

The Senior Open Presented by Rolex

Wednesday, July 26, 2023

Porthcawl, Wales, United Kingdom

Royal Porthcawl Golf Club

Padraig Harrington

Press Conference

PÁDRAIG HARRINGTON: Hoylake, any of the regular events are big, tough weeks. I'm old at this stage and it does take it out of you. 72 holes is a bit of a grind, so I know when I come to an event like this, main thing is to come fresh and to stay fresh for Sunday, you have to chill a little bit on the Tuesday, Wednesday.

I drove down here Monday, did nothing. Played 18 holes yesterday and seven holes today. Yet, I could have practiced a bit more on the golf course. There might be one or two things I see during the week that I didn't know there was a slope there on the green or I didn't know that bunker was there, maybe not that bunker, but I can handle that as long as I'm fresh and as I said, you know, there's a good chance going into this, if I'm playing my game, I should be in contention on Sunday afternoon. The main thing to be in contention is to be sharp. You don't want to be burned out by Sunday.

Q. More of this weather will make the course play longer. I would imagine you would be chomping at the bit to get started tomorrow?

PÁDRAIG HARRINGTON: The wetter the golf course, the better, but not the wetter conditions we play. If it rains for the week, rain and wind nullifies my driver because you don't want to get going sideways. You'd be trying to knock it down all the time. If the rain dries up and the course stays soft, and it's digging in and staying short into the next set of bunkers, that would play into my hands but I didn't go out on the golf course and think, this is the golf course for me. I've turned up at Champions tour events, and gone, this is an ideal course, and if I don't give myself a great chance of winning, I'm failing here this week.

This is a great links golf course. Ball flight, ball shape, the direction you're hitting, spin rates are all very important in terms of getting out there. It's not necessarily raw speed that's going to do the job.

So I look at this golf course, don't really have a big



advantage on the field but I just have to play better golf if I want to win.

Q. Barring the weather, what do you see as the biggest problems out there that you could be presented with?

PÁDRAIG HARRINGTON: Well, it's well designed. There's staggering of bunkers so you could take some truck out but you can't take it all out. Avoiding the trouble off the tee would be my goal for the week. Sometimes I'll play cautious, sometimes a little more aggressive.

If I can avoid those bunkers and the major troubles, I think that would set me up well enough going into the greens. The greens, they are difficult, there's no doubt about it. There are slopes. If I hit it straight this week, hit lots of fairways, you'll create so many chances that you'll overcome lack of knowledge or the odd mistake around the greens.

Good driving is the key for me. I'm trying to win every week I play whether it's on the regular tour where I have to say that would be the icing on the cake. You want to win a senior major, Senior Open but the fact that I've gone and won the regular -- if I win the senior on top of a regular it would be just that little bit more special and put me in very elite company.

You know, I'm happy with where I'm at. The initial holes up along the water, being very difficult, the par 5 up the hill with the concrete wall stands out most in my memory. Cross-bunkers on what we play as the 17th hole.

So there are certain -- there's nothing about '95 that in my game or the golf course that resembles me having some local knowledge for this year at all. You know, it's not like I remember a certain hole played this way, and even if I did remember that, it wouldn't be -- the game isn't even close to similar to that now.

So it is -- in all intents and purposes in terms of playing, it's a new golf course. I played 7 holes today in the rain, I played 18 holes yesterday. So there might be one or two things I'm not quite familiar with but when it comes to links



golf, it just changes so much.

Yesterday on 16, I hit -- I think I had -- 17 I had probably 65 yards to the front of the green. I hit a drive basically a chip shot and today I hit 3-wood, 5-wood and probably had the same chip shot for every third shot. Well, not quite, but like a 50-yard chip shot. So it's interesting how with links it just changes every day so you have to wait to get on the actual tee box and see what the pin position is and see what you fancy but every hole does -- some change in the wind direction can completely change the character of the hole.

Q. How is the game coming into this week?

PÁDRAIG HARRINGTON: I was very happy with the game up through three rounds last week, and you know, then I started working on a few things so I'm with where I'm at. I'm looking forward to getting on the golf course and I could do with a few more putts and all professional golfers say that. I'm waiting to get out there and play.

It is an interesting course. There's a staggering of bunkers everywhere, so it's not -- I don't necessarily go to a golf course and go, this is the one for me, that I can carry all of the trouble. The trouble is staggered nicely, so you've just got to play good golf this week. It doesn't set up as a huge advantage to me, this golf course.

