

The 151st Open

Press Conference

Wednesday, 19 July 2023

Tommy Fleetwood



STUART MOFFATT: Good afternoon, everybody. I'm delighted to welcome Tommy Fleetwood to the interview room. How are preparations going for this week, and what's your thoughts on the course?

TOMMY FLEETWOOD: Yeah, so far, so good. It's nice to have a week that feels so close to home. Course is great. It's changed a lot since the last Open, I feel. It's good to see how different that's playing, and also that they've got a brand new hole on the golf course.

Yeah, it's great. As soon as the week starts you start sort of feeling The Open atmosphere, which you always think is very, very cool.

Q. You're obviously from around these parts. Are you feeling a bit of local support from the fans out here?

TOMMY FLEETWOOD: Yeah, well, hopefully they all come out and support. It was nice playing a round yesterday. It was a damp day and there was still quite a lot of people out there supporting.

Yeah, it's one of the special things about The Open is no matter where it is, I always feel like I've had great support being a home Open, being British, but then we get the chance every few years where it feels very, very close to home and I get to experience what that feels like.

Q. You got to experience what it was like being with Shane when he won in Portrush, and you saw the wave of pride for the Irish people. Can you imagine what it would be like for you as the home guy coming down the stretch on Sunday with this local support?

TOMMY FLEETWOOD: Yeah, I've imagined it about a million times probably. Winning a major is a dream, or winning The Open is a huge, huge dream. No matter where that is, that's always something I've visualized and always thought about.

But then again, having the opportunity to do it so close to where you grew up is something that's very unique and very special.

For sure I've pictured it a lot and visualized it a lot; just haven't

done it yet in person, so that's hopefully the next thing.

Q. I know there's obviously some element of this that's an advantage for you, knowing the golf course, knowing the area, having so much support. I'm wondering is there a part of you that feels like all of this attention might be a little bit of a disadvantage?

TOMMY FLEETWOOD: No. I don't know the course that well. I haven't played it as many times as I would like, but I do know it better than most. Obviously I've played here as a junior and stuff, and then I haven't played it at all since the last Open.

I think when it's an event that is so close to home, obviously it comes with its own mental challenges, with your own expectations, and with everybody else's.

But it would be silly and daft to look at or try and find negative elements to do with that. It's an amazing feeling playing in front of so much support and having that, and I think it's very special.

It would be really, really silly to not go out with the aim to enjoy it and embrace it and see what you can do out there.

No matter what happens, it's going to be a week that you remember. I still remember the first Open I played that was here. Didn't play very well and I was so nervous and so inexperienced, if you like, but it was still so special to play in front of a home crowd.

The same at Birkdale.

Of course I have the ultimate goal of trying to win The Open, and I would like to play well. I'll be disappointed and I'll be upset if I don't, but you also have to realise that there's certain things about the week that are very special, and focus on them, as well.

Q. Obviously it is one of the kind of big popular favourites, you're part of that real glut of three balls that all tee off sort of 9:00, 10:00. Scottie Scheffler and Adam Scott as your playing partners. How do you fancy that and how do you match up with them as a dynamic?



TOMMY FLEETWOOD: Well, I get on with both guys very, very well. I enjoy being around them. I enjoy playing golf with them. It's a really nice three-ball for me.

Happy that I sort of remain in like the groups, like the TV groups if you like, and I would like to stay there for as long as possible.

But yeah, first thing you always do is look at the draw, and I was very happy with the guys that I'm playing with. Great golfers, both very, very good at winning tournaments and stuff.

It's always good to be around those people that are at the top of the game and make sure you're always trying to keep pace with them.

Q. If you feel comfortable talking about it, how poignant is it for you playing your first Open since the passing of your mom last year, and how are you and how is your dad is doing?

TOMMY FLEETWOOD: My dad is great. He's done really, really well, so that's been nice to see. It'll be different -- well, it'll be a year on Friday. We know that that's coming up. It would be nice to think she's watching over.

Yeah, it'll be a special event. I would love to play well and I would love to sort of give myself a chance come Saturday and Sunday and have something to aim for in that sense.

But everybody is doing really well, and that's all you can do. I have a great family and a lot of support, and my dad is out here today, and I think the best thing is seeing how well he's doing and obviously give him something to enjoy watching this week.

Q. I know this part of England is your home, but your second home is Dubai, and there's a lot of excitement over there about your chances this week. Can you just talk to us about how that move has been so far. I know it's just been a few months actually, but how has that move been and how it has helped you in these last few months?

TOMMY FLEETWOOD: It's been great. I think the family have really enjoyed it. It's been really good for the kids. I think the biggest change in lifestyle for us has been how much time outdoors the kids get to spend and the access to those amazing facilities.

That's been great, and we've all been very happy there. We've got a lot of friends, and I think the overall sort of routine has been great.

I haven't been back there for a while. I think once you start -- this year in particular, you start that PGA season and there's a lot of travelling to America, but we were all just talking about

this morning we're sort of looking forward to going back. The kids will start school again.

It's been really, really good. The academy has gone great. I've enjoyed being around that, and just the game itself is so popular over there and growing all the time.

