

Amgen Irish Open

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Straffan, County Kildare, Ireland

The K Club

Padraig Harrington

Press Conference

AMGEN
IRISH OPEN



THE MODERATOR: Pleased to be joined by three-time major champion Pádraig Harrington. Pádraig, this is your 30th consecutive appearance in the Irish Open. How proud are you of that achievement, and what does this event mean to you?

PADRAIG HARRINGTON: Yeah, you know, it's hard to believe 30 years. When I started out as a young lad, I would never have expected that, never have dreamt that. It's a really nice milestone. It took me a good few years when it came to this -- I used to get very stressed at the Irish Open. There's so much going on, you're busy and you're afraid of letting people down.

I kind of now know that if I go out there tomorrow and I smile and don't get too stressed, don't get angry or anything like that, I pretty much can hit any shot and they'll still like me out there and still give me a few claps. I'm a little bit more relaxed about it. I'd love to play well and compete, but if that doesn't happen, I will wave to the crowd, smile and wave at the crowds and enjoy it.

Q. You won this event in 2007. What memories do you have from that week?

PADRAIG HARRINGTON: Well, the Harringtons already have a win this week. My son won the pro-am this morning, so starting off on a good foot.

2007 was the start -- it wasn't the start, but it was part of that cycle of me winning bigger events, bigger pressured events.

Winning an Irish Open, I've always said the stress coming in feels like a major. Clearly your national open is your fifth major, but it tends to -- with everything going on, it tends to feel like a major for you from the Monday morning -- you tend to over-try. You tend to get too busy at them. You tend to over-practice at your national open, just like every major. It's very hard to stand back and relax and let it all happen.

It takes a while and a bit of experience to be able to do

that. 2007 was part of my process of getting better in the bigger tournaments and a steppingstone to winning those majors, as I said, in 2007 and 2008.

Q. How do you keep the fire in your belly?

PADRAIG HARRINGTON: Obviously, like most golfers, I have this theory that I fit very nicely, certainly up to my age group, most careers last about 20 years, but it's seven or eight years before you start getting into it and peaking. You probably have 18 months, two years of the real peak, a couple years after that, and then 15 to 20 years you're burnt out. You're still playing but you're burnt out, and I would have mirrored that. So many people.

I do see the peak of people's careers happening much earlier. That 18-month run, two-season run can happen two or three years, four years into their career, but nobody is ever good after the peak. That's the nature of the game. So yeah, burnout comes, and it would have come for me in 2016, around then, about 20 years in. I looked at it and did a number of different things. I did a bit of coaching, did a bit of commentary, all that sort of stuff, and I realised I actually really liked playing golf. So I kind of looked at it a different way, got a little bit more relaxed about it, didn't try as hard, took away some of the stuff that was making it -- I basically couldn't go at the pace I was trying to go at. I couldn't go at the pace I would have been going at when I was a young man.

I found a new lease on life. The Champions Tour has definitely helped with that. The strange thing is I play better, the temptation is to go back to working harder and going back to trying harder. It's pretty simple. I describe it like this: 15 years ago if somebody said we're going for dinner, I would have gone, I've got physio, I've got to get in the gym, I've got to do this, I've got to do that recovery, all that. Now I kind of go, we're going for dinner, great, I'll change everything to go for that dinner. I'll still go to the gym, I'll still do my physio. But my priorities, I wouldn't be anywhere near as professional as I would have been 15 years ago because I can't.

It was burning me out trying too hard. Getting up three and a half hours before your tee time, a young man can do that.

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I watch the young guys and I see them do the stuff in the gym and all that, and I go, yeah, I used to do all that. You just can't keep that pace up.

I'm reinvigorated because I found a new way. I've always loved playing golf. I've always loved practising, but I do have to have a different outlook. I think it comes to most people in their life, they get to a stage in their own job where they've got all this expertise because they've kind of hit a wall. The best solution is to try and get rid of some of the stuff that's annoying them and keep the stuff that they're good at and experienced at, and that's the kind of way I've tried with the golf.

