

# Amgen Irish Open

Wednesday, 11 September, 2024  
Newcastle, County Down, Northern Ireland  
Royal County Down GC

## Padraig Harrington

### Press Conference

MATTHEW JOULE: Glad to be joined by Pádraig Harrington.

Your 29th consecutive Irish Open. Do you ever get bored coming back?

PÁDRAIG HARRINGTON: I didn't realise it was my 29th, yeah, this must be the one that I've played the most. No, I love coming back. Yeah, feeling a little tougher this year. I don't know if I'm older or what it is but I think we're all feeling that in the couple of practise rounds we've played.

But I do enjoy it. I enjoy the fact now, actually, obviously brought back to the level that maybe I grew up with the Irish Open being one of the premiere events on the Tour, and I know we've got a tough course here but the players are abuzz about it. They feel that it is the biggest event this week in golf. It's nice. It's a nice atmosphere. It's a nice feel and it's great as an Irish player that you can be proud of the event, the Amgen Irish Open.

MATTHEW JOULE: How is the course playing out there? It's pretty tough from what I understand.

PÁDRAIG HARRINGTON: Practise day is always tough. Golf course, you always think the worst in practise. If you hit it in the right rough, you think, I do that tomorrow, make a bogey but it doesn't work like that. You recover you and hole a 10-footer or whatever.

It is feeling difficult at the moment but obviously a lot depends -- well, a lot depends on the weather that we get and then some depends on the setup we get. It's always better to have a difficult golf course that could be set up easy than to have an easy golf course that they kind of have to trick up for the scoring.

With what we are seeing, you would expect some middle of green pin positions, just nice pins, because if you hit it close in these -- if you hit any green out there in these conditions, you're playing well.

So it's not like they have to tuck the pins. The greens are

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drying out quick. They are very firm to chip on to and they are reasonably quick to putt on.

Yeah, I don't know if you want to play good golf out there more so you want to think well out there. You want to get your head in the game and work your way around the golf course, be clever. And be patient, I suppose.

But a lot does depend on the weather and the setup.

**Q. Obviously on social media, you were out this morning --**

PÁDRAIG HARRINGTON: I think when you get in conditions like this for amateurs, they have really got to simplify. So there's no point, even in the tough conditions with the format we play, they are going to have a lot of shots from inside 150 yards.

There's just no point in trying to hit an 8-iron up in the air or 7-iron up in the air. They have to learn to hit a long chip shot. Just really nice, simple, like with the hands and arms, kind of the minimum effort to get the most efficiency is the best in these sort of conditions.

You know, the ball, yeah, you're getting it to run. Even into the wind, you're trying to get it to run 25, 30 yards. There's no point in hitting a big quality strike up in the air that the ball is spinning whatever the number on the club. It does not work well. It's simplicity.

If you know a golf course -- the amateurs coming here, even us pros, we don't know the course well enough to know the misses. Hopefully we pick that up in our couple of days practise. I'm sure the members find this course easier than the visitors do because they know where to miss and it's fine. We haven't quite got that. But hopefully I have now.

I played Monday and I played yet. So hopefully I know where I'm going out there and where I can afford to take something on and where I just lay back and play the simple shots. Or maybe that's what you say to the amateurs, just try and keep it simple.

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**Q. You've spoken about angles and philosophies, and this golf course has a huge amount of those and makes you think about golf shots. How do you approach that in a normal tournament?**

PÁDRAIG HARRINGTON: Yeah, I think they proved quite a bit in modern golf that angles aren't important. But when you come to a traditional golf course like this, because a lot of times you have to land short of the green, sometimes ten yards short of the green. If you're not coming from the right side of the fairway, because you can't fly it in there, it won't stop. You do need the right miss.

I think fairways, you are okay pretty much everywhere out there but sometimes the right rough is actually fine because you're running the ball up on the left stone dead. That's the sort of local knowledge you need. You need to understand where your misses are okay and where you can come in from.

Even the holes back into the wind you're landing the ball short of the green, the greens seem to be very firm. They are not -- listening to the guys on the green out there, they are not finding the greens fast but they are incredibly fast when you're chipping and landing on green just because of that first bounce. The ball is releasing.

So you definitely have got to understand the golf course and that but I think if you offered me 14 fairways a day, and you could pick -- I would take the 14 fairways over any angle for sure.

**Q. You had a bit of links practise last week?**

PÁDRAIG HARRINGTON: I've been out. It's interesting, my kids are getting that little bit older, and you know, they are happy to go out and play golf, and when I go play with them, I'm not minding them or anything. They know what they are doing.

So it's a bit more fun to play golf in that sense. I've been playing some link, European Club a bit, out in Portmarnock as well. Just because I was enjoying it much more so than necessarily -- I know I'm coming here and I'm playing links golf. There was a little bit of an eye on that but more just for the enjoyment of going out and playing golf.

**Q. European Club is for sale. Because you won a couple of PGAs and a couple of Opens there, would you consider it?**

PÁDRAIG HARRINGTON: Are you asking me if I'm buying the European Club? As much as I'd love to open a golf course and do as Pat Ruddy and wake up every morning and go, I think I'll change this and do that, obviously the

European Club is a business. You have to step past the fact that it's a great golf course.

