

# The 150th Open

Press Conference

Monday, 11 July 2022

## Matthew Fitzpatrick



THE MODERATOR: Good afternoon, ladies and gentlemen. I am delighted to welcome you to St Andrews for The 150th Open. It's so nice to have you all joining us again in person this year. Of course I am joined by Matt Fitzpatrick, the U.S. Open champion.

Thank you so much for joining us. This is your first Open in St Andrews. How are you finding the week so far, and what are you most looking forward to?

MATTHEW FITZPATRICK: I only got in this morning, but I've been to St Andrews many times, so kind of know what to expect. But I'm sure this week has a different atmosphere than normal.

I'm just looking forward to getting out there, seeing the golf course this afternoon, and seeing how it's looking.

**Q. You told us the other day that you won a junior thing here. Let's hear about the atmosphere when you won your junior thing. Did you have to make a speech? How did it go?**

MATTHEW FITZPATRICK: I think so. I can't really remember it. Yeah, there wasn't much atmosphere. There was literally my mum, dad, and our dog watching, yeah.

**Q. What were your scores?**

MATTHEW FITZPATRICK: I can't remember. It was like two-round stroke play. One round the eve and one round the new. If you got qualified top 30, and then you came to play the Old Course, match play on the Old Course, yeah, it was just all match play.

**Q. How many matches would you have had to win then after that? Two rounds of stroke play, and then how many match play?**

MATTHEW FITZPATRICK: I want to say it was like three, I think. I think it was actually only top 16 that qualified. I don't know what the math is on that. Yeah, I think I only played three matches, and then I played the following year as well. Lost in the final.

**Q. So pretty good record around here already?**

MATTHEW FITZPATRICK: Only when I was a junior. Since I've played the Dunhill, it's not been so good.

**Q. You told us last week your idea of perfect preparation for a major would be to play pretty well but not exactly perfect. And then for it just to click this week, was Scotland last week a pretty good preparation?**

MATTHEW FITZPATRICK: Yeah, it was really. The golf course is different to here. It was playing firmer and faster than what it has done in previous years. But I think the way that I played was kind of there, thereabouts, other than -- what day? Other than Friday. I never really got going early on until Sunday. Made a birdie, made a bogey, birdie, bogey, just never really got going over the weekend.

To be honest, I was surprised that two level-pars kind of kept me sixth, to be honest. Walking off Sunday, I was happy with the result.

**Q. Matt, how did it feel teeing it up for the first time competitively last week? Did you get a sense, a different feeling as a major champion?**

MATTHEW FITZPATRICK: I think for me, I'll be honest, like I was a little bit apprehensive. Where's my game at? The golf last week, links golf is quite drastically different than what we played at the U.S. Open and what we played year round. It is a very different form of golf. So that was also kind of something I was apprehensive about.

I felt like I was pleased with the way I played day one. The draw was a big factor last week. Particularly day two played really, really well. To me, I was kind of laughing to my friends, and I was kind of saying I'm just happy that I've still kind of got it a little bit.

Yeah, I was pleased with the week, with the way I finished. Like I said, I was more surprised than anything that my scores over the weekend kind of kept me where I was after Friday.

**Q. The off-course atmosphere you were able to create at Brookline contributed a lot to your success. Are there other things you're trying to replicate this week?**



MATTHEW FITZPATRICK: Yeah, unfortunately, the Fultons couldn't make it (laughter). I'm staying in a house with my mom and dad, manager Ted, and I had a chef at Brookline, and he's been to a few events this year, he'll be here as well. So just kind of keep things the same.

Kind of last week I was just basically on my own. I stayed onsite, and it was quite boring to be on my own, to be honest. I normally like my own company, but it was a little bit boring. This week is kind of nice to sort of get back to that and be similar.

In terms of the week as a whole, it will just be kind of the same deal of preparation and normal routines, just trying to get back to the normal routines that have been all year, really.

**Q. Matt, what are your thoughts when you step to the 17th tee? Could you talk about how difficult and unique that hole is from tee to green?**

MATTHEW FITZPATRICK: Yeah, it's a fantastic hole. You've got -- I would say that you've just got to have confidence in your start lines, where you're aiming off the tee. From memory, it's one of the letters on the hotel, I think, is the line. So you've just got to commit to that.

I think it's really important to get where your right edge of the fairway is, where the out of bounds is. I think that's important. Then you kind of know where your wits are, where your dispersion is.

