, that was a great thrill.

MIKE TROSTEL: Really special, U.S. Opens end on Father's Day -- at least the fourth round has been on Father's Day every year since 1965. A lot of great memories you see on the 18th green or in the 15th fairway, in this case. We're all fans of Arnold, so I certainly think we can understand what your father was doing.

BRAD FAXON: I don't think there's a PGA official that would have given us a two-shot penalty if they heard that story.

MIKE TROSTEL: I want to talk about the other side of things. Brad was talking about the playing side. You're on the other side of it. What kind of hours are you and your team working for this week to prepare for the U.S. Open?

JOHN ZIMMERS: Quite a few. But I did manage to stay up last night. I saw them win the Cup. So that

was a big deal for me.

(Applause.)

JOHN ZIMMERS: So we hung in there.

No, we're working quite a bit. We're actually starting about 3:30, 3:45 in the morning and trying to wrap up, hopefully, by 10:30, 11:00 at night. It just depends how it goes. Our volunteers came in yesterday. We have about 140, 150 volunteers, on top of our staff of 50. It's a real challenge the first few days to get everybody to go out, learn where they're supposed to be. It is dark too at 4:00 in the morning.

BRAD FAXON: John, those are volunteers, other superintendents from around the country?

JOHN ZIMMERS: That's correct. We do something really neat. We kind of call it the Band of Brothers, and other clubs from throughout the -- really from all over the world. They send people or people in my position volunteer your time for the week. It's a great week, and you got some pretty good talent there too.

MIKE TROSTEL: Absolutely. Michael, under this, before we open it up to Q&A, you're from western Pennsylvania. You grew up a little bit south of here, a couple hours. When was the first time you came to Oakmont?

MIKE DAVIS: Well, I actually grew up in Chambersburg. This is south central Pennsylvania, but my father's side of the family was from Pittsburgh. In fact, his first round of golf was what used to be known as Oakmont East. But way back when he was playing -- I guess this would have been mid-1940s -- it was called Blackburn Golf Course.

And he tells the story, first round, and I guess the last hole was along the this Hulton Road, and he managed to hook it and land it on Hulton Road and it went into a pickup truck, and the truck kept going. So that was his first round of golf.

But beyond the 1983 Open, I was certainly here as a junior, played in a junior event here, played in a Pennsylvania amateur here. A lot of great memories.

When you walk out on Oakmont, it really is magical. You just feel the history, and you look at all the photographs that are in the club house, whether it's the '27 Open, the 1935 Open, the PGA, three PGAs played here, a couple of Women's Opens, five U.S. Amateurs. It just reeks with history. It's wonderful.

MIKE TROSTEL: As Mike mentioned, a lot of history. This is the ninth U.S. Open being played out here at



Oakmont Country Club.

We want to hear from you, the members. If you could raise your hand and ask a question.

**Q. My question is directed to Joe and Mike, the gentlemen on the right half of the podium. How do you respond to a player when he says he thinks the course is set up too difficult? Has anyone ever complained that it was too easy, a particular feature of a certain hole?**

BRAD FAXON: As a U.S. Open?

GIL HANSE: Here we actually have a quote from W.C. Fownes you could probably trot out. Let the clumsy, the spineless, the alibi artist stand aside as it relates to Oakmont. Hopefully, we won't be hearing much about that.

MIKE DAVIS: You know, it's really an interesting question. When you go back, when the U.S. Open started in 1895 -- and that was the same year we started the U.S. Amateur and the U.S. Women's Amateur -- even to this day, there's really been kind of a DNA, if you will, of that championship that it's going to be a stern test of golf. It's going to test your shot-making abilities. It's going to test your course management abilities, your ability to handle your nerves.

You can go back, whether it's Jack Nicklaus' time, Ben Hogan's time, Bob Jones' time, or even beyond that, it's been this stern test of golf. So every tournament that's played has kind of its own personality.

One of the things about a U.S. Open is this week it's not just a player playing against 155 fellow competitors. It's a player playing against the golf course, and the golf course, if it you think about our wonderful game of golf, one of the many ways it sets it apart from other sports is the arenas, the playing fields, if you will, are so different. You think about basketball, football, soccer, baseball -- pick your sport. Generally speaking, there's some differences, but not like this.

I think that one of the things the U.S. Open has always done is it's tested a player and his skills and his mental fortitude to the nth degree. And I think that some players embrace that, some don't.

