

The 149th Open

Press Conference

Monday, 12 July 2021

Shane Lowry



MIKE WOODCOCK: Good afternoon, everyone, and thank you for joining us for the opening press conference of the 149th Open Championship here at Royal St. George's. I'm delighted to be joined by our defending champion of two years now, Shane Lowry, champion golfer. I should say just before we get into the press conference that this is a hybrid press conference and that we've got obviously yourselves in the room and we've got a number of other media working remotely joining us via Zoom.

I'll begin with opening questions from yourselves here in the room and then hand over to my colleague Liv McMillan who will then take some callers remotely.

Shane, can you give us your feelings coming into this week and finally being able to defend the trophy that you won so brilliantly at Royal Portrush two years ago?

SHANE LOWRY: Yeah, look, obviously I'm happy to be here, and I'm happy to be here in some sort of a normal capacity as regards to having quite a few people out on the golf course.

I think not having The Open last year was obviously disappointing because you want to play in the biggest tournaments year in, year out, but I think coming back here and having the big grandstands and having the crowds out there and all that type of stuff and everything that comes along with the Open Championship, I think that's going to be pretty cool this week.

I'm really looking forward to the week ahead. Not that I'm ready to give the Claret Jug back. I just handed it back, so I'm ready to -- I'm happy it's here and I'm happy I'm here defending, and I'm really looking forward to the week.

Q. Do you think defending two years ago is any different to one year?

SHANE LOWRY: Yeah, I have no idea, to be honest. The thing is obviously I've defended tournaments before, but I've never come and defended a tournament of this magnitude. I've never really had that. Everything that happens for me this week is kind of new.

But at the end of the day like it's just -- I don't like using cliches

-- it's another golf tournament, it's another major. Obviously there's going to be high pressure at certain stages. You want to go out there and do as best you can. I've got a lot more on my mind, a lot more to play for than just defending the trophy.

There's a lot of things that I've got to play for this week other than defending the trophy. It's a bit of everything. I think it's -- to be announced on the first tee as defending champion, I'll be happy obviously to get that tee shot away, and if you've seen the rough down the first hole, I'll be happy if it's on the fairway, even happier if it's on the fairway.

Yeah, I have no idea, but like I'm kind of going into this week with an open mind. I'm really looking forward to the week ahead, and I'm looking forward to kind of playing in the Open Championship, because we did miss it last year.

I've obviously got a few of those to play in over the next number of years, which is pretty cool, and like I said, I'm just looking forward to the whole week.

Q. Is there any way in which (indiscernible) if you think back to your form this time last year?

SHANE LOWRY: Yeah, look, I look back on 2020 as a season, and without making excuses too much, I think playing in front of fans does it for me. Not playing in front of fans doesn't do it for me. That's just the way it is.

I think I struggled last year coming out of lockdown. I was playing great. I've never played as much golf in my life, and I just was stale when I got out there. I just couldn't get it going.

I think even little things like if you're struggling to make a cut or if you're down at the bottom of the field, having people out there on the golf course kind of spurs you on a little bit.

At the end of the day, like I said at the Irish Open a couple weeks ago, we're kind of in the entertainment business when we're out there, and when I have a difficult shot or when I'm stuck behind a tree or I have a tough up-and-down, I'm trying to almost show off a little bit.

I feel like 2020 is kind of a bit of a write-off for me. Obviously my form is pretty decent coming in this year and I'm pretty happy with that, but I don't really look back on 2020 with too



much kind of -- with anything, to be honest.

It's kind of put it behind me and move on, and this year thankfully has been a little bit better.

Q. Can you compare your feelings heading into this week compared to how you were feeling going into Portrush?

SHANE LOWRY: Yeah, look, I'm sure there's going to be a bit of anxiety on Wednesday this week, as well. There is every week. I suppose most of the tournaments I play these days are big tournaments so you have a lot to play for. You want to go out and do well.

There is always that little bit of anxiousness to get out there and get going on a Thursday morning, and it'll be the same this week. Portrush, when I look back on it, my form going into Portrush was really good. I was competing in America. I was competing well. I had a chance to win a couple of tournaments.

I know I finished kind of middle of the pack at the Irish Open in Lahinch, but I really felt like my golf was quite good. When I look back I was in a great place, but I feel like I was, you know what I mean?

It's almost -- when you have those little kind of hiccups the week of big tournaments -- like, you know, I went into Torrey Pines and I sat down with Neil and I never felt as good, and obviously things didn't go my way.

It's funny how when you're not feeling your best maybe in your head it kind of focuses you a little bit better when you get on the golf course. Maybe there's something to that, there's something to having that little bit of anxiety there and that little bit of kind of, you know, kind of if things don't -- you kind of sort of -- it just focuses you in on your shots if you kind of don't feel 100 per cent about your game.

I don't know if there's anything in it, but obviously at Torrey Pines I sat there on Wednesday and genuinely felt like I was going to have a chance to win the tournament come the weekend, and that obviously doesn't work for me.

Q. (Indiscernible).

SHANE LOWRY: Yeah, look, everybody has commented a lot on it over the last two years, and not that you get sick of hearing it because you never get sick of hearing that you're The Open champion, but like I said earlier on, I'm kind of ready to defend it.

