

2015 US Senior Open Championship

Wednesday, June 24

Press Conference

Colin Montgomerie



THE MODERATOR: Ladies and gentlemen, I'd like to welcome World Golf Hall of Fame member and defending U.S. Senior Open Champion Colin Montgomerie. Colin defeated Gene Sauers in a playoff at Oak Tree National last year and celebrated his 52nd birthday yesterday. Happy birthday.

COLIN MONTGOMERIE: Thank you very much.

MODERATOR: So many close calls in the U.S. Open. Three runner-up finishes. And last year, you break through with your first USGA title. Looking back a year later, reflect on what that national championship means to you.

COLIN MONTGOMERIE: Yes. It's a very big deal here in the States. It's been a great honor to be a USGA Champion. I see down in your notes here, USGA Champions who are competing and who are here, and you take it very seriously, and you should. It's a great honor to be associated with those great champions that you see here. Yeah, it was as warm in Oklahoma last year as it is here. I've managed to pull through, as you say, in a three-hole playoff against Gene Sauers and finally break through to winning a USGA event. I've tried for 24 years to win the U.S. Open and came up agonizingly short a couple of times. But great to break through finally and come here with -- you know, as soon as you win, you look forward to where the next venue might be to try and defend. I managed to do that at the PGA Championship, the Senior PGA Championship last month. So it's all on to try and do the same thing here. I just look forward to the challenge of it.

THE MODERATOR: Since joining the Champions Tour in 2013, you have won three times. All three are major championships. As you said, in May, successfully defended your Senior PGA title. You're only the second player in Champions Tour history to make your first three victories majors. The other one was Jack Nicklaus. Pretty good company.

COLIN MONTGOMERIE: He wasn't too bad, was he, I suppose?

THE MODERATOR: What is it about the big events? Is it playing the 72 holes? Is it getting up for them?

COLIN MONTGOMERIE: I think my game was always based on four rounds of golf and always based on a sort of U.S. Open style golf course where par meant something. And I like the way that this course sets up as well, that you have to hit the fairways, you hit the greens, you two-putt, you walk off to the next hole, and you're gaining on the field every hole. Every hole here will play over par before the end of the week. So you know that you're gaining on the field doing what I do. My game was always based around that, hitting the fairways first, using my strength, which was my iron play, to the greens, and then holing a putt if I was lucky. Or if I didn't, walk on. That's what I'm going to be doing here, playing a very U.S. Open style game on a U.S. Open style golf course. So I look forward to it.

Q. You played well last week, first time in years you played on the weekend at a U.S. Open.

COLIN MONTGOMERIE: Yes.

Q. Totally different kind of golf course. I wonder if anything in the way you played last week and your game translates here, or is it just a momentum thing, a feel good about the way you're playing?

COLIN MONTGOMERIE: Well, yeah, from last week to this week, I do look forward not to putting off the greens, which will be interesting. I do look forward to reaching some of the par 4s, which I couldn't do last week. And I look forward to the ball not running 50 yards off where it shouldn't be. So I look forward to this. This is a great test of golf. And actually, I think a few of the guys might have been in here to say the same thing. If they didn't do it, they probably should have done. This is a superb setup of a USGA event. The fairways are slightly more generous than the classic U.S. Opens that we used to play. The rough has been graded superbly, one, two, three, four. The greens are firm and yet fast on the surface, a real true surface as well. This is a setup that anybody could come and inspect the setup and be very proud of it, and I think all 156 players in the field would say the same thing. I played okay last week. I managed to get round hitting the ball -- I mean, I was commentating for Sky Sports after I finished my first round, for instance, and Dustin Johnson was out there on the course and

hitting clubs into holes that I didn't know existed. I mean, the 7th hole, I'm going in with two woods. The 14th hole, I'm going in with two woods. The 13th hole, two woods. The 4th hole, two woods. He's going in there with wedges at most, the course being designed for that type of shot in there, as opposed to my lower flighted running shot that has to be 535 yards up a hill. Was never a par 4 in my book. But nowadays, with what's happening, it is. So that's the way it is. And because he's hitting driver wedges, I spoke to my caddie, well, they might shorten this hole because it's really a bit long. But if he's hitting a driver wedge, they're not shortening anything. I was proud of the fact that I made the cut last week, the only guy that was over 50 in the field that did that, because the course really didn't suit my style of play. But at the same time, I did okay.

Q. Colin, what is it about your game that over the years, now you're 52, that's had staying power? Is there a particular thing you do or something about your game, something about your approach that's had staying power all these years?

COLIN MONTGOMERIE: I haven't actually practiced that much throughout my career. A little bit more than people think, but not as much as some. And I think physically, I'm very flexible as well. Now, you put these two together, and really, being 52, I'm really sort of 45 in golfing terms. You see the guys beating balls day after day, and the injuries appear. I'll touch wood here. I've been very, very fortunate that I've never really missed a day's work through illness or injury over a 30-year cycle. I've never really missed a day's work. So I'm very lucky that way. The flexibility's good. That's the thing that will stop us all. If we're not flexible, we can't do what we do. So I've been fortunate health-wise in a consistent period of time, and that's really what's sustained me into play for this length of time at any level.

Q. Monty, you just knocked on wood. I'd like to know if you are superstitious. And if so, what do you do in order to kind of mentally prepare yourself for a tournament or a championship? Just kind of take us through what you do to make sure your voodoo is special.

