

2015 US Open Championship

Tuesday, June 16
Press Conference

Cole Hammer

An Interview With:
COLE HAMMER

BETH MAJOR: Good morning, welcome to the 2015 U.S. Open at Chambers Bay. We are very happy to have with us this morning Cole Hammer from Dallas, Texas. Cole will be the third youngest competitor in U.S. Open history. He'll be 15 years, 9 months and 21 days when he tees it up on Thursday here at Chambers Bay. Andy Zhang in 2012 at 14 years, 6 months. And Tadd Fujikawa, in 2006, at 15 years, 5 months and 7 days were the previous two youngest competitors. Cole shot a 64-68, including birdies on four of his last five holes of his sectional qualifier last week in Dallas to make the field here. Cole, can you talk a little bit about that experience qualifying, and what it means to make it to the U.S. Open.

COLE HAMMER: Yeah, it was a blast. I got to play with a couple of pros in my sectional qualifier, and it was a really cool experience being able to play with them, seeing their game, just kind of what their life is like kind of out on Tour. And it was really cool to be able to make it through, and so far it's been a really cool experience.

BETH MAJOR: How have you enjoyed your first few days the Chambers Bay? You've been here since Friday and played a few practice rounds.

COLE HAMMER: I got here Friday, played nine Friday, 18 on the weekend and nine yesterday. I really, really like the course. At first I played the first hole and I was in a bit of shock, I've never seen anything like it. But then as I got more used to it, I kind of like -- I really like it now. I think it kind of suits my game. A lot of the short game shots I really like around the greens, and I really can't wait to get started. I really like the course.

Q. What's the coolest thing so far?

COLE HAMMER: Being able to play with some of the guys you look up to, like Webb Simpson, Brent Snedeker and Jordan Spieth. So far it's been a lot of fun. They've been really, really awesome. They really kind of accepted me and really nice to me, so that was a really cool thing.



Q. Just warming up next to Rory on the range, how was that? Were you're sneaking peeks at his ball flight?

COLE HAMMER: Every one of his three shots I'd look over. He hits it so far, it's crazy. But, yeah, it was really cool being able to hit balls next to the No. 1 player in the world. I never thought that I'd be able to do that. But, you know, it was really cool.

Q. So, Cole, this is your first USGA event. In the golf you play in the summer, was there kind of a time schedule when you were thinking about maybe first trying to qualify for a U.S. Junior?

COLE HAMMER: Yeah, so I was supposed to play in the Western Junior Amateur this week, but I qualified for this so I didn't go to that (laughter). But I was going to play in a U.S. Junior qualifier next week in Houston. And I think the U.S. Junior is in like a month or so. I was really looking forward to that. I was really kind of hoping I would qualify for that, and maybe possibly the U.S. Amateur, which I had a qualifier for in July, maybe. But, yeah, I didn't -- I didn't really expect for this to happen.

Q. With Thursday coming up, how do you keep your calm being in all of this hoopla and with the people you've been admiring for the last couple of years?

COLE HAMMER: Well, I was on the tee box yesterday with Jordan, and there were a lot of people watching. I was really nervous, but I kind of have to channel that into kind of excitement so I can get excited for the first tee shot on Thursday, I guess. I'm just really kind of excited to hit it. I don't know, you know, what it's going to be like hitting my tee shot in my first major. I'm really looking forward to it. I don't know what it's going to be like, so that will be pretty cool.

BETH MAJOR: Cole, you had said that watching Jordan winning the Masters inspired you. What was it like playing the practice round with him yesterday?

COLE HAMMER: Yeah, he's been one of my role models, for sure. Definitely my favorite golfer out here. That was really cool playing with somebody I really look up to, Masters champion, which kind of adds to it. He was really great. He embraced me. Cody Gribble and I were also playing with him, as well as Denny

McCarthy, kind of a young group, you could say. We had a lot of fun.

BETH MAJOR: It's not often that Jordan is the old man in the group.

COLE HAMMER: For sure.

Q. When did you start playing golf? Why did you start playing golf? And what would you like to do with golf, if you can keep all that straight?

COLE HAMMER: I started playing golf when I was about two years old, probably, just kind of picked up those plastic clubs, started hitting it around. My parents both play golf, so they got me into it for sure. They had a big impact on my golf game, for sure. And -- sorry, what was the last thing?

Q. What would you like to do with it?

COLE HAMMER: Like in what way?

Q. Do you want to play out here on a regular basis?

COLE HAMMER: Oh, yes, for sure. Hopefully at one point I want to go pro. I want to play college golf at Texas, I've verbally committed to play there. And hopefully one day be able to come out on the PGA Tour and play along with some of these great guys that I've looked up to my whole life.

Q. What kind of expectations do you have for this week?

COLE HAMMER: Honestly, I don't have many at all. I'm just glad to be here. But I definitely want to try my best to make the cut, see what happens. I feel like my game is in a good place right now. So hopefully I'll be able to play pretty well, I guess. I don't know what Thursday and Friday are going to bring, but I'm excited for the challenge. I'm excited to see how the golf course reacts in a tournament round. But overall I don't have many expectations, I just kind of wanted to go out there and have fun, just experiencing my first major.

Q. Cole, I think I can speak for almost everybody here, when we were 15 years old, we didn't have the eyes of the world on us. We weren't sitting on some podium up there. Your friends back home, you know, they're living normal, everyday lives and whatnot. What are they thinking right now? Their friend, their peer, their classmate is going all over the country having a great time. What are they thinking?

COLE HAMMER: Yeah, you know, they've been very supportive. They're very happy for me. When they first found out, they couldn't believe it. They're like, no way. But, you know, I have a couple of them coming this week, which is going to be fun. That will probably calm me down a little bit, lighten the mood, I guess. But

they've been really supportive. I've tried to hang out with them a little bit, as much as I can before I came here. And, yeah, it's really meant a lot to me that they've kind of supported me through this.