Then the second shot is so important that you hit the fairway to at least give yourself a chance of bouncing it up shore and staying on the green. Everyone knows left in the bunker is dead. Missing the green right is dead. Shore is the safest bet, but it's not easy from there. It's just a tough hole.

So I'm not sure where the wind is going to be playing this week, but I've played it before when it's been into the wind. I hit 4-iron in there. I don't know where it's forecast, but if it is down, it will be a little bit easier, hopefully. It is just a tough hole, and particularly if you've got a lead coming into there, it really puts pressure on.

**Q. Have you ever had any bad moments with the bunker or the road?**

MATTHEW FITZPATRICK: No, I think maybe I've been on the road once. Maybe not on the road, but I rolled just off the right edge down onto the bottom there. I wouldn't say I've played it enough to have it.

**Q. Matt, there's been a lot of thought that this course is going to be extremely gettable this week because of the weather forecast. I'm curious what your take is on that**

**because of the fact there's so many younger, longer hitters here. As a follow, how many of these par-4s in calm condition are drivable for you?**

MATTHEW FITZPATRICK: Like I said, I've not played the golf course for a couple years now. Obviously, when I've played, it's been in October so it's been soft, or softer. And right now, I think from what I'm hearing here, it's very firm.

I think I mentioned last week, speaking to Billy, looking at 4, 5, maybe 6 are drivable. Again, that's calm conditions. So that's probably a bit of a guess from my side, but that definitely changes the dynamic of the golf course.

Someone asked Billy today, what does he think the winning score is. And I'm like pretty oblivious with most golf history, and he was telling, I think Louis won on minus 15. Someone won on 18. Someone won on 16 or something. I was taken aback by how low the scores were, like I didn't think it would be that low.

I think with it being firm and par-4s more gettable, it could be a low one as well, weather permitting.

**Q. What was Billy thinking?**

MATTHEW FITZPATRICK: 18, which to me I was like, that's low.

**Q. Matt, you've been away for so long in America this time. Just wondered if there was almost a period of adjustment coming back. In golfing terms, when you're at Renaissance, made a lot of your longer hitting, were you actually hitting different clubs, too, when you played it last year?**

MATTHEW FITZPATRICK: Yeah, I think we had an opposite wind all week, this past week at Renaissance. So there were a lot of holes that I feel like the wind switched every day last year. But some of the holes played really, really short this year, and I was definitely hitting -- it was firmer as well, but I was definitely hitting a lot less club than normal. So that was nice.

**Q. The amount of time you've been away, has it been difficult to be British again?**

MATTHEW FITZPATRICK: It has been a little bit, to be honest. Purely golf, it has been a little bit. Particularly last week, I struggled into the wind. I just didn't hit many -- I didn't hit good shots into the wind, and that was -- when you're out of it for so long, hitting off of the turf and having such a strong wind, it kind of takes some getting used to and some practise to hit those shots again and control your ball. I didn't do that very well at all last week. It's something that I told Mike that I wanted to work on this week.

We did a little bit this morning, but there's not a breath out there, really, at the minute. All we kind of did was get some numbers and seeing whether I'm spinning it too low or too high. And everything seemed fine. Unfortunately, it was my fault, not my club's fault.

So it's something to just keep an eye on for the rest of the week, but definitely something that I need to get right before Thursday.

**Q. Matt, what will it mean to be part of the celebration in history here this week at The 150th Open?**

MATTHEW FITZPATRICK: It's great. It's my first Open at St Andrews. I wouldn't say it's one of my favourite golf courses, but to experience it at an Open, it's amazing. It's definitely one that I watched growing up. I didn't really watch much golf growing up. It would be Ryder Cup, the Masters, and The Open, to be honest. It was always held in high esteem when it comes to St Andrews.

I love the area, and I think this week, with it being The Open here and my first one, I'm definitely going to enjoy it.

**Q. Matt, when you played in the junior thing -- I don't even remember when that was --**

MATTHEW FITZPATRICK: Last year (laughter).

**Q. Well, congratulations then.**

MATTHEW FITZPATRICK: Thank you.

**Q. Can you just talk about what St Andrews meant to you back then and how your understanding or love of it has evolved?**

MATTHEW FITZPATRICK: Yeah, I'll be honest, back then I was blown away. It's like, wow, St Andrews, the Old Course, it's incredible. Genuinely, I was so excited, I wanted to make the match play just to play the golf course. That was probably when I was younger playing amateur golf, playing more links golf. That was kind of what we did in the UK was we played more links-style golf courses and you get used to that.

