

The 149th Open

Press Conference

Wednesday, 14 July 2021

Louis Oosthuizen



OLIVIA McMILLAN: Louis, thank you so much for joining us, and welcome to the 149th Open here at Royal St. George's. You've had an amazing year and some excellent results. How does that place you coming into the championship this year?

LOUIS OOSTHUIZEN: Yeah, it's obviously a completely different style of golf that we're playing this week. Yeah, feel good about my game. Just need to try and get one better.

Q. Obviously a lot is made now over the fact you've had a number of runner-up finishes in these championships since you of course won in 2010. It obviously becomes a bigger and bigger thing I'm sure as every single second place racks up. How do you get past that? Is there anything you're doing specifically to deal with that and overcome it?

LOUIS OOSTHUIZEN: No, not really. Doing the same old thing. Trying to prepare the same way for -- the same way I would do any other major championship.

You do feel a little disappointed afterwards, but I was outplayed by -- with both of those majors this year, and just fell short. I can just do what I do and try and just go one better when I get to the next major.

Q. When you came here in 2011 you were the defending champion. How did you feel you handled that? Was it a big challenge that week?

LOUIS OOSTHUIZEN: Yeah. I mean, I remember being very nervous in 2011, sort of coming off of being the defending champion. I remember the golf course playing difficult, and especially that Saturday morning. Rain was coming in sideways, and I was happy making the cut that week and just being there on the weekend.

Yeah, coming here this week I didn't really remember a lot of the holes, but when I started playing it the last couple of days, I started remembering some of them. It's a tough golf course. It's a very good golf course.

Q. Any defending champion standing on that first tee, is that as tough a tee shot as there is on The Open rota?

LOUIS OOSTHUIZEN: Yeah, I think it is. I think when you're

defending the championship, you've sort of got that little bit more on your plate. Once you tee off and get out on the golf course, you're fine, and you do your thing.

I think it's a great honour to be a defending champion of The Open, and if I was a little older, I would have probably enjoyed it a bit more.

Q. Just talking about that time as you've discussed, is it still fresh in the mind or does it feel like a lifetime ago when you think back?

LOUIS OOSTHUIZEN: It feels like a lifetime ago. It's 11 years since I won at St. Andrews.

Every time I play St. Andrews, whether it's the Dunhill Links or The Open Championship, it's a special place, and it will always be close to my heart.

In '15 I had a good run at it, and hopefully next year I can have a decent week again.

Yeah, it feels like it was ages ago.

Q. (No microphone.)

LOUIS OOSTHUIZEN: Yeah, especially around St. Andrews. I think The Open feels a little bit different when you play it there. It's got a little bit more to it, and the vibe is definitely a little different.

Q. Do you think people expect too much of top golfers, because if you were in any other profession, say you were a lawyer or an orthopedic surgeon, whatever, you were in the top bunch all the time, it would be a massive success story, and here you're saying you were disappointed not to get over the line this tournament and that, when really you've come in incredibly well, haven't you?

LOUIS OOSTHUIZEN: Yeah, look, I think as a sportsperson you want to win. That's why you play. You want to try and win the tournament and lift the trophy. You're always going to be disappointed when you get close and finish in second. I don't think there's one of us out here that goes out and beginning of the week say, I'll take second.



If you get to second, you're like, man, I was close to first, I could have won this event.

I don't want to play the sport if I tee it up not thinking I can win a tournament. Then I think as a sports person that's not what I'm here for.

Q. When you go home, does your wife say, well done, or does she share in your disappointment?

LOUIS OOSTHUIZEN: No, everyone is real supportive and saying, well done. It's still a great week. But you would always be a little -- that little person in the back of your mind will always be talking to you -- you also get tournaments where you finish second and you were really never in it. You had a great last three holes or something and you finished two behind the lead, but you were never really in the tournament to win it. That's different.

But I think if you have a chance to win the tournament and you finish second, you're always going to have disappointment.

Q. Just wondered about the South African challenge this week, of which obviously you're a key part, different ages, different backgrounds, so many good players. I'm wondering your take on the challenge and whether it's, again, this wonderful glut at the moment coming through.

LOUIS OOSTHUIZEN: Yeah, I played yesterday with the SA boys a bit, and yeah, we have a great bunch of players at the moment coming through. Garrick Higgo had great success; Christiaan Bezuidenhout had great success.

So the guys are coming through, and I know there's more to come from our country. We've got a great junior programme and amateur programme down there, and it's great to see the guys coming through.

