

The 150th Open

Press Conference

Sunday, 17 July 2022

Cameron Smith



MIKE WOODCOCK: I'm delighted to welcome the Champion Golfer of the Year, Cam Smith, to the interview room with a 20-under par total of 268.

Cam, fantastic round. To shoot 64 in the final round of a major and to win in the style you did is some achievement. Can you sum up how you feel right now?

CAMERON SMITH: I feel like I can breathe. These last four or five holes aren't easy around here, especially with the wind up off the left. Yeah, just stuck to what I was doing. Yeah, just really proud of how I kind of knuckled down today and managed to get it done.

Q. Cameron, congratulations. Kel Nagle won the 100th Open. You've won The 150th. How does that make you feel?

CAMERON SMITH: That's pretty cool. I didn't know that. I think, to win an Open Championship in itself is probably going to be a golfer's highlight in their career. To do it around St Andrews, I think is just unbelievable.

This place is so cool. I love the golf course. I love the town. Yeah, hopefully we can keep that trend going with the every 50 years. That would be nice, wouldn't it? (Laughter).

Q. Cam, you've had some heartbreaks at the majors the last couple of years, putting your hand up in a lot of them. Does this make it all worthwhile winning The Open at the home of golf?

CAMERON SMITH: Yeah, I think so. I've definitely kicked myself a couple of times over the past few years. To do it the way I did today was pretty cool to be back and really apply pressure, keep holing putts. Yeah, it was awesome.

Q. Cameron, just a couple of parts of the question. The first is can you just talk us through that second shot on the 17th hole and how crucial was that? Including the putt that you made, the first putt. Secondly, I was talking to Anirban Lahiri yesterday, and he said he wouldn't be surprised at all if Cameron wins it from here just on the basis of his putting. That is the kind of belief, I mean, that's the kind of like what other players think about you. Can you just talk a bit about that?

CAMERON SMITH: That second shot on 17, it's just really an awkward shot, especially where I was. I kind of had to draw a 9-iron in there. You're only trying to get it to 40 or 50 feet anyway. Just didn't quite commit to the shape I wanted to hit and got it a little bit toey and turned over a touch more than I would have liked.

Then the putt next to the green, I mean, I was just trying to get it inside 15 feet, and the putter felt really good all day. I knew, if I could get it somewhere in there, that I'd be able to give it a pretty good run. Yeah, managed to get away with a 4 there.

Q. Cam, you said yesterday that it was actually the best you hit it all week. Did that sort of spur you on to go after it today?

CAMERON SMITH: Yeah, I don't think I hit the ball any differently all four days, to be honest. I felt like I kept hitting quality golf shots and kept giving myself looks at birdie, even from a distance, which is sometimes what you have to do around here.

The only difference today, was the putts were dropping. I spent a little bit of time on the green yesterday night, last night, and just really wanted to see a few putts go in. Yeah, it turned out it was a pretty good thing to do.

Q. In a weird way, did yesterday's round that put you behind help to bring out the mongrel and the fight in the dog, if you will, and get you to chase him down?

CAMERON SMITH: Yeah, I think I was really frustrated yesterday with how the round went. I just really put it down to links golf. I think you really have those days on these courses where you get a bit of a weird bounce here and there and puts you in a bad spot.

So I shrugged it off pretty good, I think, last night. I really didn't dwell on it too much. Yeah, but to go out there and really stick my head down and keep making birdies and keep making putts, yeah, it was really cool. I think that definitely helped yesterday.

Q. Kenneth said that definitely saw that Queensland spirit, seeing the Maroons win as underdogs, he saw that come out



of you on the back nine -- you tell me if that's wrong. He said, look, this guy's not losing, and you went for it. Fair?

CAMERON SMITH: I mean, you've got to try and win (laughter). That's what we're all here to do.

Yeah, I'm not sure anything changed, to be honest. I really wanted to stay patient on that back nine. I think I was maybe three back at the turn. I knew I just had to be patient. I felt good all day, and those putts just started going in on that back nine and just got a lot of momentum going. I mean, from there it was just really solid stuff.

Q. Congratulations, Cameron. A few hours ago you were a chaser in the tournament, and then later you were the leader at the clubhouse. Explain your feelings to have the Claret Jug now and if there was a shot that you can remember that says this is going to be the shot of the tournament.

CAMERON SMITH: It's obviously nice that it's all done now. I sometimes think that being behind on certain golf courses and in certain situations is maybe a good thing. I think it's very easy to get defensive out there and keep hitting it to 60, 70 feet, and you can make pars all day, but you're not going to make birdies.

Yeah, I think it was a good thing that I was definitely behind. I think my mindset would have been a touch different coming in, especially on that back nine, if I was ahead.

