

U.S. Senior Open

Press Conference

Friday August 12, 2016

Billy Mayfair



THE MODERATOR: Ladies and gentlemen, it is my pleasure to welcome Billy Mayfair into the Media Center. Billy shot a 3 under, 67, today for a 36-hole total of 1 under par. Billy, good playing so far. Let's go through your card a little bit. You started on the 1st hole --

BILLY MAYFAIR: First of all, it's always hard to follow a Buckeye, especially when you're in Ohio. I get up here after a Buckeye. It's tough. Joey said it all. That's for sure.

THE MODERATOR: He sure did. You played very well today as well. Joey had a 66, but you had a 67. Let's go through some of the birdies. You made your first birdie on the 3rd hole.

BILLY MAYFAIR: On the 3rd hole. I hit a real good drive. It was early in the morning. I hit a 3 wood off the tee, and had about 105 yards to the hole. Pin was tucked on the right-hand side. I hit a nice sand wedge in there about eight feet just left of the hole and made that for birdie.

THE MODERATOR: And then we go to the par 5 6th, and you got a birdie there as well.

BILLY MAYFAIR: Got a birdie there. I drove it a little left, caught a good lie in the first cut of rough. Hit a real good 4 wood out of there, and actually the pin was front left today, and the ball kind of got up on the green. Looked like it might have rolled back, but it just kind of stayed up there on the fringe and two-putted from there. So I was happy with that one.

THE MODERATOR: And just before you made the turn, you made another birdie on hole No. 9.

BILLY MAYFAIR: The wind was playing hard today. It switched just a little bit. Yesterday it was playing a little bit into us and left to right. And today, especially now, but when we got to 9, it was more at us. I hit a real good 8 iron and went in there about 20 feet short of the hole. And Brandt Jobe went right behind me and hit 8 iron on the same line and was 20 feet short of me. The wind was gusting at that time, and it's doing even more now. I hit a good 20-footer up the hill.

THE MODERATOR: You bogeyed 14 and came back with a nice birdie on 18.

BILLY MAYFAIR: The pin was up front. I know that's a hard pin placement. I hit a 6 iron from about 180 yards and then just tried to hit it straight up in the air and let the wind kind of die it and hit the right fringe of the green and kind of rolled about 8, 10 feet from the hole and looked like I knew what I was doing.

THE MODERATOR: Your entire group is playing pretty well, Brandt Jobe, Glen Day, and yourself. How does it help when it seems like everyone is playing pretty well in a championship like this?

BILLY MAYFAIR: Obviously, you want your playing partners playing well. You want to play a little bit better than they do, obviously. But when you can play with guys who are playing good, it helps you. You don't have to watch shots. You're not standing around as much. It just keeps your whole momentum and keeps your rhythm going a lot better.

THE MODERATOR: And it's been a while, but you are a USGA champion.

BILLY MAYFAIR: I am a USGA champion twice.

THE MODERATOR: You've played in a lot of USGA championships over the years, from the pub links to the amateur to the U.S. Open and now your first Senior Open here. What is it about these championships that gets your juices flowing and, yeah, it makes you really competitive out here.

BILLY MAYFAIR: Any time you put the words USGA in front of a tournament -- first of all, they're going to be the best venues you're ever going to find, and they're going to be set up very difficult. You've got to drive the ball well. You've got to hit good, smart iron shots, and you've got to position the ball on the green really well. Usually, that's below the hole. The greens will get firmer and firmer. I think we're expecting some rain today and into tomorrow and the weekend.

I know these greens are going to stay firm. Yesterday afternoon, I made a comment on No. 9 tee at 6:30. You look back at 8, and you look down 4 and 5 fairway, and they were all completely brown. So, I mean, it was set up just like a U.S. Open.

THE MODERATOR: Very true.

Q. You're a baby out here.

BILLY MAYFAIR: Yes, I am.

Q. You couldn't have scripted it much better. I mean, how much bounce was in your step coming into this event, knowing that the big five-oh and some of these guys are a little older than that and you maybe have an advantage and can make hay?

BILLY MAYFAIR: I think I had maybe a little bit of a length advantage and all that, but these guys can play out here. I've watched them on TV for the last two to three years. I know it's a USGA golf course and it's going to be a lot more difficult, but these guys can play. They hit it well. They can putt great. So I knew I needed to have my game going and all that.

When I turned 50 on Saturday, I don't think my feet touched the ground. I was very excited. I've been waiting for this for about two to three years. I knew this was going to be my place where I was going to debut. And like I said, I can't think of a better place to come to than Jack Nicklaus' back corner where he learned the game.

In Columbus here, I've played so many Memorials and all that, I feel very comfortable here. So this was a great venue for me to start my Senior Champions debut.

Q. Welcome to the Champions Tour, by the way.

BILLY MAYFAIR: Thank you. Thank you very much.

Q. You talked about the last two or three years. What was your thought process over those couple years leading up to here? What were your thoughts in terms of goals out here and how much you would play out here? Because a lot of guys come out here, they're not exactly sure how much they're going to play or not going to play? Did you have an idea of what your plans are going forward here?

