

U.S. Open Championship 2017

Wednesday, May 17, 2017

Diana Murphy, USGA president; Mike Davis, USGA executive director and CEO; Jim Reinhart, Erin Hills general chairman; Jeff Hall, USGA managing director of Rules and Open Championships; Stu Francis, USGA Championship Committee chairman.

Press Conference

DIANA MURPHY: Good morning, everybody. On behalf of the United States Golf Association, welcome to the championship preview of the 117th U.S. Open. I'm Diana Murphy, president of the United States Golf Association, and we are so honored to be here at Erin Hills for the U.S. Open's first visit to this great state of Wisconsin.

We're certain that Erin Hills and the beautiful Kettle Moraine region of Wisconsin will provide a grand stage for the U.S. Open and the ultimate test for the 156 players.

Please take a look at this video.

(Video shown.)

I don't know about you, but I get goosebumps every time I see that.

Let me offer some special thanks to our dear friends Andy Ziegler and Jim Reinhart for their Wisconsin hospitality, work ethic and friendship and preparation for the U.S. Open. It's not missed on the USGA that your passion for golf is infectious and that your desire for excellence at this first U.S. Open in Wisconsin is all around.

We look forward to working together toward that exact achievement.

There are several other parties that collaborate to produce a successful U.S. Open, and I'd like to introduce three of those key executives who are vital and with us today. Sheriff Dale Schmidt of Washington County; Joe Schoemann, Washington County administrator; and Dennis Kenealy, the chairman of the town of Erin. Please join me in giving them a round of applause.

(Applause.)

The USGA is proud to bring the U.S. Open to Wisconsin, a state which is, in fact, among the top in golf participation, with more than 700,000 golfers, and it's truly worthy to host the U.S. Open, because all of you in the whole community we know love this game as much as we do.

This year we had 150 golfers from Wisconsin enter the U.S. Open, including Erin Hills caddie Dave Zeiss,

who was, in fact, the very first entrant among nearly 9,500 entries for this year's championship.

All of them are trying to fulfill a dream, to have their name etched on this historic U.S. Open Trophy.

Some of them are, in fact, competing right now at Washington County Golf Course, and we can't wait to see who advances. We are also excited to celebrate with all of the communities in Wisconsin, from Milwaukee to Madison, Kenosha to Green Bay for the Badger State's first U.S. Open.

And we know that they've waited a long time for this chance.

The USGA sends our gratitude to the fans, to the volunteers, and all the state and regional community supporters to help us put on this major championship.

We think Erin Hills is an absolute American original, a heartland course carved from the rolling terrain and sculpted by glaciers.

I'd like to give a special USGA thank you and hello to some of our guests: Jason Kidd, head coach of the Milwaukee Bucks; Gorman Thomas, fan favorite from the Milwaukee Brewers; Ryan Sandberg, Hall of Famer of the Chicago Cubs; and Olympic gold medalist Bonnie Blair, who are playing here at Erin Hills this afternoon. Soon we'll be joined by a foursome of Green Bay Packers who are out there, Brian Bulaga, Jason Crosby, Don Barclay and Jordy Nelson.

We love that they are also fans of Erin Hills and the U.S. Open.

Mostly we really hope all of you enjoy your day. We certainly appreciate your efforts and your talents in telling this wonderful story about Erin Hills and about the U.S. Open.

So now I'd like to introduce the general chairman of the 117th U.S. Open, a longtime friend and volunteer for the USGA, from Mequon, Wisconsin, Jim Reinhart.

JIM REINHART: Thanks so much, Diana. It's great to have you all here, and on behalf of my good friend and colleague Andy Ziegler and the entire Erin Hills family, we welcome you, Diana, Stu, Mike, and all of our good friends at the USGA to Erin Hills for this U.S. Open Championship. We're excited you're here.

Welcome, also, to our little corner of Kettle Moraine to our special guests, some of whom Diana just mentioned, and our distinguished members of the media. You're all important parts of the success of this first U.S. Open ever in the beautiful state of Wisconsin, and we hope you have a great day here at Erin Hills today.

We hope you also received your "Making of Erin Hills" book when you came in and that you enjoy the book. It was written by our good friend Gary D'Amato, with fantastic photographs by Paul Hundley, both of whom have been here for, gosh, since before the golf course opened, so thank you so much to both

of you.

We are delighted that the USGA has returned to Erin Hills for a third national championship in this, just our 12th season. One of the special benefits of hosting these championships has been the pleasure of working together with so many dedicated volunteers and staff members of the USGA, in particular over the last few years, we've had the good fortune to work very closely with Reg Jones, Danny Sink, Eric Steimer and Eric Reinhardt and their entire operations team, and it has been a true pleasure.

They've become more than really just good partners. They've really become good friends of ours here at Erin Hills.

It seems like only yesterday when in 2010 at Pebble Beach, the USGA officially announced that the 117th U.S. Open Championship would be contested at this relatively unknown public play golf course in the little town of Erin, Wisconsin. It was humbling then, and it still is now.