I think my shot into -- my second shot into 13 was really when I thought that we can win this thing. I think I had three birdies in a row before that, and then to hit that shot in there, or the two shots, the drive and the second shot, were two of the best all week. For that to go in, I think, that was it for me.

Q. Cameron, congratulations. Brilliant today. Just wondered if you could talk us through the loved ones you got here today. Also, is the lucky mullet here to stay?

CAMERON SMITH: Actually, I don't have any family here. I've got all my team here. My dad was actually meant to come over, and he pulled out in the last minute basically. I had a quick chat with him before. He's kicking himself now (laughter).

Q. Why didn't he come? Sorry, your dad. Why wasn't he able to?

CAMERON SMITH: Just kind of the thought of doing all that travel for one week basically.

(Laughter).

Yeah, he's definitely kicking himself now. I really wish he was here too. It would have been such a cool week, even without

this, to be at the home of golf. Dad loves his golf as well. It would have been awesome.

Q. Have you had a message from him yet at all?

CAMERON SMITH: I haven't looked at my phone yet. When you win golf tournaments, you have friends that you didn't even know were friends. So I'm sure it's going to be busy.

(Laughter).

Q. And the mullet?

CAMERON SMITH: I think it's going to stay, mate.

Q. Golf's such a mental game. Talk a bit about maybe the mental progress you've had to make to get to this stage where you've been able to win a major. You've been so close.

CAMERON SMITH: Yeah, I think -- I don't think I've changed a lot mentally. I think sometimes you get away from what you're doing, and I think it's just a thing of just getting back to what you know and what you know works.

I've definitely been on that track a few times in my career. But I think it's just honestly belief. THE PLAYERS at the start of the year, with the best field in golf, to go away with the win was a really big confidence booster. I knew it wasn't going to be too long before I got one of these. I've knocked on the door, I think, maybe one too many times now. So it's nice to get it done.

Q. A few Aussies here, mate. Congratulations to you. You said outside a few beers tonight and fill the cup. Have you estimated how many beers it's going to take in there to drink it up?

CAMERON SMITH: I'm going to guess two, two cans of beer.

Q. And how many more will you have after that?

CAMERON SMITH: I'll probably have about 20 Claret Jugs.

(Laughter).

I'm not sure, mate. To be honest, I'm really tired. It's been a long week, so I'd be surprised if I make it past 10:00 or 11:00 tonight.

Q. If you need me to drive you, I can do that.

Q. Cam, can you take us through what you told yourself last night and this morning just to get yourself ready for the final round?

CAMERON SMITH: Again, not much, to be honest. I knew my game was there. I felt really comfortable. At the end of last week, I started playing some really good golf. Yeah, I just really needed to keep doing what I was doing. I didn't do anything wrong yesterday. It was just really one of those days.

So I shrugged it off pretty good, hit a few putts. I just wanted to see a few putts go in. I didn't think there was really anything wrong technically. I just wanted to see a few putts go in before I went to sleep, and that kind of put me at ease to know that it really wasn't me, it was just kind of one of those days.

Yeah, I think that was the best thing I did all week was just to go out there and spend five minutes on the green. Yeah, that was it basically.

Q. Cam, apologies for having to bring this up in these circumstances, but your name continues to be mentioned, has been mentioned to me this week about LIV golf. What's your position? Are you interested? Is there any truth to suggestions that you might be signing?

CAMERON SMITH: I just won the British Open, and you're asking about that. I think that's pretty not that good.

Q. I appreciate that, but the question is still there. Are you interested at all? Is there any truth in that?

CAMERON SMITH: I don't know, mate. My team around me worries about all that stuff. I'm here to win golf tournaments.

Q. Did you have spaghetti bolognese last night? How did you sleep? And how was the process?

CAMERON SMITH: What was that?

Q. Did you have spaghetti bolognese? Because I know that's what you like.

CAMERON SMITH: That's what I like to make at home. I just had a quick meal here in the clubhouse. I think I had some chicken and veggies or something and went straight back to sleep. I was pretty tired after yesterday's round. We teed off so late yesterday as well. So I was just keen to get back and get the eyes shut.

Q. You talked a little bit already about your day yesterday. Missing another chance on 9 and then you run off five in a row. I'm just curious if there was ever anything that clicked, if the hole, at what point started looking a little bit bigger than it was. And was there one kind of key moment for you there?

CAMERON SMITH: I felt as though I hit really good putts all day. I really didn't have a lot of close opportunities, I think, on

the front nine. I just kind of stuck in there, kept hitting really good lag putts.

For me, the putt on 11 was a pretty good distance, probably 20 feet. When that one dropped, yeah, I could see the hole getting a lot bigger on that back nine for sure.

Q. What club did you hit on 11?

CAMERON SMITH: 9-iron.

