

# The 151st Open

Press Conference

Monday, 17 July 2023

## Cameron Smith



OLIVIA McMILLAN: Ladies and gentlemen, welcome to the 151th Open. It's delightful to see you all back again. I'm very delighted to welcome Cameron Smith, the defending champion, to the media centre. Cam, what's it like to be back here a year on?

CAMERON SMITH: Yeah, it's lovely to be back. I've been in the UK now for a few weeks. The weather has been pretty interesting the last couple of weeks, as well.

It's nice to be back. I just had to hand back the trophy there. I thought I was going to do all right, but I was actually holding back from tears.

A bit of a moment, I guess, that crept up on me. But yeah.

### Q. You know you can win it back, right?

CAMERON SMITH: Yeah, that would be nice. Yeah, that's what I've been saying to all my mates. It'll only be a week and we'll be drinking out of it again. You never know, sometimes you can play your best golf at major championships and you can run fourth or fifth.

Yeah, hopefully it's another week like last year and I'm back with the trophy.

### Q. Why do you think that whatever emotion it was, why do you think it crept up on you like that? What were you expecting and what do you think happened there?

CAMERON SMITH: Yeah, I don't know. It was just hard to -- it wasn't hard to hand it back. I wasn't like not letting it go. But it was just a bit of a moment that I guess you guess you don't think about and then all of a sudden it's there, and, yeah, you want it back.

Yeah, that's about it.

### Q. Are you okay now?

CAMERON SMITH: Yeah, I'll be fine. I'll be able to sleep tonight.

### Q. It's been quite a year, between The Open, obviously

**going to LIV, having all the success you've had. How would you assess Cam Smith the golfer and Cam Smith the person, a year on after everything that's happened as you sit here now?**

CAMERON SMITH: I think the person is the same. I think my old boy would give me a clip around the ears if he was any different.

I think as a golfer, I think I'm actually a better golfer now than what I was last year. I think the stuff that I had to clean up is progressing. It's still a little bit of a work in progress.

I said this morning to someone that kind of my 5-iron and up has always been a bit of a struggle for me, and that's an area of the game that we've worked probably harder than we have on in the past.

I feel like it's right there. It just all has to come together. I think the first round I had at Centurion a couple of weeks ago was the first time where I felt like it had all come together, and then the driver, again, wasn't my best friend on the weekend there.

But I managed to kind of scramble out a good week, so, yeah, it's there. It just hasn't been there for all four rounds. But it feels really close.

### Q. If I can, does the scheduling that you now have actually help you tweak things because you're playing a little bit less event-wise?

CAMERON SMITH: On paper it says we've been playing less, but it feels like we haven't had a week off here in a few months. I think once you get into that competitive mojo, it's good for the golf game.

I've always been a person, I think, where I can make changes on the run, and I think that's helped me throughout these last three or four months. And like I said, it just feels really close. It's just the driver just needs to behave itself, obviously.

### Q. Referring back to the trophy, I suppose the traditional question that gets asked here every Monday after; Henrik Stenson threatened to take the Claret Jug skydiving one time. What's the craziest, funnest, most exciting thing you



**did it-w it over the years?**

CAMERON SMITH: Probably the funnest thing I did it was I took it back to my home club in Brisbane and it was actually timed perfectly. They had their presentation night where they present the club champion with the trophy, and all the different events they had through out the year it was one of the first nights I got back to Australia, so brought the Claret Jug there, had all the members there, and, yeah, had a ripping night.

For a little country club outside of Brisbane to have the Claret Jug in it I think was a pretty cool moment.

**Q. Cameron, can you think of a moment when you got up in the middle of the night to go and look at the trophy and to see, is that really mine?**

CAMERON SMITH: I don't think it ever took any sleep away from me. But there was definitely a few moments, I think, where you randomly walk into the office where it was for most of the year, and you're just going through some mail and you bump into it or something. There was a few moments like that, I guess.

It still doesn't feel real, even a year down the road. But yeah, I think -- hopefully I can get it back. I want that thing back so bad.

**Q. Defending a title is very different to winning one. You now have a target on your back. Given the decision that you made to join LIV, I just wondered how much determination you have to come back here as reigning Open Champion to show the world of golf just how good a player you are all over again?**

CAMERON SMITH: Yeah, I think LIV aside, I'm determined to try my best every week and just try and be a better golfer than I was last week.

I never really expect too much of myself. The thing I expect are doing everything 100 percent, ticking all the boxes early in the week, making sure I'm prepared, and then just go out there and give it my all. That's all I can really do.

I think I've done that fantastic this year and especially last year. It was such a good year last year, you almost expect to win. I think that's not really a good way to look at golf. Just expect to do all the things that you're meant to do 100 percent and then go out there and give it a crack, and if you win, you win.

