

Volunteers of America LPGA Texas Classic

Tuesday, June 29, 2021

The Colony, Texas, USA

Old American Golf Club

Cheyenne Knight

Press Conference

THE MODERATOR: We're here with Cheyenne Knight, who just finished up a practice round out there. Hot and steamy outside, but I know it's good to be home back in Dallas, back here at Old American, site of your first victory. Do you get good memories when you drive up here?

CHEYENNE KNIGHT: Yes, it's always so special coming to play again. A little bit warmer so I like that better than last December, but it's always just so special to be home and a lot of memories from two years ago, and it's just great that my family can come and then it's home, and it's just like so much love and support out there and throughout the week, people telling me they remember me from two years ago and they're going to come watch. So it really is special.

Q. Last year in December you finished tied for 25th. Much cooler, but now that you're back and we're going to have fans, it's a little more back to normal, what are your memories that stick out to you the most as you think back to that week here two years ago?

CHEYENNE KNIGHT: I just think of the hometown crowd cheering for me. It's really special that Angela won last year, too, two Texas girls from Shady Oaks, and it's just so special every time I drive in and all the holes. I remember all the shots that I hit in that final round, and like all the nerves that I had, and to overcome that and get my first victory when I needed to play pretty well.

Just kind of whenever -- I haven't had like the best year so far, but coming back here and just reliving all those good memories and just how well I played, it kind of like just makes me be grateful, and like professional golf isn't always great all the time, and especially like it was like that my rookie year.

But coming here and winning, there's always light at the end of the tunnel.

Q. You mentioned it's been an up-and-down year for you. How is the state of your game right now as we



Volunteers of America®
CLASSIC

head back to this week?

CHEYENNE KNIGHT: It's getting better. You know, my ball-striking hasn't been great this year. I just haven't -- you've got to hit it close to have a birdie opportunity. My start lines have kind of been off, but I know I'm working on the right thing, and it's getting there, getting a little bit better.

I've always been a really good putter, really good short game, but I just need to get my proximity a little bit better on the greens. Last week at KPMG I didn't have any realistic birdie opportunities, just wasn't really hitting the ball that well. But it's a lot better than it was a few months ago, and I know -- with golf you're always trying to get better, and it's not always perfect when you start kind of changing things, but I know I'm on the right track.

Through the hard times I feel like I -- it's been kind of a hard year, but just taking it one day at a time and just being kind to myself. I honestly -- like last week in the practice round on Wednesday on the fourth hole, the par-3, there was this little boy there, and he's like, What time do you tee off tomorrow? I want to come watch. He goes, Okay, well, I have surgery in the morning on Thursday, but I'm going to come watch you that afternoon. I was like, oh, what are you having surgery on, and he goes, "my heart." So this 10-year-old little boy is having heart surgery and wants to come watch me play golf. Obviously his parents didn't tell him, you can't come watch, but they didn't want to crush him. So it just put things even more into perspective.

I'm out here, I get to do this every day, and I've wanted to do that since I was that little boy's age, like 10 years old. Just kind of seeing him, I feel like it was a God thing, like playing bad isn't that bad. His dad came out and watched me on Friday and his surgery went really well.

I was just thinking about him the whole week and I'm still thinking about him, so it was really special.

Yeah, so just like little things like that, I don't know, kind of -- kind of put things more into perspective.

Q. Between that story and so many discussions lately

ASAP . . . when all is said, we're done.®
sports

of mental health and making sure we take care of body and mind, I saw on Instagram you got to go home for a couple weeks a few weeks ago, and I know we're getting into this grind. How are you taking that time to make sure not only is the physical in good shape, are you getting those shots that you need that your brain and your heart are where they need to be, as well?