Q. You've got a pretty good last name for being a golfer, do you get a hard time from your friends like that? Do you have any nicknames going off of that?

COLE HAMMER: Yeah, a lot of people on the golf course call me Hammer Time sometimes. I think they like to have a little fun with my last name. But I like it. It's kind of fun. Yeah, that's about it.

Q. First, do you know who the original Hammer Time was? Were you born yet?

COLE HAMMER: No, I was not.

Q. Your school, are you taking correspondence courses on-line? How often are you in a classroom?

COLE HAMMER: I'm in classroom all day. I go to a prep school called the Kincaid School in Houston. Our school is from about 8:30 to 3:00 on most days. So I'm there all day and then I'll go practice afterwards. But school is very important to me. I'm there for a good amount of the day.

Q. So you're doing video games?

COLE HAMMER: No, I don't like video games. But I don't have any extracurricular activities other than golf. It's just golf after school.

Q. Are you okay with that, is that something that's -- here and now you love playing golf? Have you thought about the rest of your life?

COLE HAMMER: School-wise, am I okay with it? Yeah, I really like my school. It's been a blast this year. As I said, it's very important to me, so I'm definitely going to continue doing that and not go on-line, I guess if that's what you meant.

Q. Is it true that both your parents are club champions and multiple times?

COLE HAMMER: It is. I think my dad's won it twice and my mom three times.

Q. What's the name of the club?

COLE HAMMER: River Oaks Country Club.

Q. Were you there to follow them around as they won?

COLE HAMMER: I caddied for my mom one time when she won it, and I caddied for my dad once. I don't know if he won when I caddied for him, but, yeah, it was a lot of fun.

Q. Are those the two biggest trophies on the mantle piece in the home right now?

COLE HAMMER: Yeah, they're right in the middle of the house.

Q. Where is your biggest one?

COLE HAMMER: They're all in my room.

Q. You haven't played in this course before. Do you have a plan to play Chambers Bay?

COLE HAMMER: I don't really have a plan, but I think it's very important to put it in the right spot off the tee and miss it on the correct side of the green out here, because if you put yourself in a bad position you're looking at bogey, if not double bogey if you don't put it on the right side of the green. A lot of these greens are so firm that you have only a small place to land it on in order to keep it on the green. And some of these pins are going to be very tough to get to. With these tightly mown chipping areas, I think I should be good out here.

Q. Have you played two or three times?

COLE HAMMER: Yeah, I've played it three times.

Q. How old were you when you first beat your dad and how old do you think you'll be when you first beat Jordan?

COLE HAMMER: I don't know the second question, that's for sure. But I think I beat my dad when I was 12 or 13 -- 13, probably.

Q. How about your mom?

COLE HAMMER: 10 or 11, maybe. Yeah, she can hit it pretty far. It was kind of a disadvantage when I was younger, but probably around 10 or 11.

Q. Cole, how many friends and family will you have out here and what does it mean to have your dad caddying for you out here this week?

COLE HAMMER: Yeah, I think I have seven or eight of my friends coming and then all my grandparents and I think my aunt and uncle might be coming. And then my dad on the bag means the world to me, especially on Father's Day. I think that's going to be a cool experience to be able to share together. He's caddied for me before and we work well together. I think we're going to have a great time out here.

Q. Cole, your dad said that you played baseball but that you gave that up for golf. Why? What was it about golf that made it more fun than baseball?

COLE HAMMER: Yeah, golf, from the very time I started it, it was always just different, I liked it. There was just a different feel to it. I liked it a lot. And I loved baseball when I was growing up. I played like tournament baseball and little league baseball, as well.

But I got burned out from baseball, practicing every day, just traveling around the country for baseball. I really got burned out of that. I've never even come close to burning out of golf. It's always just had a different feel for me. I've just loved golf since I've touched my first club.

Q. What's the biggest tournament you've ever won?

COLE HAMMER: When I was 12, I won the U.S. Kids World Championship at Pinehurst. So far I think that's probably the biggest tournament I've won. I've won some tournaments in Texas, but other than that probably the U.S. Kids World Championship.

Q. How long have you been watching the U.S. Open on TV?

COLE HAMMER: First memory I have of the U.S. Open is when Tiger won in 2008, when he did that fist pump on 18th green. That's -- I think I've been watching the U.S. Open since then. Probably before, but that's the first time I remember.

Q. I would have been curious if you remember Tadd Fujikawa who was about five feet tall playing at Winged Foot.

COLE HAMMER: What year was that?

Q. '06 in Winged Foot?

COLE HAMMER: Vaguely, maybe. Vaguely. I'm not 100 percent sure I remember that. But my first golf memory was of Tiger in 2008.

Q. Have you ever played a links course before?

COLE HAMMER: Never. I've never been across the pond, as they say. But this is my first time playing on fescue grass. And so far I've really liked it. The hard, firm ground I think suits me really well, especially around the greens because I feel like I can chip and pitch the ball pretty well around here. So it's been a good first experience with it.

Q. What's the best piece of advice you've received from any of the players in the field that you've talked to?

COLE HAMMER: Yeah, Webb Simpson told me to stay patient out there. Everyone's going to make bogeys. If you're making some bogeys, just know everyone else out there is struggling, especially at a course like this at the U.S. Open. And he said he thought that if I play well, I have a chance to compete which gave me a lot of confidence. I really appreciate his advice and I think his advice about being patient is going to be huge out here considering how hard it is.

BETH MAJOR: Well, Cole, we're certainly very happy to have you here with us this week. Enjoy the U.S.

Open and we wish you well throughout the week.

COLE HAMMER: Thanks for having me.