

2015 US Open Championship

Tuesday, June 16
Press Conference



Jack Nicklaus

Barbara Nicklaus

An Interview With:
BARBARA AND JACK NICKLAUS

MODERATOR: Ladies and gentlemen, thank you very much, we'd like to welcome Barbara and Jack Nicklaus here into the media interview room. Mrs. Nicklaus is the recipient of the 2015 Bob Jones Award, the USGA's highest honor given in recognition of distinguished sportsmanship in golf. Past winners include Arnold Palmer, Ben Hogan, President Gorge, H.W. Bush, Annika Sorenstam and of course Jack Nicklaus, as well. Mr. and Mrs. Nicklaus have been married 55 years and Barbara has devoted her life to volunteer work and numerous youth activities. Just want to say it's certainly an honor for me to be here with both of you. Thank you so much for joining us today. Barbara, you've spent a lot of time supporting your husband over the years and you've played that supportive role. Now you're here in front of us receiving the USGA's highest honor. Can you tell us what that means to you to receive the Bob Jones Award?

BARBARA NICKLAUS: Obviously, it's just a phenomenal honor, and I'm so humbled and honored. When you say I've been with him, you know what, this man is why I'm here, because he's helped me so much. And when you say we've devoted our life to trying to help children, well, we've been a good team. And I think it's one of those things, we were young, we were 20 when we got married. We had just turned 25 and we had an 11-month-old daughter who was choking and then she would be okay, and then she would choke and be okay. I won't go into details. It ended up that she had inhaled blue crayon. They did a bronchoscopy, they dropped a piece in her lung, and immediately went into pneumonia. So, anyway, we felt like the Columbus Children's Hospital, which is now Nationwide Children's Hospital, saved her life. And we kind of looked at each other and said if we're ever in a position to help anyone, we want it to be children. It's been fun, it's been a labor of love. If we've helped one

family, we're happy.

MODERATOR: That's great. And you told us a few weeks ago how you found out about the award. I thought that was really interesting. Jack, you kept it a little bit of a secret. Would you like to share that story about how she found out she was the recipient this year?

JACK NICKLAUS: Sure. I was a past winner, so I'm on the voting committee, you might say. So Tom O'Toole called me and said, "Jack, have you voted?" And I said, "Yeah, I voted." Good, I wanted to make sure, because Barbara -- I know Barbara is on the list, that's who I voted for. He said, well, I just want to make sure. Anyway, he calls me back and said she won, she won on the first ballot. That's very unusual. That's great, fantastic. I'd like to come down and tell her myself. I said, fine, why don't you come down. You and Joy come down, we'll go out on the boat. We did a little cruise the year before. I said won't show any -- we won't set anything off and we'll go out and we'll talk about it. He said, okay, that's great. They came down, we went out on the boat and all of a sudden the grandkids start filing out of the front. And all of a sudden all of them were there and Barbara is looking around, and she was kind of -- this must be some big deal. She says I wonder what award Jack is getting now. Of course, when Tom told her what she was doing, her jaw dropped and everybody was so delighted for Barbara because she's meant so much to so many people and done so much for so many without ever really receiving any real credit for it. We all gave her a lot of credit, but it's nice that the USGA has given her the Bob Jones Award. We're very proud of her.

BARBARA NICKLAUS: Can I add something to this? He kept this a secret for two weeks. And you have to know that in our family we have a motto that we don't tell Jack anything that we don't want the world to know. Two weeks.

JACK NICKLAUS: That would get in the newspaper someplace. That's the kind of thing you don't say in press conferences.

BARBARA NICKLAUS: It's okay.

MODERATOR: Jack, you've called Barbara the

foundation upon -- for your life, really. And your best friend and of course your wife for 55 years. What has she meant to you over the years? You won in 1975, and you've said several times Barbara should have been the one that won in 1975 and you later. What has she meant to you over the years?