Q. After a week like The Open at Royal Liverpool, does it feel a little easier coming and playing a shorter course?

PÁDRAIG HARRINGTON: Not really. You know, every golf hole you play, you play just right then and there as that hole.

So yeah, you're right, overall, by the end of this week, I won't hit as many -- and what was interesting last week at Hoylake, unusually for a major tournament, there was quite a few long irons last week.

You know, even the long golf courses, we break them down these days that don't seem to play long but last week, because of the nature of the bunkers, you tended to -- you tended to lay up a lot of times leaving yourself 200 yards into greens and even into the wind. I hit a fair few 5-irons last week and 4-irons. If the weather stays like that, I'll probably hit them again this week. But yeah, you don't -- you do play each hole individually, so you don't necessarily see a culmination, of oh, this golf course is shorter than last week.

Obviously I could go in yesterday, I think I hit 3-wood into one of the par 5s, so you know, I know it's a second shot but it still felt long. I hit a 4-iron -- 6-iron -- no, I hit 6-iron

and 9-iron into the other two but I think I hit 4-iron into 8. Into 8 would be the normal dogleg up around the corner, there's a few holes you'll lay back because of the bunkers and so they will have a substantial -- substantial second shot.

So it's not -- it's not like you can just wait away with driver. There's plenty of course and bunker. There will be holes that I have an advantage on. There will be holes that will feel short compared to last week, but I play each hole as it comes.

So I won't feel like that necessarily but I won't be under any pressure, certainly, last week, when you are playing in a regular event, I feel, anyway, that I want to be on top form with my -- with my driving distance, whereas I know if I'm on average form this week, I'm still going to be long, so I'm not under as much pressure.

Q. And the second question, I wanted to ask you was that you played a few holes with Jeev today. What do you think, even though it's a Senior Open, how do you think this is going to impact Asian golf given they have such a huge stature?

PÁDRAIG HARRINGTON: It's normal now, as we go forward, I would have grown up with -- with Arjun and Jeev, especially Jeev on Tour. I didn't notice any different with Indian golfers playing in the Senior Championship.

I'm sure in time it will be six or eight and whoever is looking around will think that's normal. I can remember going on The European Tour when I started in '95, and like, we had 15 Irish guys on the Tour that year. And now, I'm sure there's, you know, six, maybe, kind of, six sort of thing, yeah, probably six.

And they have been replaced by, you know, by Danish players, by Norwegian players. You know, maybe what we would have thought were non-golfing countries at that time have all got, you know, three, four, five players on the tour, and it's the way the game is going. We would probably see in the next 20 years, next five years, you know, one or two -- one player coming in from each of the countries in Eastern Europe and then in five years' time it would be two, and then could be, again, five or six.

But the one thing we know for sure is there's only 156 spots, so every time, it's getting competitive. Players are getting squeezed which is a good thing but golf is great that there's no barriers to anybody playing the game, so if you're good enough you'll end up qualifying and getting out there. There's nothing stopping anybody. It is the ultimate sport for a meritocracy. There's nobody selecting you. There's nobody doing anything.

If you're good enough, you will find a way to beat the guys around you, and if you can beat them, you know, you'll beat the next grade and you'll keep moving along, and you know, even -- even financially, there's no barrier because once you're staying in your locality, you're winning enough there to move to the next level and all the way through. So it really is the best game in the world for being able to just play your game and you'll progress.

Q. The Senior Tour is getting younger, and the regular tour is getting older. So is there a change in your mindset when you're playing between the two?

PÁDRAIG HARRINGTON: I would think the reason you're seeing -- if you're thinking that the Senior tour is getting younger, that's because I started in '95, and I would have got the first up lift in money from Tiger Woods, and basically, I've had a full time physio and trainer my whole career. You know, the guys who came before me, they didn't have that.

When I was starting, a lot of pros retired around mid 30s and took a club job. That was, that was what people -- in '95, that's what a tour pro did. He retired, I think Ken Brown retired when he was 32. 35, 36, you retired and you took a nice country club job or whatever esteemed job you could get as a pro. But then the money got bigger, and that allowed more professionalism, it allowed for better standard of travel, better standard of living, better standard of care.

As I said, I've had a physio and trainer and all that goes with it for 25 years. I look around at all the guys who are out here, and as you said, most of my contemporaries, European contemporaries are pretty athletic looking. They have kept themselves fit and strong because of the investment over the years, whether it's the physio truck that we have on tour or facilities like that, keep you -- as regards to regular tour, I wouldn't have thought, yeah, some guys sustain themselves longer. There's no doubt. But the kids are coming in pretty young, too. There's a big squeeze at either end. It's more there's more good players and that's it.