Since the announcement seven years ago, our staff has worked tirelessly in cooperation with the USGA to present a true world-class heartland experience for the players, the spectators, the media, and the worldwide television audience who will be viewing the championship on FOX. I'd like to recognize today the Erin Hills senior leadership team who helped make this happen and who are here with us today, so if you could just stand and wave when I say your name.

Andy Bush, who's our general manager; Zach Reineking, our head superintendent. Zach has been here since before the first shovel of dirt was turned over; John Morrisett, our championship director, also in the back; Kris Schoonover, assistant championship director; Jim Lombardo, our head golf professional, who was here on day one; Chris Dirksey, our CFO, who writes the checks around here; and Rich Tock, who most of you know, who's our PGA ambassador, and we call him Mr. I-can-do-that, and he actually can.

Also I would like to thank the Erin Hills executive committee and ask them to stand, those who are here. These are the committee chairs who are leading our team of over 5,000 volunteers. Thanks so much to all of you for your dedication and commitment to the game and making this global championship a dream come true.

So Diana, Mike and Stu, we're tossing you the keys to Erin Hills today. We're very excited. We're ready to roll on anything we can do from here forward. Just let us know.

STU FRANCIS: Well, thank you, Jim. I'm Stu Francis, and we're delighted to be here again at Erin Hills for the USGA's national championship, the U.S. Open. We've been here two other times, the 2008 U.S. Women's Amateur Public Links and the 2011 U.S. Amateur Championship, so we are familiar with the place. We are delighted to be here at this golf course.

The U.S. Open is the premier championship in golf. It's the ultimate test of a player's skill, mental

capability and physical resolve. We are delighted to present that challenge here to the players for the 2017 U.S. Open.

We thought it would be helpful to give you a little bit of perspective on the scope of work that goes into conducting a U.S. Open Championship. As Jim mentioned, planning for this championship began in 2010 when we announced that we would be coming here in 2017. We've had full-time staff here at Erin Hills since the middle of 2015, so almost two full years we've had people living here, working and getting prepared. We have had 1,000 workers here starting in mid-March to prepare the facility for the onslaught of fans and the world of golf that's going to be arriving soon. We put up 300-plus tents. We have 14,000 to 15,000 grandstand seats. You'll all see Fan Central, which is just going to be an extraordinary celebration of golf at its highest levels.

We'll have 225 USGA staff people who will be here from now until the championship begins, 5,200 volunteers are assisting us, almost 77 percent of those volunteers are from the state of Wisconsin, so we truly appreciate how much you've embraced this championship. And we anticipate 35,000 plus spectators per day to watch us contest this championship.

We also have a lovely sculpture, the Shamrock, which we think will be a focal point for many, many photos that people take as they enjoy being spectators and watching the championship, and we think, "meet me at the Shamrock" will be a common refrain among all.

FOX will once again be broadcasting our event. We have over 45 hours of broadcast time. The U.S. Open Championship will be on worldwide television. We also have a digital live stream that will have an increasing amount of spectator viewing, as well.

The global coverage of the U.S. Open reaches 190 countries, so the eyes of the world will certainly be upon Wisconsin in the next few weeks.

With that, I'd like to turn it over to our next speaker. He has for the last six years overseen the conduct of the U.S. Open, and he's worked closely with Mike Davis for over a decade in course setup. He knows all the details of what it takes to present a world-class U.S. Open Championship test, and we're thrilled that he's with us today. I'd like to turn the comments over to Jeff Hall.

JEFF HALL: Stu, thank you very much. Good morning, everyone. Pretty exciting to be here in Wisconsin as we get ready to open the curtain on the United States Open here at Erin Hills.

What is the U.S. Open? Well, let's for a moment focus on really what I think is the operative word about the U.S. Open Championship, and that's open. The openness of this championship is what truly sets it apart from all others. It provides great inspiration to golfers around the world. It's a championship for many that starts with a dream. Who here at one point in their golf career early on practiced as a teenager waiting for mom and dad to pick you up, hit that 5-foot putt as darkness is coming down, the dwindling daylight, stating quietly, not so everybody could hear but just so you could hear, "This is for

the U.S. Open." Guilty. Didn't quite work out.

However, that inspiration is what the U.S. Open is all about. For others, it might be perhaps interacting with that U.S. Open Trophy, the Trophy Tour, where that trophy moves around the country, and folks have an opportunity to take photos with it and maybe it's the inspiration that reenergized them to get back into the game. We hope so.

But make no mistake about it, if you've got the ability, if you've got the game, the U.S. Open empowers you to pursue your dream. Did that not come to life last year at Oakmont? Can we all remember Andrew Landry, played his way through local qualifying, played his way through sectional qualifying, all the way to the final group on Sunday afternoon of the U.S. Open. That's stuff that dreams are made of, and perhaps that journey that Andrew took at Oakmont is something that inspired some of the 9,500 players to enter the U.S. Open this year. We don't get to write the script, but we'll see how it turns out here in a few weeks' time.

The journey for each of the 156 players who will compete here is always a little bit different. It starts at local qualifying, and Diana made mention of the qualifier that's going on up the road, where five players will advance through to sectional qualifying sometime this afternoon, if we keep the thunderstorms away.

