

Trust Golf Women's Scottish Open

Tuesday, July 26, 2022

Troon, Scotland, UK

Dundonald Links

Ryann O'Toole

Press Conference

THE MODERATOR: How does it feel coming back as defending champion here at the Trust Women's Scottish Open?

RYANN O'TOOLE: Just coming back, I drove from London to here yesterday, so it was nice to just kind of drive the countryside and see a lot of the land that a lot of times we don't get to see.

But just to come back here and to kind of start seeing my face on random pieces here and there has been very nice. I've never had that opportunity. To be able to enjoy that now has been very good.

Q. Can you reflect back on what it mean to break through last year?

RYANN O'TOOLE: I mean, it was brought to my attention how many starts until I had won. So that was a shock. It was a realisation. Yes, I had counted the years but not the actual events. But to look back and go, just how did I win, or even that Sunday, what the rounds felt like. I find myself, like, now, how do I get myself back to that.

I was able to just play my game and I didn't feel like I did anything special. I didn't feel like it was some miracle. Just I showed up, I stayed out of my own way and I ended up walking home with a trophy.

Q. What did it mean to you to win after such a long time and your thoughts of retiring?

RYANN O'TOOLE: Well, I think obviously the cat was out of the bag as far as the possibility of me retiring. I had not talked about that with my coach, and I didn't say anything to my caddie. It was just a feeling that was going through my head.

Obviously being, what was I, 34 at the time, just realising, okay, what's going to be the next chapter in my life. I've been busting my butt trying to get to this win and trying to



win multiple times, and it wasn't coming.

To finally have that happen, it felt so good. It felt like no matter how long you work or how much effort you put in, that you know, there's no need to stop because I don't need to feel deflated or feel like golf beat me or I didn't get to achieve anything that I had always dreamed of.

Now that being said, the retirement is on the back burner, and I'm just enjoying the fact that my golf game has been good since and just keep it going.

Q. What's been the key for you since then?

RYANN O'TOOLE: I've been analysing that, wondering, was it this elephant off my back, this feeling of pressure being released or whatnot. But to be honest I feel like I just have a really good team. I've been working with Jorge since 2014. We've been constantly working and growing and working on certain things that I think will help me be more consistent with my game that won't fold under pressure.

On top of that, working on the mental aspect, just trying everything under the sun of what can help me in that regard. But then I just think having a caddie third page suited me well. Mikey, our first week together was Scotland, and it was just one of those that I feel like sometimes you can walk off a course and feel like you're a team out there.

And you know, it's making the least amount mistakes as a player and caddie and even as a team together, and I just think we work well together to minimise those things that in the long run, day after day, whether it's one shot that you feel like hey, could have been a different decision between the two of you, add those up, that's four shots. That's the difference between winning and that's the difference between making the cut and playing the weekend, and then even growing the leaderboard from there. I think that has also been a big key factor for me. I just I feel like I am in a good place there.

Yes, obviously winning. But winning came with other elements as far as, okay, now I won and I thought now



once I broke that seal, I thought I would win again and again and it would be easier, and that's not the case. I'm still trying to figure out how to get back there or how to keep myself from getting in my own way to be back there.

Q. And getting married, happy on the golf course, happy off the golf course; did that help at all, give you more confidence maybe?

RYANN O'TOOLE: It definitely does. Having a partnership, having -- being married, my wife is super successful. She's driven. I don't feel like it's just me, myself out there. Golf became a career as soon as you turned professional. It is your job at the end of the day. It's the means of livelihood and making money and your future and setting up for your future.

When you do finally find somebody that you're with and that you then get married, you have a partner now, and that you don't only have to rely on yourself but you can rely on each other. And I think that takes an element. That takes an element of stress off your back as a player. When you miss a cut, you're like okay, I'm in the hole X amount, like just from this week. It's like people around you are getting paid but you're not getting paid. I think there's obviously that.

Then on the side of just being happy and having that ability to have someone that distracts you and be there when things aren't good or be there when things are good. The fact that she was able to be there when I won, I mean, how lucky did that happen to be.

Q. This championship on a links, have you seen the golf course yet?

RYANN O'TOOLE: Not yet. Yesterday I drove the seven and a half hours due to all the crazy flights. But I'm playing today, so I'll go play 18 holes today and the Pro-Am tomorrow.

I played this in 2017. So once I got back on site, I was like, okay, now I start remembering the holes. But as far as like I know that once I play them, they will all come back. Great track, so I'm excited and looking forward to it.

Q. It's a little bit different than the venue you were on last week. I don't think we've talked about it enough, going to different climates back-to-back weeks, how do you adjust to that?

RYANN O'TOOLE: It's hard. Definitely you have to just really be prepared to look at what -- I'm looking over here because I do. I see a few holes to the right of me, and you know, it is. It's how firm is it playing, and especially here,

it's all based on the wind and weather, like whether we get rain, if it's super windy or not. That changes a lot of things.

But compared to last week, it is night and day. Maybe there's something to be said that some players play better in different elements and some players play better in different golf styles. I don't know.

Did I think that the Scottish was ever going to be my first win? No. But it was. And so that I be that was a realisation to me that, hey, maybe, you know, there is something to be said there.

Q. You mentioned you didn't expect this to be your first win, but do you enjoy playing golf in Scotland and why do you enjoy it?

RYANN O'TOOLE: I love playing golf here. St Andrews is probably my favourite place on earth. I think the birth of golf, you go to that town; like I tell anybody that doesn't really play golf, you go to Aspen, it's all about skiing and snowboarding and being in the mountains. You go to St Andrews, and it's all golf and it's just like you are in the Home of Golf and it consumes you.

