

Dubai Duty Free Irish Open

Wednesday, 30 June, 2021

Thomastown, County Kilkenny, Ireland

Mount Juliet Estate

Shane Lowry

Press Conference

CLARE BODEL: Welcome, Shane, welcome back home. We'll start with that, you mentioned recently it's been a long time since you've been back to Ireland. Give us a sense of how much you're enjoying being back home even though it's only been for a few days so far.

SHANE LOWRY: Yeah, it's nice being back home. It's nice -- it's just nice to get home, isn't it. No matter where you go in the world it's always nice to be home. Go home last week and got to see some family and friends at the weekend that I haven't seen since Christmas, so that was nice.

Obviously coming here to play the Irish Open is exciting. It's a tournament that obviously means a lot to me. And not that I owe a lot to it, but it kick-started my whole career with that invite I got here and winning it, so I probably do owe a lot to the tournament. It is nice to be here and it's nice to have some good weather down here in Kilkenny, and, hopefully that stays for the rest of the week and we can all have a good week.

CLARE BODEL: You touched on there, a tournament that means a lot to you and you've played many times. This is a course you maybe don't know quite as well. What have you made of it so far being out there playing the Pro-Am today.

SHANE LOWRY: It's good. I grew up about an hour and a half from here, so played here a few times over the years. It's probably not as long as the modern day golf course that we play, but I think the fairways are narrow enough to maybe make it trickier when you do miss fairways because it's quite firm out there. It's a lovely place to play golf and a lovely place to be.

Obviously we have our bubble this week but it doesn't feel like a bubble here at Mount Juliet because it's so nice we're. We were actually commenting, there were a few lads at dinner last night in the bar, we were commenting on that; it doesn't feel like the actual bubble this week because the surroundings are so nice. It's great to be here and at a nice venue, and hopefully I can be here for the whole week



and hopefully I can be here until late Sunday afternoon.

Q. A rich run of form in the last few months. Anything you've had to work on since the U.S. Open? Any changes to the bag this week, given it's probably a slighter course than you're used to playing?

SHANE LOWRY: No, nothing changed. To be honest I got home from the U.S. Open on Monday and jet-lag hit me pretty hard, eight hours from San Diego, so that was tough for the week. Took me a few days to get over that. So I didn't really get to do much last week. I saw Neil on Friday. Played golf on Thursday.

Yeah, I haven't really practised or worked on a whole lot until I got down here. But I felt like my game was in pretty decent shape this morning. I did quite a bit of putting yesterday. Bit of practise. Played nine holes. So I felt like, you know, I would have known from yesterday or today if there's anything that needed to be sorted out.

Like the thing is, you go to the U.S. Open, you go to a place like Torrey Pines, and yeah, you shoot 13-over for in our founds and feel like your game is probably miles away. But when you look back and break down the whole week, it probably wasn't as far away as it looked. I've always struggled and even I was very worried about going over to Torrey Pines. I've always struggled on fast poa annua greens and I lost my confidence there fairly quickly, and that killed me.

Nice greens here this tweak. They are rolling lovely this morning, so hopefully I can just keep doing what I've been doing over the last few months and hopefully have a good week.

Q. Thinking about Open prep for Royal St. George's, because this is a parkland test, is there anything you can take forward from this week that you're looking to take forward going into the links?

SHANE LOWRY: The only thing I'd be looking to take forward from this week is having a good week and building confidence. There's probably nothing you can take away from this week that will help me at St. George's in my game apart from building confidence. More of a mental thing.

I'm very fortunate I live in Ireland and I can have a about week's prep on links, on probably not some of the best but probably the best links courses are in Ireland. So I can play a couple of those and hopefully I get a couple of windy days next week that I can really go out and get some good prep done. So that's my plan for next week.

Yeah, the only thing I'd be looking to take from this week would be trying to build confidence and trying to get up there and trying to win a tournament. I think if I could do that, I'd be pretty happy leaving Sunday night.

Q. You talked about the Olympics before this press conference, but can you talk about the emotion of receiving that and the Olympic gear last week? Did it hit a chord?