Q. I wonder, could you give us a word, please, on Rory McIlroy? He was leading today. He was the British guy, would have been extra special for him to win here at St Andrews. He had the Tiger Woods thing, that you just basically ruined his weekend for him. Just want you to give us a word on Rory.

CAMERON SMITH: He's obviously a great player. He's one of those guys that you can't help but stop when he's hitting balls on the range, and he just keeps knocking on doors every week, it seems like. He's probably the most consistent player out here.

Yeah, he's going to get a major, I'm sure, very soon. He's just really solid. For me, I've played with Rory a few times, and there's really nothing that you can fault.

Q. Did he speak to you afterwards? Have you had a chance?

CAMERON SMITH: No, I haven't had a chance to speak to him, no.

Q. Obviously 150 years, there have only been four Australians that have won that trophy. Do you pinch yourself to think you're joining the likes of Peter Thomson, Greg Norman, Kel Nagle and Ian Baker-Finch?

CAMERON SMITH: Yeah, that's pretty cool. I think just in general, all the names on there, every player that's been at the top of their game has won this championship. Yeah, it's pretty cool to be on there. It really hasn't sunk in yet. I don't think it will for a few weeks. Yeah, it's just unreal.

Q. Cam, on Wednesday you said you didn't want to jinx yourself but you're feeling really good. So you didn't jinx yourself. Just how good were you feeling pre-tournament?

CAMERON SMITH: I started to feel really good with where my game was at last weekend at the Scottish Open. I had a really, really solid weekend. I just felt really good about my game. I'd played this golf course before, but it had been a while. It was almost like relearning the place.

I love this type of golf. I think this type of golf suits a lot of

Aussies, the firm and fast fairways. Having to hit away from pins, I think, is another one, where Aussies are brought up doing that. Yeah, I just felt really good with where my game was at and how the course was set up.

Q. When you feel good like that, do you actually think you can win it or just envision yourself contending?

CAMERON SMITH: I think what you're trying to do at the start of the week is just get yourself in contention, just kind of let the tournament, let the golf course come to you. And I did a really good job of staying patient this week.

The first couple of days were really nice to hole a lot of putts, but yeah, got a little bit impatient, I guess, yesterday and a little bit frustrated. Just did a really good job of that again today.

Q. Cam, in hindsight now, how crucial was that holing it to get it up to 14 through 18 yesterday afternoon?

CAMERON SMITH: Yeah, it was a bit of a struggle yesterday afternoon, I think. To come in there -- I think I probably played those last few holes maybe even-par or 1-under. So to do that and really keep myself in the tournament, I think, was good, especially when things aren't really going your way. It's easy to just kind of throw the towel in and really let it get away with you. Yeah, just stuck in there, and it was worth it today.

Q. For people who don't follow golf closely, can you describe the differences and similarities between TPC Sawgrass and The Old Course?

CAMERON SMITH: No, I can't, to be honest. There's not a lot of similarities, to be honest. I think they're two really different golf courses.

I think when Sawgrass plays firm and fast, it can be similar in some aspects. But two really different golf courses. I think you have to be two completely different golfers to contend at both of those golf courses.

Q. So what does that say about your golf game, the fact that you won on two very different golf courses?

CAMERON SMITH: I think that's just where I'm at at the moment. My game feels really good. I felt like, towards the end of last year, I had a lot of chances and really didn't get over the line. I think that made me more eager, I guess, at the start of the year to really knuckle down and try and get over the line.

For it to happen three times this year is pretty unreal. I really wasn't expecting that. I would have been happy with one. So, yeah, just lots of hard work and keeping at it.

Q. Cam, just given the astonishment that everyone has

about your putting, can you just give us an idea as to how much you have to work hard and what kind of process goes into your putting practise and doing things?

CAMERON SMITH: I definitely keep on top of it. I think, for me luckily, putting comes quite naturally. For me it's just about getting back to the same setup position, basically.

I practise with a mirror for probably 20 minutes a day, and to be honest, that's about it. I don't really hit a lot of long putts at home. I try and focus probably 10 to 15 foot and in and just seeing those putts drop. When I get out here at the start of the week, I start hitting some more lag putts and just getting the speed right.

Q. Watching that back nine, it felt incredibly tense. Can you just try and explain how you felt at various points? Because obviously you made it look quite easy out there.

CAMERON SMITH: Yeah, it was pretty tense. I think maybe after my second or third birdie there on the back nine, I was starting to think that I could really win this thing. I think I was three back with nine holes to go, and I really needed to make something happen.

But, yeah, I would say those first three holes on that back nine really came to me, and then from there I was starting to get different emotions and really had to keep an eye on what I was thinking and just different shots into greens.

MIKE WOODCOCK: Cam, thank you very much. Congratulations again. It's a wonderful performance.

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