525 spots are available at local qualifying, and when you combine that with those who are exempt from local qualifying, about 1,000 players will participate at sectional qualifying, 12 sites around the world. We have one in Japan on Monday; the following Monday in England; and then we have 10 domestic qualifying sites across our country on Monday, June 5.

Just a great opportunity for players to chase their dream and try to earn one of those 78 spots to get here to Erin Hills.

A special thanks to Rob Jansen, executive director of the Wisconsin State Golf Association, and his talented staff and their dedicated volunteers in conducting several of those qualifiers for us, as well as all those across the country that are involved with our state and regional golf associations who give their time and talents. All of our championships just wouldn't be possible without their dedicated efforts.

Now, before we continue, here's a short clip with some voices of past champions.

(Video shown.)

We certainly agree with Tiger. The U.S. Open is widely regarded as golf's ultimate test. The names that are etched into that U.S. Open Trophy confirm that fact. Golf's ultimate test requires shot-making, mental and physical resolve, and sound course management. And you could say, hey, wait a minute, those qualities are required any time you play golf and you're successful at golf. And we wouldn't argue with that.

However, the U.S. Open combined with the USGA's tried and true setup philosophy, on the grandest stages of the game, it raises the bar considerably and offers truly golf's ultimate test.

It's fitting that this championship is annually conducted on what many would consider the grand cathedrals of our game, whether it's Pebble Beach with its windswept landscape, small, hard-to-hit putting greens; Oakmont's bold architecture, large undulating and fast greens; Winged Foot's tree-lined fairways; or the minimalist design of Pinehurst's Course No. 2, each venue is a masterpiece with its own very unique qualities to serve as the backdrop for the game's ultimate test.

Erin Hills is a new addition to that. It's the game's newest grand stage, and we look forward to helping make that introduction to the golf world next month. It will be where the best players in the world put their full range of extensive physical, mental and strategic skills on display.

The preparation and presentation of the game's iconic venues through the years has consistently identified golf's greatest, many of whom are considered the game's most complete champions, the names of Jones, Nelson, Hogan, Palmer, Nicklaus, Watson, Woods, each has exemplified shot-making at its highest level, made sound decisions in managing their game across a host of venues with varying design philosophies, course features, turf and weather conditions, and has shown the mental toughness and physical stamina to earn their title.

Golf that is truly full on and all out for 72 holes, that is the U.S. Open.

We're excited to bring golf's ultimate test to Erin Hills, and now to offer some specifics about Erin Hills as the ultimate test, I introduce Mike Davis, executive director and CEO for the United States Golf Association.

MIKE DAVIS: Jeff, thank you, and good morning, everybody. Stu Francis just mentioned that this will be broadcast in 190 countries, so that's millions of people watching it, and I guess I would start out the day saying the USGA is incredibly excited to introduce Erin Hills to the golf world. Really when you think about it, this is a new venue for us, and we historically go to many of the tried and true venues that have been around in many cases for over a century, so this is really a welcoming party, and I suspect that this will be the first of many.

Before I get started and really talk about Erin Hills and play off a little bit of what Jeff Hall said, let me acknowledge a few people who have really been key to this Open, and I'm not going to necessarily go through based on who's been introduced so far, but let me start out with the three architects and have them stand up for just a second: Dana Fry, Ron Whitten and Mike Hurdzan. Gentlemen, congratulations.

I had the pleasure of coming here August of 2004 and seeing this raw land before anything was done. You had mown out the corridors and kind of shown where tees would be, center line fairways and greens, and I think all of us congratulate you on how well you used this beautiful piece of property. For

anybody who likes golf course architecture, you'd salivate seeing this property in its raw form. I mean, it's not up against an ocean, but it's about as good a land as you can find to build a golf course, and fellows, you did a great job, and you should be incredibly proud.

I was thinking about it, talking a little bit with Brad Klein of Golfweek before I came up here, and it's a rarity to see a living architect actually get to see their work as a U.S. Open venue. It's happened very few times. You probably have to go back 75, 80 years to when you saw the Donald Rosses of the world or maybe A.W. Tillinghast get to see their work played, and it's happened since, but it's a rarity, so guys, congratulations.

Let me just – Andy Bush, on behalf of all the staff at Erin Hills, thank you. I know our staff couldn't have better things to say about the working relationship, so I'm not going to acknowledge all the staff, but there's two I want to acknowledge. In the back of the room, John Morrisett. There's a reason I'm doing that. John was with the USGA for well over a dozen years, was a great staff member, and I always thought probably the best person in the world with the Rules of Golf. He was and still is an expert, but John, thank you. We hated to lose you, but to have you come to Erin Hills and be such a big part of this Open is just great.

And then to John's left, Zach Reineking. You know, we say this every year, but we mean it, and Zach is the golf course superintendent, but probably no one other than the players themselves is more meaningful to the U.S. Open than the golf course superintendent. You really have been here since day one. You watched Erin Hills evolve, and congratulations. You have it in absolutely marvelous condition, best we've ever seen it, and to many of you, I know you are actually going to play this afternoon. Take note of just the color of the place. Erin Hills is just waking up right now, and it's a very kind of a monotone green, but think when you come back a month from now, it will be different colors, and it won't be what you saw in August of 2011 that was a very, very brown, tanned out, but there will be a color differentiation.