SHANE LOWRY: Yeah, it did. It didn't really -- I've obviously known for a while that I'm probably going to be on the team and going to Tokyo. Like the team is officially announced on, whatever, after the U.S. Open, and then you start getting text messages from people congratulating you. Got my gear during the week. Talking to some of the people from the Irish Olympic council or committee, whatever, sorry, talking to those people and seeing how much it means to those people to be involved, I think it's just pretty cool that I'm going.

But like I'm not going -- not that I want to put too much pressure on myself. But I'm not going to make up the numbers. Like I'm going to win a medal. I sat down last week and you sort of talk about it and you talk about it with Neil and talk about it with my friends and stuff. We don't actually come home with that many medals from Olympics as Irish athletes. So it just would be really cool to win a medal. It would be amazing. It would be a huge achievement, huge achievement for me and my family to be involved in that.

Look, for me growing up, I never thought I was going to be going to the Olympics, so it's obviously new and it's going to be pretty cool.

Q. Have you spoken to Justin Rose or Stenson or Kuchar and how important it was for them in their career?

SHANE LOWRY: No, I really haven't spoken to them at all. Obviously like it obviously means a lot to them. You've just seen the way they have gone about it over the years, over the last few years.

It's a pretty cool thing, and I think as the years go on, look, golf, it is a big deal now. Like it is a big deal but I think it will actually become bigger and it will become quite a big

part of golf is preparing for Olympics. Yeah, like I said, not that -- I'd give anything, if you just really -- it would be unbelievable to go and come home with a medal. It would be a really cool achievement and something that I could tick off my list and be very proud of and happy with.

Q. You're very close to winning, you're knocking on the door, an Offaly man to Kilkenny this week, that would be special.

SHANE LOWRY: It's been a while since Offaly won in Kilkenny. Like I go into the Irish Open every year wanting to bad to win this tournament again. At the start of the year, you're looking at tournaments that you'd like to win and this is definitely up there with them.

Obviously it would be amazing. I just want to give myself a chance. I just really, really would love the buzz to give myself a chance, and given what few people are here, the chance to see me do something really cool again.

Q. You spoke about confidence, wondering about your confidence levels with the putter. You made a change this year. How is that going, are you happy with how that's going and can you talk as well about why are confidence in The Ryder Cup process? That was your big goal for the season.

SHANE LOWRY: Yeah, obviously a made a decent change with my putter. Changed my grip back after Bay Hill. So struggled at Bay Hill and then went to PLAYERS and did pretty good. Since then, I feel like I've been pretty good. There's been, you know, certain rounds that have not been great but there's been, more often than not, I've been pretty solid the way I'm putting.

So I'm very happy the way that's going. Like I've had my bad weeks, there's no doubt about that, but you have your bad weeks. Everyone has their bad weeks.

I felt like I needed to do something to try to become a bit more consistent, and I did. I certainly think some of my form has been down to being comfortable over putts and over short putts. You know, I'm pretty happy the way that's going. It's a rode that I'm looking down and a road that I'm kind of trying to build confidence and build on what I'm doing and be happy with what I'm doing. It's more of a long-term thing than trying to get short-term results.

As regards toward The Ryder Cup, I've had some good weeks and put myself pretty close to the team. I think some good golf over the next couple of months will take care of that. And yeah, I'd obviously be very excited to be on that team and going to Whistling Straits and going to win The Ryder Cup. It would be amazing just to be

involved in something like that to go there and try and win that Ryder Cup for especially one of your really good friends as captain. I've not been shy about talking about that. So it's been my main goal for the whole year and for the last two years, and I really feel like that's there in front of me now and it up for me to kind of go and reel it in or go and grab it by the scruff of the neck and go and get it.

Q. You obviously had a good, long stint in the States. Do you have the Claret Jug with you?

SHANE LOWRY: I didn't. It was at home. So I didn't bring it over.