JACK NICKLAUS: I think I was one of the lucky guys that I got a gal that understood what I had to do and what I had to do with my life. And she knew that I wanted to be the best I could be in what I was doing. So she said I need to be able to support that, so I've got to be able to take care of the kids. I've got to be able to make sure they know their father. I've got to be able to make sure the house things are done so I'm free to be able to do what I needed to do. Well, I was lucky to find a gal that she understood that and wanted that to happen. So Barbara -- I mean, I don't know how many times I'd be on the West Coast playing and here comes on the weekend my wife with two kids in diapers and another one out of diapers and showing up at an airport just because she wanted to make sure her kids knew their dad. Things like that, just continually she did those kind of things. But she not only did that for me, she did it for our kids and her grandkids, and all our friends. All our friends turn around, what are you doing, oh, so and so has got this, I've got to go make sure I support that. She takes care of everybody and she's done absolutely a person without an ego, and a person who has just been selfless totally. She's absolutely has never thought of herself one time except -- never has thought of herself. Always thinks of other people, period.

MODERATOR: And Barbara, you've done so much for other wives, for Tour players, as well. Can you talk about some of the interactions you've had over the years with Tour players' wives and the families, since you stood by Jack's side when he was on Tour for so many years.

BARBARA NICKLAUS: I think that kind of just happened, too. We really had a very close knit of wives when Jack first came on Tour. As I've gotten older -- I think we were the youngest for a long time, and I'll never forget being on the golf course, and one of the wives came up to me and said hello, Mrs. Nicklaus, nice to meet you. I've graduated from Barbara to Mrs. Nicklaus because they're so much younger. A lot of the girls have called me or come to me and I love talking to them. And it's just -- you have to be there. And a lot of times I'll say, you know, you don't stop being a wife just because you become a mother. So, you know, it's been fun. And I still talk to a lot of the girls now. I love that and I really appreciated that they feel like they can call me. It's really great.

MODERATOR: I'd like to open up to questions.

Q. Do you think it's easy to be a professional golfer's wife now than it was 20, 30 years ago, because most players don't play as often as when Jack did and some of the others did?

BARBARA NICKLAUS: Well, I guess that's a hard question for me to answer because I was then and I'm not now. But I think we had -- we maybe had a closer knit group. We had a group, if another husband happened to be playing better than Jack, I would keep her kids or vice versa. And I don't think that happens now, and not that what we did was good and it's bad, but I think it's a lot different. They have a school out there now for the kids, which is phenomenal for the wives now. So there's a lot of things that they have. But I don't know that I missed them because you don't miss what you never had. And we loved every minute of it and had a lot of group dinners at the motels. I know I'm not answering your question, but I don't know if I can because I loved the way our Tour was and I think the girls today love it today.

Q. Barbara, you guys got married as kids and here you are 55 years later. What's the secret to a long, happy, successful marriage like you've had?

BARBARA NICKLAUS: Well, I don't know, maybe the fact that we did get married so young. And I think we kind of feel like we've grown up together. And most everything we did, we did together. And, yes, he was busy and he was gone a lot, but I think I was always proud of him, and I always wanted him to be proud of me. And he gave me the capabilities to do that and never said no. And always helped me out, too. And you know I raised you, Michael.

MODERATOR: I'll bring this up, that as you serve as the chairman of the Nicklaus Children's Health Care Foundation that has done so much, what has going into that meant to you and what kind of impact has that had on your life in the past 10, 15 years?

BARBARA NICKLAUS: Well, I think it was about 2004 that we decided to form our foundation. It was basically to bring better healthcare to children in our area and surrounding areas. And that was 2004. And then in 2005, we lost a grandchild and that was -- it just kind of -- our foundation kind of grew by leaps and bounds because now we wanted to keep Jake's memory alive and do more for him. So we actually have a wonderful outpatient center in our area. We like to call it a one-stop shop. A lot of the families in our area had to either drive to Miami or some place and they can now get all they need at this place. We have urgent care, physical therapy, occupational, autism, feeding therapy and subspecialists. So I think that's one of the things we're most proud of. When we run into families who say thank you, you've saved us two or

three days a month at home, why, that's what it's all about.

Q. Wondering going forward what your goals are as a couple, what you'd still like to do together from here?

JACK NICKLAUS: You talking to me or Barbara?

BARBARA NICKLAUS: You get to answer that.