Anyway, we couldn't be more pleased with the condition, so Zach, thank you. Great job with everything.

And then the last three people I want to acknowledge are really the three people that if they weren't around, we would not be here. The first one was the original owner and really the visionary of Erin Hills, and his name is Bob Lang. Bob has been a friend to many of us. Without his vision and his passion, we would have never been here at Erin Hills, and I know we all look forward to having Bob and his family out the week of the U.S. Open.

And then Bob did hand those keys off to Andy Ziegler and to Jim Reinhart, and fellows, we can't thank you enough because without the two of you, we truly would not be here.

For everybody here, they're not only the owners, the custodians, the keepers of this, but they have put their heart and soul into this, and what's interesting is it's been all about what's best for Erin Hills and also what's best for the game of golf. I mean, think about closing your entire golf course this spring to

play, just to present it in the right light for the U.S. Open. But they've gone so far. They host college events. They host high school events. They host the Wisconsin Amateur, and they're just giving back to golf. So gentlemen, thank you, on behalf of all of us. Great job.

With that, let me talk a little bit about Erin Hills. You heard Jeff Hall and Stu Francis talk about this ultimate test of golf. Folks, that is why we're here. There is a strong belief by the USGA that this will absolutely provide this ultimate test of golf, so it's the shot-making, it's handling yourself mentally, it's course management. Obviously this is a physical test, too. When you walk 18 holes here at Erin Hills, you know it. But we really do believe that it starts with the great piece of property, but it's the design, the architecture, that really is going to test every skill, every shot-making ability, and we really do believe that this course is going to identify, hopefully come Sunday of U.S. Open week, a worthy champion to hold that coveted U.S. Open Trophy and the Jack Nicklaus gold medal.

You know, I mentioned some of the traditional sites that we go to. I mean, last year we were at Oakmont Country Club hosting its ninth U.S. Open. Nine U.S. Opens. Jeff rattled off some great names like Harry Vardon and Gene Sarazen, Bob Jones, but the whole way up to the Tiger Woods and Dustin Johnsons of today, and when you look back at some of those treasured sites, and we're at Shinnecock Hills next year, which is one of our founding clubs, hosted the U.S. Open in 1896, what Erin Hills doesn't have is history yet, but everybody had to start somewhere, and you're going to see history made next month, and we're excited about it. As Jim Reinhart said, this is our third national championship, and we had two goodies, or else if we didn't, we wouldn't be here with the U.S. Open.

Erin Hills checks so many boxes for us. When we look at U.S. Open sites, first and foremost, I can assure you we are looking at the golf course. Can it truly test the world's best players? So that's the top thing. That's the second thing. That's the third thing. But Erin Hills checks other boxes, and Diana Murphy, our president, mentioned it, too. We haven't been back to middle America since 2003 with the U.S. Open, first time since 1895 we're in the great state of Wisconsin. This is a big piece of property. It works logistically. I think there's over 650 acres, plenty of room to move between holes, nice viewing areas, and if you think about it, it's not a treeless property, but there aren't many trees out there, and the ones that are out there are probably nervous.

It's a great place to watch and just some natural vistas, so we're excited about it.

But at the end of it, we're here because we believe in this golf course.

The words were used, Erin Hills is an American original. I've even heard it described as a "build it and they will come," and you know what, it was built, and we did come.

As I mentioned, the site itself really did – if you were out here and you know about architecture, it was screaming out for a golf course to be built.

You know, the architects describe this as a heartland golf course, and that really is appropriate. We've

seen some people saying, well, it's a links course or it's links-like. Folks, it is not a links course, nor – I'll go into it a little bit. It's not really links-like. Yes, there are fescues out there, yes, it's windy, yes, there aren't a lot of trees, but that's where it stops. I think we prefer and the architects prefer it be described as a heartland golf course, and it is in so many ways an American original.

In terms of characteristics, rolling fairways, so as I mentioned, the architects, Jeff used the word minimalistic. That's exactly what they did. They just laid the golf course -- I wouldn't suggest they didn't move some earth because they did. They laid this golf course right on this beautiful land, and because of it, what you've got out there are a lot of fairways that have movement to them. So you don't have a lot of flat lies here at Erin Hills, and even for the world's best players, if you put them on a sloping lie, it's a harder shot than a flat lie.

The fairways themselves are bouncy. They're predominantly fescue. There's some ryegrass and some other grasses in there, but the soil or the subsoil here is a gritty, well-draining soil, so the combination of the grasses and the subsoil really do make this a bouncy course, so you're going to see balls hit and move, and because of that and because of the wind out here, the fairways are most certainly wider than most U.S. Opens. If you were to pace off the widths and compare it to say a Winged Foot or Pebble Beach or Oakmont, I dare say they're 50 percent wider and in some cases they're easily double the width. But we think that works architecturally and that's really the way the three architects designed it to be, and we're excited.

Because of this Kettle Moraine land and the movement to it, there are a lot of semi-blind shots out there, at least shots where you don't quite see where you're hitting to, and sometimes there's a completely blind tee shot where you cannot see where your ball is going to land. Other times you get a little peek. Sometimes you're hitting into greens and you don't see the whole green. You don't see any of the green. Maybe you see the top half of a flagstick. The reason I mentioned that is that does take some homework on the part of the players. It takes some imagination, and it really does, for all of us who are golfers, when you get a semi-blind shot, it takes a commitment to it because you can't quite see where you're going.

