

**Caddying is ASU golf coach's bag for a week, as long as the bag isn't too heavy**  
**Kent Somers, Arizona Republic (Sept. 15, 2020)**

When Arizona State men's golf coach Matt Thurmond accepted an offer from his top player, Chun An Yu, to caddy at the U.S. Open this week, it was with only one condition.

No using a big, heavy Tour golf bag.

"That's not happening with me as the caddy," Thurmond said.

Yu agreed and their deal was done.

So Yu, a senior from Taiwan, is not only playing in his third consecutive Open as an amateur, he also should be the envy of every collegiate athlete.

Because for this one week, the player, not the coach, is giving the orders. Thurmond made that clear before they left Tempe for the tournament at Winged Foot in Westchester County, just outside New York City.

"I said, 'I'm your servant. You're my boss. You can tell me anything you want. You want to arrive four hours early? I'll be there four and half hours early. You want to stay all day. I'll be there. You want me to carry seven umbrellas and four sets of rain gear? I'm carrying all those things.'"

These were not empty promises. Reached Tuesday morning, Thurmond said he was finishing up a meal in the dining room for caddies. Work awaited.

"I'm getting pin sheets, range balls, wet towels," Thurmond said. "I'm happy to do it; he's treating me great."

Yu, who also adopted the American name "Kevin," doesn't seem the type that requires a lot of maintenance. And part of the reason Yu asked Thurmond to caddy is that Yu is hoping to play better than he did in his previous two Opens, in which he failed to make the cut.

"He's coached me four years already," Yu said. "He knows me so well. On the course, he knows how to calm me down. If I do something that's not me, he can say, 'Hey, hey, Kevin, you should do this.'"

Thurmond has caddied many times before and attended several U.S. Opens. He knows the drill. The courses are difficult with fairways that are narrow, rough that is thick and long and greens that are quick.

Inevitably, players will complain. His advice to Yu: don't participate.

“Look, it’s going to be really hard,” Thurmond said. “We know it. Let other people worry about that. We’re just going to try to make pars and some birdies when we can.

“You have to recalibrate your expectations. Kevin comes out on pretty much any course we play and shoots mid-60s, every day. Just knowing that you might go and shoot 74, 75 and have it be a great round, being OK with that, will be a vital, vital skill.”

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The No. 3-ranked amateur in the world, Yu’s original plan was to turn pro after the collegiate season, but that was canceled because of the COVID-19 pandemic.

A senior, Yu accepted when the NCAA offered an additional year of eligibility to seniors whose seasons were cut short by the pandemic.

“Give me another year to play as a Sun Devil,” he said. “Never say no to that.”

Yu hasn’t played a competitive round since March. While back home, he tried to stay sharp by making rounds with friends as competitive as possible. He did the same thing with teammates after recently returning to Tempe for classes.

Despite the time away from competitive golf, Yu hopes he’s less nervous when he tees off Thursday at 5:40 a.m., than he was during his previous Open experiences.

His coach, however, is experiencing some stomach flutters.

“I’m just carrying the clubs, so it doesn’t really matter if I’m nervous,” Thurmond said. “But it does speak to what a big deal this is, what an exciting time this is for Kevin and our program.”

Seven golfers with ASU ties are playing this week, ranging from 50-year-old Phil Mickelson to the 22-year-old Yu. That’s tied with Georgia for the most of any school.

Three ASU alums — Mickelson, Paul Casey and Jon Rahm — play together in the first two rounds. (Tee times: 10:27 a.m. Thursday and 5:07 a.m. Friday.)

“It’s pretty cool to see that the legacy continues,” Thurmond said.

Oh, and the bag Thurmond will be carrying? It will be Yu’s Arizona State camouflage bag with “PT 42” on the side.