JACK NICKLAUS: What our goals are together? Well, I'd like to win a couple more U.S. Opens (laughter). Barbara and I -- I had the ability to have a good golfing career. I was fortunate to be able to have a design career, still have it. And it allowed me, because of what we did and where we were, to be involved and be able to have time to be able to help kids, which is what we do. But that was Barbara's thing. She supported me for about 40 years. It was time that I supported her. And I've had more fun supporting her doing this than I did playing golf, probably. We have the ability in Miami now -- of course Miami's Children's now is Nicklaus Children's Hospital, which I don't know what size we are, but we're certainly in the top 10 in the country as far as children's hospitals. And the ability to be able to go out and reach out to people and reach out, say, come help us with this, we're trying to help kids. Kids from all over South America and Central America come to Miami Children's, Nicklaus Children's. And I think that most of the rest of our life is going to probably be guided to that direction. It's not only very rewarding, but it's fun. You meet a lot of new people. You have a lot of people that -- it's pretty difficult when you see a sick kid to say no. And if you do, you don't have much heart because you go down in one of those hospitals and watch -- go through and watch what's happened. We were with Nationwide last week and to see a little five-day-old baby that you can hold in your hand and watching all the parts move and you're saying, wow, they're taking care of kids. That kid -- what would that kid's chances have been 40 years ago? They said probably less than 10 percent. I said what's the kid's chances today? They said better than 90 percent. It's really neat to see all the things that are happening, and to be on the inside part of it. We're not -- our goal is not to -- we don't do anything with the kids. We raise money to be able to help the kids and let somebody who knows what they're doing take care of them and give them the ability to do the research and the things that we have. And I think that's what Barbara and I will probably do. We've still got 22 grandkids that we want to -- I think we're probably far better off keeping our nose out of that and let the parents raise their own kids. I think that's one thing I have a hard time learning. And Barbara knows that. I had to get my two cents in, usually. But anyway, that's really what we shouldn't be doing. But to help the other kids is really neat. I think that's what we'll do most of the time. I've

got other stuff we're doing. I'm going tomorrow to Japan and then to China. I'm still working and doing things that I'm doing, but I enjoy both of them. And I think Barbara feels like she'll probably want to continue doing what we're doing, right?

Q. Can you talk about what you're doing with the golf course south of here involving veterans and how you're involved in that project?

JACK NICKLAUS: Well, American Lakes Veterans Golf Course is right down the road here in Tacoma. No more than six or seven minutes away from here. And Kenny Still called me, oh, I don't know, five, six years ago. And he said, Jack, he said, I need your help. I said what's that? He said we've got nine holes of golf out here, it's playing 40,000 rounds a year and we need more golf. All these veterans, they're unbelievable, and I want to help them. I said, well, what do you want? He said I want you to design another nine holes and fix up the other nine. I said, okay, we can do that. Well, we've raised money. We've done a lot of things. We've gotten the nine holes built. I went out today and hit the opening ball. We had three of the Wounded Warriors there. One was a Congressional Medal of Honor, Leroy Petry. They all three outdove me, how's that, in the opening tee shot. It was a very, very interesting thing to watch these guys that have come back and have given for us and to help them as they try to reenter society. And golf has been a big, big booster to a lot of the guys that have the post traumatic syndrome, to come back mentally and so forth. I remember one guy came to me and said, Jack, you don't know what this has done for me. He said, I unsuccessfully tried to commit suicide three times. He says, and then they got me out here and got me into the game of golf and he said I wouldn't even dream about it now. He said I love this game. It's the greatest thing that ever happened to me. It's pretty neat when you hear that kind of thing. That's why I got involved. There used to be a lot of golf courses at VA hospitals in areas around the country. The government has stopped funding those. This is privately funded out here. And there's several of them that we've talked to about trying to regenerate what they're doing, try and do this around the country, do a few more. We've got a lot of boys coming back that need that help. And we were delighted to be part of it and hopefully we can help someone.

Q. If you wouldn't mind a golf question. You won all your U.S. Opens on old, traditional golf courses. What's your opinion about a U.S. Open being played on such a new course?

JACK NICKLAUS: Well, I think that when I played -- I'm not sure that when I played Pebble Beach, it may have been the first time played at Pebble Beach when I won in '72. That's a two edged sword in many ways. You've

got to try a new venue. And if that doesn't work out the way you want it because you don't really know about it, you get egg on your face. Then again you come to the Pacific Northwest, which has never had the U.S. Open. The excitement that is created here. I noticed that the ticket sales, they said the volunteers, normally takes about 45 days to get volunteers, it took 36 hours. People were so starved for wanting it. I went out and looked at the golf course today. Really interesting. I have no idea how it will play or what it will do. But frankly I really like the looks of it. I thought it was a very, very appealing golf course from the eye. As I say, I haven't played it, so I don't know how it plays. But I think that that will -- we'll see that as it happens during the week. I think the USGA will make good, common sense in making sure that the golf course is playable. Because I think this golf course could get away from you. But to create the excitement, to have created it in the Pacific Northwest, to go to venues -- they're going to Erin Hills, when is that?