Q. Do you think you can win, and what needs to happen for you to win the Irish Open?

PADRAIG HARRINGTON: Physically, I'm well-capable of winning. I remember last year -- I played the Scottish Open last year and I just tried so hard and I was well off the cut line, two or three shots, and I was actually thinking on the ninth of the Scottish Open, Sunday night of the Scottish Open, that was the end of my you think man tournaments. Then the following week at the Open I was top 10 in strokes gained tee to green, so clearly I was good enough. I think I was close to very high up -- like in the top 10 at the BMW PGA in terms of ball-striking. So physically I can do it. The putting comes and goes and mentally it comes and goes at times, but you can always catch lightning in a bottle with the mental game.

It's possible. I think the issue for me is words like "it's possible." So when you tend to win is when you're very comfortable that your game is good enough. In 2002, 2007, 2008, I wasn't looking over my shoulder. I was thinking about me. This week I'm thinking I need to be the best version of me to win. I need to get the breaks to win. Everything has to go for me to win this week, whereas if I go to the Champions Tour I'm comfortable that if I play my own game, I'll be in contention.

That doesn't mean you're going to win tournaments because things have to happen for you to win: Look, if I do my own thing this week, play my own game, I'm going to be there or thereabouts on Sunday, and if I do the right things in the last nine holes, I'll have a great chance, whereas here I'm kind of on edge Thursday morning I need to be thinking I'm doing the right things all the way through.

Tiger said it, and he's so right, Tiger said he could win with his B game. If you think you can win with your B game, your "A" game turns up. If you think you need your "A" game, your B game turns up. It's a tough one.

I wouldn't be -- I'm coming here and I'm thinking I need a

big week, whereas you win when you just come here and be yourself and play your own game. I know they are cliches, but that's how it happens.

Q. Did you ever consider politics --

PADRAIG HARRINGTON: We know where this is going. No. No. I'm very busy with what I'm doing. It's an incredible honour, obviously, for anybody to become the president of Ireland but a very difficult job in the sense of I don't think my game would be up to it. I'd have to improve that. I think being a statesman is tough, not having your own opinions. As you know, I have a lot of opinions, so not having your own opinions is not great, and not being able to leave the country wouldn't be great for me either, playing 30 golf events a year.

It's not on my radar for sure, but it would be an incredible honour for whoever becomes president, and it's a tough act to follow. We've done very well with our presidents over the last 30 years or so for sure. I suppose more than that, but the ones in recent times are the ones I remember, and they've been brilliant.

Q. I've been asking the Irish guys if they could only play one golf course for the rest of their life, which course would it be and why?

PADRAIG HARRINGTON: There couldn't be a simple answer to that for me, could there. I think if I tell my wife I'm going playing golf, she would kind of nod and say, yeah, whatever. If I say to my wife I'm going and playing golf on Adare, she says, I'm coming. To be allowed to play golf every day for the rest of my life, it would be at Adare because that's as nice as it gets.

Outside of that, there's so many good golf courses -- I love playing them all. The links golf courses are rugged and tough and they're a joy to play, Portmarnock, Portrush, Ballybunion, Lahinch -- I start naming them, I can't stop naming them. They're all fantastic.

This one here in particular -- yeah, this is as good as it gets for professional golf, as in I think I've counted 16 tournament shots out here that are perfect for any golf course where -- a real tournament shot is the likes of No. 8 -- 17 here where you've got water down the left, you've got a fairway and you've got trees right. You don't really want to hit it in the trees. You definitely don't want to hit it in the water. So there's a temptation involved in it.

This one is a really -- if I want to become a better golfer I'd play this course or Adare all the time. If I want to go out and enjoy the favours of golf and how golf it meant to be, we have all the links golf courses to keep you



entertained and frustrated for pretty much eternity. We've got some good ones here and a good run of things for sure. There's something for everybody.

Q. You played some practice rounds with some of the other Irish players. Do they seek you out or do you seek them out?

PADRAIG HARRINGTON: A little bit of both, but I definitely seek them out. I want to play with the young guys. I want to see what their game is like. I want to see how they handle themselves and what they say and do around me. I want to help them if I can.

I would sit down here in the winter at different times with the Irish panel or whatever and talk through it with the young pros, and I'm really happy to help them. It's amazing how times have changed. 30 years ago when I played my first one of these, I would have thought it was all a secret. Now I'm happy to help the guys and really see where they're going with their game and what's happening.