That's part of the beauty and the DNA of Erin Hills.

The greens themselves architecturally are fascinating because they sit really on land forms that the architects found, so in some cases they're sitting up on like a dune or land form, and other times they're in a saddle between two of these dune-like features.

The greens themselves are wonderfully conditioned. I can't remember coming into a U.S. Open where greens were this smooth, and these are almost totally hybrid bentgrass. It's an A4 variety, and we all believe, we've talked about it, that we're going to see a lot of putts made at this U.S. Open. Part of that's because of the design of the green, that these are relatively subtle greens, but part of it is just because they are so well-conditioned. When you hit a putt, if you get it on the right line, the right speed, it will go in here, and we don't expect to see many things hit and moving sideways.

You know, these greens, they're probably slightly larger than average size relative to other U.S. Opens. As I say, they're subtle, so if you think about Winged Foot that has a lot of internal features in it or Pinehurst that are kind of domed greens, turtle back greens, if you will, Pebble Beach, which are tiny, tiny greens, or Oakmont with its lightning fast greens, their personality here is that they're relatively subtle, though there's a handful of greens here that do have enough internal undulations that the players are really going to have to think, not only on their putting but as they hit approach shots into the green.

Something that's pretty unique about Erin Hills that I guess really would only be rivaled by Pinehurst No. 2 in North Carolina is every single one of these greens has closely mown surrounds, and because of that, you're not going to see many players who miss a green, assuming they're not in bunker, hitting pitch shots out of thick rough. What you're going to see is recovery where the players have a choice. They may putt it, they may hit a bump-and-run or they pitch it. Again, that's very reminiscent of Pinehurst No. 2, and that is not necessarily easier, particularly when you give choice. Sometimes the choice in and of itself makes the play a little bit more difficult.

Bunkers: If you haven't played Erin Hills before, you're in for a treat both esthetically, although I would say you'd best keep out of those bunkers because relative to most U.S. Opens, these are really hazards. In fact, I've been – we see it with Tour-level players, that they are so good out of bunkers that oftentimes if they know their ball is going to miss a green at a U.S. Open, they're begging for it to get in a bunker. I don't think that's going to be the case here because when you look at these, they're so natural. I think the architects referred to them as some erosion bunkers, some coffin bunkers, some blowout bunkers, whatever the term is, when you look at these things, there's a lot of nooks and crannies where a ball could get where you're uncomfortable, and I'm not sure I've seen a golf course where the bunkers have so many lies where you have a downhill high, an uphill high, a sidehill lie, and that in and of itself, when you're in a bunker, even for a good player, makes it challenging.

A couple other characteristics: This is obviously a very windswept property. As many times as I've been out here, it's a rarity to go out on this property and not get any wind. Somebody many decades ago coined the phrase that wind is kind of the invisible hazard for a golfer, and really I think for us, we are hoping for some wind. This golf course was designed for some wind. We've got more width because of that in terms of the fairways, and we do hope that maybe it comes out of different directions.

But the reason for that is it just adds to the test of golf where a player has to say, you know, instead of it being 178 yards and I'm going to fly it 178 yards and the ball is going to stop, if we can get firm conditions with a little wind, it just makes them think even more, and it makes them control their trajectory of the golf ball more, so we're excited about that. We think we're going to get a firm golf course and a windswept one, so that is exciting.

In closing here on setup, this golf course does offer a lot of flexibility in the setup. That's the way the architects designed it to be. There's a lot of different teeing grounds out there, and I think from our

standpoint, we love to try to showcase that to say, OK, if you use this teeing ground in combination with this hole, it brings this part of the drive zone in or this bunker into play. Sometimes you just want them to get up and think, so it's not the same shot off a teeing ground four days in a row or into the green. So this course really does offer up that flexibility.

In terms of the scorecard yardage, it's going to be 7,693 yards. We won't play that yardage on any one of the four days I'm quite certain. It may be slightly more than that, it may be slightly less than that, but we really don't figure out exactly what we're going to do until really the day before or even the day of, once we know what the wind conditions and the firmness is going to be. But while that sounds long on a scorecard, remember, we're playing a par 72, and that's the first time since 1992 we've done that at a U.S. Open.

If you think taking 300 to 450 yards off that, now all of a sudden you actually get to a point, assuming this is a bouncy golf course, where I actually think that Erin Hills will be a little bit shorter in terms of how it feels to a player than some of the Opens we go to.

The greens themselves I've talked about already, but they will be average U.S. Open speed, maybe even a little faster than typical U.S. Open speed. Part of that's just going to depend on what kind of winds we get predicted for a certain day. And then in closing here, I will tell you that in terms of key holes, we do have four par 5s here that go in different directions by and large, so some of those will be downwind if we get wind, some into the wind, but I do think that all four of the par 5s, depending on where we set tee markers, depending on the player and the firmness, are reachable in two, and all of them, all four of these par 5s do offer up some risk-reward.

