

RBC Heritage

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Hilton Head Island, South Carolina, USA

Harbour Town Golf Links

Brian Harman

Press Conference



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THE MODERATOR: We would like to welcome 2023 Open Championship winner Brian Harman to the interview room here at the RBC Heritage. This is the 20-year anniversary of your PGA TOUR debut at the 2004 RBC Heritage. Looking back at that week does it feel like it's been 20 years?

BRIAN HARMAN: Yeah, it feels like a lifetime ago. I was I think 16 or 17 years old, so, yeah, feels like a long time ago.

THE MODERATOR: What kind of memories do you have coming back to this tournament every year? As I mentioned to you, that you made the second most starts of any player in the field, how does it feel to be back here, especially as a major champion for the first time?

BRIAN HARMAN: Yeah, this is one of my absolute favorite stops all year. The state of South Course, I'm so happy that they have got such a good field. This is such a great event. They have always supported this event, even when it got a little dicey there, I don't know, seven, eight years ago. We were afraid we were going to lose this tournament. I'm so glad that it's still here and kind of made it through. They have got a great field and great weather, it's going to be a fantastic event.

THE MODERATOR: All right, we'll take some questions.

Q. Always seemed seems like you have a good feeling here being a local guy. Entering this tournament, how special is it to always come back, getting to play basically in your home backyard, and also do you have any local friends or family that you plan on seeing this week?

BRIAN HARMAN: Yeah, we always entertain a pretty big crowd this week. My parents, my in-laws, a bunch of friends from Savannah, they always come out and support, which is fantastic. This is the first tournament that I attended as a spectator, first PGA TOUR event that I played as an amateur. Yeah, so, for me, this is an incredible spot. I love the golf course. It's always really,

really comforting to be back here.

Q. Got to ask, what happened at the Masters and when is the last time you shot 47?

BRIAN HARMAN: Oh, man, 47, you're right. I thought it was 46. You know, I had -- I didn't have my best stuff. I played at Valero and was feeling pretty good, winning there. My prep wasn't that great. Got off to a good start, which I haven't really done, and the conditions just got the better of me. I hit a wedge shot into the water on 13, which is the hole that I restarted on, and I just lost my patience. I've been pretty good at being able to kind of dial myself or bring myself back to the moment, and I just, yeah, I made that mistake.

Then I hit it in the water on 16. Both shots I felt like I executed pretty good. If you could have let me move my ball three feet I probably would have made two birdies instead of a double and a triple. Once I got behind it, the wind's blowing, it's just such a hard golf course. I was proud of the way that I hung in there without really -- I wasted the golf tournament, but I was proud of the way I hung in there Friday afternoon and shot a decent score, even after I wasn't going to make the cut. So, what happened? I lost patience and made some bad golf swings and they add up quick over there.

Q. Going back to that first time you played on a sponsor invite, did you write a letter? Do you remember what that was like finding out that you were getting in the tournament?

BRIAN HARMAN: Yeah, I can remember Steve Wilcot called me. I was at home, obviously still living with my parents, I was 16. Yeah, I got the call, was super excited. I probably came over here and played 15 times after I found out, trying to like -- I thought this was the hardest golf course that I had ever played as a 16 year old trying to come here and play. It was great experience. I didn't play any good. It obviously set in motion my love for this place and how much I love coming back.

Q. Do you think there should be sponsor invites now that this is a Signature Event?

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BRIAN HARMAN: Well, it's a tricky one. I mean, in the pure meritocracy of it, no. But we're asking sponsors to pony up extra money for these events, and so I don't see how you can ask them to also not have sponsor exemptions. So, I hear arguments for both sides and I understand both sides. I don't really have a strong opinion either way. I think the elevated events have been, for me anyway, have been a fantastic experience. They have an aura about them that makes it feel like an old-school PGA TOUR event. Like, they feel like a really big deal and I've been very excited to compete in 'em.

Q. First of all, when have you not had a strong opinion about anything?

BRIAN HARMAN: (Laughing). In press conferences I don't have strong opinions.

Q. Is any part of you surprised that Scottie is playing this week with everything going on, and is there a part of you that hopes he doesn't?

BRIAN HARMAN: Yeah, there's lots of parts of me that hope he doesn't play. No, I'm not surprised. He's one of those guys that when he commits to do a thing, he's going to do it. Yeah, he's about as impressive as a guy that you're ever going to meet. I can remember when he first came out he, I was razzing him about Texas football. I was trying to get a reaction out of him. Wouldn't give it to me. I was joking with him. I was impressed that he didn't bite on that.

