

2015 US Open Championship

Tuesday, June 16
Press Conference

Martin Kaymer

An Interview With:
MARTIN KAYMER

BETH MAJOR: Welcome to the 2015 U.S. Open Championship at Chambers Bay in the Pacific Northwest. We're very happy to have with us today our defending champion, Martin Kaymer. Martin won in runaway fashion last year at Pinehurst's No. 2 course, really setting some spectacular scores and a tremendous performance overall. Martin, can you talk about what this last year has been like as a major and U.S. Open champion?

MARTIN KAYMER: It was a little bit less stress than 2010, when I won the PGA Championship. It was very unusual, a very strange feeling for me being in the spotlight so much, especially when you play other tournaments in America. I was just not used to that. And this year was -- it was a lot different. I knew approximately what was coming up, what things you have to do, but it was -- this time it was very enjoyable. This time you could really notice how much respect you get from players, from the fans, from a lot of people who are involved in golf and makes you very proud, especially the way I won last year.

BETH MAJOR: And coming to Chambers Bay, can you give us some impressions of the course? I know you just arrived and have played a round. Can you give us your initial thoughts on the course?

MARTIN KAYMER: Yeah, I said yesterday already in a couple of interviews that I believe we're going to play three British Opens this year. We start here and then we play the real one at St. Andrews, and then Whistling Straits. The golf course here, I think, is very similar around the greens what happened to -- or the way I played Pinehurst last year. I think even chipping, pitching might be more difficult than putting. So I think you will see the putter a lot this week, not only from me, but from other players, too. So definitely for me, I enjoy playing those golf courses. I think the guys from the UK might have a little bit of an advantage this week, because this is what they grew up on. And I think the holes, there are some funky greens here and there. But the 12th hole is a very short par-4, so they



need to protect the scores a little bit. And therefore, I think it's okay to have such a crazy green there. And then 18 is similar. It's a par 5, depending on what day you play, maybe you play it as a par-4. But overall, I think it's a great golf course. I think completely different in the way you have to be very creative, very untypical for U.S. Opens. But I think for the European players, we welcome those courses.

Q. What was it like last year when you had the 54-hole lead, you wake up Sunday, you have most of the day to just sit around and wait. How did you manage your nerves, your excitement, to be able to go out and close it out?

MARTIN KAYMER: Well, fortunately last year my brother, he was with me. So there was a lot of distraction there. I didn't focus too much on golf. We did a bunch of stuff in the morning.

Q. Like what?

MARTIN KAYMER: Well, every morning we went to Starbucks, hang out there, read the newspapers. And actually a lot of news in Germany, because there was a huge storm where I was from, and I wanted to know if my apartment was still the way it was when I left. And then obviously we read a lot about the World Cup. The World Cup started the next week. So I could distract myself about other news for the upcoming week. Then I watched a little bit of the golf, as well, to see how the golf course was going to play on that day. I put it on mute because I didn't want to listen to all the comments. Obviously they talk a lot about you. But I didn't really want to listen to all that because you know what you have to do, you know how to win a golf tournament, you just need to do it. And I didn't want to listen to too much, just wanted to do my own thing. And I said to my caddie, when we were on the range and preparing for the round, that this is probably the toughest round that we've played so far in our career, because of all the expectations. A lot of people -- you are supposed to win. If you don't win then it's one of the biggest crashes for athletes in golf. So I said to him, it will be very difficult to play, especially when you play on a different continent with an American player in your group. I was just trying, really trying to focus on what I want to do that day. And tried to enjoy in the position where I was in and tried to challenge myself on Sunday, not challenge the other players, just challenge myself and keep going with my own game.

Q. Obviously it's a very long walk this week uphill, especially for the caddies. Do you feel for those guys and do they play an even more important part this week, mapping out?

MARTIN KAYMER: I'm very nice to my caddie. We play only nine holes today and tomorrow, so he can rest for the tournament. But I think it's the same for the players and the caddies. You don't really feel how exhausting it is while you play the tournament. Craig, my caddie, he might feel on Sunday, but until then, as long as you drink and eat enough, it should be all fine. What was the other question?

Q. Mapping out the course?

MARTIN KAYMER: Well, I played 18 holes yesterday and obviously the first time it looks very complicated. You're here and read a lot about the place and everybody talks about how complicated it is and how confusing it can be. But actually if you really focus on the main thing, it's not that complicated. You have to -- you shouldn't talk too much into it. Therefore, my caddie and me walked the golf course this morning, walked nine holes, did a little putting around the greens. Play the other nine this afternoon and do the other nine tomorrow. So you need to know how much of the slopes you want to use. It's very difficult to control at the end of the day, but I think the key this week is definitely around the greens, hitting those long putts or the pump and runs, whatever you're going to do, hit them within 10, 12 feet and trying to make those putts.

