

The 151st Open

Press Conference

Monday, 17 July 2023

Matt Fitzpatrick



MIKE WOODCOCK: We'll make a start. Very pleased to welcome the 2022 U.S. Open champion Matt Fitzpatrick to the interview room.

Matt, you've had a good year in the majors this year with good performances at the Masters and the U.S. Open. You've had a good record in the Open over the years. There's always been a lot of talk about it being a long time since an Englishman has won The Open. How much would it mean to you to break that this week?

MATT FITZPATRICK: Yeah, of course it would mean the world. For me, winning majors is obviously the goal every season, and this being the last one of the year, I always feel there's kind of bigger excitement over it because you don't get it for however many months.

Yeah, it would obviously mean the world to do it here in England, as well, family here and stuff. So, yes, it would be a special week.

MIKE WOODCOCK: It's also been 10 years since the won the silver medal here at the Open. I remember doing that with you back at Muirfield, so, yeah, nice to do it on the anniversary of that.

MATT FITZPATRICK: Yeah, that was crazy.

Q. Just touching on what you were saying there, obviously I think it's 31 years since Nick won, but that was Muirfield, '69 Jacklin. You would have seen what happened with Shane Lowry at Portrush. Can you even imagine a Sunday stretch, being an Englishman in England, what that would be like?

MATT FITZPATRICK: I think Tommy Fleetwood is the home hero this week. I think Shane's Open was something incredibly special. I feel like the Irish people have probably a little bit better connection with their sporting heroes.

I feel like English fans, don't get me wrong, they're fantastic, but I just feel like that Irish connection, I remember being there obviously a lot more groups ahead of Shane, but yeah, there was just something about it that was a lot different.

Sure, I'm sure it would be special coming down the stretch. I have no doubt it will be. But yeah, I think it would be a little bit different.

Q. You referenced family being here this week. You've got family in the field with you, which is an unusual situation. How has that dynamic been so far, and has your brother been leaning on you a bit for what to do at this tournament?

MATT FITZPATRICK: It's been good. I think my biggest thing, a couple bits of advice I've given him, he came last week to play 18, which I think was helpful, see the golf course, no stress, no rush, and then I just told him take these next few days easy, nine holes each day.

I remember speaking to my coach, Mike, about what to do at my first Open back in 2013, and that's what he stressed, is don't tire yourself out. I think I played nine Sunday, Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, so I think that was kind of similar to what Alex should do.

And then the other one is just no media, as well, just so he can concentrate, concentrate on myself and stay away from you lot. (Laughter.)

Q. On the whole PGA TOUR deal with the Public Investment Fund, how much has that affected your preparations for this week? Are you putting it to the back of your mind, and have you been given any more information since you last spoke about it?

MATT FITZPATRICK: I know as much as everyone else in this room. That's all I can say.

Q. Getting back to your brother, two things. What was your emotion when he did get through qualifying?

MATT FITZPATRICK: Oh, I was so happy. I was buzzing. I was playing golf, and I was just refreshing the scores constantly. It was taking a while to update. My girlfriend was just literally like, put it down. It'll load in a minute. I was just constantly refreshing, texting my mom, what's he doing, where is he hitting it. I was so happy for him.

Q. Where were you playing?



MATT FITZPATRICK: I was in New Jersey.

Q. Which course?

MATT FITZPATRICK: Manasquan River.

Q. Were there moments when you guys were younger when you talked about being in a major together kind of thing?

MATT FITZPATRICK: No, I don't think we talked much about that, me and him really. We've never really sat down and talked about wouldn't it be nice to be in a tournament -- there's never been that kind of relationship where it goes deep like that.

We kind of just enjoy playing golf together and normally just taking the Mickey out of each other, as well.

Q. Does it seem kind of unfathomable when you were kids and now you're here at a major championship playing together?

MATT FITZPATRICK: Yeah, I think it's amazing, if you would've said to be 10 years ago when I played at Muirfield, you'd play The Open in 2023, you'd have won a major and your brother would be playing in one, I think we'd both be like, what?

He was only 14 ten years ago. It's kind of a lot to take in, really.

