

The 150th Open

Press Conference

Friday, 15 July 2022

Cameron Smith



MIKE WOODCOCK: We welcome our clubhouse leader, Cam Smith, into the interview room. Cam's on a 13-under par total of, I think, 1-3-1 for the championship. That's actually the lowest total to par for the record.

Cam, fantastic round today. You played very well, 8-under par 64. You got off to a great start and an eagle on the back nine. Can you sum up what the key was for you today?

CAMERON SMITH: I think just being patient. Obviously got off to a really hot start. And it's very easy to just keep going, getting on the front foot and maybe trying to hit some shots that are a little bit too aggressive. But just stayed patient and holed some really nice putts.

MIKE WOODCOCK: You obviously enjoyed it out there, links golf in these kinds of conditions is a pleasure. The rain this morning maybe slowed down the fieriness a bit on the course.

CAMERON SMITH: Maybe a little bit.

MIKE WOODCOCK: But not much.

CAMERON SMITH: Not much. We actually probably played maybe 16 holes into the wind today. We got out to the back and the wind switched around.

And, yeah, we were able to kind of land those shots into the green maybe a little bit softer than the guys this morning. But the tee shots were a little bit harder.

Q. Seems like you found something that inspired you at the Scottish Open on the weekend. Is that the case? If so, what was it?

CAMERON SMITH: I think I just played some really good golf last week. Just a little bit I guess more pep in my step. My last few tournaments before that one weren't the greatest. I wasn't really happy with how I was playing. It's nice to put a good, solid weekend together ahead of this one.

Q. Were you thinking or were you aware at all -- I know you said you were being patient, making sure you did the right things -- but were you thinking 63, 62 at any point?

CAMERON SMITH: Not really, to be honest. I knew that back nine I knew was going to be really hard. In and off the left the whole way in there isn't the wind that right handers want. Like I said, just have to be really patient. Hit two really good shots into 14 and was able to get away with a 3 there, which was nice.

But other than that, just really played smart golf. And lots of good lag putting again, lots of good two-putts.

Q. How excited are you for the challenge this weekend?

CAMERON SMITH: It should be good. I think being off late again tomorrow afternoon it's obviously going to be a bit firmer, more like the first day, I would say. So I would say it's going to be pretty brutal out there.

I think there's going to be a few more gnarly pins, and I think being smart out there is definitely going to be the key to staying at the top of the leaderboard.

Q. Last week you said when you stepped onto the 1st tee at The Old Course, you felt a kid again. How have you controlled that so far? And now you're in the position you're in, how will you do that over the weekend?

CAMERON SMITH: I guess on the practise days, it's easy to have a laugh and stuff like that. But out there, the last couple of days has been such a grind, it's almost snapped me back into thinking about the shot right and really having to be precise with targets and shapes.

I think Tuesday/Wednesday was more the kid coming out in me, using the big humps and hollows and stuff like that. But it's definitely been a little different in the last couple of days.

Q. The play is incredibly slow. Did that actually help you in getting that patience that you had to wait 10, 15 minutes between each tee? Or what's your thoughts about the pace of the round?

CAMERON SMITH: Yeah, I don't think we can really do anything about it, to be honest, the way the course is set up. But I'm a really impatient person. Everyone that knows me hates me for it. So I have to try my best out there to be really patient, with the pace of play, and with the golf course as well.

Q. Following up what you found at the Scottish Open, Collin Morikawa was in a similar position last year. Was it just the shots you started to hit in the wind? Has that helped you this week?

CAMERON SMITH: I think so. Just being really creative in the wind. I think maybe the first couple of days at the Scottish Open I was trying to hit the right shot and they weren't quite coming off. And just had a little bit of practise after rounds.

And really started seeing my shots on the golf course, really started to commit over the weekend, and I think that's been the key. Just being really precise with targets and yeah.

Q. What have you enjoyed most about the challenge here over the first two days?

CAMERON SMITH: I think sometimes a really good shot around here is 60, 70 feet. I think that's the challenge because we're used to hitting it straight at the pin, basically. That's most of golf now.

Having to hit shots away from the pin sometimes hurts the ego a little bit, but it's just what you have to do around here.

Q. Is there anything you learned about yourself contending at the Masters this year and winning at THE PLAYERS in tough conditions that can really carry over to this weekend?

CAMERON SMITH: I think I've always been a pretty good player in tough conditions. I think most Aussies are, for some reason. I think we're all brought up to be smart golfers, hit away from the pin sometimes. And that really serves us well, I think, in big tournaments and when the conditions get tough.

Q. You mentioned the Aussies. Adam Scott obviously had a great round today to kick it off, and there's quite a few up there. Is there anything you can put it down to why -- I think there's going to be four in the top 12, collectively -- anything why everyone seems to have fired today?

CAMERON SMITH: Yeah, I think just what I said. I think you have to play smart golf. You have to play away from the pin around here. I think a lot of sandbelt golfers like that, using slopes to your advantage, sometimes having a big curling putt is your best option. And I think the Aussies will do good this week as it gets firmer and faster.

Q. You see yourself leading the 150th Open Championship. Tell us about the emotions and how do you prepare for tomorrow's round?

CAMERON SMITH: I think probably try and stay up as much as I can tonight. I think I'm going to be a little bit tired. Just trying to have a really big sleep in. I'm not going to try to do

anything for the morning. Sleep in, get on the bike, get the legs moving and get prepared as I normally would every other day.

