

AIG Women's Open

Friday, 21 August, 2020

Sophia Popov

Quick Quotes



Q. What a great round and you find yourself in a great place on the leaderboard. Can you talk about today, a very steady back nine?

SOPHIA POPOV: Yeah, I think overall, more steady than it looked I think on the front nine. I had one three-putt that I guess I was a little angry about or whatever, but other than that I played pretty solid. I didn't hit as much green -- as many greens today. I would say I did a really good job around the greens. I had a lot of putts from off the green that I putted close, and a lot of good chips and pitches. So yeah, just very, very steady and just kind of grinding it out on the back nine for a solid score.

Q. And steady I feel is like underplaying, because being steady in conditions like today must feel like a massive achievement. I feel like it's too bland a word.

SOPHIA POPOV: Definitely, you can't tell, like I'm really excited about the round. I mean, the conditions, especially I'd say the first 14, 15 holes are really tough because the wind changed, so we didn't even have -- we weren't even downwind on the back nine, so we had this extreme side wind coming, and every ball you had to start it like 20 left and feed it into the green. I think that's very tough to see probably on camera, too.

So you're kind of -- we were really grinding it out, and I mean, I'm extremely happy. I just made a lot of up-and-downs, and steady wouldn't be the right word because it was emotionally pretty up-and-down. But the score is steady, so I guess that's --

Q. You qualified for this by playing in Marathon, so that's a bonus, this is your second one, and I can see from your chat how excited you are to be here?

SOPHIA POPOV: Oh, 100 per cent. I've been trying to qualify for every year, but I never -- you know, I stopped playing on the European Tour a couple years ago, so I always had to get in by means of LPGA or through the Marathon and I just missed out barely the last few years and I love this championship. I mean, I grew up playing all the British Girls' and British Ams and those are my favourite tournaments. My last one was in Carnoustie,

which was obviously a highlight in my career, so I was so excited.

I had a friend actually FaceTime me when I was in the scoring tent and she just yelled and said, "You qualified for the British!!" It wasn't even on my radar which is a great thing.

Then when I found out and I knew it was here, I was like, that's a bonus.

Q. Have you played here in any of the Junior Ams?

SOPHIA POPOV: No, I've never played here. First time.

Q. So now, you find yourself at the top of the leaderboard. How do you approach the weekend?

SOPHIA POPOV: You know, pretty much my game plan is going to be very similar to the last two days, really. You have to stay extremely patient out here. There are shots that just don't go your way and you need to figure out how strong that wind is and pick the right moments to hit shots, too. So I think you have to be -- I'm a very fast player, so I think for me it's all about taking my time and really thinking through my strategy for every hole and really just stay, in, my group, too, we could see today, like when we least thought it would happen we would make a birdie, because you just have to keep your head in it and you know you can make some. They are out there. But it's just about -- I think just totally about patience and one shot at a time and just battling the conditions.

Q. Is patience once of your strong suits or have you just found it this week?

SOPHIA POPOV: Actually, it's not. It wasn't, but I've been working on it really hard. That's my No. 1 thing I've been working on this season. I knew my game is in pretty good shape, so for me, it's all about between the ears and all that is all patience for me. It's all I think -- sometimes I just get ahead of myself, and definitely that was the No. 1 thing that I was working on during quarantine, so for me it was nice the last two days that that paid off, because I think that was my biggest achievement personally was the mental part of it. Just I knew my game was there. I just had to get it together in my head.



Q. I was going to ask you, you've had quite a start in quite a few weeks since play started. Apart from patience, what else did you work on?

SOPHIA POPOV: Just kind of a lot of strategy, course strategy, just being a little bit smart around the course. Sometimes I catch myself being extremely aggressive. I go at a lot of pins and out here, it's just really not what you have to do. If you hit the greens, you're always going to have a look at it. It's all about giving yourself putts and opportunity for birdie. So course strategy and patience were like the two things that I worked on the most.

Q. With not playing a tournament for such a long period, you've obviously come out incredibly competitive. How were you keeping competitive?

SOPHIA POPOV: I did play a little bit. I live in Arizona and we have the cactus tour there, so that's a mini tour. So I think I played eight or nine Cactus Tour events, and I won three of them. So for me, I did get a lot of confidence from that time, but it's a mini tour. It was more competitive than it usually is, but you tee it back up on the LPGA and you're like, let's see where this goes because you just don't know.

I felt like my game was there. I knew that from all the those mini tour events that I played, and those are all three-day events. As far as conditioning, I felt great. I've been working on fitness a lot and eating well, and so I feel like just everything kind of came together and just have to let it happen a little.

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