

# The 149th Open

Press Conference

Tuesday, 13 July 2021

## Tommy Fleetwood



**Q. Obviously the course is really green and really soft. Can you just talk about how the rains really are going to set the test this week?**

TOMMY FLEETWOOD: Yeah, I will say I've played a few holes yesterday and it was pretty soft. I think what the rain has brought is the rough is pretty thick. If you're going to -- from what I could tell, if you sort of know your lines off the tees and everything, the fairways, they're not like overly tight. You can get some -- obviously the way the bounces work, then it can easily be bouncing off the fairways, but they're not like massively tight.

But if you do hit it off line, you're sort of going to be lucky to get a lie a lot of the times. Bad shots are probably going to be punished due to sort of long rough.

Yeah, it was pretty soft and receptive. We'll see how that goes throughout the week.

Each individual course gives its own challenges, and we'll see. I've played 11 holes on the golf course, so I can't really tell what I think the scoring will be like, but you know with links courses, the wind, the weather makes such a difference. But for sure a softer golf course plays different to a firm and fast one.

**Q. Just thinking back to 2019 and how well that Open went and how close you came, how do you kind of almost assess that confidence-wise and this tournament-wise heading in?**

TOMMY FLEETWOOD: Well, I think -- it was a long time ago now. I'm a different player in a different situation to two years ago.

I think when you have sort of been up there and competed in majors, I was there on the final group on Sunday, I think I can take from that the way I felt or the way the whole day felt and everything.

I would say that one in particular was very much like a one-off where I can't think of many Opens where I've been in the final group and I wouldn't be like the fan favourite in a way, so that was like a different experience entirely.

But you take from it the experience you've got. I think the last,

from dating back to Troon, which was 2016, and I was off the planet, I couldn't hit a golf shot, but I've improved every Open since then. If that trend carries on then it would be really, really nice.

But you take from it all the good stuff you've learned. And like I said, it's been two years ago now and it's been a while since you've been up there or competed or had a chance in a major or even a golf tournament given that, but you can draw on all those memories.

**Q. Do you write down what you learned, or how do you remember it, because I never remember things properly?**

TOMMY FLEETWOOD: Yeah, I do quite a lot of writing. I always like to kind of, whether it be assess it or like look back on it or write something so that I remember it, I'll write things like throughout the week all the time anyway.

Plus I think when it's your sport, I think most golfers -- like I can come off and remember every shot I hit and you know how that felt. You're so engrossed in it that you do kind of do remember everything. So that's one part of it.

But yeah, I'll have it wrote down, the people that were there at the time with me, whether it be Clair or coaches or Ian caddying, whoever it is. We'll speak about it at the time or many times.

Yeah, it's two years ago now, so as I say, as a golfer I'm sort of in a different situation. But all those things, for when that time does come -- and you never know. I mean, Phil Mickelson won the U.S. PGA. In his own words he sort of just found something that week and went off and won.

I'm not saying I'm Phil Mickelson in any way. He's one of the greatest golfers of all time. But these things happen in golf, and when they do, you look at what he probably drew on all the times he won majors or competed in them. It had been a while for him and he still had that feeling and those experiences.

That's probably something I've got in a way. Not quite as much as Phil Mickelson, though.

**Q. Shane was in here yesterday saying, I really don't like not playing in front of crowds. The double negative, sorry. I do**



**like playing in front of crowds. He describes himself as a bit of a showoff. Do you think you're a showoff, and do you think the fact there haven't been crowds for the past however many months might have had something to do with your form?**

TOMMY FLEETWOOD: No, I don't think so. I wouldn't say I'm a showoff in any way, and I think what I do is I love the game, and I love trying to get better, and I want to get the most out of myself. Crowds there or not, I'm still trying to do the same things.

I do agree that there's definitely certain times, certain moments where crowds bring the best out of people, and there's probably people that benefits from there being no crowds, as well.

In particular, if you look at a major and the added element of you're not just controlling your emotions, you're controlling what's happening with the crowd and their energy, as well, listening to cheers going on, whether it's you or whether it's somebody else, listening to groans. There's a lot of added elements, so it does bring a different skill set when there are thousands of people watching.

Like personally, the only one like in control of my game is me, and it hasn't been to a level that I would like as of recent times. Still, like I say, whether there's one person watching, no people, whether there's 60,000, I'm just trying to be as good as I can possibly be, and that will always stay the same until I stop playing.

**Q. Just considering the mood of the nation at the moment, I was wondering are you over the footy and what was your experience of Sunday night?**

TOMMY FLEETWOOD: Yeah, it's a lot easier for me or any of us than it would be for the players. I think as a sportsman and somebody that is interested in like all sports and those experiences, I'm an England fan. I could massively see the positives in all of it, in what we achieved and how the players conducted themselves and how they played.

I struggle -- I understand that people would say or that they would see it as I didn't win, so it was a failure. But at the same time, our best result in a major tournament in however many years. I find it hard to admit that it is a failure. I think it's progress, and I think they all did great.

Penalties can go either way. The goal keeper goes the wrong way, the penalties go in. In my opinion that doesn't change their performances in the tournament, and like I still see that team going a long, long way, and I just see it as part of -- I know what it feels like to come very, very close to your dream and not achieve it, so I sort of can relate to what the guys are feeling

in a way, just without the added nation that's behind them.

