

US Open Championship 2016

Monday, June 13, 2016

Wes Short

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: Good afternoon. My name is Beth major, and on behalf of the United States Golf Association, it's my pleasure to welcome you all to Oakmont Country Club for the 2016 U.S. Open Championship. It's also my pleasure to welcome with us this afternoon Wes Short of Austin, Texas.

Wes has an interesting road to the U.S. Open here. This year he started at local qualifying in Austin in May, made it through a playoff, and advanced to sectional qualifying. He played at Wedgewood Golf Club and Country Club and Kinsale Golf and Fitness Club in Powell, Ohio, last Monday. Shot a 59 and 66 to earn one of the 13 spots to make it here to Oakmont this week. It's his first U.S. Open, started trying to qualify at age 18 in 1982.

Wes, can you talk a little bit about what it finally means to be here at a U.S. Open Championship?

WES SHORT: Well, to tell you the truth, it seemed like that after all the years, I didn't ever know if I was going to play in one. There's two tournaments, when I was a kid, that I always wanted to play in. One was, of course, the Masters, and the second was the U.S. Open, being from the United States.

I'm looking really forward to it. It's been a hard week to think about playing in the tournament last week, because I was always looking at this week. But I made it through last week. So I think it helped me for this week too because the course last week at the Cricket Club was pretty tough. But I'm looking forward to it.

THE MODERATOR: As you mentioned, you played in the SENIOR PLAYERS last week, finished tied for fifth and drove over last night and this morning. Any first impressions of Oakmont?

WES SHORT: It's a lot more people than normal, than our Tour. But I've just hit balls so far. Of course, driving in looks great. I hit some putts. The putting green is phenomenal, but it's pretty quick. So I'm looking forward to go play a few holes.

THE MODERATOR: Excellent. We'll open it up to questions.

Q. Wes, you worked really your whole life to get here. Did you have a vision as to what this

experience would be like? Obviously, you haven't gone through the whole thing yet, but did you think about what it would be like to finally be at a U.S. Open? And at least your early feelings, is it kind of matching that vision you've had throughout your life?

WES SHORT: Yeah. Just as soon as you get in the gate, all the people and all the media and stuff, it's what I kind of expected. It's a lot bigger than I expected. I know in the tournament, you have to drive it well and putt well. So I've been practicing trying to hit my driver a little straighter this past week. Boy, I hope it gets better because it wasn't very good last week.

Q. Wes, with how you did in the Philadelphia Cricket Club, how much does maybe taking your medicine and being patient on that course maybe translate into a course and a track such as this?

WES SHORT: I think it's going to help me a lot because you had to be really patient last week. The wind was blowing pretty hard, and the greens were firm. There was enough rough where you hit it in there, and it was hard to get it on the green. Not near probably like -- I haven't seen the rough this week, but I'm sure it's going to be two or three times taller than what it was last week.

Hopefully, I won't visit it very much and keep the ball below the hole. That's what everybody tells me.

Q. You had mentioned, Wes, about the U.S. Open being kind of one of your dreams as a golfer earlier in your career. What was the closest that you got to that dream, maybe seeming like it wouldn't be something that would ever materialize.

WES SHORT: I had actually been in a couple playoffs. I think in 2006 or '07 was the last time I was in a playoff. It was also in Columbus but at different golf courses. But got close.

I just think I can still play a little bit so I keep trying to qualify. Fortunately, at least I can write this one off that I at least have played in one U.S. Open.

Q. Wes, after you qualified, was there a temptation to drive through and take a look at Oakmont, or did you want to see it for the first time and play it for the first time this week?



WES SHORT: No, actually, I would have liked to have been able to come here, but we played our Major on the Champions Tour last week. So after Monday, I needed to go over to Philadelphia so I could see the course that we were playing in that week.

Plus I played pretty well at the qualifier, playing it blind, but I'll get a couple practice rounds in this week. Like I said, I'm looking really forward to it.

Q. Wes, you qualified on a solid three hours' sleep. What was harder, the three hours' sleep or playing a golf course you're just playing blind and not knowing what to do?

WES SHORT: Well, sometimes I think it helps you because you don't take any chances. You just kind of go down the fairway, and you try to see where the wide side of the green is. I think the hardest part was the 36 holes on the two and a half hours' sleep. Actually, I don't think I've recovered yet. My legs are still barking at me right now.

Q. Wes, when you were working in a stone quarry and teaching lessons to people how to play golf, what kept you motivated to try to reach this dream of playing in a U.S. Open?

WES SHORT: Well, I always thought that I was good enough to play. Unfortunately, about golf, to play golf it costs a lot of money to play in tournaments and stuff. But what kept me motivated is actually I had friends that I grew up playing golf with, like Jeff Maggert had some nice success. Omar Uresti is another guy. He's from Austin. He never won, but a veteran member, made a lot of cuts. People that I grew up playing with kept me motivated.

Eventually, things worked out for me. I wish I'd have done it a little bit earlier in life, but sometimes things are meant to happen a little later.

THE MODERATOR: I believe, over the weekend, did you play with Rocco?

WES SHORT: I played the first two rounds with Rocco at the Cricket Club.

THE MODERATOR: And he obviously has quite the U.S. Open history. Did he offer you any advice or thoughts heading into this week?

WES SHORT: Yeah, he said hit it straight and practice a lot of 8-footers.

Q. Wes, along those lines, you mentioned Jeff Maggert. He's had some success here at Oakmont in a U.S. Open. Did you pick his brain at all about this course or any of your fellow brethren on the

PGA Champions Tour?

WES SHORT: They gave me a lot of advice last week, the guys did. Specifically to Jeff, no. I think we must have had opposite tee times last week. I didn't really see him much. But a lot of the guys in the locker room all gave me some advice. So that was helpful.

Q. Wes, you said a little bit ago that you had a little bit of trouble keeping this one out of your mind last week, but you must have kept it out of your mind well enough to finish tied for fifth.

WES SHORT: Yeah, you know, it kind of motivated me too a little bit for last week. It may have helped too to not really be thinking about how bad the wind was blowing and stuff. So I think it was a good test last week, and I think it's going to help me for this week for sure.

Q. Just when you hear U.S. Open, what comes to mind? As a golf fan, what are your best memories of a U.S. Open, having watched it?

WES SHORT: Well, of course, being from the U.S., this is the biggest tournament, in my opinion, for the players. I think it's going to be the hardest course to win on.

You know, I watch every year. There's two tournaments I never miss, unless I'm playing, of course, is the Masters and the U.S. Open. So to finally play in one, I can't wait till Thursday gets here.

Q. Wes, how many family members do you have who will be in attendance this week? And if you just walk us through who it is.

WES SHORT: My wife is going to fly up tomorrow. I have a couple brothers that live in the area, and I have a brother that's in Columbus right now so he's going to drive over. Probably, I'm going to say -- I have some aunts and uncles too -- probably about 15.

Q. Having missed out and never being able to play, was watching this tournament ever difficult for you?

WES SHORT: No, because it's such a good tournament to watch, where par really means something. You're not going to shoot, generally, 20 under par here or anything. So par's a good score. The conditions are tough, but generally fair, and I just love watching the Majors. I really like to watch. It's nice to finally participate in one.

THE MODERATOR: We're certainly glad to have you here with us this week. We wish you well. Enjoy every moment. We'll look forward to watching throughout the week.

WES SHORT: Thank you.