Q. What was the reunion like? Did you take time to look at it and reflect on what you did last year?

SHANE LOWRY: I haven't really looked at it to be honest. You know, it's funny, because you think, not that it's done, but like it's so long ago now, not that I'm ready to put it behind me because it's something I'll always have, but I'm really happy I've achieved something like that. I've obviously got the trophy. But it's not like I sit down there every night with it on my dinner table in front of when I'm eating my dinner. It's something that I have and I've put aside.

But I'm obviously very focused and driven to do things and do different things in the sport, not necessarily bigger, better, because I think I'll find that hard to achieve. But yeah, I'm just very hungry and very anxious -- not anxious, but very hungry and very driven and focused on going and achieving different stuff in this game. I don't tend to think about it too much. It's funny, because it's just there now. It's a part of the furniture and it's pretty cool to have that.

Q. There's been talk about whether this is a good week or a bad week to have the Irish Open, but is it good that you can get up for this one, maybe take a little bit of time to regroup and then go again for The Open?

SHANE LOWRY: Yeah, I've not really talked about it. I'm probably in the camp that I think maybe it's not the best date. I'm thinking, in my opinion, and I've never really said this and I don't know -- Brian is over there looking at me, I don't know what he's going to say, but I think the week after The Open is probably a really good day. That's the original date, the week after The Open in Portmarnock; I remember going and watching the Irish Opens as a kid there.

I think the week after The Open could possibly be a better date than this. Because it's just hard, guys are trying to get ready for major championships and obviously The Scottish

Open has the best date because they can play on a links course the week before The Open.

But yeah, who knows. It's not my call. But if I was involved, probably the week after The Open would be my preferred date.

Q. You have an early start tomorrow for the Irish Open, how do you think that will build your confidence for this weekend?

SHANE LOWRY: I do like being early the first round. I do genuinely like that. I'm looking forward to getting going. Hope the weather is not too cold or the weather is okay in the morning that I can shoot a decent score and sit back for the afternoon and wait till Friday afternoon to play again.

Yeah, the greens are generally fresh first thing in the morning, so they will be nice tomorrow morning. I'm just hoping -- I'm confident and hoping I can go out and shoot the best score I can tomorrow, a few under and go on and kick on for the rest of the week now.

Q. Do you think getting early will be a good assessment for yourselves as you're focusing on yourself while the rest are --

SHANE LOWRY, it's funny, I've been around long enough now and I've played obviously lot of tournaments and I've had early/late tee times, and I've done well or bad on both. So it doesn't really bother me. If I was late tomorrow, it wouldn't bother me. Just you get your tee time and you plan for that and you just kind of work towards that.

Yeah, you just hope you're not that early on a Saturday or a Sunday. You hope you're a bit later on a Saturday or a Sunday. To be honest, if you had not asked me the question, I wouldn't even be thinking about it.

Q. And finally, you talked about fans a few months ago, and you said you wanted to get 1,999 tickets for people you know, and obviously there's still 5,000. How many did you manage to get?

SHANE LOWRY: I didn't get many at all. I didn't get enough. I obviously have a lot of friends and family that are unable to attend this week and that's just the way it is. Is there 5,000 here? I think it's way less, maybe 1,500 to 2,000 spectators here, which is obviously not ideal. We'd love to have a lot more, but it is what it is, and we just have to get on with it and, yeah, deal with it, and hopefully the people that are here, I can give them something to cheer about come the weekend.

Q. Tomorrow you're teeing off with John Caldwell who obviously did very well recently on the European Tour in the Scandinavian Mix. He was coming through when you were coming through, but he's had to do it the hard way before getting his first European Tour win. I'm sure you've already congratulated him. But will it be good to be reunited with him after all these years?

SHANE LOWRY: Yeah, look, it's going to be great. I have huge admiration for someone like Johnny Caldwell who stuck with it for so long. Even the level I've been at for the last few years, when things are not going your way, it's pretty hard. I can only imagine what it's like at that level.

You know, fair play. I text him straightaway afterwards when he won. And even I said it to him in Galgorm. I remember meeting him at Galgorm last year, and he obviously got his card back after ten years of trying. And I just said to him, "Johnny, people in Ireland will actually miss it," because it seems like all people care about now is if you're going to win a major or not.