But my personal favourite golf courses have always been regular par ones, tree-lined, Harbour Town, Augusta, Brookline, that style of golf.

So I've kind of grown out and enjoying links. I enjoy the challenge of it when it's windy and it's hard and you've got to grind. But if it's still and calm, I don't particularly enjoy playing that because I don't think it's -- I mean, it's still hard, but I feel like -- I've said it a lot, when it's really hard, it's harder for everyone else. That's kind of why I enjoy the challenge more, I

guess.

**Q. I was going to say, do you think that gives you an advantage when it is harder?**

MATTHEW FITZPATRICK: Yeah, I like to think so. I just prefer it like that. When you've got to dig in and just grind out a score, whether it's level-par, 2-under, 5-over, whatever it is.

**Q. Before this year, you were kind of maybe under the radar, and this year you've been behind the mic a lot. Are you embracing this attention as something that is helping you, or would you wish not to be here so much?**

MATTHEW FITZPATRICK: Yeah, I said to a few people last week that before I won a major, I'd see the other guys doing press conferences and doing media and that sort of stuff, and I'm like that's what I want. I want to be part of that, and I want to do that. And now it's happened, it's kind of like, oh, it's quite a lot. It's a lot to take in.

It's definitely different. I spoke about it already, you've got to manage your time differently and even better than before because you've got more people wanting your time and you've got to balance that. I'm enjoying it so far. The end of the day, I've got to do whatever's right for me and my golf. So if I have to do less of this and make sure that my golf's okay, then that's what I'll have to do.

Like I say, it's just trying to find the balance in it, but, yeah, I'm enjoying it for now.

**Q. You mentioned you have a chef. It looks like more of you have a chef now. How does it work for you? Does he cook your favourite things every day, or is it more like a structure and a balance?**

MATTHEW FITZPATRICK: No, it's a structure. I work with a nutritionist as well, so it's kind of like all planned out.

**Q. How do you sort of reflect on your Open record to date? How sort of do those experiences help you this week?**

MATTHEW FITZPATRICK: I wouldn't say my Open record is great at all. I think my best finish, 2019 Portrush, is that right? Is that when it was? Yeah, it's funny. I think -- I'll be honest, since I turned pro, obviously we play much less links golf. I feel like I've got worse in the wind since I turned pro because we don't -- not worse in the wind, worse in the links and wind. Other golf courses in wind, I've played fine.

I feel like coming back here, like David said, it's taken time just to get used to it and where to land it, how to fly it. We're not put under that test as regularly out in regular events because either there's no wind or it's softer and you can just fly it to a

certain spot.

Obviously I'd like to improve on my record, and I feel like I've obviously been playing much, much better since the last Open that I played. It's just trying to do more of the same this year, and like I say, just fix a couple things from last week and hopefully take into this week.

**Q. You got a nice message of congratulations from Padraig Harrington on Twitter after you won the U.S. Open, talking about hard work and perseverance. When you hear that from Padraig Harrington, it sort of says a lot. Have you had much inspiration from Padraig over the years, much advice? I think after the 2013 Open I remember him coming off the course after his round, and he just wanted to know what you'd shot, as far as I recall.**

MATTHEW FITZPATRICK: I don't remember that.

**Q. He might have just been ahead of you. What kind of inspiration has Padraig given you over the years? Any stories regarding that?**

MATTHEW FITZPATRICK: I played with Padraig a few times over the course since I turned pro. I really enjoy his company. He's a great man. The work that he puts in is incredible. His ball speed is what he's obsessed with nowadays, and it's incredible how fast he's got.

For me, the biggest thing that I would love to take from him is just his attitude towards the game. He could tell you himself, and I spoke to row Nan his caddie about it before, he could hit 100 yards offline and you'd never know it happened. I think that his biggest strength is he just moves on straight on to the next shot. That's what he's focused on. That's why he's been such a good player, and he's a multiple major winner.

**Q. Just a followup, how much of your U.S. Open winnings would you bet on him not winning this week?**

MATTHEW FITZPATRICK: That's not very nice, is it? Well, hopefully all of it because I'm going to beat him. (Laughter).

THE MODERATOR: On that lovely positive note, thank you very much for your time, Matt. We wish you the best of luck this week.

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