COLIN MONTGOMERIE: If I went into the superstitions of golfers and myself, we'd be here all day. I mean, it's bizarre what we do, but left sock goes on first and right sock goes on last. And I never, ever use any tee that's not colored white because yellow and red marks water hazards. I know white's out of bounds, but I can usually keep it within the boundary of the course. I usually mark the ball with a ten pence coin, a British ten pence coin, queen head up. If I continued, we'd lose battery power, okay? My coin always goes in my back pocket to avoid getting in the way of the tees. Oh,

no, it's madness. I think I speak for them all that we're all a little bit that way. The superstitions of what we do is quite bizarre, yeah.

Q. Ten pence coin is about how much in the U.S.?

COLIN MONTGOMERIE: The ten pence coin is about 18 cents it's worth. So if I lose it, I'll be distraught if I lost that. I only ever use one, and it's in my back pocket now, my ten pence coin, and it's always there.

Q. It's the same one you've had through the years?

COLIN MONTGOMERIE: It doesn't matter the same coin, it's the same coin per week. I don't lose my coin every week. I can't afford that. But always queen head up, yeah.

Q. Fascinating stuff, sir, I've got to say. You were paired the first two rounds with Bernhard Langer.

COLIN MONTGOMERIE: There's a surprise.

Q. Many, many rounds of golf with Bernhard over his career.

COLIN MONTGOMERIE: Many rounds of golf with Bernhard Langer.

Q. The benefit to playing with him, though --

COLIN MONTGOMERIE: We'll be out there a while. (Laughter). Carry on.

Q. I think you said last year, if you're close to him, you're probably close to the lead, that kind of thing.

COLIN MONTGOMERIE: It's always the case, isn't it? He seems to be the standard. And remarkably so, at 57 years old, the standard that has set by him. He's been first or second in the Charles Schwab Cup the last six years. I do hope he remains second this year. It will be fun. It is fun playing with him. You know exactly where you are, where you stand the first two days. He was just ahead of me -- he was in the last group. I was in the second to last group last year. He's remarkable in many, many ways. The amount of preparation that he puts in is far beyond anyone else, even at 57 years old. He's acting as if he was 25. Amazing. He's a credit to himself and his profession. He really is. And it's always an honor to play with him. We played many Ryder Cup matches together as partners and as friends, and they seem to pair us an awful lot here together on the Champions Tour. I enjoy playing with him because, as you say, to play with the standard, you know that Langer's going to be there or thereabouts, especially on a course like this. We play a very similar game. We hit the ball a similar length. We think -- the thought patterns are the same, and we don't waste shots out there so we're thinking the same about what we do. Hopefully, with respect, I think he's copying me sometimes, and I'm copying him, and it's good. I'm glad, when the draw came out, that I was

paired with him.

Q. What were the benefits of playing with him as a Ryder Cup partner? What did he help you with? Was he a calming guy? Was his methodical way, in a way, helpful?

COLIN MONTGOMERIE: As a Ryder Cup partner, we played mostly in the foursomes, the alternate shot, and we never lost. In fact, we never even halved. It was amazing, the record. I think it was the preparation. I knew that I had someone beside me that knew exactly what was going to happen almost somehow before it happened. And hopefully, he thought a little bit the same about myself. We respected each other, we trusted each other, and we enjoyed the challenge of it. We weren't the longest. We weren't the best anything really. We weren't the longest, the best iron players, the best putters, whatever it was, but we were second in every category. You add that up, and it wasn't a bad combination. And as I say, I have huge respect for him, and I had huge respect for him 20 years ago when we played and now the same.

Q. After playing at Chambers Bay, it was highly criticized by some of the players, what is the setup like here? What do you like about Del Paso? And also, do you like playing in the extreme heat as we head into the triple digits?

COLIN MONTGOMERIE: Yeah, I think that the setup here is, as I said to the gentleman at the front here, I think it's as good a setup as I've ever seen, and I've played a lot of -- well, this is my 26th, I think, USGA event, 24 U.S. Opens and here as well. There's a lot of USGA events. This is the best setup I've seen. It gives you an opportunity to score, but you've got to play your best. There won't be anybody scratching the ball round here and scoring. This is a proper, proper man's golf course this and set up extremely well. So the USGA should pat themselves on the back the way the golf course has been set up this week. With regards to the heat, you just have to make sure that you're hydrated and get on with it. It was warmer in Oklahoma last year than it is here because we had humidity as well as these temperatures. So it was worse last year and managed just about to get round. So we'll do the same here. Yeah, tomorrow afternoon is going to be warm, there's no question, and it's the hottest day, and it's the worst time to be off in the afternoon. But Friday morning should be good, and it's cooling down, I think, towards 90 towards the weekend. And I'm going home on Sunday to Scottish summer, which will be 40 degrees less than here as a high. So I just look at the temperatures to look forward to going to back home and not having to use the word air conditioning. We just open the windows at home. We don't have air conditioning. We just open the windows. It's easy. But it will be a struggle for some of the guys.

It will be. It's very, very warm. Very warm. But as long as you stay hydrated and stay in the shade as much as possible, you see a lot of the guys walking down the rough. The ball might not be in the rough, but they walk down the rough because there might be trees and some shade in the rough, and I'll be doing the same thing. Just stay in the shade as much as possible because it will be quite a while out there. The course is playing difficult. It could take up to five hours to play, unfortunately, and that's a long time to have the concentration out there that one needs to win this type of championship.

THE MODERATOR: Colin Montgomerie, Thursday 1:27 p.m. off the 1st tee. Best of luck.