

For the record, I loved the 2018 U.S. Open. We got to see four days of great players taking on [Shinnecock Hills](#) – William Flynn’s brilliant design, Coore & Crenshaw’s thoughtful restoration, and Jon Jennings et al’s beautiful presentation. No amount of setup snafu, quick rake nonsense, or bellyaching from various constituencies could dampen my enthusiasm.



All photos by Jon Cavalier

The internet produced a variety of strong reactions to the Open at Shinnecock. Some were well-reasoned and others were hyperbolic in the extreme. Setting reactions aside, following are my musings on what we’ve learned, and where America’s governing body might go from here with our National Championship.

For some time now, the USGA has been doing a fair bit of tinkering and way too much micromanaging. They are not the victims of happenstance or bad breaks. They have placed themselves in an untenable situation by trying to: appease players and manufacturers by not adequately regulating equipment technology, appease traditional hard-liners who demand carnage, appease casual fans who prefer birdies over bogeys, and appease par devotees who want to see a certain number on the scoreboard.

Combine these factors with the unpredictability of Mother Nature and the game of golf itself, and you have a recipe for outcomes that are guaranteed to frustrate and disappoint. Worse yet, the USGA’s insistence on pursuing this impossible balance to try and please everyone is distracting from what really matters – great players competing against each other on great playing fields.

As I watched Saturday’s action unfold, with the setup tipping over the edge, I ran a 24-hour Twitter poll to try and gauge how the carnage vs. playability balance was shaping up:



Jason Way @JasonWay1493 · Jun 16

For the [@uspengolf](#), would you rather that the [@USGA](#)

45% Protect par

55% Avoid over-the-edge setup

2,239 votes • Final results

A day later, with the USGA

arguably going too far in the direction of playability, I asked essentially the same question in a different way:



Jason Way @JasonWay1493 · Jun 17

Which day of the @usopengolf did you enjoy watching more?

60% Saturday

40% Sunday

167 votes • Final results

Although the second poll was much quicker, I doubt that the results would have changed had I let it run for 24-hours instead of 2. My conclusion? We the audience don't really even know what we want. We are essentially impossible to please. The USGA would be better served choosing a position, and sticking to their guns knowing that some players and fans will gripe no matter what. With that approach, at least they will have maintained a discernible and authentic identity.

THE PATH AHEAD

The definition of insanity is doing the same thing over and over again and expecting a different result. It's time to stop the insanity.

If I were King, I would create a U.S. Open rota, with architectural interest and history being the weightiest considerations. I would not concern myself with charges of "elitism" in my rota selections. This is one of the most elite competitions in the world. Its venues can and should be elite as well. Making the game more inclusive is an important mission of the USGA, but the U.S. Open is not the vehicle for that mission.

My proposed rota is:

Oakmont*

Shinnecock Hills*

Pebble Beach*

Pinehurst No. 2*

Winged Foot*

Merion

Olympic Club

The Country Club

Los Angeles CC

Cherry Hills

Inverness (based on Andrew Green's recent tune-up)

Oakland Hills (contingent on Gil Hanse tune-up)

Olympia Fields (contingent on Keith Foster tune-up)

*host more frequently than others

This rota provides geographic and architectural diversity and allows fans to get to know great courses by watching different player cohorts play them over the decades. Just because a course did not make my rota does not mean that I don't want to see professional golf on that course. I very much want to see future events held at Chambers Bay, Bethpage Black, Erin Hills, and others. Let the PGA and PGA Tour cast a wider net with the PGA Championship, Ryder Cup and Presidents Cup that includes those great courses.

The rota being selected, my second act as King would be to simplify the rules for setup to a list of 3, and I would let the Golf Course Superintendent lead the preparation of the course for the tournament with consultation from the USGA that is not overbearing.

Rough and/or native area that is nasty and penal, but only where the original architect intended for it to be.

Very firm greens, but slow the putting surfaces down so that they stay alive and roll true.

A mix of pin positions each day - some gettable, some next-to-impossible.

These setup rules would not be altered regardless of the weather. If Mother Nature helps the players one year, so be it. If Mother Nature crushes the players the next year, so be it. As King, I would offer no apologies to anyone based on

their perceptions of difficulty, or lack thereof. You play in the National Championship, it is what it is. Deal with it. Because after all, that is the essence of the game itself, and as King, I would want my championship to pay homage to that essence.

THE ROTA IN PHOTOS



Oakmont



Shinnecock Hills



Pebble Beach



Pinehurst No. 2



Winged Foot



Merion



Olympic Club



The Country Club



Los Angeles CC



Cherry Hills



Inverness



Oakland Hills



Olympia Fields

Now that I've shared my musings, I'm off to read what everyone else has concluded. Feel free to share your thoughts here, email me, or comment on social media. Already looking forward to Pebble...

Read Geoff Shackelford's roundup and commentary [from his site here](#)

Read Michael Clayton's commentary piece [for Golf Australia here](#)

MORE GEEKED ON GOLF MUSINGS:

[Geek Dad's Diary Pt.1 - The Best Birthday Gift](#)

[Musings on Greenkeeping](#)

[Musings on Greatness](#)

[The Year that the GeekedOnGolf Tour Ended](#)

[2016 Golf Tour](#)

[2015 GeekedOnGolf Tour](#)

[Wilson & Me](#)

[New Year's Shift](#)

[My Bucket List - U.S. Open Venues](#)

[2014 GeekedOnGolf Tour](#)

[Want to Improve Pace of Play?](#)

[Short Game Game Plan](#)

[These Are a Few of My Favorite Things](#)

[Making It Right is Alright with Me](#)

[2013 GeekedOnGolf Tour](#)

[End of Season Wrap-up](#)

[From Putt Putt to Punchbowl](#)

[A Slip of the Mind](#)

[Coming Full Circle](#)

Copyright 2018 - Jason Way, GeekedOnGolf

Share this:

[Twitter](#)

[Facebook](#)

Google