Q. With two majors, you're as close to Rory among the young generation as anyone. Do you feel that this younger group of golfers has really surpassed the older generation at this point in taking over the game and do you look at Rory as kind of the standard setter this week?

MARTIN KAYMER: Well, my personal opinion, I don't know if it really matters, but it's a fact that these days the young guys, that they win and compete more than the guys in their late 30s or 40s. What Rory has done the last three or four years is obviously outstanding. It's very, very special. The great thing right now is when you win a big tournament I think you can be very, very proud of yourself because right now it's very hard to win one because there are so many guys that can win a golf tournament. Even if you are 200, 250 in the world, guys won this year. So the field is very tough to beat.

Q. I wonder if you could just assess overall your play since Pinehurst last year to now, just maybe in general how you felt you played, what you've improved on, what you still need to improve on?

MARTIN KAYMER: Yeah, obviously I'm not a hundred

percent satisfied with the way I performed in certain tournaments. This year there was so much focus on the Masters, now reflecting on it and thinking what happened in February, March and April, I was focusing too much on only one tournament, little bit forget about the others, the tournaments in between. And I practiced a lot and I did a lot of fitness. So that was the main issue when I got to Augusta that I was almost -- almost tired by entering the tournament, so it was a little bit mis-planning. And it took me two or three weeks to recover from all of that. So I need to take care of the physical part first in order to focus more on the golf again; and therefore, when you get -- when you focus on something for two or three months to perform well and then you don't, it's very disappointing, especially when you think you planned everything proper and right for one week and then you figure out going through the week how tired you are. So you would think after ten years you know what you're doing, but clearly I didn't.

Q. I just wanted to follow up and just ask you, there's been a lot of talk about Jordan this week already, Rory, the focus on Tiger, as always. Do you almost feel coming in under the radar, even though you're the defending champion?

MARTIN KAYMER: A lot of times I'm under the radar, I feel like, which is fine. Obviously the other guys, they should get a lot of credit for what they have done. Obviously Jordan, what he has done this year, probably must have felt for the others how I played Pinehurst. It was impressive to watch that he didn't miss many putts. He played still very aggressive down the stretch the last few holes. Then what Rickie did at The PLAYERS, how brave he played. And then obviously Rory and those guys they're all four or five years younger than me, so they should get the credit for what they have achieved. My win was already 12 months ago. So I think what they've done more recently is more important than my win last year.

Q. What was the highlight of having possession of the trophy for the past year?

MARTIN KAYMER: The highlight?

Q. Yes.

MARTIN KAYMER: How many people want it, how many people wanted it at the tournament. My father has to ship it to so many different places. And it cost a lot of time to always drive to FedEx, back and forth.

Q. What were some of the unusual things you did with it?

MARTIN KAYMER: I didn't do anything unusual. I take care of it very well. I have it in my -- well, not anymore, I have the replica now. But I have it in my living room. I take care of it very well because it's something very

special. You should keep it very clean and very neat because it's something that you are very proud of. And so I have two big wood -- I don't know how to explain it -- they're on wood stands, the PGA trophy and the U.S. Open trophy. And hopefully I can have two more of those one day, because there are still two missing.

Q. What were the feelings like when you had to return it?

MARTIN KAYMER: It was fine. I've got a replica. Obviously, when you win a major, it means something very, very special to you. Because it's very difficult. And it's very difficult as a career goal for most of the players to win one. And for me I was surprised in 2010 when I won it. So to win the second major last year was it was a massive proof to yourself that the first one was not really a coincidence, that you can -- that you really believe any tournament on any golf course you have a chance.

Q. Did you drink out of it?

MARTIN KAYMER: No, I haven't. Obviously I didn't have it for long. I think I had it only for two or three weeks and then my dad said, Do you want to keep it? I said, We've got the replica, so if we need to send it back to Florida, I will send it back. And some of the tournaments that I played, that was the trophy there, so I didn't have it for long. So I didn't even have a chance to have a sip out of it.

Q. I know as a pro your number one goal is focusing on your own game and yourself. As the defending champion, who are a few of the names that you really expect to be there on Sunday closing out the day up at the top of the list challenging to take that trophy away from you?