CHEYENNE KNIGHT: Yeah, after -- golf, I feel like the best players leave it at the golf course, and I'm trying to do more of that. After Asia, it was very strict quarantine, golf course, hotel, but we were so grateful to play, we had to do what was required. But it kind of -- I don't know, like playing bad and then kind of sitting in the hotel and not really doing anything else, I kind of got into like a bad spot mentally, kind of got pretty down.

Like the last few weeks I've tried to think about what else I enjoy off the golf course. I love animals, and I got some paint-by-numbers to make me relax and just chill a little bit.

Yeah, golf is hard. I feel like it's more acceptable now for people to talk about their struggles because everyone goes through it. But yeah, I just -- honestly, Huntley, the little boy from last week, it shook me.

So just being grateful and not being so hard on myself -- because it's -- everyone has the same goal each week, we all want to play well and win, but there's bigger things at the end of the day, and just being grateful and having more fun when I'm playing, not being so life-or-death out there has really just -- like finding stuff more that I enjoy and just being more grateful on the golf course.

Q. You came here, you said you're tired because you came here hopefully from a day of fun. You were with Pat Hurst and a bunch of potential Team USA Solheim Cup players yesterday at Reynolds Lake Oconee. Tell us what that was like; you said a lot of pickleball?

CHEYENNE KNIGHT: Yes, it was so much fun. Pat, Angela and Michelle did such a great job organizing it. It was nice to see people outside the golf course. Amy Olson and Ally are so good at pickleball, and I was not very good at first. But we played badminton, pickleball, we did cornhole, archery, shot the clays. I wasn't very good at that. And we went fishing.

But it was a lot of fun. Just kind of not being -- when you see people on the golf course, like they are doing their -- you're at work. Doing the drills on the putting green, playing a practice round, being focused, so actually seeing people in another environment I would say was a lot of fun.

It was great to just bond a little bit more with people I didn't

know that well. But yeah, I'm a little sore today from pickleball. That's not good.

But I think I'm going to get a racquet. I'm not as good as Amy, but I'm at the beginner level.

Q. I've heard Anne van Dam is the one you've really got to watch out for.

CHEYENNE KNIGHT: Oh, yeah. I'm not there yet.

Q. You mentioned Angela's win last year, and her victory being the last player over 40 to win on the LPGA, how important is it from your perspective for the health of the Tour to have players in their 40s being in contention?

CHEYENNE KNIGHT: I think it's great. I've looked up to Angela for a really long time, and just seeing one of my idols growing up still playing on Tour, because I grew up in the era of Lorena and Annika and I never got to watch them play. I was fortunate enough to play with Annika at the Diamond Resorts tournament earlier this year, but actually playing with people who have been out here so long, they have so much experience.

Angela ran a marathon, and so her winning last year, she's overcome so much. She has a lot of grit. We practice at the same place, so seeing her every day, works so hard still, she never satisfied. So I think that's the most important thing, it doesn't matter how old you are.

I feel like a lot of people think of the prime being late 20s, early 30s, but she's just getting started in a way, and I love that fire in her.

Q. Is there any lessons you've learned from practicing with her every day?

CHEYENNE KNIGHT: Oh, gosh. I mean, so much. I don't think it's lessons essentially, but I feel -- she's a mentor to me, and so if I'm ever going through anything, I just feel very comfortable talking to her about things and just getting her advice.

I remember when I won here two years ago, she comes up to me on the range and I was really nervous, and she goes, You know, God already knows what's going to happen today so just go out there and have fun, so I feel like we have just a very good relationship.

Q. Is her victory here an example of the longevity you want for your own career?

CHEYENNE KNIGHT: Yes. Obviously I want to play on



Tour for a long time, and I feel like that's what everyone wants. Play well, play for a long time. But just taking it one day at a time and staying in the present.

With just my own life, taking it day by day and being thankful for the little things throughout the day is kind of like my mindset right now, but it's God's will if I play or not play, so just taking it one day at a time.

Q. When you drive in I noticed there's a great sign out front that says "Champions are made in Texas" and there's a picture of you and Angela. Is that kind of surreal to see a picture like that up there?