So I think that's certainly going to be a key on how a player plays these par 5s relative to his fellow competitors.

Of the par 3s, the 6th hole is really the longest. It can play with a back hole location probably upwards of close to 250 yards. It's the biggest green on the course. The green falls away from you. But then you've got the 9th, which is a great little short par 3, which without wind is probably no more than a gap wedge for most of these Tour players, but they'd better hit the green. As Jim Reinhart loves to say, it's a great little par 5 if you miss the green.

And then in terms of par 4s, there's some short ones, the 2nd hole, the 15th hole in theory are drivable. Maybe not all days but certainly some days, and they were designed to be that way.

And then I think the story is really going to be these last five or six holes. If you think about the last six holes here at Erin Hills, you've got two par 3s, two par 4s and two par 5s, and we do think just given the nature, the architecture of those holes, you're going to see some swings on the leader board. The 15th hole is in theory a drivable par 4. You've got 14 and 18 which are par 5s where definitely things could happen.

So it's an exciting golf course, and again, Andy, Jim, thank you for inviting us to be here. We're tickled pink, and with that, I hope everybody enjoys their golf today. Keep it in the short stuff, and Pete, I'll turn it back to you.

Q. Mike and Jeff, if we do get a weird week where the wind lays down during the championship rounds, how is this course going to defend itself without wind?

MIKE DAVIS: Jeff can certainly chime in here, too. Great question. I think we go into every U.S. Open saying that Mother Nature is going to play actually a bigger role than we will play in terms of how stern a test it is. You know, this course, as I mentioned, really is designed to have some wind with it, and most days you get that. I think it seems to be the mindset that, and history would show, that the prevailing wind is out of the west, but I think that week you can see it come out of all directions.

But listen, if there's no wind for four days, that would be highly unusual, but they'll definitely shoot lower scores. If it's softer, they're definitely going to shoot lower scores. These greens are so good, as I mentioned. They're going to make putts, and then you've got a par 72, so I think all of those factors – but listen, at the end of it, contrary to what so many think, we're not after a certain winning score. What we really are after is to see if we can set the golf course up in such a way that tests every aspect of the game. As one of our fellow staffers said, we want to see all 14 clubs in a player's bag get dirty, and if it's windy, the test is just going to be a little more stern, and if it's not, we're still going to give out the trophy and the Jack Nicklaus gold medal for the low 72-hole score.

Q. How excited are you to have this blank canvas to work with, the Women's Amateur Public Links and then of course the U.S. Amateur, they were completely different in terms of the contestants that were involved in it and the golf course at the time. This is going to be a different venue at a different time of year. How excited are you to set up this golf course?

JEFF HALL: I think it's a tremendous test. We certainly learned a lot from the 2011 U.S. Amateur. Yes, played at a very different time of the year. The golf course played probably a little bit differently. But those players don't have complete Tour-quality refined games day in and day out, but they hit Tour-quality golf shots throughout the field. We learned quite a bit.

So I think it's really a neat opportunity to come to a venue that is not well-known and presented from a U.S. Open perspective to the best players in the world and really presented to the millions of people who will be watching on TV and those who will be here. We're breaking new ground. It's pretty neat.

Q. We have a lot of Chicago media here, and we're all curious as to whether you have any plans to bring an Open back to the Chicago area; are you negotiating with any clubs there? Wisconsin is beautiful, but Chicago would love to have another Open back, also.

STU FRANCIS: I'll respond to that. We think very carefully about where we'd like to go. We obviously conduct the Open at golf courses that do invite us. We do an extensive amount of research and evaluation as we think about the forward calendar, so we've had great experiences in Chicago in the past. I'm sure there will be another opportunity. We do have a pretty full calendar for the next eight or nine years. We appreciate the question, and we'll certainly be looking at things as the clock and the

calendar unfold.

Q. You mentioned that this is the first time since 1992 it's playing as a par 72. How much thought went into that? Was there any thought potentially given to playing it as a par 70?

MIKE DAVIS: If you know the background of Erin Hills, there have been a few renovations on the golf course where it's – for a while it was actually a par 73 for I think maybe one year or something like that. When we look at that, we don't come in saying we want the par to be a certain number. We've never come in and said we want the yardage to be a certain number. What we really have done is looked at the golf course and said, how will each golf hole play the best.

As an example, 1992, it was Pebble Beach, and that was a par 72, and the second hole played back then as a par 5, but it's just gotten to the point where the players were hitting it – they were really, as the definition of par goes, when an expert player takes – how many shots it takes to get on the green plus two putts, it was a par 4 by definition. So we changed that.

But here at Erin Hills, but thought there was absolutely no need to do that. These four par 5s – in fact, we felt to change any to a par 4 would really compromise the great architecture of these four par 5s. We came in and said these holes can play beautifully as par 5s, so we never even contemplated changing any to a par 4.

Q. Does anyone know what the walk is from the first tee to the final green all the way around, how many miles that is? And second question, Mike, you've been coming here for 12 or 13 years or so. What were your biggest concerns in the evolution of the site as you began to formulate a plan for it actually having a U.S. Open?

JIM REINHART: John Morrissett, I think, can answer – 6 miles if you hit it relatively straight.