And someone like myself, I love golf. Like I never get sick of it. End of the season, take a couple weeks off and I can't wait to get back and start practising. Some people go home on their off-weeks and don't do anything. I want to go practise or play or play money games. Just, I enjoy it.

So I don't know, maybe that was a hindrance to me some point mentally; that I loved it so much that I let it get the best of me versus not care as much. I don't know. I feel like Scotland lives and breathes golf, and it is like the motherland of the birth of golf, and I feel it.

Q. I wondered what's it meant to you to be Scottish Women's Open champion over the last 12 months, for you to say that to people and maybe be announced as The Scottish Champion?

RYANN O'TOOLE: To be honest, I feel proud being the Scottish champion. The amount of people that have congratulated me, came up to me when I won and proud of me, I felt -- it felt unbelievable. I cannot explain truly what it felt.

But to be the Scottish Women's Champion, I would take it over any event. I just hope that -- I would love to be the champion again this year. But to be honest, like I said, to know that golf is so important here in Scotland and then to be able to be that champion, it's meant a lot.

Q. You mentioned being there in 2017. Obviously the

golf course has not changed a lot, but there's a lot of improvements off the golf course. What have you made of them? There's been a lot of investment down at Dundonald.

RYANN O'TOOLE: There was no clubhouse when we were here before. So the clubhouse is absolutely stunning. I had dinner there last night and the food was excellent. I'm staying here in the cottages and they are super cosy, super nice, very clean. I'm very happy about my accommodations this week.

You know, there's a couple places that have like a full-on kitchen, a living room, a couple bedrooms. So anybody out there, come to Scotland, you need to spend at least a weekend or a couple days here and enjoy staying here because you won't be disappointed.

Q. I think recalling last year, I think you said your first Women's British Open at Hoylake, you got your butt kicked for want of a better phrase. Can you actually remember how severe that butt-kicking was?

RYANN O'TOOLE: To be honest I felt like it was the first time I was ever terrified in golf. Like, as far as terrified, like, I don't know where this golf ball is going. I really need to learn how to get the baby on the ground.

It was just a wake-up call. I mean, it was to the point where sometimes -- like, I grew up playing softball. And it's like when you get a really wild pitcher, and you're up at-bat and you have a girl that's throwing 80-mile-an-hour underhand balls at you and you're ready to get one beamed in the side. It's like the same thing. You're standing on one of the tee boxes and it's just howling side wind, and you're like, this could go in the gorge over there. I mean, I really don't know. Like, please, just somehow put some -- you know, no side-spin on it.

It was just one of those weeks where I was like, I feel so out of my element and so not in control. I need to figure out how to concur this style of golf.

Q. Obviously last year was the kind of ultimate redemption, I suppose. Was there a buildup before last year that you knew you were kind of getting to grips with the links game?

RYANN O'TOOLE: I mean, yeah, definitely. The hard part was I had gotten COVID before the Scottish and the British the year before, so I was unable to come to either one. That really took the wind out of my sails far as wanting to come and compete. These are two of my favourite events.

So then the following year, I played the Irish, and I played

pretty decent there. Then I felt like, okay, I really have wind under control. Other events we had played in the wind like Hawai'i and stuff, I feel like I played decent there. I played decent in Hawai'i this year, and I think I took sixth.

To me, I figured out how to really play in the wind and I just I feel like I'm not -- I know how to play with it versus like have it play me, and I think that's the key point. I figured out how to hit this low tee shot. That really helps. If it's howling wind, I can just get that driver off the ground. It can fly 20 yards off the ground and run forever.

I feel like getting the ball in play is huge. Staying patient is very huge. I think what helped me last year with winning was I think I was so focused on having this new caddie and just thinking, okay, he's going to tell me to hit it here, and I'm just going to hit it there.

We went around the course the whole week doing the same thing. I didn't get caught up in the morning round had no wind, the afternoon round had a ton of wind, and we got in the afternoon round.

And same thing the next day. We had wind in the morning, so I never got out of it. But I didn't allow myself to focus on scores and I think that's been the biggest challenge for me now is to keep trying to get back to that place, is just staying in the moment.

I think when it comes to windy conditions, it really tests that, and that is I think one of the key factors to just play each shot as you can because I mean, you're worn out after 18 holes if it's super windy out here.

Q. It's probably impossible to avoid the whole LIV Golf palaver these days. There was obviously a story the other week with the LPGA Tour. If something like that developed, what would your opinion be on LIV Golf getting involved in the women's game?

RYANN O'TOOLE: I'll just say this: I think the PGA TOUR didn't do it right in regards to possibly sitting down and having a conversation with LIV and seeing what the possibilities were of coming together. I think they created a very big void with each other, and it's creating a lot of turmoil.

I hope that if the LIV decides to like approach the LPGA and create something or want to create something, that maybe we can do it together versus is being this taboo thing or this big issue where players are going have to choose.

I think that it would be a great opportunity to utilise like the possibility that there could be some major finance

opportunities, and that we come together as two organisations versus having two separate organisations.

Q. With this event being co-sanctioned with the LPGA, it's really elevated the event. How have you seen it evolve?

RYANN O'TOOLE: To be honest I feel like in 2017 prior, it was one of our smaller events. It was one of those, you look at and go, I really don't want to go play it. I might need to take it off.

Now it's one you want to play. They definitely elevated a lot of it. It feels like a big tournament. It feels like a solid event. Looking around at the setup, the venue, everything they provide, the purse increase, it's been phenomenal. I thank Trust Golf for that and their commitment to women's golf and our partnership together.

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