Q. Given the weather at the weekend up in Scotland, was that quite a good cut to miss in some respects?

MATT FITZPATRICK: Billy said when we missed it on Friday, yeah -- you know I love to play when it's pretty shitty, to be fair, so I would have loved to have been there, obviously.

But it was nice to kind of get down here, get settled, have a look at the golf course early, do a bit of work, and kind of just figure it out that way, and just more for me, just like to be able to get settled and into the house that you're staying in and just get used to where everything is at the course and the range and everything.

Q. When you won at Brookline, you told us that your target was going to be six majors. Is there anything that's happened in the last 13 --

MATT FITZPATRICK: That was never my -- of course that's my target, but it wasn't like I'm going to win six majors. It was always a joke amongst friends, really.

Q. Has anything changed in those 13 months to make you think, that's completely unattainable or that's very

attainable?

MATT FITZPATRICK: Yeah, I don't think it is. I'm 28. I've got, all being well, quite a few more years playing golf, so plenty of chances. It's a process. It's about doing the best you can, and I think the important thing is just literally working as hard as I possibly can at the right things, working smart, and trying to let it take care of itself.

Sometimes it's not easy, but that's the most important thing.

Q. I saw the two of you tee off together yesterday for a practice. Have you any idea when the first time would have been the two of you walked out on to the first tee together anywhere as kids?

MATT FITZPATRICK: I couldn't tell you. In a tournament, I couldn't tell you.

Q. Just as even --

MATT FITZPATRICK: Oh, loads of times. I couldn't give you a place or a time, but yeah, loads of times.

Q. Obviously that's a bit of a pinch-yourself moment for him I would imagine, but very special for you, too, I would think?

MATT FITZPATRICK: Yeah, definitely. Definitely. It's my little brother. I've almost wanted to give Francesco and Edoardo a call and ask them what it's like, what's the dynamic like between you? Is it weird?

People ask, what would you do if you were in the final group on Sunday, and I said, well, that would be kind of my worst nightmare, to be honest.

Yeah, it's an exciting week, and I'm just so pleased for him. I think it's great, gives him a good boost of confidence qualifying, and there's no reason why he can't do well this week. It's a golf course in 2006 that required really good accuracy off the tee and great iron play. He can definitely do that.

Q. You actually played a couple of holes with him yesterday; was that always the plan?

MATT FITZPATRICK: I kind of wanted to go and work on something.

Q. How would you assess your broader form and year heading in? Obviously a super win at the Heritage, a little injury before that. How are you at broadly to really give it a good crack this week, and how does the course shape up for you personally do you feel?

MATT FITZPATRICK: Yeah, I would say The Open -- I would argue The Open is my weakest major, to be honest, so my expectations have probably got to match my results previous.

My best finish might be like a tied 18th or something. I've got to be realistic about where I am, where my game is. No, it's not obviously where I would like it to be. I think everyone would be like to be playing golf like Rory McIlroy and Scottie Scheffler right now, but that's pretty rare for the rest of us.

I think for me, a good finish, all jokes aside, would be kind of top 30 this week. I really do.

I've not played well in Opens in previous, and I wouldn't say I'm in the best form, either, so I've got to be realistic about where I am.

Q. Is there any reason why do you feel?

MATT FITZPATRICK: No, I couldn't really tell you. I couldn't really tell you. I think even as an amateur, I wouldn't necessarily say I had great results on links golf courses, so it's not like you turn pro and then you leave links golf.

I don't know. Wouldn't say if I had to play one last round in the world, I wouldn't choose a links golf course. I think there's probably a little bit of that in where you like to play. Don't get me wrong, I love playing great links golf courses. I love playing Muirfield and Turnberry, two -- this place is fantastic, as well. It's in great shape, and I'm really looking forward to playing it.

There's loads of great places. It's just for me it doesn't necessarily suit my eye.

Q. At the U.S. Open you were talking about some issues with driving accuracy, and I'm just curious what you're working on in order to help solve those and how you're feeling about them.

MATT FITZPATRICK: Yeah, my posture just got a little bit too upright. I'm already a pretty rotational player, so it's harder for me to kind of control. Obviously when I get more upright the rotation gets more. With driver in particular, just trying to be a little bit more -- feel like I'm a little bit more over the ball and kind of the club shaft a little bit lower in my hands rather than kind of having it quite upright.

