

The 150th Open

Press Conference

Wednesday, 13 July 2022

Cameron Smith



OLIVIA MCMILLAN: Good afternoon, ladies and gentlemen. I'm delighted to be joined by Cameron Smith here for the 150th.

Cam, can you talk about what it's like to be here in St Andrews and what the week's been like for you so far.

CAMERON SMITH: It's been really nice. Spent last week up in North Berwick, playing the Scottish Open, which was a nice week in Scotland, getting prepared for the links types of golf courses. The week here so far has been unreal. I'm staying in the hotel.

The course looks exactly how I thought it was going to, firm and fast. It's obviously been windy the last few days. So it's been a bit of a challenge. But yeah, it should be a good week.

OLIVIA MCMILLAN: You mentioned the course. Could you talk about how your preparations have been going and what your initial thoughts are?

CAMERON SMITH: Just did a little bit of practise on Monday afternoon. I was actually probably a little bit tired from last week. It was a bit of a grind. It was also windy there.

And last couple of days just played nine holes. Played the front nine yesterday, the back nine this morning. Like I said, the course is looking fantastic, exactly what I guess all the players want.

OLIVIA MCMILLAN: You've definitely not played The Open at St Andrews before, but have you played The Old Course perhaps in amateur golf before, or is this the first time?

CAMERON SMITH: I've played the St Andrews Links Trophy maybe in 2013 or '14, so quite a long time ago. I think we played a few of the golf courses. So it's my first time back here in a long time. I remember the course playing quite a bit different to what it is now.

Q. It's been a long time since an Australian's won the British Open, 29 years, I think. Ash Barty broke the Wimbledon drought last year. She was there following your round today. Do you think this could be the year?

CAMERON SMITH: Yeah, absolutely. I would say this golf

course probably reminds us a little bit of home. It's really firm and really fast, which I think the Aussies really enjoy.

I think we're going to have a tough time keeping the ball on the fairway this week given how firm and fast and windy it's been. A lot of balls have been running off into the rough. So just got to be kind of wary of that.

But Leish and Scotty were hitting it pretty good today as well. So it should be a good week.

Q. You played a couple of times in the Asia-Pacific Amateur Championship many years ago. How did that help you in your development? And do you have any recollections of playing alongside or seeing Hideki during those tournaments?

CAMERON SMITH: Yeah, I remember my first Asia-Pacific Amateur I played with Hideki in the last group, I think. He ended up winning the tournament.

But he was probably the first player I played with where I really -- I thought he was the best player in the world. He was hitting iron shots, shaping it into different pins. And he was really the first guy that I saw do that. So yeah, lots of good memories there.

Q. The conditions out there make it look like you can get quite a bit creative. Are you just having fun out there and trying different things?

CAMERON SMITH: Yeah, pretty much. Around the greens, there's so many different options. I think you can putt the ball here from, it seems like, 50, 60 yards, which is a little bit different to what we're used to.

But there's so many options. I've been hitting every club, it seems like, in the bag, from 30, 40 yards in, and just really seeing what happens, getting used to the conditions.

I think the wind plays a big factor even when you're trying to hit along the ground here. So just getting used to the conditions and trying to be creative is, I think, been the, I guess, theory the last few days.

Q. The Open's kind of a particularly good show ground for



colourful characters, and you with your trademark hairstyle, you're very much standing out. I know you've spoken about it in great depth and made a lot of high comments about it. I wanted to know do you see your hair as a symbol of your strength, maybe like Samson, or a challenge? If you were to win The Open, would you maybe cut it off or something like that, do something drastic?

CAMERON SMITH: I've always said that if I won a tournament or did something good, I would cut it off. And I've done that a couple times this year, and it's still on there.

So I'd like to say I would cut it off, but it's probably not going to happen. I feel like it's almost a part of me now. Like you said, people recognize the hair and makes a few people laugh. Yeah, it's good.

Q. Do you get any comments from the fans on the sidelines as you go past, about your hair?

CAMERON SMITH: Every week. There's some goodies from time to time. But for the most part I think people enjoy it. Like I said, I think they have a laugh at it. And it makes people smile, which makes me happy.

Q. You touched on it a minute ago, but how much will you rely on your sort of short-game prowess? Rory was talking about hitting Texas wedges from 60 yards and whatnot. Is that something you might do?

CAMERON SMITH: Yeah, I think so. You have to have all the shots down pat out there. There's going to be some pretty ugly spots you get yourself into out there. Links golf is trying to hit the perfect shot and hoping for the best. You are going to get yourself into some ugly spots. You've just got to be ready for it. You've got to prepare for the worst and hope for the best.