CHEYENNE KNIGHT: Oh, it's so cool. Angela showed me the picture yesterday. Her mom took a picture of it. I had no idea. I don't know if I've said this before, but I remember Angela gave me her Solheim Cup shoes from 2009, and I just was -- it was so cool. I think I still have them, honestly.

You know, I've just looked up to her for a really long time, and it's so cool to both of us be like former champions of this event. She's always wanted to win at home, so last year her getting it done was just really special with her parents there.

We just are -- where we're we practice, we're just kind of one big family.

Q. When did she give you the shoes? What was the story behind that?

CHEYENNE KNIGHT: So Mike Bright, he's the head pro at Shady Oaks -- I met her before then. I think the first time I met her may have been 2008 or something like that, and she was about to go play the Solheim Cup, and she just took an interest in me and was just so kind to talk to me and I was so shy, I didn't even know what to say. Next time I was up there, she left the shoes for me. Just something that -- I met her a few times, talked to her a little bit, but she remembered me and was kind enough to give me something that special.

Q. I think a lot of people saw it with your win, your intense passion maybe would you call it?

CHEYENNE KNIGHT: Yeah.

Q. I saw it on the Symetra Tour, just the want to -- you talked about the want to be as great as some of the greats before you. You've had that pressure on you when you were recruited by Alabama and when you first got out to the Symetra Tour with the amateur resume that you had. After your win I'm sure that put a

little newer pressure, you went from being the underdog to people taking notice of your game. When you reflect on yesterday and who you were with and what you were there for, in the long run do you feel like there's kind of a new pressure or just an exhilaration of a new pressure that could launch the next phase of your career?

CHEYENNE KNIGHT: Yes, I definitely think -- it goes junior golf, amateur, college, all that stuff, and then I feel like the next thing for me is to make the Solheim Cup team, and it's been like one of my goals. I do want it a lot, and I would be -- it's something I've always -- I watched all the Solheim Cups like growing up, and it is like an added pressure, but I feel like it's an honor to compete for a team and compete for a spot or a pick.

I think I've always been good, like I can't control the points, I don't even know what position I'm at right now, so I just -- like each week is a new opportunity, and that's kind of how I'm viewing it as, but honestly being around those girls that I've looked up to for a long time, and when I think like three years ago I just started my professional golf journey on the Symetra Tour and to where I am now, I am proud of myself.

But just like being considered is an honor, but I am a competitor, and I want to make that team and I want to make a last push until the British to get a spot.

But yeah, I would say I've always done kind of well with pressure. If I like just think back to all the stuff that I've overcome in my golf career, I feel like I handle it pretty well. I handle adversity pretty well. But it's just opportunity, and just got to get a little better every day.

Q. Last push starts tomorrow or can start Thursday. You're going to be teeing it up with Stacy Lewis and Sei Young Kim, two major champions, pretty cool there. What's the goal for this week?

CHEYENNE KNIGHT: Just trying to get some consistency, getting my ball-striking to where I want it. I have a great pairing, two girls that I look up to a lot, so just kind of seeing -- and I love playing with good players every week, but especially like two girls that have an amazing resume and kind of just see how my game stacks up because I learn from them, too. I'm still learning, still kind of a young player on the Tour.

Just kind of try to get some more consistency. I'm putting and chipping it really well, but just kind of get my ball-striking back to where it needs to be and then go from there.

Q. Obviously the Aon hole is the par-5 17th hole. Is there a specific strategy that you go into that hole with?

CHEYENNE KNIGHT: Yes, so the tee shot, if you can cut the corner a little bit on the left side, you kind of hit more of the speed slot and have a shorter shot in, but I kind of just take it a little bit right of that because you don't want to go left in the bunker because you could -- it's just bad.