I obviously love golf and we love golf, so it's great to be around it.

Q. Have you gotten many messages from the kids at the Tommy Fleetwood Academy, especially this week?

TOMMY FLEETWOOD: Yeah, there's a few, and hopefully they'll be watching. Yeah, I love that there's so many kids that are playing the game, and I love being a part of giving them the opportunity to learn and grow from the game.

Again, I'm always conscious of my performances and the way that I play or act is part of inspiring or motivating those. I'm always conscious of that, so hopefully I can keep that going and give them something to watch this week.

Q. What plays on your mind more, the turmoil in golf at the moment or the turmoil at Everton with what went on, and how you feel about next season and Sean Dyche in charge? Are you optimistic or not?

TOMMY FLEETWOOD: I was optimistic last season, as well. No, there's a bit of a reprieve when the season ends. Again, I think for everybody that is involved with Everton or a fan of Everton, I think it was great to finish the year like we did.

I think we're sort of -- I'd like to be done with where we've been in the league and trying to scrap for safety year on year.

I think Sean has done a fantastic job. I think he did really, really well. I like the culture he created and the way that they played on the pitch for the remaining part of the year.

Then we'll see how we go this year. It would be great to have a good start. I think start is so important it seems in the league, and there's no easy games.

But I still love watching them, and they definitely give you plenty to think about when you're watching.

Q. It's the last year at Goodison. Will you be able to get to Goodison Park much?

TOMMY FLEETWOOD: Always travelling, but I do enjoy going back every now and again. I didn't go for the last game of the season. I was much happier and comfier watching it on the couch thinking of all the possibilities that might happen.

Q. Were you hiding behind it?

TOMMY FLEETWOOD: A little bit, yeah. There was plenty of cushions in front of my face.

Yeah, it'll be kind of sad for it to be the last season at Goodison, but also it's good to look to the future. It is an amazing stadium that we're building, so hopefully we can build on that.

Q. We've been doing some filming at the Tommy Fleetwood Academy and the talent down there is absolutely fantastic. Isn't this a great opportunity to spread the game of golf to children from all kinds of different backgrounds this week?

TOMMY FLEETWOOD: Yeah, of course it is. Again, the opportunity to have the biggest event in the world to come to the northwest every few years is very, very important for us.

I guess I grew up in a golfing town, and I got access to the game from an early age. I've lived the game, and I see it every day and the good that it does. I think golf is a very special game that you can learn so much from and play your entire life.

One of my main aims and objectives is to try to give access to the game to as many kids as possibly and let them grow from it. It's not about them actually wanting to become a golfer. I'm sure plenty do, but it is about using golf and the skills that it requires in all aspects to help them sort of achieve whatever they want to in life, and I think it's a great opportunity to do that.

Q. You mentioned playing here as a junior. Just wondered if there was any memories that sort of particularly stand out from that time for you?

TOMMY FLEETWOOD: I think it just being a special course to play. One of my closest friends was a member here as a junior, and I think coming here to play -- it's similar to being able to play Birkdale or any of the courses.

It's hallowed turf if you like. I think just getting the opportunity to be around the club, play on the course is very cool for a junior golfer to get on somewhere like this.

I think it's always one of those things where being from the northwest you would have Birkdale, Lytham, Royal Liverpool, that are kind of like those sort of pinnacle of courses you wanted to play just because they're The Open courses. I just remember anytime you got a chance to play on those, it was very cool.

Q. In 2006 here you'd have been 15. Can you share any memories you've got of Tiger winning that year?

TOMMY FLEETWOOD: I watched it on TV. I didn't come

and watch. Honestly I always preferred watching on TV. You got to see more.

Again, a very, very different golf course. I remember how firm and fast it was. I actually remember Lee Slattery from the same golf club as me, and he qualified and he actually did well. He finished like top 20 in the Open so we were all very happy for him.

Just how it was such a special Open performance from Tiger that year that people still talk about now and how -- we'd never seen this golf course play anything like that.

So I think that's one of the biggest memories of it. You just remembered watching seeing how the course was playing and you'd never seen anything like it, and then Tiger's performance was clearly something people will remember forever.

Q. On 2014 you mentioned the occasion over here being a bit much. Matthew Jordan obviously hits the first tee shot here tomorrow. He's a member here. I don't know if you know him at all, but what would be your advice to him ahead of this week?

TOMMY FLEETWOOD: Enjoy it and sort of make sure you play your own game and have faith in yourself. I remember when I played -- it was just such a huge occasion and a big thing and I was very happy to be playing my first Open, and I sort of didn't really get out of the box and particularly play well.

For Matty, he's a great player. I actually played with him when he was like 16 around here, and I remember coming off and saying, this kid is really, really good. I think he'll continue to grow, but this is a great week and opportunity for him.

Being at your home course, it doesn't always follow. You know the course well, but that doesn't mean loads.

But it's a great opportunity. He tees off first. Hopefully he'll get a bit of momentum going early doors and see what he can do. But yeah, just for him, enjoy it, trust himself and see what he can do.

STUART MOFFATT: We'll bring things to a close there. Tommy, thanks for your time, and good luck.

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