But at that price tag it's a big business, and I certainly don't have the time to be running any sort of business or anything like that.

But I would be thrilled if I had my own golf course to tinker with. That would be great fun. But at the price tag, yeah, you really want to be a very savvy businessman to know what you're doing. It's not really about being a golfer at that price.

**Q. The course being a topic this week, do you have a memory of shots into the winds and things that you can draw?**

PÁDRAIG HARRINGTON: Instinctively you know what you're doing in different situations. It takes a little while to get back to that.

As I said, I did play last week. I played here on Monday and played in Portrush on Tuesday and got a rude awakening yesterday in that weather. I don't know if you stepped up straightaway you would remember everything but once you hit a few shots -- it comes back quick, put it like that.

Yes, going into the tournament, I might know what I want to do. It doesn't necessarily mean I'll be able to do it.

**Q. Course management out there, is it absolutely crucial?**

PÁDRAIG HARRINGTON: Right now it's nothing to do with being a great swinger of the golf club or ball-striker. It is full on a hundred percent course management. You've got to make the right decisions at the right time. You've got to work your way around the golf course. Challenge where you need to challenge and be patient where you have to be. You can't do one thing all the time.

But yeah, some of that is instinctive, and I've taken some solace. I don't feel like I've played great the last couple of days. I'm finding the golf course tough, and you know, as my caddie keeps saying, if you're finding the conditions tough, how do the rest of them think about it. I'm taking some solace from the fact that everybody is finding it difficult this week. In these conditions, it is very, very difficult. But as I said it all depends what we get in the week and the setup.

There's no point in turning around and saying what it is at the moment. Ask us after the round tomorrow or after ask us Friday evening or Sunday evening. It's definitely better

to have a difficult golf course that can be set up easy than an easy golf course that you have to trick up.

**Q. Putting your captain's hat on, what is your view of the situation the LIV players find themselves in, and Jon Rahm, trying to play the Spanish Open?**

PÁDRAIG HARRINGTON: You know, we had this situation back in my day where players were playing on the U.S. Tour, where they had to come back and play enough events -- dispensations and exemptions. If anybody knows me, I'm a stickler for the rules. You know what the rules say and you stick to them.

I know Jon Rahm. Big fan of Jon. And if the rules are written down, you've got to go about and stick to them. That's just the way it is. It's very important for the Ryder Cup -- the Ryder Cup is bigger than just the match.

I know people want to make out that it's this one match every two years, but the Ryder Cup is The European Tour. It is the backbone of The European Tour. I would have been a strong advocate of stronger rules in the past of four events is not a lot.

And I know the independent, the neutral would say, you know, it should be just European-born players against U.S.-born players, but it's very important to the European Tour. The European Tour doesn't have a lot of leverage to get players to come across and play here.

When I started off, half the best players in the world played on The European Tour. You go back and look at the top 10 in the world, the names that were up there were playing The European Tour. Now even our best Europeans start their life with the PGA TOUR and so they don't have that affinity.

But when I started off, like Ernie would have come through Europe first and he always came tack. Relief came through Europe first, he always came back, Adam spot. They had an affinity to come back to Europe.

Whereas if you go to college straight to the PGA TOUR, you don't know the European Tour. You don't have that draw back to it, and you know, the Ryder Cup is the carrot that we use to get people to come back, and when you do, you see guys come, like last year, they come, they play well and they enjoy the experience and that will get them coming back in future years.

We need to keep -- it is a very tough situation for the European Tour. It is a very tough situation for Luke Donald and The Ryder Cup in the sense of they really do want to have the best team and there is a case for saying, you

know, give ourselves the best chance of winning, that's as important a factor as anything in be keeping the European Tour at the forefront of golf.

But at the moment -- if they want to change the rules, change the rules. I've always been a stickler for the rules. I've seen this leverage before and I wasn't happy about it back in the day. I know there was a few -- yeah. I'm a guy for sticking to the rules but it puts us in an awkward situation because in 12 months' time I will actually want Jon Rahm playing in the match.

But the 12th guy who qualifies, sticking to the rules or gets bumped out, he's not going to be happy if somebody else has not stuck to the rules. We can't forget that person, either.

**Q. The fact is the Olympics count for Jon; so it's only four, three regular the European Tour events.**

PÁDRAIG HARRINGTON: Look, I'm not sure if three or four makes any difference. I don't know why or what's happened. It was only brought to my attention yesterday that this was an issue. I wish, like my own personal -- we're getting a bit -- getting into LIV now.

I can never see -- there's too many tournaments as there is. We've got the PGA TOUR, Europe is fighting for its corner to get tournaments, like this week is a great week for the am Jenny relationship open. It's the perfect date. You start adding in more events and who are you fighting against for players at that stage. Most players say they want to play less so it's hard to add another 14 tournaments and have players have dual membership.

So ideally for me I would suggest that every PGA TOUR and the European Tour event should have four invites for LIV players, and every LIV event should have four invites for an International team. That way we have enough crossover that we can get Jon Rahm to play the European Tour and we get Abraham Ancer to play the Mexican Open. If four PGA TOUR guys come over, it's not like they are going to be welcomed with open arms; so that creates buzz at their events.