Q. Rory has it to 10-under. There's a fair prospect you could be playing with him tomorrow. How exciting would that be?

CAMERON SMITH: That would be good. I think it's just exciting to be leading The Open after a couple of days. I think that experience tomorrow is going to be really cool. There's a lot of Aussies in the crowd, it seems like. Had a lot of support the first couple of days and really can't wait for the next couple.

Q. You mentioned your lag putting. I was curious when you take your final look at the hole, what's going through your mind and what are you visualizing, what are you looking at?

CAMERON SMITH: Just basically looking at the hole and trying to see the ball just dropping in the front there. That's always been the last thought of mine, is take a long, hard look at the hole and really feel the putt. I don't take a practise stroke. I just get up there and really feel it.

Q. You find yourself in contention here again at a major. Just how does it feel about putting yourself in this place going into the weekend?

CAMERON SMITH: It's good. It's obviously a really good spot to be in. I feel like I've been in this spot a lot over the past couple of years, and things just haven't quite gone my way yet.

But like I said before, I've just got to be really patient over the weekend. I think the golf course is going to get a lot harder and a lot faster. So just be patient and make good putts.

Q. Have you allowed yourself to -- I guess, thinking ahead not only would it be a major, but at St Andrews, it's 150, it's very historic -- how do you keep a level head knowing that's within your grasp now?

CAMERON SMITH: I think I've always done a pretty good job of just treating every round the same, to be honest. I think it's going to be a really cool experience being out there. It has been this whole week. But I've always done a really good job of just doing the same thing, going through the same process every morning, making sure I feel the same -- get on the range, hit the same shots. It's very boring, but it does the trick.

Q. At what point did you feel like you were going to make that eagle putt was going in?

CAMERON SMITH: Once it started breaking pretty good, about 10, 15 foot out, I thought it would have a chance. And not really one that you're trying to hole, you're just trying to get a nice easy birdie, but nice of it to pop in the side there.

Q. Your reaction made it seem like you never had a doubt.

CAMERON SMITH: (Chuckling). I don't get too excited nor too angry. I like to stay in the middle there sometimes -- all the time. So yeah, I don't really know. A lot of people say that it's boring to watch, but that's just how I go about my golf.

Q. What's been your favourite thing about being in St Andrews during such a milestone Open Championship?

CAMERON SMITH: I don't know. I think playing nine holes with Leish and Scotty the other day and getting our photo taken on the bridge, that was a pretty cool moment, I think, something that I'll definitely never forget. Two of my best mates now in the home of golf, just having a good time, having a whack around, that was really cool.

Q. (No microphone.)

CAMERON SMITH: I don't know if anyone got a good enough photo to be honest. The people taking photos weren't professionals, that's for sure. (Laughter).

Q. With regards to the firmness of the turf, how similar is it to the sandbelt when it gets real firm like we saw at the Presidents Cup? And what shots can you hit here that are different from there? What are the similarities, differences?

CAMERON SMITH: I think it's very similar. Hitting off the turf you definitely get the same interaction through the turf with the wedges. You have to be really creative. You have to have all the shots. It's just a lot like that. I don't even know what to really say about it.

If you are not quite on with your wedges, I feel like you can be punished really quickly. And yeah.

Q. It's all done now dan how many episodes of "Peaky Blinders" did you watch last night? And how important is it to get your mind off golf in between rounds?

CAMERON SMITH: I probably only watched two or three. I spent a bit of time talking to folks back home and watched two or three before I went to sleep. I probably will do the same thing tonight. Might watch a few more, just trying to stay up a little bit longer.

Q. Does it help to take your mind off the game?

CAMERON SMITH: I think it's really important. I think I've always done a good job of once golf is finished, is kind of getting on with life. Told myself it's like a job. Don't take it home with you. And I think it's really important, especially in these big tournaments.

Q. Growing up in Brisbane, what are your first memories of The Open?

CAMERON SMITH: I really don't know, to be honest. I remember Greggy Norman having a really good crack. That's probably one of my first memories, to be honest. And obviously Tiger winning around here.

I almost forgot what I was remembering with Tiger because it seemed like he was winning every week. I remember Greg having a good crack, yeah, that was probably my first real good memory of it.

Q. 17 is a really key hole around here. Obviously very historic. Have you got a specific strategy off the tee, and will you try to play into the green? Does it change with the different wind directions?

CAMERON SMITH: Yeah, absolutely. I think yesterday down off to the right, we're almost trying to hit over the corner of the hotel. And today, in off the left, we're trying to almost slide something down there, down the fairway. Changes the hole so much.

I think we had almost 200 metres in there today. Yesterday we only had 140. That back nine today definitely played a lot different. But it's such a cool hole. You never really know what it's going to throw at you. And it's definitely one of those holes where you are hoping you make 4 and you can just walk off.

Q. Yesterday you said you thought the course might get so difficult that you're just going to have to hang on over the weekend. Do you still feel that might be the case or did you change your view?

CAMERON SMITH: I think it was definitely yesterday afternoon, watching the golf, I felt as though it was going to get really firm and fast. We had that on-and-off rain this morning, I think, which slowed us up just a touch. We were able to hit some shots that we weren't able to hit yesterday.

But I still think it's going to get really firm and fast. This course bakes out so quickly. It's going to be a challenge, for sure.

MIKE WOODCOCK: Thank you for joining us. Best of luck for the weekend.

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