What I will tell you is we get more unfavorable mail at the USGA when we have what's perceived as an easy U.S. Open, saying it doesn't feel like a U.S. Open. I'm not sure the players necessarily always like that, but there is history to it, and I think that's why we talk about Oakmont and this great test of golf. And in some ways it's kind of a gold standard for U.S. Opens because we

joke, but we could call up Oakmont with three weeks to go and say, we're in a pinch. We need a U.S. Open site to play, and the guy to my left could have it ready, could have it in U.S. Open condition.

MIKE TROSTEL: Very good. I think there's a question down front.

**Q. First, John, congratulations on the way the course looks. It's phenomenal out there. For the whole panel, with the tree removal project that's gone on, with the Open coming up, it's going to be on TV, it's going to look great. Do you think there's a lot of courses that have over planted trees over the years, should those trees be nervous? Do you think you're going to start a trend?**

GIL HANSE: I hope so. I think it's a great advertisement for restoration. There's all kinds of reasons why it makes sense to do this. Here, history was obviously a critical one, and I think that we'll have that opportunity to talk about that certainly on air, and I think it will be front and center. It has been in a lot of articles recently written about the golf course.

And I echo your comments because I don't know if I'm going to get another chance to speak, but you probably know the three of us better than you know John, but the most important guy up here is that guy. Superintendents, they work their butts off day in, day out to give the conditioning that every single golfer respects and understands.

Probably not many people in the room will play the game as well as Brad. They may not look at it from a design standpoint like we do or setup from Mike's standpoint, but every single person in this room appreciates good conditioning, and that guy right here is one of the best in the country, and he is just a shining example for his industry, which I think is under appreciated.

And I just want to say thank you to John and the rest of the industry, the superintendents industry for all the work they do because, at the end of the day, they make us look good, and they provide the conditions that these guys like to play on. So thank you.

(Applause.)

JOHN ZIMMERS: Thank you.

BRAD FAXON: Mike, I'd like to say something because when you go out and you walk on the golf course and you watch the players hitting shots today in the practice, and hopefully as the week continues, I think a lot of golfers sometimes think that, when the conditions are firm, when the ball goes a long way, when it travels

and runs on the ground, that it's going to make things easier because it makes things so much shorter.

If you remember the 2007 Open when Angel Cabrera hit one of the most famous drives now in U.S. Open Championship history, he smoked that tee shot on what was the hardest hole on the golf course all week long and maybe hit a wedge in on a 475- or 480-yard hole.

When the conditions are firm, knock-knock firm, and the ball's bouncing, especially with the contours you have here at Oakmont when there's slopes on the fairways, a shot hit on the wrong side of the fairway will end up bouncing a lot of times out of the rough and into the primary rough, and that's what makes it so difficult when players have a shot out of the rough.

Now when they're going into these greens -- and it can happen on the short holes as well. There's four par 4s here that are under 400 yards, which is unheard of today in any of the golf courses that we play on the PGA Tour. But the 2nd hole, the 11th hole is a diabolical tee shot because now you only need to hit it 225 or 230 yards to get it on top of this hill to have a vantage point, but there's sloping to the right.

When it's firm, Tiger Woods missed that fairway almost every day to the right. Now it goes into the right rough. It's almost like Fownes knew, didn't he? It's like this shot is where everybody is going to play their shot. Now he's got to go over a bunker. And when you hit a shot out of rough and you're lucky enough to get it over that bunker, it's going to bounce towards the back of the green. Now you have one of the fastest putts in the history of the game, not just at Oakmont.

That's what makes it so difficult. When it rains and softens everything up, everyone says, oh, it's going to play tough, it's going to play longer. When the player can control the ball's bounce, that's when it's easier. That's when the scores are lower. That's when players shoot 63, or Larry Nelson's final 36 holes was after a rain softened green.

So I think John's job is what do you call the opposite of a rain dance? We want to see firm and fast conditions. The players probably don't. But that will make the scores be higher if you're seeing balls run a long way.

GIL HANSE: And it magnifies the architecture. The ground game is part of design, and certainly with the greens that are running away from you, the approaches are a critical aspect of this golf course. I think it would be interesting to watch. A lot of the approaches are severely tilted. So trying to get there, you've got to land it here. There's a lot to be judged. When this course plays firm, I think it just displays the brilliance of

the architecture even more so.

