

# U.S. Women's Open Championship 2016

Wednesday, July 6, 2016

## Gerina Piller

### Press Conference

**MODERATOR:** It's my pleasure to welcome Gerina Piller into the media center. She's playing in her fifth U.S. Women's Open this year. She's made the cut in all four of her previous appearances. Gerina, unlike some of the other players we've had up here, you didn't play in your first Women's Open before you had your driver's license, but your career has been one of continuous improvement. And it seems like you're only getting better. What are you doing that has you playing the best golf of your career here at age 31?

**GERINA PILLER:** I think that a lot of it has to do with I started so late. I started when I was 15. And I think, where girls kind of peak earlier, I'm peaking at the same time, but just I started later.

And I think just being out here and being in contention, I think that's just really given me a lot of confidence, whereas my physical game has improved really quickly, my confidence has been lacking. And so the more I put myself in those situations and obviously made some Solheim Cup teams and really established myself out here, that's given me a ton of confidence.

**MODERATOR:** You've had a few close calls the past couple of years, some runner-up finishes last year, already three top-3's this year. Are you encouraged that you're consistently knocking on the door or a little frustrated that you haven't been able to notch that first win yet?

**GERINA PILLER:** Definitely encouraged. Coming into the year, I set goals for myself, and obviously you set goals for winning and definitely result oriented. But I think the most important thing for me is I want to be just a more consistent player. If I can consistently be in contention, whether I'm winning or not, that's -- for me that's a huge success. And I've always thought about looking back on my career, and winning does not define my career. And I feel that if I can -- if I can just be successful and be more consistent, I think everything else will really take care of itself.

**MODERATOR:** You've mentioned that Juli Inkster has become a friend and mentor over the last couple of years. We're back in the Bay Area, her hometown. She's here with FOX this week. Have you talked with her about this week in particular? And if you have, as



a two-time Women's Open champion, what wisdom has she imparted on you?

**GERINA PILLER:** Well, we are staying in the same house, so I have talked to her. But, yeah, she gives me a ton of advice. She's a lot like me, in that she doesn't really get -- she prepares the same for every tournament. And I'm a firm believer in that. Even though this is a U.S. Open, it is a major championship. You know, I prepare for every tournament the same. And I try not to make this any bigger than what it is for my sake, kind of keep it simple.

Even at Solheim when I had that putt to keep the Cup going, I tried to tell myself the golf ball doesn't know that it's in Germany. The golf ball doesn't know that I'm playing for a U.S. Open. If you can keep it that simple, and just your reality. If you think -- your reality isn't your surroundings, it's how you respond to that. And if you come out here and you're overwhelmed with everything and you're stressed out, that's going to be your reality. But if you come out here and you prepare like any other week, and obviously I've been successful doing it, why would I change for another tournament? So that's kind of my intake.

And with Juli, she definitely has helped that and really encouraged me to just let my ability take over and not try to -- she's like, you're good enough. You don't have to hit it perfect. You don't have to make every putt. And if you -- you've just got to let yourself do it.

**MODERATOR:** And in addition to it being a big week anyway, Women's Open, the Olympic qualifying ends after this week, and right now you're sitting just outside the top 15. Is that any extra motivation for you this week, playing here at CordeValle?

**GERINA PILLER:** You know, golf's a funny game. You know, if you go into it -- I always think of it, if you go into a tournament and you're trying to make the cut, you'll probably miss it by one. So if you go into a tournament trying to hit good shots, you're probably going to end up pretty good.

So as far as this week, that is on the line, but that's something I can't control. I can't control where I finish. I can control the process. And so that's kind of my main goal this week is just sticking with the process.



And even with trying to win this tournament, that's obviously an outcome. And if I come in here with giving every shot my all and with my ability, I think that I'll be in contention and hopefully get my first win. And if I do, then that will definitely take care of that World Ranking.

**Q. How big of a deal would it be for you to make the Olympics?**

GERINA PILLER: I think it would be a really big deal for me, personally. I love my country. I love America. And nothing gives me more honor than to put on the stars and stripes. And to have that honor, to represent your country at an event like that, would be pretty awesome.