MIKE DAVIS: I think that the things we're looking at for a U.S. Open site are always going to be a little bit different. You know, Reg Jones leads our team in terms of all the operational aspects of that, so when Reg and his team do the analysis many years ahead of a U.S. Open site, they're trying to figure out where do you put things, how do you move people, where are the operational compounds, where are people going to park, what are the traffic patterns going to be like, and when Reg goes to a Shinnecock or an Oakmont, and I use those two because that's last year and next year, we've been there enough where they basically can look back and say, what did we do last time, and are there any adjustments to make it better.

We do the same kind of things with the golf course itself in terms of setting up. But when you come to a site for the first time, you're having to use your imagination a little bit more, and frankly, it causes perhaps a little bit more angst or anxiety because you just don't know how certain things are necessarily going to work. But having said that, we've done a lot of research, and I would say over the years when you look at Erin Hills, in a very short period of time, say a dozen years, it's made a fair amount of changes that I think a reasonable person would say they probably would not have happened quite that quickly had there not been these championships on it.

But I think everybody should realize that you can't name a U.S. Open site, at least one of the ones in the last half century, that hasn't gone through and done things to try to make itself – not just a U.S. Open course but a better course for day-to-day play. When I look back at what's happened here, that's exactly what's been done.

This golf course is better conditioned than we've ever seen it. That's one thing. So 12 years ago, it simply wasn't as nearly well-conditioned as it is now. But they've done little things just to make the experience better for the golfer. They've done things to make the shot values better.

I suspect that post-U.S. Open they'll continue to do little things, like Oakmont and Shinnecock continue to do.

Q. 35,000 people a day coming through these gates, your first time in Wisconsin, it's going to be a first time for a lot of these fans to see a major championship. What would you ask of them? Every tournament has a different feel whether it's Waste Management or Masters. What are you asking of Wisconsin fans, many of whom are seeing their first major championship?

MIKE DAVIS: Well, I'll take that one. Listen, when they come here, they're going to be witnessing history. Think of it, this is not against what happens week to week to week, but think about this. People remember who won certain Opens at certain venues. We sit and talk about it. We talk about 1960, that great U.S. Open when Arnold Palmer beat Ben Hogan and a young Jack Nicklaus at Cherry Hills. We talk about 1913 with Francis Ouimet, which is one of the greatest U.S. Opens of all time. Folks, we're going to be making history here, and you'd like to think the people who are coming to Erin Hills are going to be saying, I am witnessing the first U.S. Open at Erin Hills, and it's going to be historic, and again, nothing against those events you just mentioned, but they're the same event at the same place every year, and the U.S. Open is unique.

Along with the U.S. Amateur, it's the oldest championship in the United States. This is the 117th playing of it. So I think as much as anything, it's to watch truly the world's best golfers play on a great golf course and making history, and that's really what the U.S. Open is about. It's that ultimate test on a great golf course that's going to make history.

Q. Mike, if you could, I'm sure Erin Hills wasn't the first place you've ever visited where somebody wanted to have a U.S. Open at some point, whether the course was built or not built. Can you kind of flash back to your very first day on this property and what you saw where, hey, this place might be able to have a U.S. Open some day?

MIKE DAVIS: Well, it's a unique story how I ended up getting here. Ron Whitten, who's one of the three architects, in 2003 sent me this out of the blue email. I have it somewhere, I guess. But he basically said, there's this site in Wisconsin that one day he believed was good enough to host a U.S. Open. And you know, if I got that from somebody who didn't know what they were saying, I'd kind of go, thank you very much, I appreciate it. But this is Ron Whitten. This guy is as knowledgeable on golf course architecture – he is the longtime golf architecture editor for Golf Digest. So I had to respond to it, so I sent back a reply,

and I said, Ron, when I'm next in Wisconsin, I'll do it. So I actually came a year later when the PGA Championship was first being played up at Whistling Straits, and the architects along with Bob Lang and some others had mown out these corridors, and myself and the then championship agronomist Tim Moraghan, we walked the property for the better part of four to five hours, and I remember us being done with it, and just thinking, I cannot believe how good that property is.

You know, we said thereafter, you know, let it – keep us posted in terms of if this gets built, we'll come back and visit again, and here we are today. It's really hard to believe that that did happen the way it did, but it all started with this great piece of property and somebody's vision, and here we are today.

Listen, if you look at our next 10 U.S. Open venues we're going to, they are historical, tried and true sites that have these wonderful names associated with them, but we relish the idea of occasionally introducing a new golf course because, when you think about it, there's no country in the world that has as many great golf courses as the United States, and we should celebrate that.

So if a golf course has the infrastructure and if it's a good enough course architecturally and it can test, then let's welcome that, let's embrace it, and let's start creating history, and I think that's how the entire USGA thought about Erin Hills and some of the other ones.

You think back in 2002, our then executive director -- it was the mid 90s, David Fay, he came up with at the time what was perceived as this wacky idea, let's go to this municipal state-owned course called Bethpage, and a few of us went out and looked at it and kind of shook our heads thinking he's lost his marbles, but you know what, he knew what he was doing, and all of a sudden you introduce this public access – it was a great story.