**Q. Does being a LIV player come into it at all in any way, especially given that this is arguably the most traditional and historic event in golf?**

CAMERON SMITH: No, I don't think so. I think we're all here to win the Claret Jug, and basically any one of these guys, if they have their week this week, is going to walk away with it.

Yeah, we'll see what happens.

**Q. With all the uncertainty surrounding the deal between the PGA TOUR and the Public Investment Fund, have you been given any assurances over what the future of LIV Golf might look like, and are you optimistic about what your future might look like?**

CAMERON SMITH: Yeah, absolutely I'm optimistic. I think golf is in a great spot. There's obviously a lot of things that are up in the air that no one really knows at the moment. I don't even think the guys that are trying to sort it out really know what this outcome is going to be like.

Yeah, a lot of uncertainty, but I'm optimistic that LIV will be around in the future.

**Q. When did you get here to Hoylake, how early, and how often have you seen the course, and what are your plans leading up to Thursday?**

CAMERON SMITH: We got here Saturday afternoon. It was actually a bit of a longer journey from London than I was expecting. I was expecting it to be a few hours, and put it into the maps and it was five or six. Probably would have liked to be up here a little bit earlier, but the weather was not so good on that Saturday, so just laid low.

And again, yesterday was a windy day, but managed to get out there and play 1 through 5 and then 14 through 18. So seen a fair bit of the golf course. I think it's a great venue. I think it was playing very strong yesterday given the wind, and I think the wind is actually going to die down a little bit, but it will be something that we are going to have to deal with all week.

Yeah, it's a very strong test of golf out there.

**Q. Cam, I think you said recently that your win was slightly tarnished by being asked so quickly about LIV. I was wondering, is that something that did gnaw at you throughout the year, and is it something you can use as an extra motivating factor this time?**

CAMERON SMITH: Yeah, I think it was frustrating at the time, just given the circumstance, but then I guess looking back on it, it's just a guy just trying to do his job and asked a question that everyone really wanted to know.

I don't think there's any added motivation there. I don't have any hard feelings towards anyone there at all.



**Q. Now that you don't see these guys on the PGA TOUR as much, are the majors more enjoyable for you to come and get that competition back four times a year that you used to get basically on a weekly basis?**

CAMERON SMITH: Yeah, I think it's good seeing old friends, probably more than the competition stuff. We're still trying to play our best golf out on the LIV Tour and there's still a lot of competition, especially at the top end there where they push you to play your best to win a golf tournament.

Yeah, it's good to see Scottie. I don't see him a whole lot anymore. We've managed to have a few practice rounds in the majors this year, and we're going to have it again this afternoon. Yeah, it's good to see familiar faces, especially friends.

**Q. Just to follow up, I know you're a process guy, but do you let yourself dream about winning multiple majors in your career?**

CAMERON SMITH: Yeah, absolutely. Yeah. I don't expect that of myself, but yeah, there's definitely something on the inside of me that wants to win two, three, four, however many I can.

I try not to let that get in the way, though, for sure.

**Q. Cam, if you go back to last year and one of the great closing rounds in major history and the decision to join LIV and suspension, losing your parking spot at Sawgrass - big deal - lawsuits, start of a new year, all that stuff, does last year seem like a long time ago or a short time ago? Secondly, as much of a guy who doesn't seem to get bothered by much, what part of all that do you think caused the most turmoil for you?**

CAMERON SMITH: Yeah, it does seem like a long time ago, last year. I think it all went so quick for me, really, to be honest, between the decision to go and then being back in Australia and then starting again this year. I wasn't a part of all the lawsuit stuff. I tried to stay as far away from that as possible.

Like I've said in the past, the PGA TOUR is a great place to play golf, and it will be for a very long time. I don't think there was any part of me that made me think I made the wrong decision throughout any part of the last eight or nine months.

**Q. Was there ever a stressful part for you?**

CAMERON SMITH: Probably the most stressful part was trying to make the decision, and then it was almost like a breath of fresh air getting out there and playing golf again.

**Q. When you look back at last year, what's your fondest memory of that final round or that week?**

CAMERON SMITH: Being in the Old Course Hotel with the Claret Jug was pretty fun on Sunday night.

The 18th hole, walking up there, it was one of the most stressful but enjoyable five minutes of my life. I said before that I wish I had a few more shots up my sleeve there and really been able to enjoy it, but I think definitely the walk up the 18th hole, the ceremony on the 18th green, and that night were something I'll never forget.

**Q. Do you think there's a better pressure shot that you've made in your career than that putt on 17, hitting up there -- that seems to be what everybody remembers most about that, the heat of the moment there.**

CAMERON SMITH: Yeah, I think the first putt from left of the bunker there was a great shot, don't get me wrong, but I think that the next 10-footer was an even better shot.

The putter felt great on that Sunday, and just needed to give myself a look at it, and hopefully it went in. Hit a great couple of putts there, managed to get away with 4, and then birdied the last.

Yeah, that's exactly what I needed to do.