I do enjoy it. I don't think -- at the Open in particular, I've played with every Irish guy that gets into The Open every year, and it's a little harder with the Irish Open because there's more of them. I would have liked to have played with Doyle this week. I've heard a lot of good stuff about him. But yeah, I've played with Alex Maguire, I've played with Conor Purcell, and I've played with Rob Moran this week. Max Kennedy asked me for a practice round, we just didn't get around to it. I want to see the players, I want to see what they're up to, and certainly if they ask questions -- it's important that they ask questions. You want to hear -- if they ask the right question, you know they're on the right track. We did a little bit of chipping and stuff like that.

I definitely enjoy playing with the Irish guys and seeing the up-and-coming guys. I miss the fact -- and it's been tougher on Conor Purcell this year, when I came out on Tour there was 15, maybe 16 Irish guys in total on Tour, so we were a great group, and when I actually reinvigorated myself in golf, it was going out on the European Tour and playing tournaments where Damien McGrane and Peter Lawrie were there and I just saw a different outlet to golf.

I think Conor has been very unlucky that he's out there on his own. Having a bunch of Irish guys is crucial to -- the Europeans who have gone to the States have done better in the last couple years than we did back 10, 15 years ago because it was a real death knell getting your golf 10 years ago to go to the States, and now these guys are doing well because there's a group of them, and that camaraderie, people going through the same thing, is a big help.

We need a few more guys out there basically to help each other along.

Q. Kind of a transitional team in the Ryder Cup when you were captain. Luke has got a pretty consolidated team this time. I'm wondering which captain's shoes would you like to be come the end of this month, European captain or U.S. captain?

PADRAIG HARRINGTON: I think the European team is very strong and in great form, and I think that gives them a great chance. I think the U.S. Team is slight favourites based on home advantage, but I really do think Luke is bringing a very strong team over there. They're going to be well prepared and will give Europe every chance to win away from home, which is clearly very difficult to do, but I think it's going to be a good match. I think it's going to be close.

Yeah, I'd still put us as -- I think Luke would say, give them the slight edge because of home advantage, but it will be close.

Q. Have you been back to Doonbeg since you played with Greg Norman in 2002?

PADRAIG HARRINGTON: I have.

Q. There's been a bit of chat about it maybe hosting this event.

PADRAIG HARRINGTON: I think the last shot I hit at Doonbeg was at 3:00 in the morning. I did play it the day before. No, not going on. That was the last time it was there. I was there for a wedding was the last time I was there, so I have played it a few times since Greg and myself opened it up back in the day. What a job he did on that. I remember looking at it and going, you'd have to be somebody of Greg Norman's stature to be able to do a design like that, a real traditional funky links golf course. There was some -- what modern people would say, bunkers in the middle of greens, L-shaped par-3s. It was really great fun to play, and as I said, I was very impressed with Greg's work.

But again, I don't think -- I was kind of looking at I wouldn't have got away with what Greg -- some crazy stuff, which is what links should be. So it was fantastic. I know they've softened it since then and made it a little bit more orthodox or a little bit more conforming, but it was a great -- when I played it in that opening, I was very impressed with it.

Q. You'd be happy to go back there if there was a chance for an Irish Open?

PADRAIG HARRINGTON: I've never played the old head of kin sail. I don't get a chance to play the great linkses around Ireland. I often say I really do need to go on a tour of Ireland myself and play these courses. I'm always happy to go play links golf. Great part of the world down there when you get down there and you play Ballybunion, Lahinch, Doonbeg, go across the water -- there's great golf. It's all great golf. From my experiences, Doonbeg, the hotel, accommodation, the whole thing, it's top class.

Q. There was a very strange rumor I heard recently that --

PADRAIG HARRINGTON: That I'm going for president?

Q. A fellow off a handicap of 19 beat you in a chipping competition. Is there any truth to that at all?

PADRAIG HARRINGTON: That was you with your hurl and your football and a bit of camera -- a bit of fudging the cameras and stuff like that, yeah. You know, it's amazing what you put out on video, everybody thinks it's real, and then all of a sudden it's edited, and 19 handicappers look like stars, professionals look very average.

Q. I won't deny it was the greatest chip I ever hit in my life, and as I said, it's my claim to fame, and I appreciate letting everyone knowing that I won a chipping competition against Pádraig Harrington.

PADRAIG HARRINGTON: 10 chips, take your best one. I have been asked, by the way, several times about that. No truth in the rumor.

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