

The Saudi International powered by SoftBank Investment Advisers

Thursday, 4 February, 2021

King Abdullah Economic City, Saudi Arabia
Royal Greens Golf and Country Club

Stephen Gallacher

Press Conference

STEVE TODD: Before we get into questions, do you want to give us your reflections on the round, great way to start this week.

STEPHEN GALLACHER: Yeah, it was good. It's a course I was looking forward to coming back to. I just hit it really close to the pin. It's probably the closest proximity I've ever had to the flag I think and then when I got it on a roll on the back nine I holed it to 25 foot at 8 and thought I could hole the one at the last. It was solid and gave myself plenty of chances and took them.

STEVE TODD: You were saying how much you put in over the winter period. Nice to see that come to fruition.

STEPHEN GALLACHER: Yeah, well, 2020 was just a write off. So I just sort of gone to the gym, worked hard on my game and just couldn't look forward to 2020 enough. When the bells came, it was a relief. Came out a week early. Played pretty good in Abu Dhabi and struggled off the tee last week. Worked hard on my game and it was good today. I'm delighted with that.

I think the good thing now is being Scottish, you have young Bob doing really well and Marc up there the first week, Scott Jamieson is chipping away. You have a lot of the young kids coming through. It's good to keep the old boys on their toes and it's been great watching the young kids doing well. When you're in such a small country, it sort of breeds on the other. It sort of rubs off on you, as well.

Q. Last year, you were just outside the Top-20 in this event last year, and you played really well in the final round, and the wind was up if memory serves me right. How good was that experience in terms of coming back to this event?

STEPHEN GALLACHER: Yeah, like I said, it was my best result last year. It's a great golf course like you say.



السعودية الدولية
SAUDI
INTERNATIONAL
POWERED BY  SoftBank
Investment Advisers

Generally it gets windy in the afternoon. The scoring from the morning to the afternoon is always tougher. I think we know that. By the forecast we're seeing as well it's going to be tricky.

All the scores, the scoring in the afternoon is way worse in the morning. You know it's good to get one in when you know it going to be windy at some stage the next three days?

Q. Talking about how close you were hitting it most of the day, is that something you felt confident from the start? Were you feeling good about the swing?

STEPHEN GALLACHER: I've done quite a lot of work over the last couple days and hitting my irons pretty good. I still hit a couple of poor drives today but just into the rough, so I got away with it. But if I keep driving the ball well, I'm hitting my irons well, so it's one of those ones, and just something nice to build off the first round.

Q. You must have been seeing the hole like a bucket today, ten birdies?

STEPHEN GALLACHER: Yeah, something like that. I had four or five tap-ins which was nice. It's like when you get on a roll, I kept hitting it pretty close, and you do see it like a bucket every now; and then when you get on a roll, you think you're going to hole everything. You've got to kind of make hay while the sun shines with that department, because it could be the total opposite the other days, when you feel like you can't see anything going in.

It was lovely to find that today. I did feel confident over it. Thought I was going to hole everything and I did hole a few, which was nice.

Q. I guess all the birdies, any birdie is good, but what would you say was the pick of the birdies today?

STEPHEN GALLACHER: I think the one I had at the long par 4, I had a lovely drive and a nice 8-iron to six feet. You can hit driver and 5-iron in there if you miss your drive. It was good to get that. That's quite a tricky hole on the front nine. That kept the momentum going and means that I

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

could have a birdie at the next two as well which were quite short holes. That was a good momentum-builder.

Q. You touched on the fact that Scottish golf is in a good place at the moment and you've been in a good place, and in your career, you've come in off the back of Monty and Brandt Jr. and those guys. I don't want to say you're the senior player, but you must be sort of quite proud yourself of all those guys like Calum Hill and you mentioned Marc Warren, and of course Robert MacIntyre.

STEPHEN GALLACHER: I think there's ten guys in the field this week, which is not bad, nearly a tenth of the field. There's a lot of young kids coming through. I see it in my foundation, as well, the younger generation. Obviously we had Paul Lawrie, and Sam and Monty when I was playing, Sandy Lyle coming through, watching these guys.

So yeah, I think Scottish golf is in a really good place right now. You don't want to put too much pressure on anyone but it's nice to just sit back and watch, watch them flourish.

Q. You seem to be feeding off each other, too, as well.

STEPHEN GALLACHER: I think that's the thing, we're such a small country, and you know, managed by the same people most of us, and it's just nice to, you know, you go out for dinner with the young guys and get a bit of craic with them and whatnot, and it's good.

Q. Well-played today. I probably won't be as diplomatic as Bernie. When you're at your -- when you're at your stage of your career, I just wonder how much excitement a round of golf like that actually gives you, because I know that you're not going to get carried away, but equally, choosing 62 in that company is pretty special, isn't it?

STEPHEN GALLACHER: Well, like you say, I'm just happy to make it around, you know, 18 holes at any age.

It's like anything else. I think you see Miguel playing here this week, as well. You see Ernie playing, Mickelson playing, all in their 50s and still striping it, still enjoying, it still got the will to travel. I think when you shoot 62 or eight under around your home track playing with your mates, you're happy with it. It doesn't happen very often. It's one of these days, and the good thing is, you know, you don't get too carried away. Still three rounds to go. But it's a good platform to build off any time you have one of these in a tournament.

Obviously playing well. You've got some good thoughts to take into the next three days and see what happens.

Q. You just talked about it, Ernie and Phil and Angel. As you were talking about you give some credence to the younger guys, they understand, they see you playing, how much -- do those guys give to you want to play longer in your career?

STEPHEN GALLACHER: I think Miguel has played 710 European Tour events. I'm going to be 600 this year. So I would love to emulate Miguel and play another five or six years and try and get to 700. You see obviously smoking cigars and drinking red wine is good for you, so I'm going to start smoking. But you look at Miguel and you look at Ernie, and you look at all these guys who have been out here for ages, they still play well. They still give advice to the young guys.

You can ask them anything and they are great ambassadors for golf and that's why they are here. When you come to an emerging nation, an emerging country, these guys are icons, it's great them giving back.

Q. I've been coming a lot over to the U.K. and there was a point where Scottish golf was kind of shunned. It was like no one was playing that well out of Scotland. How gratifying is it to see the situation now where not only that you have these guys that you just talked about. There's this kind of like pipeline now that seems to be able to create more and more good Scottish golfers?

STEPHEN GALLACHER: I think it comes in cycles. I think maybe 15 years ago there, was not one Englishman in the top 100 in the world. That was not that long ago. Now there's two in the Top-10 or one in the Top-10.

It happens in cycles, and they just come in waves. I think that the guys coming through just now, you know, they look like they belong here. That's as much a compliment as you can give them I think. They come from The Challenge Tour and they come from different routes and you have Bob who looks like he's going to be a superstar, but you don't want to put too much pressure on him. And we're all in numbers, they are all pretty handy golfers now.

STEVE TODD: Thanks for joining us.

FastScripts by ASAP Sports