Then I can remember it was either his -- what year is this for him? Five or six? Five? So this would have been maybe his second year. His rookie year or second year, we're playing together in Detroit. And he shoots, I mean, something -- he shoots a bad score the first day. Then, the second day, he goes out, he's got no chance to make the cut, and he shoots like this perfect 65. Like, just all day, just like what you see now. And that was really impressive because most -- I felt like most guys that were first year, they would have kind of mailed it in, but he just went through his routine and shot a great score. Scottie's success has not surprised me. He's got like the perfect mental strength and demeanor to do what he's doing.

Q. Speaking of him, at least from the outside looking in, it seems like the gap between him and others has widened a little bit. Does it feel that way at all?

BRIAN HARMAN: Feels that way from the inside looking out too.

Q. Is it more up to him to come back or how do guys reach where he is or chase him down?

BRIAN HARMAN: Yeah, that's kind of the rub of our game, and I'm sure the guys felt the same way when Tiger was winning every tournament that he stepped foot on. It feels like right now that if Scottie shows up with anything above a B game he's probably going to be right there. He's been so consistent. He works extremely hard. I can remember at THE PLAYERS this year he had just won Bay Hill the day before and Monday afternoon he's out just, I mean, golf ball after golf ball after golf ball, working, working, working. So, he's very dedicated to it. He's got a great mental approach to the game. I don't think that he gets -- I don't think he gets enough credit for the way that he does putt. Everyone wants to pick apart his putting, but it seems pretty good to me.

Q. To follow-up on that, I think 2012 and 2013 would have been probably your biggest crossover year, playing along Tiger Woods when he was winning a lot. Do you see comparisons between those two?

BRIAN HARMAN: Let's see, 2012, I think Tiger won five times. He swept the invitationals -- seems like Scottie and his current trajectory would be very comparable to that. Yeah, he's just, you know, he's extremely good and he's playing extremely good. I'm super excited for him and Meredith to welcome their child into the world. They're going to be fantastic parents. He's a very agreeable person to be around. I mean, I can't say enough nice things about him.

Q. How has the reception that you receive everywhere changed since The Open Championship, and how exciting is it to think to Thursday morning or afternoon whenever it is that you are announced at this event closest to home, a lot of people you probably haven't seen or heard since July welcoming you here?

BRIAN HARMAN: Yeah, it's certainly been a different experience being a major champion. I'm here for all of it. I love it. It's been fantastic. It's given me what I feel like is a little bit more room to try and perform the way that I feel like that I can perform. Not that it's given me any sort of a cushion, but it's given me a little extra confidence and it's given me a little extra motivation to try to work really hard to try and put my game back into the place that's good enough to win a major.

Q. Thinking ahead to Thursday morning what's that going to be like?

BRIAN HARMAN: It will be great. I'll appreciate everyone that's there and there will be a friendly faces. But when Thursdays come around, I don't notice that stuff a lot. It's about hitting that first tee shot and getting off to a good

start and I'm trying to win this golf tournament.

Q. With this course I think considered a short course, do you feel like it fits your game better, and also you had a great start last year, does that give you any confidence heading into this year's tournament?

BRIAN HARMAN: The confidence that I'll have going into this tournament will just be because of my preparation this week. Usually after you struggle, especially for me, after I struggle for a week I usually play pretty well the next week.

It's because I kind of refocus and work again. Yeah, I don't think about the golf course a whole lot as far as if it suits me or if it doesn't suit me. They all present their different challenges. I know what it takes to contend around this place and those are the things that I work on and hopefully I get 'em a little sharper going into Thursday.

Q. Last Monday when you were talking at the Masters a lot of people asked about being in Georgia, home type of event. Are these two weeks circled for you going into this season every year and the excitement level for you to play so close?

BRIAN HARMAN: Yeah, for sure. Growing up in Savannah you're almost an adopted South Carolinian over here. Like I said, as getting a chance to play as an amateur here, I'm very familiar with this place. I love this area. I love the Coastal Empire. I'm just really thrilled that this tournament is getting such a good field, getting a little extra recognition. Maybe some guys that wouldn't normally play this event are showing up. I'm fairly certain they will fall in love with it and it will be a more permanent start on their schedules.

THE MODERATOR: All right, Brian, thank you very much for your time, and best of luck this week.

BRIAN HARMAN: Appreciate it.

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