So on that hole, if the pin is ever on the right side, even in the back, and if I'm in the fairway I'm going to just take my 3-wood or 7-wood or hybrid up there and try to get on. But the left pins, those bunkers aren't really the place to be, so if it's on the left side I'll just lay up to a good number and wedge it up. That's what I did when I won.

The only time I birdied that hole was the last day, honestly. So hopefully my strategy works a little bit better this year. But it's a great hole. It can change a lot of things.

And the green, just how it's designed, you can get -- there's just essentially three pin locations, front, back and on the left side, and you can use the slopes to get close to those. It's definitely a game changer.

Q. Where do you think the key decision is on that hole?

CHEYENNE KNIGHT: Positioning your second shot for sure because if you go left in the bunkers, you -- it's relatively a long bunker shot with a high lip and then if you miss right of the green there's a bunker and then there's a false side, and you kind of have to hit kind of a high soft shot to get it close.

When I won the last day, I hit it right of the right bunker and hit a flop shot to like 10, 12 feet and made it. If you can pull it off on that narrow gap, the second shot is crucial because even if you like go a little bit right in the fairway and not try and take the speed slot, you're still going to have a chance to go for the green.

Q. What kind of process do you and your caddie go through, kind of preparing for the shot or preparing for the hole in general?

CHEYENNE KNIGHT: So the second shot really is where it's at. So me and my caddie say, if I can't get close to the front number then it's not worth it because a lot of things could go wrong. If the front is over like 225 we're just not going to even bother, just lay up to a good number and try to make birdie from there.

Just the second shot, but if you're feeling good and --

you've just got to pull it off. I mean, I trust my short game, but yeah, if it's too far of a carry, I'm not going to trust it that much to take a risk.

Q. Is there like a particular piece of information maybe going into the first round that you kind of like to hold on to approaching that hole?

CHEYENNE KNIGHT: Hmm. Honestly when I -- probably tomorrow night when I get the pins, just seeing where it's at and just kind of getting my game plan because I mark the pins every night in my yardage book and kind of in my head think about -- I've played this course a lot, so I know where you should hit it, where not to hit it, so just kind of in my mind thinking about like how to attack it and what time of the day I'm going to be playing that hole, check the wind and kind of go from there.

Q. You talked a little bit about your win and how that hole kind of played into it. Do you remember your strategy at all from 2019? I know that was kind of a long time ago.

CHEYENNE KNIGHT: Foot on the gas, like accelerator, just because I needed such a good finish to keep my card, but keep playing aggressive. I hit the ball really well that week, putted -- just like every part of my game was on. On that hole I remember I didn't have a good number, but me and my caddie with that front pin, we knew we had to go for it, and if I could get it anywhere around the green I was going to have a good chance because I think Brittany and Jaye birdied the hole, I think.

For me to birdie that hole and have a one-shot lead going into the last hole was huge.

You just have to -- I mean on the risk-reward holes you need to be aggressive to kind of keep yourself in the race because I'm not one of the longer hitters so I'm having a wood when some people may be having an iron into that green. Just playing aggressive.

Q. It was a tight leaderboard that year, so were you having to be aggressive that day to kind of make sure that you did birdie that hole?

CHEYENNE KNIGHT: Yeah, I made a lot of birdies that whole week, and I knew I needed to keep making birdies, and I got off to kind of a slow start the last day, but I kept -- I feel like if you just keep hitting the greens and giving yourself realistic chances, it's going to -- you're going to click at some point.

I birdied 9 and 10, chipped in, and then on 14, the par-5, I birdied that, and then 17, birdied -- so I just kind of birdied

the par-5s on the back, but I also had like a lot of chances during the last few holes, but on 18 I played pretty conservatively.

Yeah, just being aggressive. I knew that everyone on that leaderboard had a chance, even people a little bit back, because the scores were low that week.

That's how it always is. You know anyone has a chance to win and shoot a low round on the weekend.

FastScripts by ASAP Sports