I'm starting to become one of the older ones and the old boys, and it's great just seeing the youngsters coming through and playing well.

For me, seeing Ernie here this week is for me also -- it's great to see him at this tournament. What he's done for me and my golf and being one of my idols, it's always nice seeing another South African like that.

Q. Do you also then almost help put back a little bit into the even younger ones, or do you wait for them to come and ask you a question here or there, or how does it work?

LOUIS OOSTHUIZEN: Yeah, I try and stay out of their way for them to prepare the way they want to prepare. But definitely they can ask me a few questions, and how I would approach this, I would definitely share what I think and what I would do.

Especially around links golf, it's all on what you see on your eye and the way you play the game, so it's difficult to really tell someone, Listen, this is the way to play this hole. But yeah, if they ask me, I will be more than happy to share.

Q. Can you talk about that little guy in the back of your head? What's he really saying to you when it's over? And how long does it take before you and that little guy kind of come to a decision that, okay, it's done and we'll move forward?

LOUIS OOSTHUIZEN: Yeah, normally when I have a bad round my wife knows just give me 10 minutes to sort of just go and think about it and just get it over and get it done with, and then I'm fine. Then it's behind me and I'm not going to think about it again.

When it comes to a tournament, and as massive as a major is and you come that close, it definitely sticks with you a little bit longer. You sort of just have to get over it and get on with it and see if you can do better in the next tournament. Otherwise you're not going to be able to go forward.

I think this game changes so much in a couple of golf shots where you can hit three great shots and one shot can put you back completely. It's sort of the same with tournaments. You've just got to get that tournament behind you and get to the next one and see if you can prepare better and play better and go one spot better.

Q. A lot of times people say if you keep doing the same thing over and over again, as you've been saying, just try to do the same thing, just try to be better, that's kind of like insanity. Are there things you're doing beyond the same things over and over again, between The Open and here, maybe something a little different to try to rectify what happened at the U.S. Open?

LOUIS OOSTHUIZEN: I think if it was a case where I completely collapsed the last four or five holes or something like that, it would be something I would look into a lot more. Like speak to someone. I might not be mentally strong enough or somewhere in my game and the pressure collapsed.

But in those two cases I don't think that was the case. I played really well. Yeah, I hit an errant shot on 17, I took it on off the tee, but I was in it the whole time.

If I can put myself in that position again and just try and aim better, I would be that insane person and try and do the same thing. I feel in the occasion of the U.S. Open, and I only saw the two putts Jon Rahm made later on, you have those tournaments where it's meant to be for him. He made two massive putts on 17 and 18, and it was just not my time.

Q. Louis, when you spoke back in -- I think we talked at the Memorial about finding a second wind, if you will, with your game -- did you need results to kind of get that second push, or what allowed you to find it that led to the results?

LOUIS OOSTHUIZEN: Yeah, wow, that was a good question. I definitely felt like I was playing good enough to win tournaments, but I wasn't really playing good enough in the same sentence. I was doing stuff, the right things, but also not doing things good and finishing 20th and 25th and felt like I should be doing a lot better.

Gave it a little push to myself a couple of years back, I think, starting with working quite a bit on short game and especially my putting. I always felt like I had too many days with my putting where it was hot and cold, and you can't get a consistency.

I started working quite a bit on that, and last year got a better rhythm in my stroke and better consistency, and this year putted beautifully so far. That definitely got me on the right path, and it sort of lifted up the rest of my game.

But I needed the results to sort of get that second motivation to really try and step it up.

Q. You do rank No. 1 this season in strokes gained putting on the PGA Tour; can you share some more details? Have you changed coaches? What have you done to change your stroke or your philosophy on putting?

LOUIS OOSTHUIZEN: No, I don't have a specific putting coach. I went back to a few things that I did as an amateur really and looked at a few things I did playing in 2010, the way I was putting, especially the week of The Open.

A big thing was also sticking to the same putter, the same look, the same feel, and trying to get some kind of a relationship going with my putter.

I think the biggest change was consistency in doing the same thing every time, trying to get a really good routine going, and when I do practice work at home and when I do it at a tournament, trying to do the same thing all the time. Just putting the time.

My coach, my swing coach, Justin Parsons, helped me with finding the right routine and doing things every time the same way, and I just think that got my consistency so much better.

OLIVIA McMILLAN: Louis, thank you very much. We thank you for your time and we wish you the best of luck.

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