I'm ready to go and play in the Open again and I'm looking forward to it. Look, obviously it will be a bit of a -- one of those questions over the years. Yeah, I don't really feel anything about it, to be honest.

I just feel -- I look back on Portrush and look back on Portrush with incredible memories and fond memories and something that I'll have no matter what I do for the rest of my career. I'll always have that.

Q. (On the COVID protocols).

SHANE LOWRY: Look, obviously it's not ideal, but that's the world we live in at the minute. That's the rules we have to abide by. If you test positive, you can't play. That's why we're -- the R&A have done a great job and they're doing a good job this week of trying to keep us away from as many people as they can.

I know there's going to be 32,000 people there. I think that's great for the tournament, but us as players, I'm in my own bubble at my own house and I'm not leaving. I'm not allowed to do any of that stuff, and I think that's good.

Like I don't want to be here playing in front of nobody, so I think it's great that there's 32,000 people, and I was very excited when I heard that there was going to be that many people here.

I think, yeah, it's just the times we live in. You don't know what's going to happen over the next few weeks, do we, because if you had have told us last year that we'd still be sitting here social distance wearing masks with not 100 per cent capacity and living in a bubble, you kind of would have laughed at someone.

But you just have to mind yourself. I'm not saying Zach didn't mind himself because he probably did and he probably got it somewhere stupid, but that's just -- that's the nature of the world we live in at the minute. Yeah.

Q. (Indiscernible).

SHANE LOWRY: People probably think I have because apparently that's all I do every evening. (Smiling)

To be honest, like Paul asked me a question this morning, I was chatting about the course, and he said, How did you feel coming in here? I was like, Honestly I don't know. Like I just kind of -- driving up to an event, I just come to play in the Open. Obviously exciting.

Coming to play in the Open Championship, whether you're defending or not, is exciting, because it's such a big event. I always remember coming to my first Open in St. Andrews, and I couldn't believe the size of the grandstands and the magnitude of the whole thing. The fact that we're here at St. George's with -- obviously it's great to be out there, and to be honest, out there on links golf courses, it's great to have the

grandstands for lines off tees more than anything else.

If you didn't have them out there it would make the golf course a little bit harder. I think it's just great to be here. It's always great to play in the Open. I said one of the coolest things about being The Open champion is I get to play in it for years. I have a lot more left, which is obviously really cool. This is one of them.

And look, I think, I hope that I can be competitive this week. I just like to put up a good defense of my trophy, and I'd give anything to have a chance to win come the weekend. I'm out there planning for that over the next few days, and we'll see how it goes.

Q. Give us a sense, this morning you were walking the course, initial thoughts?

SHANE LOWRY: Yeah, so the weather -- obviously I got here at 8:00 this morning. The weather wasn't very favourable. I was planning on playing 18 holes, so I went out for a walk and I walked the front nine, and then I went out and I played -- I came back in when the weather brightened up and got my clubs and I played 12 holes. I played the first two and the last 11, last 10.

Yeah, the course is good. Look, it's soft with all the rain. It's going to be soft probably for the next day or so. I think the forecast then, it's going to dry up and the course will hopefully dry out a little bit and play a little bit what St. George's is supposed to play like.

Yeah, it's difficult to get a feeling for what it could actually play like today because everything that I've heard over the years is that St. George's, you can hit decent shots and they get bounces on to the fairway and kicked into the rough. I didn't see any of that out there today. I suppose the next couple of practice rounds -- I'm going to play late tomorrow, I might play late on Wednesday just trying to get a feeling for how fiery the course could actually play come Thursday.

As regards my form, yeah, it's been pretty good. I try not to think about it that much, but I've had some good results over the last number of months, and I'm pretty happy where my game is at. Like I said, I've played a couple of links courses back home last week, which is pretty nice.

It was nice to get away with my friends and just go out there and play some links golf and get some good prep for this week. You know, because it does take a little while to get used to playing links golf, and I think I kind of underestimated that.

I remember my first full season on the PGA Tour, I came back and went to play the Scottish Open and struggled to get my head around hitting a 7-iron 150 yards as opposed to hitting it

180 or 190 over in the States.

It does take a little bit of getting used to, but I feel like I'm there and I feel like I'm ready to kind of attack the week.

Q. I'm just wondering about the whole concept of the bubble; who have you got in with you this week, and can you actually make that work to your favour to some extent in that it's just your close members of your team?

SHANE LOWRY: It's funny, we were actually talking about it last night. It's a bubble, but I don't think I'll be doing anything different than I normally do. I come to the golf course, I play, and I go home and we have dinner in the house, and that's it. Like that's all you do.

I've got Neil, Wendy, and Brian in my bubble this week, and that's it. Like we're in the house together. Yeah, it's just kind of watch a bit of TV and have some food in the evenings. You don't do anything else the week of big tournaments. You're kind of resting up as much as you can, and you're obviously here playing and practising all day every day when you're here.

Yeah, there's not much different. As regards to kind of make it work to my favour, probably look. I reckon if it was a normal Open and I was defending I might have a couple more things to do, so it probably is working in my favour a little bit as regards my performance.

MIKE WOODCOCK: Shane, thank you for joining us today. We appreciate your time as always, and best of luck this week.

FastScripts by ASAP Sports