MODERATOR: 2017.

JACK NICKLAUS: A couple years for that. Next year you're where?

MODERATOR: Oakmont.

JACK NICKLAUS: Can I get in (laughter)? But they're going to another public venue at Erin Hills. Untried. But you've got to -- I think Mike Davis does a really good job of using common sense and setting up the golf course in trying to get where you need to get. I'm sure he probably has here this week. I think it will be interesting to watch. Unfortunately I'm going to be overseas so I will be getting up at 4 o'clock in the morning to watch it, but that's okay.

Q. In addition to Muirfield Village, which of your courses would be most suited to a U.S. Open?

JACK NICKLAUS: Well, Muirfield has the most room, that's for sure. PGA would probably object, but Valhalla is pretty good. I don't know which ones. Castle Pines would suit a U.S. Open very well. Shoal Creek. I've probably got several other ones that could, that have never thought about having that. A lot of times when I've been asked to do a golf course people have said, Jack, we want to have a U.S. Open here, we want to have a PGA Championship. I can't do that for you, but I can certainly try to do a golf course and try to create the space for you so that if you want to try to put in for it, you would certainly be able to do that. And I've done that on several occasions. Some of them haven't bothered to go any further. I suppose I could probably find a couple other ones, but I don't know.

Q. I wonder if you wouldn't mind getting a little philosophical. What is it about golf compared to

other sports that spins off so many charitable endeavors, like what you and Barbara have done?

JACK NICKLAUS: Well, I think one of the things is Barbara and I are doing this as a team. And one of the things is that it allows us both to get involved. It's not just an outside organization doing something. We're involved in the middle of it. That part is fun. But golf, itself, is the one sport where you're not in a uniform. You're not in an enclosed stadium. You mix with the fans. You play pro ams with people that financially can afford to help support charity. Matter of fact, that's a large part of -- those people are there because of that. That is their goal, too. Sometimes people don't know how to do it until something comes along that golf guides them to it. I think the Tour is now about \$2.1 billion, and I think -- I'm not sure what we were last year, but \$114 million or something like that on the Tour last year as far as charity goes. But the Tour's whole emphasis is on charity. Even us at the Memorial tournament, which is not what you call a charity tournament, we raise a couple million bucks every year for charity. And the tournament was structured not too different than the way the Masters was structured to try to create as much of a tournament as we can, but also to try to support charities. The Masters never supported charities to start with. The Masters gives out millions of dollars to charities today because of what they do and what they bring and the help that they can give to people. Well, ours grew out the same way. Maybe we started with \$100,000 or \$50,000, or whatever it is, we've grown to over a couple million dollars there. There's a lot of tournaments that give a lot more than that because that's their sole function to do that. But golf is a great vehicle for that. It brings people together in a very intimate way that allows you to talk and have a common goal.

Q. Barbara, everyone sort of I think assumes correctly that Jack was able to be successful for so long because he was grounded because he had a good marriage, a good family life. What was he like in his 20s compared to his 40s? How did you see that evolution up close, better than anyone? And how do you think that helped him keep perspective over his life and his golf game?

BARBARA NICKLAUS: Well, actually I don't think he was much different. He's kind of one of those people that puts 110 percent into everything he does, whether it's fishing or golf or whatever. And when you know that he is so focused in doing this and wants -- he really probably would like to have remained amateur, but he realized he wanted to be the best he had to play against the best. So I think that's probably why he did turn pro. I don't think he was really any different. He did not bring golf home. It was just his thing. And when he turned pro, he made it a point, he said, I will not be gone longer than two weeks at a time.

Because, as he said, I refuse to have my kids go away to college and say, gee, I wish I knew my dad. And believe me, they knew their dad. He would fly cross-country for a football game or volleyball game, and our kids at that time thought that's what kids do. Now that they're married and have families of their own, they say, wow, dad really did support us. I don't think he was really different. He supported all of us from day one.