MARTIN KAYMER: Well, obviously you have to go with Rory, for sure, the way he played recently. I think the few cuts that he missed, they're very explainable why. I think Jason Day has a very good chance. I think for him I was very surprised about the Masters. I thought he would play a lot better there, because he was playing great golf at the beginning of the year. So I think for him it's just a matter of time that he will win a major. Jordan will be interesting to see how he deals with all the expectations now. I think Mickelson will have a good chance. He's under the radar, not many people talk about him. Apparently he's on his back nine in his career and all those things. But I played with Phil a few times in the past and knowing how aggressive he can play and how good and how creative he is on golf courses, so I think he will have a good chance. And all those guys, they're not afraid to win. Once they're leading, they want to win a golf tournament. Some other players, they are feeling uncomfortable in situations where they are about to win a golf tournament. It's not that easy to win, but for

them it's even tougher. But those guys I just named, they want to win and therefore it's even more difficult to catch them.

Q. What makes a U.S. Open golf course setup so unique compared to any other tournament you play in?

MARTIN KAYMER: Well, I think after the Masters, it's the biggest challenge that we have. U.S. Open, PGA Championship are very, very difficult golf courses. The last two years have been obviously very different for a U.S. Open. But, for me, I enjoy playing difficult golf courses wherever they are, because it's not about making too many birdies, not about a putting competition. It's just a challenge. It's the biggest challenge that we have after the Masters, I think.

Q. You just said the word comfort for certain players and discomfort for maybe other players. When did you get into a comfort zone when you were in the heat of contention? What was the moment that you felt you had arrived and were able to match stroke for stroke with anyone out there when you're on your game. When was that? When would you say that would be?

MARTIN KAYMER: It's very difficult to pick one moment. You do win a tournament, your first one, your second, your third, your fourth, and after a while you reflect on how did that actually happen or how did I actually win that tournament? Did players give it to me or did I actually win it? And then you have to reflect on a lot of moments, a lot of feelings that you went through during that round, during the final round, during the last two or three holes. Did you ever have to make a very, very important putt in your career where you didn't really have a choice, you win or you lose. And obviously I was fortunate enough to have that situation in 2012 at Medinah. So all those things, they add up to believe that once you lead a golf tournament that you're actually able to win. But I think some players they just have it naturally, that they want to win. For example, Mickelson, I can imagine if he's up there in contention, he doesn't really care if he finishes second or 15th or 18th, or wherever, he wants to win. So many players, I notice they still play for the money, for World Ranking points. So little players actually play for the win. That was very interesting for me the last two or three years when I played tournaments, whether in America or Europe, but just seeing the players. And that gives you more confidence in yourself. Because you're not there to finish second or 10th. You want to win. And knowing that they might don't want to win, so you see how they play the last few holes. They are not that aggressive anymore or they leave their putts short or you see it in their body language. And you kind of like feed from it.

Q. Just as a quick follow-up, there seems to be a burst when players are playing at a high level for a three- or four-week period or six-week period, and all of a sudden that burst goes away. People have the expectation of seeing Tiger and being in contention and having sustained brilliance over many years. But it seems like many players, McIlroy went through it with the missed cuts, but you explained that, but they have four or five weeks, and all of a sudden it's not there for that period of time and they regroup. Do you see that happening for yourself or others or is that just something that is not really happening as much as I'm describing?

MARTIN KAYMER: No, I think it's a very difficult thing to keep going, to keep going, because you would think you need to -- you would have enough motivation every single week to win a golf tournament. But you can tell yourself I want to win or it really has to come from deep inside. And a lot of times when you have success, let's say when you play -- when you win a major or any other huge tournament, it's just a fact that the motivation is a little bit less than it was before. And the expectations on your own game is a little bit less, as well, and that makes a big difference sometimes. I believe that you need some time to reflect on those big wins, as well. If you don't reflect on them, you can't enjoy them as much as you should. I did in 2010. I won the PGA Championship and then I kept winning. I won -- well, with the Ryder Cup together, I won five tournaments out of five. Every tournament that I entered the next two months, I won, which is obviously great for me outside. But for yourself, you don't have time to enjoy it. It will be interesting, if you ask Rory about it, what he felt last year when he won the British Open, PGA, the World Golf Championships, I think you just keep going, you don't have time to really notice what you're doing right now. And I think for myself, I want to -- yes, of course, you want to win golf tournaments, but at the same time you want to give yourself credit and time for what you've achieved and be proud of that.