BRAD FAXON: I was just out on the 12th hole, the par 5, with Lee Westwood. Westwood is a longer hitter, not one of the longest. But the back tee plays 667, and he hit a drive, and I just showed up to watch his ball rolling. It landed in the left center of the fairway and rolled all the way down, and there's like a little plateau right there, right where you have that little net guarding the lowest area, and he had 285 to the front.

And I'm thinking, 285, that's a long way. He took out a 3 wood and popped it pretty good right on the left edge to the green, carried that bunker, and landed on the front part of the green, went over the back of the green. First of all, who can imagine hitting a 3 wood 300 yards? It probably flew 265, 270. It's downhill.

But I said to him, I said, you will take your second shot over the back of this green every single day. But he hit a perfect tee shot that rolled 50 or 60 yards, but it rolled sideways 25 or 30 yards, and then if he missed that second shot and hits it to the left, now you're in jail.

MIKE DAVIS: That's right.

BRAD FAXON: You can miss it to the right, it goes in a bunker. It's just going to be so exciting to watch this week. I don't know if I'm glad I'm indoors and not outdoors this week, but it's going to be fun.

**Q. Kind of a two-part question for each half of the table. For Mike and John, Jordan was saying he thought in the five or six weeks since he'd been here, they poured a ton of extra sand into the bunker. Wanted to see if that was true. And if so, how much?**

**And for the Gil side of the table, I remember Nicklaus a couple of years ago being irritated the bunkers were no longer a penalty. He started using the furrowed rakes. That didn't end so well. What is your idea of how a bunker should be played; how it should be built, the way it should be built?**

MIKE DAVIS: I guess that, since this is an architectural forum, what's really interesting, when you look at the history of Oakmont, is that it started out with, I believe, 80-some bunkers that were originally put in in 1903. And by the time the Fownes got done, there were over 300 bunkers. Every time somebody hit it a place that either Henry or William didn't want it, they put in a bunker. And I think it's down to 210 bunkers now.

But what's really interesting is, when you read about it, the Fownes really wanted these bunkers to be true hazards. But because this sits on heavy soil, they couldn't go down because of the drainage. The

bunkers wouldn't drain. So what did they do? They used the old, basically, river bottom sand from the Allegheny River and created furrows, purposely creating furrows because they couldn't go down like the pot bunkers in the U.K.

So that finally got to a point in 1953, the U.S. Open, where there was some controversy between the USGA and, I guess, trying to defend the players, believe it or not. So you went from two to three-inch furrows down to one-inch furrows.

But eventually the furrows went away. Oakmont figured out how to go deep, and, boy, did you go deep with those bunkers. I mean, they're the most penal bunkers we play in.

Doug, on the question about -- it's interesting. I didn't hear Jordan say that, but we were just saying, as we were going around this morning after the setup, that the bunkers did need some moisture because the guys were having trouble raking it. So I know, as preparation tonight, there's going to be water put in the bunkers just to settle them down, to firm them up a little bit.

But it's really just because we were expecting more rain this weekend, and we really didn't get any. So normal course of maintenance.

JOHN ZIMMERS: Yeah. Really, specifically, we've intentionally kind of loosened the sand up the advance week coming in, just to get it a little bit more uniform for playability, et cetera. And then we had a lot of rain coming in the last week. So probably when he was here playing too, they certainly play different. I hear that quite a bit from the members as well.

But anyway, as Mike said, we're not trying to have perfect bunkers in some places. So we did some maintenance. We did a little bit of work on them. And then yesterday, if you were around, it's one of the windiest days I can remember here at Oakmont, very, very unusual for us, and actually some of the sand was actually even blowing out of the bunkers. So when we got out this morning, the tops of the sand was very, very dry. So it's unusual for us to have to kind of throw a little bit of moisture into our bunkers here, but it's a good problem. I'd like it to be dry. I'd like to be saying, Mike, I need to water the bunkers.

GIL HANSE: I think H.C. Fownes is spinning in his grave with the thought of watering bunkers to make them more playable.

You know, Doug, I think that whenever we approach a restoration, we really focus on what the intent of the original architect was. So that really would determine

depths of bunkers. So here, the famous quote, a shot poorly played is a shot irrevocably lost. So these bunkers are intended to be deep, they're intended to be hazards. So I think the presentation of them now is consistent with that philosophy.

BRAD FAXON: I played golf a few weeks ago with Devin Gee. Devin is going to take over Bobby Ford's position as director of golf. Devin is a good player, a strong hitter.