From there, that allows me to get it back underneath me a little bit better. When I'm more upright it's spinning out a lot of the time.

Q. Back to that idea of you and links golf, while you're in your prime here, have you thought about trying to come out of it different ways to develop an affinity more for playing this kind of golf?

MATT FITZPATRICK: Yeah, a little bit. A little bit. I would say I've had success at the Scottish Open since it's been at Renaissance. It's kind of tough for me to take that week off before The Open and then come play given that, particularly this year, you need the FedExCup points to make it inside the top 70, top 50, top 30.

That was obviously on the plan all season long, to go there and play well. But it's certainly something we talked about was going to other links golf courses before The Open, playing a little bit more links golf. With the Open it's always a great story. There's potential to have a good draw and a bad draw. I think that's what makes it so exciting.

But I grew up playing in wind. I feel like if you look at when I've had good rounds when it's been tough weather effectively links style weather, it's just on a different golf course. It's always been when I've played well, it's been tough, it's been windy, it's been firm, it's been hard, but it's just purely a different type of golf course.

Maybe I do need to spend a bit more time getting used to it. I just think it's one of those things that hopefully will come.

Q. Have you played the new 17th hole?

MATT FITZPATRICK: I have.

Q. Your thoughts?

MATT FITZPATRICK: Interesting. (Laughter.)

Q. Anything else?

MATT FITZPATRICK: I'll leave it at that.

Q. Why do you like playing in shitty conditions?

MATT FITZPATRICK: I feel like a lot of the time nobody else does. I kind of have that mentality, that well, I may as well like it because everyone else is not liking it.

I always prefer -- I've always said this all along. I prefer grinding out a par than -- when it's a good score, when you might have to have strategy involved or just purely grinding it out, as opposed to just soft conditions where you're just firing at the flag and making 10 birdies a round.

I don't particularly enjoy that type of golf. Probably because I can't do it as well as everyone else.

Q. It might be hard for you to say this, but are you saying in effect that you feel mentally stronger in those conditions?



MATT FITZPATRICK: Yeah, I think so. I think you look at where I grew up in Sheffield, the weather is hardly Florida. It's always windy, cold. That's even in summer.

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You always just have to try and grind out a score, and I just remember that specifically. I think that's one thing I enjoy when it is bad weather like that, that that's what you have to do, and I feel like some players necessarily don't like that.

Q. Does any part of you kind of empathize with Alex's journey? Brooks and Chase Koepka kind of have a similar dynamic, as well, but I can't imagine that's an easy scenario to follow in a famous brother's footsteps.

MATT FITZPATRICK: Yeah, absolutely. I remember however many years when I first got on Tour, Alex was still at my golf club, Hallamshire, and members would come up to him all the time, how's Matt doing? Where's Matt? Not, how are you doing? How's your game?

It was just always asking about me. Well, I completely understand how it feels now because it's the other way around. Literally the majority of the questions are, how's Alex.

I totally get how it is, and I'm sure for him growing up it was probably very annoying. It's hard for him to kind of have his own identity and have his own game. People kind of putting him into, oh, he's got to be like his brother and stuff, when actually we are polar opposites.

I think for him, he's just learning. It's all new to him. This is obviously his first major. It's his kind of first full season on Tour if you like. He turned pro last June or whatever it was.

Yeah, I definitely empathize with him, and I think he's handling it pretty well so far.

Q. If you're polar opposites, is that on the golf course, or is that as people?

MATT FITZPATRICK: Yeah, both. On paper my strengths are driving and putting, and his strengths are short game and approach play. Then off the golf course, yeah, we are just literally polar opposites. I'm like a control freak, OCD, organised, and he's not. Just look at the Zurich press conference I gave earlier this year.

Q. How is it sharing a house with him again?

MATT FITZPATRICK: Oh, it's fine. It's fine. He's fine. Fortunately my parents are there to take care of him.
(Laughter.)

MIKE WOODCOCK: Matt, thanks so much for joining us, and best of luck this week.