Q. How about your driving? How is that coming along?

CAMERON SMITH: It's been a bit of a challenge, I would say, the last couple of days, in the wind. I feel like I'm hitting the driver really good. I think, just like I said before, keeping the ball on the fairways, because they are so hard and fast and it has been so windy has been a bit tough.

But hopefully the wind dies down a little bit and gives us some chances at birdies.

Q. Collin Morikawa was here the other day and he specifically talked about the 12th hole as a hole that you could stuff up maybe 15 or 16 different ways. And he went as far as saying it almost scared him. Is there a hole out there that scares you at all?

CAMERON SMITH: I mean, all of them, to be honest. Like I

said, it's so hard to keep the ball on the fairways that it seems like you're constantly hitting from that longer grass where you don't have as much control. And given the terrain and the humps and hollows in front of the green, you really are kind of guessing into the greens.

So it can turn, I guess, a good shot off the tee into a just-trying-to-make-par scenario, which is quite frustrating at times, and it's going to happen. So you've just got to kind of prepare for that and try and leave it in some good spots around the greens to make your 4 and move on.

Q. After playing the Renaissance last week in the winds on the links course and then coming up to play the 150th, how do you feel your mindset for the ones that you were playing against? Is it causing you a bit of fear factor or make you want to take more risks or tactical play for The 150th Open? A bit more pressure?

CAMERON SMITH: The game plan, I think, has changed quite a bit over the last few days being here with the wind. Like I said, it's been so hard to keep the ball on the fairway that it's almost worth just hitting driver up into the rough and hoping you get a good lie and kind of play it from there.

There are a few holes like that. There are a few holes where you have to hit an iron off the tee into play. And it's going to be brutal, I think. If the wind keeps up like it is, it's going to be a really good test of golf. And at some points it will be unfair, I think. But you've just got to move on and I think deal with it as best you can and try and make those birdies when you can.

Q. Do you feel this is your best chance to win an Open given the form that you're bringing in over the last 12 months or 24 months?

CAMERON SMITH: I think so. I think I've played the best golf of my life this year, for sure. I love the golf course. It would be awesome to win an Open here for sure. I think it's everyone's dream growing up to win an Open at St Andrews.

So don't want to jinx myself, but I'm feeling pretty good. The game feels good. I had a good weekend up at the Scottish Open. It was good to see some putts drop and a couple of low numbers over the weekend. So, yeah, hopefully I can get it done.

Q. And to score up that, it's 16-12 Queensland with about three minutes to go.

CAMERON SMITH: I was watching -- I actually got off the Wi-Fi at the clubhouse, and my phone went out and got it again here. So I'm hoping that Queensland can hold on and get the series win.

Q. There's been a lot of talk and controversy over the past few months regarding the LIV Golf series. Do you think being back at the home of golf, this prestigious competition, 150th anniversary, that it will put the focus back onto the game and bring players together?

CAMERON SMITH: Absolutely. I think at these golf tournaments where golf is the priority, we should talk about the tournament. We should talk about the history of the event. I mean, the golf course and the town is absolutely buzzing. Went out Monday night, and the town was really something else. It absolutely should be about the golf.

Q. Just while origin was mentioned there have you ever been confused at all with Cameron Smith, the rugby player? Are there any funny mix-ups.

CAMERON SMITH: He's about four times the size of me.

Q. Not in terms of likeness, but maybe on social media or in an interview, has anyone ever thought that you...

CAMERON SMITH: When Cam is coming up through the end of his career and I was coming through the professional ranks, definitely got a little bit confused there through social media and stuff. But now that Cam's retired, I think he's done me a favour (laughter).

Q. Who is the most famous Cameron Smith in Australia at the moment?

CAMERON SMITH: I grew up idolizing Cam Smith. So it's hard to say myself -- I would consider myself more famous, but he's a legend of the game. I've looked up to him since I was 10 or 11 years old. And like I said, I hope the boys just get it done. I'm begging for a score update if anyone's got it.

Q. (No microphone.)

CAMERON SMITH: 20-12? Awesome.

Q. Practise round today with Adam and Leish. Obviously, Marc being a good mate and having shot 64, 66 here last time, are you breathing easy about any secrets about getting around The Old Course?

CAMERON SMITH: Not really any. I've definitely watched him the last day, I guess. Leish is so creative, and he's able to hit those shots against the wind, which I think is going to be a really big advantage this week given the firmness of the fairways.

We played the back nine today, and he was able to hit that little cut into the wind while I was kind of riding the wind and ended up in the rough. Leish was able to hit that cut into the wind and

kind of keep himself on the fairways. So just little things like that. Going to go work on this afternoon, and hopefully he's helped me out.

OLIVIA MCMILLAN: We'll leave it there. Thanks, Cam, very much. Best of luck this week.

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