I asked him, if he hit 100 shots out of fairway bunkers over the course of a year when you play here, how many of those shots from the fairway bunkers can you actually get on the green surface? And he started to think about it, and he says, probably 15. And then he said, maybe 10. So you know, 10 or 15 percent. Here's a guy that hits the ball as far as any Tour player. Think about the severity of these lips like Fownes intended to have.

I grew up in Rhode Island, so I played a lot of seaside golf up there in New England. A lot of the bunker sand that was used there was sand from the beaches. It was very soft, granular sand, inconsistent, where I think we as golfers have gotten very spoiled, haven't we? It's almost as if there's sand farms now where you can go to a gravel pit and get -- it's not even sand anymore, right? Like Augusta National's sand is firm white sand, and the players you've heard oftentimes say I'd rather be in the bunker than be in the rough because it's easier to hit a shot out of, whether it was the fairway or close to the green.

Billy Harmon was the golf professional at Newport Country Club for a long time, where I was fortunate enough to play for a little bit, and he said, remember a bunker is a hazard, and you're not necessarily supposed to have a good lie. And that's what I love about the game of golf. I think we as players all get spoiled where we expect to have everything be fair and taking chance or luck out of the game is something that I think we falsely think the good architecture, we should always get a bounce that goes in the right direction. But I think at Oakmont, you're going to see, a matter of feet or sometimes inches, with very similar shots, can make a ball go bounce to the right or to the left.

I love that about this game. It can be the hardest thing. It can be the most difficult thing mentally to overcome a shot you think is pretty good, and it caroms off the ridge and goes the wrong way versus the right way. How you deal with that is how you become the U.S. Open champion.

**Q. Question for Mr. Davis. If it does not rain in the coming days, what plans do you have for putting water on the golf course and especially the**

**greens? And do you foresee any situation where there would be a risk of another Shinnecock situation? And do you take any precautionary measures to kind of ensure that that does not happen?**

MIKE DAVIS: Yes. So those are exactly the things that we meet every day at 2:30 to talk about where the golf course is, what maintenance will be done in the evening, what maintenance gets done in the morning. And you touched upon the things that get talked about every day.

So the speed and the undulation of these greens, we're very, very mindful that. If they get too firm, you really have a situation where the players simply can't control his golf ball. And because of the slopes and speed, what happens is normally we really want at a U.S. Open exactly what Brad was talking about. We want the player to have to think about, when his ball lands, where is it going to bounce? Where is it going to roll?

Because that is an element where if they're just, if you will, throwing darts, then it's just a matter of saying, I've got 178 yards, and you know when it lands, it's going to stay. It takes a little bit of that course management.

You know, what Gil was talking about also earlier, it really brings the architecture alive. But we would say here at Oakmont, you know, if you were hitting a 6 iron into the green, say, from the fairway, normally we'd want to bounce, bounce and then stop and then maybe roll out 20, 25 feet. What happens here is if you got the same firmness here that you got at some other golf courses, you would see with the speed of the greens that the balls just simply roll too far.

So Oakmont plays its best when there is a firmness to it, but it's not overly firm. We are supposed to get rain maybe late Thursday, perhaps all day -- excuse me. Late Wednesday, maybe all day Thursday, and maybe ending sometime Friday. To Brad's point earlier, that really will make it easier, but it won't make Oakmont easy. It just won't. This is a tough course.

It's interesting. We use a lot of science behind -- a lot of data when setting up the golf course. So we will look at not only green speeds, we measure firmness of every green multiple times during the day. We measure moisture levels in the greens, and we want to get it to the point where it is a good test, but it's fair.

So where do you cross the line? When you start to see well executed shots not being rewarded, that is something we don't want, but we want this to be the ultimate test of golf. But you can't cross the lines. Listen, at the end of the day, it's not perfection. Because we talk about this based on what the forecast says. So if we're supposed to get rain, if it's 100

percent chance, we decide we're not going to water, and all of a sudden, meteorologist misses it, then you may have a golf course that doesn't play properly.

If you're setting a golf course up with the southwest wind in mind and all of a sudden you get out there and it comes from the east, again, you can look, as a setup person, not so good, but that's just the nature. So you're going to miss it sometimes.

MIKE TROSTEL: With that, I just want to say thank you to Brad, Gil, Mike, and John. Thank you, members.