

# 2015 US Open Championship

Tuesday, June 16  
Press Conference

## Michael Putnam

An Interview With:  
MICHAEL PUTNAM

BETH MAJOR: Good morning, welcome to the 2015 U.S. Open Championship at Chambers Bay in the Pacific Northwest. It's my pleasure to introduce this morning Michael Putnam, who's from University Place, right here at the home of Chambers Bay. He earned a share of medalist honors last week at the sectional qualifier in Columbus to qualify for his fourth U.S. Open, first in his backyard. Can you talk about what that means to qualify for the U.S. Open and be able to play here this week?

MICHAEL PUTNAM: For the last five years, since they announced that Chambers was going to host the U.S. Open, I've gotten a lot of questions. Are you going to play? Are you qualified? What's the tournament going to be like? And so on Monday last week I guess I answered some of those questions by getting in the field. It's awesome for the city of University Place and for this area, the whole Pacific Northwest, to host the biggest golf tournament in the world.

BETH MAJOR: You were the first one to hit a golf ball here and to play the course in 2007. You'll be the first one to hit on Thursday, what do you think that moment will be like?

MICHAEL PUTNAM: Yeah, it's pretty cool. When the course opened in 2007, they called me and asked if I wanted to come and play the first official round of golf. I think they wanted to see how this place actually played for a good professional golfer. They charted the whole round, and it was a pretty neat experience. Not really realizing that now eight years later, I'll be teeing off, the first person to tee off for the championship here at Chambers Bay. It's pretty cool, pretty neat and cool honor to have.

### **Q. If you can think back to '07, what did you shoot in that first round here?**

MICHAEL PUTNAM: Yeah, I think I shot 70. I think that's what they officially kept the scorecard of. I definitely held the course record for at least a day (laughter).



### **Q. Since you're from here, does it bother you when you hear criticism about the course?**

MICHAEL PUTNAM: No, not really. Every U.S. Open and USGA event comes with a certain amount of criticism from players. The course is what it is. It's not typical for this area to have a links golf course, and this gravel pit area is not a typical course for the whole United States. A lot of players here expecting a U.S. Open golf course, came here not seeing what they usually see for a U.S. Open venue. But we're really proud of this course and this area. There's always going to be some criticism.

### **Q. What's the strangest, weirdest, oddest thing you've been asked about the course from either your fellow pros or other people around the game?**

MICHAEL PUTNAM: Some of those guys knew that there was only one tree on the golf course, so they always -- they thought maybe it was in the middle of the fairway somewhere. They thought that the tree came into play somewhere. But obviously it's not in play, it's on that 16th tee box. Other than that, a lot of guys really wanted to know, are the greens really fescue. Because no one really thought the USGA would really play fescue greens, considering U.S. Opens are usually on firm, fast poa, bent or Bermuda greens. So that's kind of the question everyone asks. And yes, they are fescue.

### **Q. Course knowledge everybody says is key for Chambers Bay. You've played this course more than anybody. Kind of a two-parter: Do you think that's going to play to your advantage. And two, not just your course knowledge, but having your brother on the bag, as well, that knows this course?**

MICHAEL PUTNAM: Yeah, yeah, it can't hurt. I've probably played 30 or so rounds out here throughout the last five years. And, yeah, the course has changed a little bit since the Amateur, but not a ton. And definitely knowing the bounces off hills and on the greens is what's going to separate the guys this week. And I've played enough rounds to feel like I know if I hit a ball here, it's going to bounce there. So it's going to come in handy to me on some of the pin positions they're going to have. My brother, Joel, he's caddied 500 rounds out here. He's seen the good, the bad, the ugly with all the amateurs that come and play. He

knows the golf course, probably every square inch of it. He's going to have some good knowledge for us out there when the tournament starts.

**Q. He is your older brother. How many arguments have you had this week about bounces and there's no way that's going to go that way, and he's trying to convince you otherwise?**

MICHAEL PUTNAM: Yeah, he watched a lot of bad golf caddying for the amateurs that play out here, and so he's seen a lot of the bounces that maybe I'm not going to have because I put a little more spin on the ball than a lot of those amateurs. But the first couple of rounds last week, when we got out here, he definitely asserted that he knew what he was talking about because he's seen it all. And I was kind of challenging him on a few things, on a few points. But we were about 50/50 who was right and wrong on that deal.

**Q. You're sort of the unofficial host pro here. You've got a lot of commitments and a lot of events you're going through in the evening. Are you finding that energizing or is that going to be a distraction by the end of the week?**

MICHAEL PUTNAM: I did a lot of stuff early in the week, and this is kind of my last hurrah for the media stuff. I was trying to get it done early because I know once the tournament starts, you're going to need as much energy as you can this week. It's a hard walk. It's going to be taxing both mentally and physically, probably more mentally. By Sunday, I definitely want that energy to be able to contend and win the golf tournament. I'm probably sleeping better than anybody else. I'm sleeping in my own bed, which is nice. Hopefully that will keep me energized throughout the week.

BETH MAJOR: One thing I think all of us have been impressed by is the energy of the crowd and the support the championship has received. What does it mean to have the U.S. Open in this place?

MICHAEL PUTNAM: Knowing the ticket sales, they sold out in like three days. That meant a lot of -- once I got in the tournament, a lot of my buddies were counting on me for tickets. I said it earlier this week, these guys up here are Seahawk fans, which is loudest stadium in the NFL. So I expect that energy to translate here at the golf tournament. And so it's been pretty cool. Yesterday I played nine holes and got a lot of -- was yelled at a lot and a lot of cheering was going on. The fans up here have been craving golf for a long time, since I think the NEC was the last major golf, PGA Tour golf event at Sahalee. They're craving to watch the best players play and they're getting it this week.

