

# 2015 US Open Championship

Tuesday, June 16  
Press Conference

## Henrik Stenson

An Interview With:  
HENRIK STENSON

BETH MAJOR: Good afternoon. Welcome again to the 2015 U.S. Open here at Chambers Bay in the Pacific Northwest. Very pleased to have with us this afternoon Henrik Stenson, who is playing in his 9th U.S. Open Championship. Henrik, everyone is talking quite a bit about the golf course this year, and this does not look like a normal U.S. Open, can you talk about Chambers Bay and how you found it so far.

HENRIK STENSON: Yeah, it's a beautiful venue. It's a golf course that's a bit different from the normal U.S. Opens. Like you said, we normally don't play links style golf courses. I enjoyed Pinehurst last year when we played a different setup compared to the other seven that I played before, which is more of a hack out, if you miss the fairway, and it's going to be a lot of wedge and putts to try and save par. In Pinehurst, you had a second shot most of the time, and this will be the same. It's not going to be hopefully too many hack outs. There's a few deadly places out there, but if you avoid those ones, you should have a shot to up around the green most of the time. Yeah, it's just that it's quite undulated and obviously more elevation changes that we normally see at links golf, as well. It's hard to know what we're up against weather-wise and scoring-wise and so on. So instead of spending too much time trying to figure that out, I'm just going to try to go out there and do a good 72-hole tournament, staying patient. You're going to get some good breaks, you're going to get some bad breaks, and you just have to hang in there throughout the whole week if you want to do a good tournament.

BETH MAJOR: In the past years, the European players have had quite a bit of success at the U.S. Open, and heading into a course like this.

HENRIK STENSON: Yeah, I think that could benefit a few of the Europeans, for sure. Most of us have played a fair bit of links golf throughout the years and that will come in handy on a week like this. It's different from what we normally play. You've got to be a bit more creative, I think, around the greens, and you've also got



a lot of putts up and over. Yeah, it's more seeing the shot and just trying to do that rather than some of the box standard shots around the greens we face on a weekly basis. Yeah, it could continue to play into the Europeans, hopefully.

**Q. Considering the newness of the course, lack of familiarity and all the crazy bounces that could happen, do you think it's also necessary to move tees on 9 and 15 to make 18 and 1 interchangeable par-4s and par 5s. It seems pretty difficult and pretty new to you guys already?**

HENRIK STENSON: Yeah, it is. There's a lot of things to take in throughout these days when you're out there practicing. I came here at the end of April to have a look at the golf course. So at least I knew kind of the big picture when I came here. But then still it's playing much firmer and faster than it looked to do in the end of April. Yeah, there is a lot to take in and of course every new tee box and every par change is going to make it even more difficult. Whether it's necessary or not and how much it's going to be changed I think is yet to see. I think they're going to start off in a somewhat reasonable manner and then we'll see what the scoring -- which direction that goes. Because it is a golf course you can make it extremely hard and you can ease it off on quite a few of the holes. So I think, as always, level par at the end of the week normally does a good job for us. Yeah, I think it's going to start off somewhat in the middle. And if need to, we're going to play it longer and harder and potentially go the other way if the scoring doesn't come on. Whoever sits back home and figures these things out always does a good job because level par always seems to work.

**Q. Could you maybe single out one or two holes that you found the most challenging, either in how they play or how to figure out how you want to attack them this week?**

HENRIK STENSON: Yeah, I think there's quite a few tee shots out there on 14, on 7, where you've got to pick your line and you can be more defensive, but then you're going to have a longer second shot. And of course with a bit of breeze you're standing quite high up, it's not easy to figure out which line to take. And then if you get it slightly wrong then you might end up in a really bad spot. To me, I played the back nine today, and to me 17 and 18, the green complex there are very, very undulated and tricky. So I think those

are going to be two key ones, really. And 17, I don't really feel like there's any chance you're going to try to hit that right section of the green. Because eight times out of ten, I think you're going to slide down into the bunker and up against the back lip and that's not the spot you want to be. So to me 17 is going to be a lot about hitting that left side of the green and trying to two-putt from long range. There will be a lot of long range putting. If you're going to do any good around here this week, you've got to be pretty solid from eight feet in, because you're going to have a lot of six, eight, five-footers for par on this golf course, so you've got to hole out well. And 18 is probably as busy a green as I've ever seen, so same goes for that one.

**Q. When you came in April, it sounds like you walked it but didn't play it. I'm wondering why you wouldn't play it. And secondly, how much longer are practice rounds this week with all the tee shots that Mike's kind of scaring you into, to be prepared for, and how much more of a nuisance is that?**

HENRIK STENSON: Well, when I came, I was still kind of just recovering from some of the illnesses I had throughout the spring. So I was not in great shape. I was just getting back into things. And after a six-hour flight from Orlando to Seattle, I felt like I would just walk it instead of being out there. If you hit one to the left and one to the right, you've got to start worrying about your swing instead of seeing the golf course. So I think a lot of times as a first look, it's probably the best to just walk around it and you can take everything in and do a better job seeing the course. So that was that one. And then, yeah, it is long practice rounds. I played nine yesterday. I played nine today and I'm playing nine tomorrow. It's about three hours for nine holes and six hours for 18. It's long days out there. It's easy to waste a lot of energy early in the week, and you really -- if you're going to be able to keep that patience and keep the head on for the weekend, on Saturday and Sunday when you need it most, the key is always not to burn too much energy early in the week. I think I've got a pretty good plan for that and try and stay rested to be focused later on in the week. It's probably the toughest walking golf, as well. Some of those high elevated tee boxes, and it's quite far between tees and greens, as well. Yeah, it is a long week and a long walk. It's definitely going to be hard on the players out there.

