

U.S. Senior Women's Amateur Championship

Thursday, September 16, 2021

Point Clear, Alabama, USA

The Lakewood Club

Ellen Port

Quick Quotes

Q. There were a lot of people rooting for you this week. I think you also got quite a bit more notoriety off of your accomplishment a couple weeks ago.

ELLEN PORT: Sure.

Q. Did you feel like you had a lot of attention coming into this final on you?

ELLEN PORT: Well, yes and no because people follow golf, and since I'm a seven-time champion, I think that that draws a little bit of attention, too. And then the success I had.

I love the golf community. Everybody is cheering for everybody, and it's becoming kind of global where with Golf Channel and people are just happy when people do well at any level. I've been surprised, so I'm thrilled for people paying attention to old ladies who play golf.

Q. Not only that, but competitive, wonderful play. I think there may have been some people that came out this week and were pretty impressed with the level of play. You also had to overcome some really difficult matches to get to this point. You were down two with three to go in one match and battled back to win in extra holes. Before getting to the final, even before the match with Lara, what was this week like?

ELLEN PORT: Well, and I need to take it back more because I haven't been playing well since I won in 2016. I took a year off because I was coaching at Wash U and didn't play golf and really was struggling with my game. So to go back even further, I've overcome a lot in the sense of just kind of reformulating my game and getting some things straightened out.

So I've been playing really good golf. I've had personal bests on -- I actually feel like I'm playing better than when I won some of these tournaments. So the just the fact that every match has a different nuance, and I feel like if I



would have putted better I wouldn't have been behind in some of those matches, and I think the people I played probably would say the same thing because they weren't making putts, either.

But I didn't putt well, and it was frustrating. I hit a lot of shots close, and I pulled my wedges, I had some issues, just like I pulled the one on 12 was really bad. I was in perfect position and I just wanted to jump on it because I was at the peak of my distance, and I tend to pull it when I'm trying to hit a wedge hard.

I hit a lot of quality shots. I drove the ball as good as I've ever driven it. My driving -- there was a day in the Women's Amateur in 2018 when I made the cut at Chicago Golf Club. I didn't where my driver was going to go for the last three years.

So those are all things people don't know but that I know. So that makes it even more amazing that I was in the finals, coming back at 60 years old and having kind of struggled a little bit.

Q. I know your match against Shelly, 16, 17, 18, you had chances and you missed the first two and on 18 it was, finally, I got one to go.

ELLEN PORT: Yeah, I really had to struggle with keeping a good attitude with putting, and you've got to believe you're going to make it, but I started really doubting myself because I just had a lot of good chances and I just didn't read them right, didn't have the speed right. That's hard when you're not putting well.

Lara is such a good putter, such a good player. I knew she wasn't going to make many mistakes. I'm the one -- we each made a bad swing. Unfortunately mine was when we were running out of holes, and then I couldn't convert a putt on 15 that would have helped my cause a little bit.

Q. I know that she had the missed swing on 9, you had that one, but also the quality of golf for the round, you guys were in the fairway or maybe a foot off, on the green or a foot off the green. The ball-striking and the level of play was extremely high.

ELLEN PORT: Thank you, well, I'm happy for that. I'm happy because I love playing well with people watching.



They would have clapped if we weren't playing well. They were so gracious, but I really do feel like we put on a good show for them. When I played Shelly I was 2-under and I played really well then. That was my best round really.

But yeah, I was really glad Lara and I both played well. It was just going to be who made a putt, and she started out birdie-birdie. Well, she bogeyed the one, but then she went birdie-birdie, and that's what she's done.

I've played enough golf with her to see her just stick it in and birdie. She's a really good putter. She's a really good lag putter. She's a better putter than I am, and her short game.

Q. Well, you know how hard this is to do, so just to put in perspective to win three in a row, you've got to win a lot of matches. It's pretty impressive, and you've seen it firsthand, this is the first time you two actually squared off in a match, right?

ELLEN PORT: Right.

Q. So you knew it was going to be a tough one, and you know she's a competitor just like you are. Can you talk a little bit about what she did to finish it off? Was just a tiny bit more consistent than you perhaps?

ELLEN PORT: Well, I made the mistakes. We were even going into -- I made a mistake. She hit a good shot, she didn't hit a good drive, and she didn't hit a particularly good second shot on the par-5 and I did, and I hit two good shots. It goes to show you -- and then I pulled my wedge. She put a quality shot in there, and then -- I hit some good shots, like even -- she hit a great -- then she came right back on 13 with a 5-hybrid, and I hit the best 6-iron, and it hit five feet past the hole, flew right over the hole, and these greens don't hold. I mean, it was high. I really cannot believe that I hit the ball as high as I did and the ball still goes 20 feet past.

Q. Same on 17, right?

ELLEN PORT: Yeah, exactly. I hit it high and hit a quality shot. So that's all you can do is hit a quality shot. It was hard because I don't think an 8-iron -- a lot of times I question should I have hit less club. It was a carry. I had to get that there and you're living dangerously, you're in between clubs, and if you miss it -- so it makes me realize I need to get better. I need to be able to hit some fades. Like that would have been a good time for me to hit a fade because --

Q. Softer landing?

ELLEN PORT: A course like this really did set up to work the ball a little bit, and I didn't do some of that as well as I should have.

Q. Well, all in all, a tremendous week. I know it's tough to come up just short, but you're going to continue to search for No. 8.

ELLEN PORT: Yeah, I've been in nine finals, and I've only lost -- I've won seven out of nine, so my percentage has been pretty good. I don't know how many people have been in nine USGA finals.

Q. Very, very few.

ELLEN PORT: It could have been eight, but I lost to Kathy Hartwiger in a Mid-Am. So I'll just remember that and build on this and get to the Mid-Am. The good news is I get another tournament in a week, which rarely happens, and I'm playing good, and I'll take the lessons I've learned into that, and the Lara and I are doing qualifying for Four-Ball in October.

She didn't make all those putts when we were qualifying. I carried her. By the way, I carried her -- when we qualified for four-ball in Farmington, Missouri, off the record. Off the record. So where was that Lara Tennant?

Q. Why did she have to make them all today, right?

ELLEN PORT: (Laughs.)

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