We're a very individual sport and quite a different fan base. It's much more important how those guys are allowed to, I guess, heal or deal with their disappointment and deal with it together and then get over it to then push on in their careers.

Saka is a 19 year old kid. He's got an amazing career in front of him if he gets allowed to blossom and create his own path and everything.

I felt for them, and I was obviously gutted as a fan, but it's much more hurtful for those guys and important that they can move on and become the players that they can be, and I do think England have a very big future in football.

**Q. I was wondering about how different this feels to you because of the times we're living in and the challenges, and logistically if there's been anything sort of particularly different or problematic this year at the Open.**

TOMMY FLEETWOOD: No. It is a different Open in terms of the rules and regulations that we have to stick by. Again, I go back to nothing changes. When I'm still on the range or on the first tee or on the putting green, wherever it is, you're still doing the same things you've always done.

It's just logistically some rules are a little bit different. You have a mask on or you can only hang out with the people that are in your team.

For me, like the buildup to this week, knowing that the Open is going to be on, the feeling that it gives you when you wake up on Monday and know that it's like Open Championship week, they are exactly the same as they've always been. It gives me the same buzz, it gives me the same excitement. And like when The Open in a COVID year or not, I think you look back at the way Dustin reacted when he won the Masters and that was a very quiet Masters and you see the emotions that it brings out, I don't think those things go away and I don't think those things change because of what is going on around the tournament.

I think everybody is really grateful that we're here playing The Open. It's been a long time since the last one. It's a very special event.

For me, like it's just exactly the same feelings. Like I'm going to go out there, practise, I'm going to assess the course, the excitement is going to be building for Thursday, and hopefully I'm there for the full week and right up until the end of the event.

Like it doesn't -- not many things change that much really.

**Q. Going back to what you were saying earlier about**

**football, do you see finishing runner-up at the Open as failure?**

TOMMY FLEETWOOD: I don't see it as failure, but runner-up at the Open would equal my best-ever finish in a major, and I think last time I did it it hurt, but I find it difficult when you haven't been that far before or achieved that.

I finished second in two majors before, so I would be equalling what I've done over the last two or three years. It probably wouldn't -- like it would be fine.

It also depends on how you finish second, as well. But I don't see it as -- I would see it as probably disappointed. I would have come very, very close and I'd be disappointed like the guys are, but as I say, sport is very, very difficult and you're playing at the very, very elite end. I think using the words "failure" are sometimes a bit harsh.

It's not what you would want. It's not what I want. I don't want to finish second and the guys didn't want to finish second, but they still -- I think it should still be acknowledged that they did absolutely amazing. And like myself out of 155 other guys, I want to be the last one. It would still be a great performance, but yeah, I would be disappointed.

**Q. What happens if you finish runner-up again this year?**

TOMMY FLEETWOOD: I'll see how I've done it. I think -- would I have failed? I just wouldn't be the winner of The Open. If that's failure, then I would have failed. It wouldn't be a bad performance, though.

**Q. I just wondered for 2019 and Portrush, there seemed to be a direct correlation between the Lahinch form and the Portrush form, probably because of similar layouts and kind of similar intricacies of the courses. Just wondering, did you spend any time on links behind closed door sessions this year in preparation for St. George's? When you kind of consider Rory had a round in Portmarnock, Shane Lowry was in Lahinch and Portmarnock last week. Did you have any of your own?**

TOMMY FLEETWOOD: Well, I played the Scottish Open last week, so that was like a competitive tournament on a links course. Links golf is something I feel very comfortable with. I grew up in a links town, and although I wasn't like a member of one of the links courses, I've played on it a lot.

When I'm at home I will go and play Hillside quite a bit with my dad, things like that. I think I have one of the more constant, like, sort of -- I guess links is more in my life than a lot of other golfers.

Yeah, it takes a different kind of preparation. I feel like

Scotland, sort of the way that the course plays and the bounces and the turf, that's good preparation for it.

But like I said, when I'm home I'm always playing -- once a week probably I get to go on a links course, so I have that as like a constant throughout the year. So it's not like something I feel like I need to go out of my way for to prepare really hard for because I feel like it's always around, and I feel like as soon as I step foot on them, I feel pretty comfortable with what is needed.

**Q. It's been 52 years since there was an English winner of The Open in England. Do you view playing in England in an Open as pressure or is it a chance to play well in front of your own fans, your own gallery?**

TOMMY FLEETWOOD: Yeah, I think it's just an amazing opportunity. It's very, very special. I've said it many times. For me personally there's three Opens: There's Birkdale, there's Hoylake, there's Royal Lytham that I could have the chance of playing them all and they're all within 30, 40 minutes of where I grew up. And people go their whole lives without playing any kind of event that close to home, and there's three chances there of the biggest event in the world being that close for me.

It's very special for me, and I see -- I completely see it as opportunity. It's nerve-racking, yeah. It's like a different element to the event, but I love it. I really, really do. It's always going to be my home event, and like I said before, the one time I was in the final group on Sunday was probably the one time I won't have the crowd on my side, which was slightly different.

I consider myself very lucky that I get to play this tournament as one of the home favourites and to get the support that I do, and I always, always look forward to it.

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