**Q. Just curious what, if anything, now that you're here, did you get out of that scouting trip a couple of months ago?**

HENRIK STENSON: Well, because it's quite a unique golf course and not something we see on a daily basis I think it was good to have seen it. You know what you're up against and also my caddie and myself, we kind of made a bit of a plan early. And when you come here for the practice rounds, you have a way of playing

the golf course and playing some holes in mind and you're more about testing that out when you're here on Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, instead of trying to take everything in and coming up with a plan and testing it at the same time. I think it's always beneficial to have seen a course in advance when it's possible. That just makes it a little bit easier. I feel like I can go easier these three days because I've been here before. Otherwise it would have been a bit more to take in. It's just good on the pacing side.

**Q. Just to follow up, a few players have talked about how this feels like an Open Championship being played in the United States. I'm wondering, one, if you feel that's a pretty accurate assessment. And two, if so, maybe what course it would remind you of in the rotation?**

HENRIK STENSON: Sorry, I missed the last part, there.

**Q. What Open course -- if it does remind of you an Open feel, what course would it remind you of in the rotation?**

HENRIK STENSON: Yeah, I don't think I've played any course like this in the UK. But I guess there's certain parts where you can feel a little bit -- St. Andrews has quite a few slopy greens and some of the putts you might face at St. Andrews could be kind of similar to some of the ones you have here. I think it's just this course is longer, a lot of the holes are longer even at extended Open courses back in the UK. So some of the clubs you're coming in with today was roughly a 4-iron, 4- or 5-iron into 17. And there's just no way to hold that right side on that green. It's just a bit more challenging. It's going to be a tough test.

**Q. Mentally do you have to approach it from the standpoint of forgetting almost that it's a U.S. Open and things that get attached to it from that standpoint?**

HENRIK STENSON: Yeah, I think it's just that you've got to be mentally very strong this week if you want to do well. And that's no different to any other Major Championship or U.S. Open or Open Championship. So I think it's just that it can be a tiring week because you can hit some really nice golf shots and ends up far, far away from the hole due to the design of the green complexes. At least in my mind, it's a challenge. If you feel like you hit a good shot and you hit on a bit of a side slope and end up 50 feet away, and you feel like that should have been 15 feet away, then it's tiring and draining to just keep on fighting through that. And then you've got the next challenge to try to two-putt that and make a par, even though you thought you maybe should have had a birdie chance. It's a challenge, but it's -- major championships is all about testing your mental abilities as much as your technical and playing

abilities. So I'm pretty sure we're going to get everything to the test here.

**Q. You tend to have a pretty wise perspective on a lot of things. I'm wondering if you can explain what are the differences between golf at the professional level in your 30s as opposed to your 20s, as you've sort of learned over the last decade. What's different now than it was in the 20s for you personally?**

HENRIK STENSON: I think for the sport you're seeing more and more young guys coming out. I think we've got -- that progress, like in any sport just becomes more and more competitive and more and more young guys coming out. Of course, the older guys would have all the experience and that sometimes plays into our hands. You've done certain mistakes over the years. You've played in tournaments like this one where you know par is a winner, more or less, on every hole. And then that could help you stay away from taking high numbers at times and just playing the course a little bit more wisely because of the experience. So I think that's something to try and use to my advantage, even though there's guys who hit it farther and coming out really good at a young age. I like to think that I do a lot of wise decisions out there and a lot of it has to do with experience, I think.

**Q. What is it like to juggle fatherhood and being married and being less selfish and more sort of -- be a whole person?**

HENRIK STENSON: Do you want me to put those challenges down in a particular order, being married, kids (laughter.) Yeah, of course, that's also something I fought when I was 22 or 24, I could spend all day out there on the golf course practicing and hanging out. And that's for one stage of your life. When you've got family and kids and other commitments, as well, there's -- I just try and be a bit more planned with my time. And I need to make sure that I get the things that I really need to get done with my golf game done in as efficient way as I can, instead of going for the quantity, it's more about the quality these days. And wiser practice and make sure we get everything in a shorter period of time. So you've got time for other things, as well.

**Q. Beth mentioned the success that the Europeans have had in these tournaments lately. Anything that you can put your finger on what's led to that. Secondly, has that recent run of success given you any added motivation or confidence that you can join that club?**

HENRIK STENSON: Well, I think of course we've got some really strong players coming out of Europe. You've seen more and more players playing more tournaments over here and living over here. That's

going to make us feel more at home and more acclimatized at a lot of these events. Yeah, of course when your friends are winning major championships and you play practice rounds with them in the past and you beat them every now and again then of course you feel if they can do it I can do it, too. I feel like I'm getting closer and closer. I've had some good success at the PGA, at the Open Championship and last year I was fourth in this tournament, without Martin having such a good week, I think it could be exciting all the way to the end. But he put on a fantastic show and left everybody else in the dust. But it was still a good race for second, I guess. It's all about giving yourself opportunities and that's the way I look at it, for the next three or four years, whatever, I hopefully have left out here in my prime. And if I can come in well prepared and have a good plan and put myself in the mix on a few occasions then I find some chances to walk away with at least one.

BETH MAJOR: Henrik, thanks so much for joining us. We look forward to watching this week and we wish you well.

HENRIK STENSON: Thanks.