Q. Given the veterans older than you, like Phil, who have that ability when victory is near to just do whatever it takes to close it out, and the players younger than you that you spoke of, Rickie's bravery at THE PLAYERS Championship, Jordan's aggressiveness, Rory's aggressiveness, is it markedly more difficult to win a major now than when it was when you won in 2010, your first one?

MARTIN KAYMER: If you see the whole field, so many players they're just able to win because there are not many players that are afraid, afraid of losing, afraid of failing. Because at the end of the day, you do play a game. You win and you lose. And I think again -- I think Mickelson is a great example. Phil, he plays the

way -- at least the way it seems, the way he wants to play. He is aggressive when he needs to be and when he feels like he can hit the shot, he hits the shot. Of course, once in a while, you don't pull it off. But if you pull it off, it's sensational. So it's just a belief in himself. And I think a lot of players, maybe subconsciously, they do the same thing these days. They are not afraid of screwing up a golf tournament. They keep going. They try to make birdies. They try to make eagles. They're not afraid to make double bogeys. So I think -- the whole game became a lot more like Phil Mickelson in the past or still, these days, a lot of his game, which I think is great for golf. And I think what Phil did and still does is a great role model for a lot of us who are a little bit younger than him and for the upcoming professionals.

Q. Does your success at Whistling Straits translate here and does it lead you to believe that you should be among the favorites, as well?

MARTIN KAYMER: I guess it's a similar golf course. I won the U.S. Open last year, so it would be surprising for me if I'm not a favorite. But I just see it as it's a different golf tournament. Again, not only a different golf tournament, it's a different golf course. It's not Pinehurst. It's not Whistling Straits. It's Chambers Bay. I look to tee it up Thursday and approach the challenge. Hopefully I can put myself in a good position for the weekend. Hopefully I can enjoy it the way I want to enjoy being the defending champion because it is something special. A lot of players they dream about winning the U.S. Open. Fortunately I've done it last year and I'm back here in Chambers Bay to defend it, which not many people have done in the past. So in general, the goal this week is really to enjoy playing one of the greatest golf courses that we play all year, because it is stunning and enjoy the challenge. And then see where you're going to end up. I have a good group on Thursday and Friday. It will be interesting to play with the Amateur who won the U.S. Amateur this year. I played with Rory, I played the last three tournaments already with him, so this week again. So we will become very good friends. So I think it will be a good week.

Q. You were talking about the players who try to win versus the players who seem to back off in some way. Do you think that is something those players are born with? And if the answer is no to that, what explains the difference between Phil or whoever else?

MARTIN KAYMER: Well, if you're born -- that's a tough one. I think after a while, when you keep playing tournaments, when you win tournaments, you create and you learn a lot about yourself. You notice for yourself that not many people or I, as well, don't really talk about it because you don't really -- sometimes you

don't know exactly what their feeling is. If you call it killer instinct, if you call it a winning instinct or wanting to win, whatever it is, I think you create it over the years, over the tournaments that you play and over your wins. As long as you have time to reflect on them, and again, what I said earlier, to reflect on how you won and why you won those tournaments, think about your feelings, think about how did I feel in certain situations, especially when I had a 1-shot lead and I had two holes to go. It's only up to yourself, so how does the body feel? Do you want to actually win? Do you really want to win that trophy? Or is it like, okay, I'm not sure. You have to be very honest with yourself. And you see it again, like I said earlier, you see a lot of times that you don't need to make anything special happen in tournaments in order to win when you're two or three shots behind. You don't need to finish birdie, birdie, eagle. Most of the time the players, they come towards you. And that is very interesting to see how few players really, really want to win. You can tell yourself, oh, yeah, of course I want to win. They sit here and think, yeah, I want to win, but they didn't. It's the honesty to yourself. And I had to face it this year in Abu Dhabi. There was a very interesting afternoon for me on Sunday, when I pretty much screw up the whole tournament. But then you have to ask yourself the right questions. And at the end of the day did you really want to win the tournament or not? You're the only one who can answer that. And then, again, Phil, the way it seems like he wants to win every week. So I think he's a very great example for the young players what you have to do. Because you are here to win golf tournaments and not only for the money or for all those things. It's a very fine line. But, again for us players, it's very -- I think it's nice to see sometimes how little you want to win, because it gives you more freedom, because you want to win, you're there, I guess for the right reason.

BETH MAJOR: Martin, thank you so much for that. On behalf of the USGA, we certainly thank you for being such a wonderful U.S. Open champion last year. We thank you for taking such good care of the trophy. And we wish you the best this week at Chambers Bay.

MARTIN KAYMER: Thank you.