Q. Is there a change in mindset when you shift between the tours?

PÁDRAIG HARRINGTON: There has to be. I would like to think I'm the same player every time I hit every shot but I think when you play on the regular tour, you're under more pressure to bring your game and to be on top form which has its own burdens. There's certainly less -- there's less pressure, I think in the end of the day, the reality is you've got to -- both of them you have to play pretty decent, but

you have to putt well.

I think the Champions Tour, sometimes you can miss out. You still have to hold those putts for birdies during the weeks if you're going to shoot the score. Yeah, the regular Senior Tour is not as pressurized, nor should it be. We're out here, we have already done it at this stage, and we are out here somewhat to enjoy the sunset and wave at the crowds as we are doing it. So there isn't as much stress and pressure as there would be in a regular event.

Q. Can you talk about playing more on the regular tour?

PÁDRAIG HARRINGTON: Very simple reason, I've been playing well, physically capable of competing with the young guys. I go back and play a regular event, and it's like because it's an individual one-off event, it's standing out too much when I'm there. Like there's -- years ago, like I joined the PGA Tour back in 2005 because I wanted to win majors and I was going to major tournaments prior to that and they were all individual stand-out events, and you're distracted when you're doing that. You need to play tournaments in a flow.

So I'm going to play -- I think I'm good enough to win on tour, on the regular tour, but I have to get back to in the flow of regular tour events. I can't just turn up and play one and say hello to my friends and do all that sort of stuff. I have to play three or four of them in a row to get the feel of them and the flow.

Everything has a flow like that. The reason being, I think I'm in good enough but can't think playing one I'm going to turn up and everything is familiar and everything is right. I've got to play two, three, four in a row and get a feel for it, and that's my intention. I really feel like I'm actually going to play five European Tour events lined up in my head, and you know, that should give me a good feel for how I stand in junior golf laugh.

I'm obviously going to play The Irish Open and Wentworth, so I'm probably going to play Czech and Crans Montana and probably going to play Dunhill.

Q. (Inaudible.).

PÁDRAIG HARRINGTON: I try to find where you're drawing this. Five years of age, like it's hard to believe that in the modern era, somebody could still think that they could -- I honestly don't know what's a cry for help. I have no idea. It just seems bizarre that somebody would do that in a -- in a -- what event was it? So like a fully-fledged organised tour event. And he thought he would get away with it?

Q. He did try.

PÁDRAIG HARRINGTON: You know, I don't know. Is this a serial offender? And is that wrong, I suppose that's why we have in real life, why we have a court system and a judge because you know, I'm sitting here thinking, it makes no sense. There must be a reason why this has happened, is this poor person under some outside pressure or something or why would they do this.

But if he's a serial offender, I really don't know and does it make it -- do you go easier on him because he's a nice person or do you go harder on him because you don't like him, I don't know. You know, it's a very, very hard thing but it's not a clear-cut thing of throwing the book at him because I know, and this is the horrible truth of it, we know players who have broken the rules over the years, and I talk to players who have because I like the person, and then I don't talk to other players who have because I don't like the person.

So even though both of them have broken the rules, my judgment falls more much based on what I think of the person, which is terrible, isn't it, but that's who we are as human beings. Like you know, we all pile on somebody we don't like and we all kind of, you know, forget about when it's a nice person.

So that's why we have committees and judges and people who do this because as I said, so much bias comes into all of these things, and I'm glad I'm not the one who has to throw the book at somebody but if I was in that position, I would take responsibility and investigate and figure out what needs to be done as I expect the Tour should deal with.

Q. How much are you enjoying being a YouTube sensation?

PÁDRAIG HARRINGTON: It sounds like something else than golf. I love the fact that I can talk directly to the public. Get my ideas out there. I'm a bit of a contrarian. I like to say things and tell people things that I think they don't know and so it's been great being able to give the lessons online, talk about golf, really enjoyed it. I like the fact it is successful. Like I wouldn't say there was a hole I went last week that somebody didn't mention it to me.

So it's probably -- it's probably the most mentioned thing to me on the golf course now by fans of anything I do. More than one a hole will come up and say, thanks for the video -- love the videos, they really help me, the videos.

So that's been very nice. I enjoyed that, and it's

interesting, it has built over time, as I suppose these things do. So even though I put out a video every three weeks now, but people still watch the old ones and it kind of grows that way.

It's been very, very satisfying.

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