Like if we had four LIV players this week, they would be focused on them, and people would be watching it. Some people would be wanting them to do well and some people would be wanting them to do badly. But that would create a bit of a buzz and vice versa, if four PGA TOUR players or four international players turned up at a LIV event, they wouldn't want that team winning, they wouldn't want the outsiders, so that creates a bit of a buzz for them.

That's the only solution I see in golfing. They can do all the

business solutions, that's a completely different thing but you're not convincing -- like the guys on the PGA TOUR have never had it better. You're not convincing them that they are going to play an extra ten events, 14 events around the world; that they have struggled with that idea of traveling to Asia or something like that that are, they are just not comfortable with the extra jet-lag and all that.

So I don't see the golfing merging. That's what they are struggling with. Easy to play -- these guys -- I played 28 to 30 events but the young guys are going to struggle to do that. But maybe having an invite -- and nobody has to like each other. You know, it's good for sport when you have rivalries, and we've seen it at the majors this year.

The majors have never been better because of those rivalries, so why couldn't we have that this week? Why couldn't we have a few guys -- like I'm sure Tyrrell playing last week created a great buzz, two weeks ago at the British Masters. There will be a lot of home fans wanting him to do well and then there's plenty of people that didn't want him to do well. In the right context, that's good.

That's my solution. I'm not sitting at the top table. That's why I'm sitting in the media centre telling you my solution.

**Q. (How impressed are you with the young Irish players)?**

PÁDRAIG HARRINGTON: Very impressed, I played with him and max Kennedy and Connor. I had three of the young Irish guys, different personalities, different sort of games.

Obviously Tom is a young lad, only 18, a great ball-striker. Just I think he doesn't look like he's outgrown the game at 18 years of age. So he has plenty of time to keep growing and learning as a player. There's no hurry there.

Max is really only starting off his journey. He's not turned pro yet and max is very similar to who I was at that stage, a later developer, quite determined, dedicated.

And Conor looks like the real deal. Looks like he's very comfortable with who he is. The only thing you need to be, if you want to be a professional golfer, everybody, they all have the minimum standard of ball-striking. It's who believes, who is comfortable in the environment. That's the buzz. To turn up out here and not be starstruck or startled and be able to do your own thing and not get knocked back when it doesn't go well.

**Q. Graeme McDowell recently had a problem with a nasal spray.**

PÁDRAIG HARRINGTON: I'm getting them all asked here, aren't I. I'm not used to these press conferences anymore. The Champions Tour is a lot nicer (laughing).

**Q. Do you think the testing regime on all the tours, you've played all the tours --**

PÁDRAIG HARRINGTON: I'm a real stickler for the rules. So I would advocate for -- yeah, I thought that was harsh. I think he was being -- I think his comment was about the fact that, you know, why doesn't had this happen more often on the PGA TOUR.

Graeme, friend of mine, and you know, the nasal spray, you always have to be careful with things like that. It's just one of those things. You can't take anything that's over-the-counter at all.

So maybe he got thrown out there. Obviously they don't do that on other tours. They don't -- a player gets -- especially an innocuous thing like that, you don't -- thrown out there. Also when something happens like that, you take it on the chin and you don't throw everybody else under the bus.

Yeah, look, I think I would prefer if all the tours fully disclosed who was tested and the results, both good and bad. Because I want -- the more transparency we have, the better. It clears up a lot of things.

Yeah, and I'm a stickler for the rules. We don't have testing on the Champions Tour, but I'm an absolute stickler that we've got to stick to the rules all the time. I will prefer if everything was more transparent in the sense of -- even in terms of how many times they are tested and how they go about it.

Why keep it -- it doesn't need to be -- maybe they say some law of privacy, but I pretty much know every time I turn up, the first time I turn up -- every time I go back and play a PGA TOUR event, I'm getting tested on Tuesday or Wednesday. My random name has come churning back up to the top.

So look, yeah, a bit more transparency would not be a harm but I also think that maybe wasn't the right moment in time to bring it up. When something goes wrong, you just have to take responsibility for it and not sort of drag everybody else.

**Q. You used to bring all your medications over and say, look, this is what I got.**

PÁDRAIG HARRINGTON: I really stick away from it. I wouldn't -- if I have to take something that's -- anything at all, I'm trying to think what would be -- I would ring up the

PGA TOUR and say, well, what's the story with this, is this okay.

You end up being the opposite. Like you don't take anything at any stage, really. You avoid all of it. The only thing I've taken is the EyePromise stuff at the moment. So that would be the end of it for me.

But you know if you're going to take stuff -- I don't know if I would have known. I certainly wouldn't have gone with the nasal spray myself, but I wouldn't necessarily have thought -- one of the U.S. players got done for taking Night Nurse. You know pretty much even over-the-counter stuff can be -- and that was pretty transparent. Which one of the players -- one of the lads -- maybe there is more transparency than we think. That was a very similar case.

MATTHEW JOULE: Thanks very much for your time.

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