BILLY MAYFAIR: Well, I'm going to play -- it's just like before I turned 50, I tried to play everything I possibly could, from the Web.com Tour to the PGA Tour. If I got in on my number, I'd play. That was the most important thing I kept saying to myself, you know, you got to keep playing. You can sit at home and hit balls and practice all you want, but you've got to get out here in competition.

Two years ago, I went out and played the Web.com Tour, which was a difficult thing to do. It's hard to be out with those young kids. They're great, and there's a lot of talent out there.

I feel like I've paid my dues quite a bit. This year, I got into seven PGA Tour events up to here, and just try to play as much as I can. Now that I'm 50, I'm going to play a full schedule and play every week I can, that's for sure.

Q. You've played your fair share of Majors, obviously, over the years, on the other Tour. How much does this feel like a Major to you this week?

BILLY MAYFAIR: From the moment you drive in. I mean, it feels like a Major. You see that USGA flag and all the logos, and you know it's an Open. But yesterday afternoon, when we made the turn and that wind was blowing about 15, 20 knots and that golf course got hard and firm, I said, this is one of the hardest -- I played Bethpage when it was hard there in 2002, and I thought it was playing -- it's a little bit shorter than Bethpage, obviously, but it was playing just as difficult and as challenging as Bethpage and all the other U.S. Opens.

I remember Oakmont. Oakmont was difficult, but you can't sit here and say Oakmont was harder than this. When you get out there in the conditions, when the wind starts blowing, the fairways get firm and brown and all that, you've got to play, and it's different.

Q. Happy birthday, by the way.

BILLY MAYFAIR: Thank you.

Q. I just remember going back to the U.S. Am, you made every putt there was. Can you talk about the evolution of your putting and how you got to where you are now with that putter and how you do it.

BILLY MAYFAIR: Well, two more days, I can tell you if I love my putter or not, but right now I do, that's for sure. I've gone through some transitions. I've made some changes over the past probably ten years from the short putter to the belly putter, having it anchored. And then obviously this past year, when they disallowed that, I just basically shortened my putter about three inches and just kind of kept the same motion.

I got a center shafted putter so I could have it a little more upright and further away from my body. But that whole motion feels very natural for me.

I've played some rounds. My wife's beat me a few times when I used a short putter, so I had to go back to the one I feel most comfortable with. I may go back to the short putter soon or not, but I didn't want anything that was controversial, not even close.

So like I said, I think I cut three inches off of it, and I got a center shafted one, which allows it to be a little bit further away from my body. So there's nobody calling in on TV and saying it's anchored and all that. It's

clearly away from my body.

Q. How worried were you about having to make that transition before?

BILLY MAYFAIR: I don't think worried is the right word. I just knew that I needed to work with it. I needed to go home. I needed to get the putter that I felt. It took a while. Any golfer in here will say that you've got to like what you're looking at. You have to like your putter.

About a month and a half ago, I said to my wife, I found one I like. I like looking at it every day and putting with it, so I went with it. It's just a matter of working at it and getting used to it.

Q. Billy, can you talk a little bit about the par 3 17th hole? It was playing 30 yards shorter today. Just compare and contrast the challenges of that hole from yesterday to today.

BILLY MAYFAIR: First off, I think the wind is directly at you today. I think that wind has switched just a little bit. Yesterday we were kind of into the wind, blowing a little bit left to right, and we played from the middle tee back there. It's a long -- I think it's a great par 3 for the distance, and that you've got to hit a good golf shot. You've got to stand there.

Yeah, you can say you can bail out to the right, but if you hit it in those right bunkers, it's pretty much a 4 on your card. So you've just got to stand in there and see your target and trust your club and be decisive. The last two days, I've hit very good shots. I hit 5 iron yesterday, and today I hit 8 iron.

Both shots, your heart's ticking. Your heart's beating pretty good out there. It's a very great shot. Come tomorrow and come Sunday, it's going to be beating pretty good too when I get there.

Q. Billy, you had the 30 straight holes that you had no blemish. After the blemish occurred on 13, what was maybe the mindset to stick to that game plan that got you where you're at?

BILLY MAYFAIR: Well, I never tried to change my game plan. I made a comment to my caddie, I usually take the ball out of play when I make a bogey, and yesterday I played with the same ball all day for all 18 holes. Today I played with the same ball for all 12 holes. We walked off the 13th green, and he handed me a new ball. And I said, well, that's the first time you handed me a new ball.

It's like we said, if you can get to a USGA event -- or any event really, but especially here, and you're making pars and don't make any bogeys, you're playing pretty good.

That's an old GMO hat you have on. Is that GMO?

Q. Yes, it is.

BILLY MAYFAIR: I won my first tournament there.

Q. You were there every year. I probably wrote it up for the tournament last year.

BILLY MAYFAIR: I recognize that old logo.

THE MODERATOR: Billy Mayfair, 4 under par, 136 through 36 holes. Good playing.