Q. Barbara, Jack talked a minute ago about the Nicklaus Children's Hospital, which is a very big deal in South Florida. Can you just talk a little bit about how that came about and is there anything else on the horizon for the Foundation?

BARBARA NICKLAUS: Well, actually that's a real biggy right now. And we've been working with Dr. Kenny at Miami Children's Hospital and our foundation has been supporting projects there and going back and forth. Dr. Kenny is a visionary, and he really -- he thinks outside the box and he said Miami Children's Hospital is kind of local with the Miami on it. And I think he just felt with the Nicklaus Children's Hospital, they could bring in a broader area than they do now. And he just thought they'd be able to help more children than with the Miami name. So we're hoping to help him and we're just really beginning.

JACK NICKLAUS: Did that answer what you wanted?

Q. Yes.

JACK NICKLAUS: Yeah, they really felt that our reach was bigger than Miami and we're going to help them fund raise. Frankly that's what it amounts to. We got a nice big bull by the tail right now.

BARBARA NICKLAUS: We have our work cut out for us.

JACK NICKLAUS: Have our work cut out for us, and that's okay, I like that.

Q. For Barbara, when you first met Jack, you obviously didn't know much about golf. And you actually wondered if you could ever talk golf with him. What are the things about golf that you've learned to love in the 50 plus years since?

BARBARA NICKLAUS: Well, the first -- I actually knew nothing about golf when I met Jack. Between our freshman and sophomore year, there was a tournament called the Rubber City Open in Akron, Ohio. He said, well, why don't you ride up with me. We were riding back and forth from Columbus to Akron. So we're in the car on the way home and he turns to me and he said, what did you think of the second shot I hit on the 13th hole? I'm going, oh, I don't even know where the 13th hole is. This is never going to work. I'll never be able to talk golf with him.

But you do find out that you do learn to sometimes remember where the 13th hole was and the second shot. But I don't know, it's just I guess I was proud of him and I was happy that he was including me on what he loved. Very easy to learn to love golf. It's been -- made our life a wonderful life.

MODERATOR: Thank you very much. And now in honor of Barbara's special day, we're pleased to offer the media four of the seven Jack Nicklaus Ice Cream flavors in media dining right after our talk here. Barbara's favorite, strawberry lemonade, and we have Jack's favorite, butter pecan. There's salted caramel toffee and coffee and donuts.

JACK NICKLAUS: Hers is vanilla.

BARBARA NICKLAUS: Boring.

JACK NICKLAUS: Her's is vanilla.

BARBARA NICKLAUS: It's really good.

MODERATOR: And through Schwan's, a portion of all proceeds are donated to the Nicklaus Children's Foundation.

JACK NICKLAUS: I've got to tell this story. I love the story about this. Excuse me for diverting for a second. You're going to get some ice cream. But the CEO at Schwan's, who makes the ice cream, came down to me and said, we sell it for a buck 99. In the last two months we've outsold every other -- we sell it in pints. We've outsold every other ice cream in the country that's been in the stores, on volume. Because they're selling for five, six bucks. We're selling for a buck 99. And I said, Demetrius, why do you want to sell this for a buck 99 when all your competition is really two or three times what we're paying for it? He said, Jack, he says, we have a little excess capacity at Schwan's right now, and he said while we're introducing the ice cream and probably for a while, he said, I just have a philosophy that 54 percent of the families in the United States make \$30,000 or less. He says, we can take a family of four -- and there's four dips in a pint. He says, for 50 cents, I can put a smile on a kid's face. I said, well, I said, I like that. The money goes to charity and we put a smile on a kid's face, and they get a bargain in the store. I said that's a nice philosophy. I said I'm going to pass that on whenever I get a chance to pass your philosophy. We're not in the business because of that, but that is part of what we're in the business with. And they're nice people and we'll be nationwide very shortly with it.

MODERATOR: And as Jack mentioned, Schwan's, who makes the ice cream, will give a portion to the Nicklaus Children's Health Care Foundation. Finally, Barbara will

receive the Bob Jones Award this evening at the Museum of Glass in Tacoma, and we will provide a live stream of the ceremony tonight, starting at 6:45 p.m. on USGA.org. Congratulations, Barbara Nicklaus, our 2015 Bob Jones Award recipient (applause).