**Q. You just mentioned -- you kind of stole the thunder. The amount of tickets people are requesting that from you, how has that been, how many? Your status for your brother, Andrew, what's he doing?**

MICHAEL PUTNAM: The amount of requests are kind of unlimited. Everybody has got somebody that wants to come that didn't get those tickets the three days it took to sell them out. I've been able to fulfill some ticket requests. But, yeah, my brother, Andrew, he's home this week, hanging out at my parents' house up here, just kind of watching the tournament probably on TV. He's proud to be here and proud to be affiliated with Chambers Bay, as well. Obviously he's really disappointed he's not playing, along with a couple other local guys that had a chance to get in. But they're proud that we're hosting a major up here, it's cool for the area.

**Q. I know your dad takes walks, your parents live so close that he takes walks around Chambers Bay every day. Do you live that close or how close to the course do you live?**

MICHAEL PUTNAM: Yeah, I live about two miles from here. My parents live probably about a mile from here. But I don't take quite as many morning walks as my dad does.

**Q. You don't ever join him for those?**

MICHAEL PUTNAM: No, no. But it's cool because when they tear these tents down, there's a huge kids playground, and I've got a four and a half and two and a half-year-old. When we're home, we come use the playground at least twice a week, which is just on the northeast corner of the property, I guess. We're here a lot. We enjoy the park part of it, and then every once in a while go down to the golf course and play golf.

**Q. How many times would you say you've played here?**

MICHAEL PUTNAM: Probably about 30 times, not including what I've played this week.

**Q. How have you seen the course mature over the years?**

MICHAEL PUTNAM: Yeah, I mean, when the course first opened, it was super young, the grasses were not filled in, a lot of tractor tracks on those hills. And so just over the last five, six years, it's filled in grass-wise, and esthetically looks a lot better. And then obviously when they had the Amateur here, the course matured a lot after that, figuring out how it actually played in a real golf tournament when they've made subtle changes to a lot of holes, which have been great for the golf course and for the playability of the golf course.

**Q. Shifting gears a little bit, I know you got to come**

**back and go see your alma mater, Life Christian, this past weekend. Going to a smaller school, growing up around here, a lot of people don't realize how much of an extended family that type of school becomes. What was that like coming back, especially on the world stage this week, but this is actually just coming back home for you?**

MICHAEL PUTNAM: Yeah, it was pretty cool. Sunday night I kind of did a hometown event up at the school I went to and the church I went to, Life Center. They didn't know how many people were going to come out, did kind of a Q&A, a celebration of the U.S. Open coming to our hometown. It was awesome. We had 400 or 500 people there. I got to sign autographs for people that have watched my career for a long time. It's cool, as a local growing up, people haven't watched me because they knew they were going to have a U.S. Open here, but they watched me because they cheer for the locals no matter where we're playing. And to kind of reward them with a nice night like that was really fun.

**Q. Knowing this course as you do, what aspects of it do you think will give players headaches? Certain drives, certain approaches, that sort of thing?**

MICHAEL PUTNAM: Yeah, I think the biggest -- there's a couple, three and four hole stretches that are going to be really, really hard for the players. The first one that comes to mind is 4, 5, 6, 7. Those are going to be brutal par-4s. And then I think 12, even though it's drivable is going to give guys a lot of headaches. Because you feel like standing on the tee you should make a birdie. And a lot of guys are going to come off that hole making bogey because of how crazy the green is and how tight the drive is. But I've told people, it's a second-shot golf course, I think. With all the humps and bumps in the greens and how firm they are, if you can learn where your ball is landing and where it's going to end up in the next three days, it's going to be a huge advantage to guys that just don't learn the bounces of the greens. And so obviously closer to the hole you are, the better chance you have of making birdie and that's going to be the biggest challenge of the week.

**Q. Have you picked yourself winning this championship and what it would be like Sunday night?**

MICHAEL PUTNAM: I have, yeah. When I was here early last week, they had the trophy out doing some shoots with FOX and I saw the trophy on the 18th green. After my practice round I walked up, took a look at it and realized this would be the best place for me to ever win a U.S. Open in my entire career, in my entire life. And I feel like I've got a good chance. I've been well rested, taking the last week off, coming in and

playing practice rounds last week, and taking it easy on the golf course this week, knowing that a lot of guys are mentally struggling out there trying to figure this place out. And hopefully it will be just a little bit of an advantage going into the week.

**Q. When these guys are really struggling, what do you hear from them, not naming names but just epithets or other kinds of crankiness?**

MICHAEL PUTNAM: They're not so much struggling with their golf games, but just figuring the place out. You can't come out here, and Mike Davis said, you can't come out here and play one round and figure the whole place out. I played with a couple of guys yesterday nine holes and they'd come from St. Jude, and so this was the first time on the golf course. And both of them said, hey, you know, we're just going to play today, trying to get a feel for the place, not going to figure too much stuff out. And as they stepped on the first green, you could tell their caddies and themselves were, wow, we really need to prepare today and try to figure this place out because we need to play tomorrow and try to figure it out, we need to play Wednesday and try to figure it out. So you can't just hit one shot into these greens and know where all the balls are going to bounce and what slopes to hit them off of because you need multiple practice rounds to figure out the slopes of the greens.

BETH MAJOR: Well, we'll certainly look forward to watching you play this week. Thanks for joining us today. We wish you well.

MICHAEL PUTNAM: Thanks.