So there's risk going to new venues because you just don't know how they're going to come out, but we're excited about this one. We really think this is a fabulous site for a lot of reasons.

Q. It's been quite the journey here from when the course opened to the 2008 Public Links, the '11 Amateur, and now finally the U.S. Open here at Erin Hills. How much pride do you feel about this journey and golf coming to a lot of our homes?

JIM REINHART: Well, I would just say that Andy and all of us at Erin Hills, as I said earlier, we're truly humbled by the fact that the USGA has decided to take their largest, biggest national championship here to Erin Hills. It's thrilling for us. We're really excited for the state of Wisconsin, and it's a great opportunity for us to show what a great sports state this is to the world, what a beautiful state this is, and how enthusiastic the citizens of Wisconsin are. I think it's going to be a really exciting time for us, and we're all very, very proud of the fact that we're going to be, I think, the center of the golf universe for seven days next month. It'll be pretty cool.

Q. I realize that green speeds are based on a lot of conditions, but what does the USGA consider to be the ideal green speed out here for these conditions, for these greens and the way they're set up?

MIKE DAVIS: I'd put it to you a couple of ways. If the question was based on what's right for day-to-day

play, I'd give you one answer. If it's for the U.S. Open, which we do talk about this ultimate test, we try to match the green speeds to the architecture, to the weather conditions that are predicted, how windy, how firm, but I will say, and we've said this publicly before, too, this notion that good greens have to be fast greens is bad for golf. It's just not good.

You know, it's costing the game more money to keep greens fast. It compromises in some cases the health of the greens. It compromises the architectural integrity of the greens sometimes. It certainly hurts pace of play. For all those reasons, as an organization, we would say that there is a happy medium where golfers will enjoy themselves more at a certain speed, and if you get past that, then all of a sudden you're probably not doing golf any favors.

Now, this week, the week of the U.S. Open, they're going to be fast, and you know what, it's because we're going to – we're testing every skill. It's not just putting in terms of these green speeds, but when you can get them – and it's not just speed, it's firmness, too. We want the ball to react a certain way when it hits the green that the player really does have to control his spin, his trajectory. If it's a 178-yard shot, he may only want to fly it 162 yards to bounce it back if it's downwind, or whatever the case might be.

When you get the greens to a certain speed they almost come alive architecturally to where if you miss a green, you may have to play a contour.

You know, there is no ideal green speed for – it kind of depends on who's playing it and what, but we would just say that, taking our U.S. Open hats off for a second, that this arms race to get fast greens is not a good thing for the game of golf.

Q. Pete Dye once told me, too, something that you just said, it's not the greatest thing for golf to have fast greens, and he told me the ideal green speed would be about 10 really.

MIKE DAVIS: Well, listen, you know, we sometimes are 10 at Pebble Beach for the U.S. Open because how much percentage slope they have in the wind, but I will tell you the collars at Oakmont are faster than 10, so it just depends on the architecture and what it is.

Nothing is wrong, it's just, as I say, that I think we hope that the game starts to move back the other way and that courses are more reasonable and golfers are more reasonable about the speed.

Q. One question for President Murphy: How much of a factor, if at all, is the potential for financial performance of the championship when you bring it to a site? Do you consider things like attendance, merchandise sales, that sort of thing? And if that is a factor at all, what do you perceive for this one? What do you project for this championship in terms of performance relative to other championships?

DIANA MURPHY: I think as Mike said at the very beginning, the most important thing is the golf course, and we're extremely excited about being here, and we are creating history. So our projections are just that, projections.

We hope we beat all of our expectations, but again, the most important thing is the performance of the course and the players. We are a nonprofit, we make these decisions really first and foremost on the course and the community and the community's support. I know we have done a great job in getting, as Stu as others have mentioned, over 5,000 volunteers, many of whom that have come from very close by, but several of our volunteers come from all over the country and other countries, too.

It's exciting. That's really not the most important decision to us. The most important decision is the quality of the course and the community that supports it, and again, we couldn't be happier to be here.

Q. Mike, you've said already that the score is not really something that you shoot for in terms of how you set up the course, that sort of thing. Having said that, if you get a score that is 10-under or lower, would you feel like you have, quote-unquote, failed or not really tested the players enough?

MIKE DAVIS: Absolutely not. So much of the score really does have to do with Mother Nature. Think about the last two Opens at Oakmont; that golf course was set up almost identical. The only difference was one year you had a soft Oakmont, the other year it was a firm Oakmont.

Think back to the U.S. Open that Tiger Woods won in 2000 at Pebble Beach – he shot 12-under there. That was one of the great U.S. Opens we've ever seen. He won by 15 shots, but we celebrated – the whole world celebrated there, and so I know people get caught up with this even-par thing. I can tell you nobody at this table got caught up. We don't even talk about it. What we do talk about is making sure we can adjust the course to say if there's soft conditions, then how can we really – maybe we tuck a hole location a little bit more versus if we get real firm conditions and it gets windy, we're sitting there talking among ourselves, saying how do we tone this thing down, how do we slow the greens, get some more water on them, whatever the case may be. It really isn't about the score, it's about just setting the golf course up properly.

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