But Johnny's story is actually as big as anything in Irish sport. I might be biased because it's golf, but I really do think what he's achieved over the last couple of years, getting his card back and winning on Tour at 37 years of age, fair play to him. Hopefully it can be something that he can build on now and hopefully he can kick on now. He's got his card for another couple years, and that will take the pressure off him. He's in all the big tournaments next year and hopefully he can kick on and become a big name again and a big name on The European Tour and win more tournaments.

Q. The Open returning to Portrush, I know it's been talked about for a while, but in recent months, they have talked about it coming back in 2025. I know that would be something you would love to see.

SHANE LOWRY: Yeah, obviously, the rumours about 2025, it's nothing official yet or anything, but if they do go back there to Portrush, when you talk to all the players, I'm obviously very biased, but it was one of the favourites. Obviously it was my favourite Open that I've ever played in.

But if you talk to a lot of the American players and caddies and anybody who was there, and no one had a bad word to say about their week at Portrush.

It was something that I think the R&A are obviously looking at and hopefully they can go back there sooner rather than later and it will be pretty cool. I'm just hoping they can go back there when I'm still half-decent at golf and can compete. There will be a few Opens towards the end of

my career that I'll be probably struggling at, so hopefully we can get back to Portrush before that happens.

Q. First like to know what you think of Mount Juliet and how much you remember of it, and a big change going from a tough test like Torrey Pines to a big, wide-open parkland course like Mount Juliet.

SHANE LOWRY: I wouldn't say it's "wide open" but obviously, look, Torrey Pines is incredibly difficult. It takes it out of you. Weeks like that take it out of you. I got punched around there pretty bad that week.

So it was nice to get home and have a week off last week and it's obviously nice to be here at Mount Juliet. It's still a decent test. Look, the scoring is going to be quite good especially if we have nice weather but who cares. I think if everybody just has a good week, the course looks good, the course is in great shape, we get a good winner, I think we can all have a good week.

For me personally, being back here in the bubble, we're obviously used to a different world over in America when we are playing the PGA TOUR but coming back to Europe, it's nice to be here. It's such a nice venue, nice hotel, getting looked after really well.

And to be honest, I played the golf course, I played nine holes yesterday and I had not played here for a few years, and I played 18 holes this morning. The golf course is in really, really good shape. Just looking forward to the week ahead. Like I keep saying, I'm just kind of hopeful that I can have a good week myself and get my name toward the top of the leaderboard.

Q. Just on that nine holes yesterday, I heard whispers that potentially Caolan Rafferty might have got the better of you. I don't know if there's any truth to that, and this WhatsApp group chat, apart from that, do you think he has the game if he was to go pro to compete out there?

SHANE LOWRY: Look, I say this to a lot of people about, you know, you play pretty much every Irish Open I play, I have a knock with a couple of the amateurs who are playing, you play with guys who really impress you, guys you don't really know what to make of. There's so much more to playing professional golf than the golf itself. It just comes down to the person, how determined, how hard-working they are. Caolan is obviously a very talented, very good player and was very unlucky to miss out on the Walker Cup this year. COVID probably didn't do him any favours with that.

So, yeah, look, if he applies himself well and works hard

and gets the breaks, you know, you never know. But it's obviously hard to tell from nine holes like that.

**Q. How does it work with returning the Claret Jug?
Have the R&A been in touch with you to at the time up
a date? How does that work? Have you not
investigated that yet?**

SHANE LOWRY: I have to be there Monday morning, so I'm sure that's when I give it back. Yeah, I'm travelling over on Sunday and I'll be there Monday morning at the golf course. That's the plan as far as I know, anyway. I'll do what I'm told and give it back, and I'll try and have it as shiny as I can for them. I'm sure they will have to bring it off and shine it up themselves, so that's when it's going back.

Q. No damage as far as you know?

SHANE LOWRY: No. It's in great shape.

CLARE BODEL: Thanks, Shane.

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