**Q. Did you notice any change in perception or attitude when you went from Cam Smith, Open Champion, to Cam Smith, Open Champion and LIV Golfer?**

CAMERON SMITH: As far as from a play standpoint or --

**Q. Just in terms of how the public treated you or how you felt you were perceived.**

CAMERON SMITH: No. I've never tried too much to worry about what people thought of me, and I think LIV was really well received in Australia. They were probably the two most important things to me.

I think when I went down to Australia to play the PGA and The Open at the end of the year, there was no public kind of uproar of me switching tours. They were just happy to see me there playing golf.

That was awesome.

**Q. When you came to the press conference at last year's Open, were you prepared for the questions, or could you have been better prepared?**

CAMERON SMITH: I think there was only really one question.



I kind of figured it was going to come at some point. No, I don't think I would have answered it any differently if I was less or more prepared.

**Q. But nobody was telling -- your manager, they weren't saying, this is what you're going to get asked?**

CAMERON SMITH: No. Internally I probably knew it was going to get asked, but yeah, there was no one there really backing me up.

**Q. Who had you expected to back you up?**

CAMERON SMITH: As far as backing up, as far as someone telling me that you're going to get asked this and this is what you're going to answer. There was no one telling me that. That was just my brain and my heart telling me what I thought was right.

**Q. The greens are kind of on the slower side maybe because of the wind. As a good putter, what gets you excited or what do you think rewards a good putter, greens on the slower side or reason the faster side, and just kind of your assessment of these in general, too?**

CAMERON SMITH: I think hitting good putts rewards a good putter. I feel like any surface, any speed, a good putter is able to adjust, no matter what he's fronted with. Typically I would say generally probably faster greens and smoother greens lean into a good putter's hand.

But I've played well on these greens before. It doesn't bug me that they're slower or a little bit bumpier maybe.

I've always been all about just reading the green, thinking what it's going to do, and then just hitting a good putt. If it goes in, it goes in. It doesn't really tear me up or -- I think I've always hit a good putt. If it goes in or if it misses, it doesn't really bother me.

The greens out here I think are probably a little bit flatter than maybe some other greens we've played at the Open, but the punishment for missing the green around here is I think maybe a little bit worse in some cases.

**Q. You said you've been in England for a little while. Have you been following the cricket?**

CAMERON SMITH: Yes.

**Q. Are you a cricket?**

CAMERON SMITH: I'm a cricket fan when I'm down in Australia and the Big Bash is on. It's been hard to watch The Ashes, given we've been playing through most of it. But always

manage to keep an eye on The Ashes, as well.

**Q. What do you make of it so far? It could be a big day on Sunday because Australia could win The Ashes and you might defend your title.**

CAMERON SMITH: Yeah, that would be unreal. Yeah, the first three Tests have been amazing. Like I said, it's been hard to watch, but we've been able to put it on the radio or put it on the TV in most cases.

Yeah, hopefully the Aussie boys can get it done this week I would like. I think going into a fifth Test would be -- I don't know, could be a bad thing, but I'd just like them to get it done this week.

**Q. What do you make of the Johnny Bairstow thing, the run-outs?**

CAMERON SMITH: Yeah, I don't know. I'm not a cricket player. I don't know really what the etiquette is there.

**Q. Can I ask for your thoughts on the new hole here, the 17th, the par-3? Looks like there could be a lot of drama there this week.**

CAMERON SMITH: Yeah, that's probably the right word, drama. Yeah, it's a tough hole. We played it yesterday and it was straight into the wind, 30 or 40 miles an hour, and it was not a tee shot that you want to have.

I think I hit 7-iron in there yesterday. I don't know if we're going to hit 7-iron again, but yeah, there's not much room for error up there, and I think it'll be a really exciting finish to an Open Championship for sure. I think it's a great hole.

**Q. You say lots of things are up in the air and obviously they are for next year. I just wondered, you've worked with Greg Norman obviously for the last year. Would you like to see him stay on? There are a lot of rumors about his future.**

CAMERON SMITH: Yeah, I think I've kind of become a bit of a friend of Greg's, I guess, the last eight or nine months. Personally I think he's doing a great job for our Tour. He's looking out for our best interesting. That's all you can ask of a guy that's running the show.

Yeah, I'd love to see him keep on.

**Q. I know that Cameron Young was involved and you have a lot of the entire field this week to deal with, but it felt a bit like Cam against Rory McIlroy on that nine back last year. You've won one time; he's won Sunday. Do you fancy a rematch Sunday afternoon?**



CAMERON SMITH: Yeah, I guess that would be a good story for you guys to write about for sure. Like I've said, there's plenty of guys here that given their week can be right up there on Sunday afternoon.

I'm sure Rory will be one of them. He's played great golf the last few months here. It looked like he finally got one on and it may have opened the floodgates for him for sure. But yeah, it would be a cool story for sure.

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