**Q. I know you've been out here with Martin before to this golf course. I'm curious if the two of you talked at all this week about the strategy, or did you talk about the golf course and how he played it?**

GERINA PILLER: Not much strategy. I think probably -- we don't play at the same order as they played it, but -- and I'm sure it's probably not played in the same condition, as well. But it's a funny thing, because we really don't talk about golf (laughter).

**Q. So no advice from Martin?**

GERINA PILLER: No competing at home.

**Q. So far everybody has talked about this as kind of a typical U.S. Open course. The fairways are a little more generous, and it's playing a lot longer. Do you feel as though this is going to be right in your wheelhouse once again?**

GERINA PILLER: I do. I feel like I've hit a lot more wedges than I normally do, which is like am I missing something here? Am I playing the right golf course? I feel like tomorrow I'm going to wake up and I'm going to have nothing but 4-irons and woods.

But definitely, even if you have a short iron, with the greens getting more firm and just the pin placements and the slope, they did a really good job with shaving the areas on the sides of the green, some with really, really thick rough, some with collection areas. So even though you have a small -- or just a wedge or a short iron, I think it's still going to be a pretty good test, you've got to be pretty precise. It's definitely to my advantage that I hit it farther and I feel like I can put a little more spin on it. So coming into more firm greens, I think that that's definitely to my advantage.

**Q. You played yourself into the final group at KPMG, and it didn't turn out the way you wanted. But what was the takeaway from that in terms of the confidence that you can bring into this next major?**

GERINA PILLER: I think the biggest thing was I didn't feel like I was hitting it as well as I'd like to. I was still up there near the lead and put myself in contention. But I took a lot away from that, just to be in that situation. I've never played in the final group in a major and been that close, one shot off the lead, going into it.

So it's just very comforting to know that I don't have to be hitting it perfectly or putting it perfectly to be in contention, especially at this stage. I feel that I should be in contention every week and that it's more of a sense of belonging now, as before it was kind of like, oh, my gosh, I'm in the top-10, don't mess it up. And now it's more of a playing to play great, and not playing to not play well.

**Q. You said you and Martin don't talk golf at home. Do you talk Olympics?**

GERINA PILLER: You know, Martin's great. He has been nothing but a huge support for me. And I've asked him kind of what his take is. He's just like, if you want to go, I'm all for that. If you don't want to go, that's your decision. I will support you in whatever you want to do. And that's for anything. If there's a golf tournament that I don't want to play in or I'm kind of on the edge, he's always been super supportive of that. And by all means he's not like, no, you can't skip that tournament, you have to go play in it or anything like that.

But he's been great. And he'll -- but at the same time, he'll tell me if I want to play six in a row, well, maybe you should consider taking one of those off. So he's been helpful in all the decisions.

**Q. A lot of his peers have been opting out of the tournament. So do you think he has some worries for you that he's maybe trying not to voice because he doesn't want to influence your decision?**

GERINA PILLER: You know, I don't think so. There's definitely some risks that you're taking going down there. But we've -- the LPGA has done a great job of keeping us informed and the Olympic Committee. So it's funny to talk about it because I'm actually not even qualified right now. I've always said when I qualify, I'll cross that bridge when I get there. And it's still time and a long way away. I'm sure there's still some information that we can get to really just give us a good at peace for going.

**Q. How different do you think this golf course will be playing on Sunday? What are your expectations?**

GERINA PILLER: I expect the fairways to be a lot firmer. There are some, like, wet spots, here and there. And especially the greens. The greens have like a hit, one stop and -- one jump and stop. But I

think that they're going to be really firm just because, the weather here had has been perfect, it's dry. The sun just beats down on them. So I definitely think that it's going to be a lot firmer and faster.

MODERATOR: Gerina Piller, 1:52 off the 10th tee on Thursday. Best of luck this week.

GERINA PILLER: Thank you.