

The 151st Open

Press Conference

Wednesday, 19 July 2023

Wyndham Clark



OLIVIA McMILLAN: Good afternoon, ladies and gentlemen. I am delighted to be joined by U.S. Open champion Wyndham Clark.

Wyndham, welcome to Hoylake and Royal Liverpool. What have been your first impressions of the course?

WYNDHAM CLARK: It's a lot more difficult than last year at the Old Course. It's a very nice club. The greens are immaculate. It's a little bit more narrow and the rough is tough. I think it's going to be a really good test of golf.

Q. Last year you came to the Open ranked 216th in the world. This year you've come in as No. 10. Have you been able to reflect on what a year you have had?

WYNDHAM CLARK: You know, being in it sometimes it's hard to reflect on everything, but I've had some time, and comments like this or people reminding me how high up in the world or low in the world I was as far as World Ranking kind of puts it in perspective of how much has changed in one year.

But yeah, it's great being here as a major champion, a PGA TOUR winner, and someone that people are now thinking can win multiple. It's kind of a fun feeling, that's for sure.

Q. You've won a couple tournaments, obviously won a major, and your story has gotten out there a little bit. I was wondering what it's like for you when people come up and say, hey, I read The Energy Boss or I read The Obstacle is the Way. What does that feel like to have that?

WYNDHAM CLARK: I think I have a unique story with everything that's happened in my life. It's something that my mom kind of instilled in me and somewhat prophesized a little bit of that play big, and then I have a platform to try to inspire people.

If it's through reading books that helped me during tough times or helped me with my mental game, I hope it inspires other people to help them in whatever that is. That's the stuff that really gets me going and is the most rewarding thing of all this is trying to help and inspire other people.

Q. You had a huge crew of family and friends out at the

LACC; it's a little farther to come to get here. Are they here?

WYNDHAM CLARK: No, I have those two guys behind you, my agent and his assistant, and then I have a couple of other people here, but no family. It's kind of a long ways, and they have lives outside of what I do.

This one we're a little solo.

Q. You played The Open last year. What's your history with links golf, your feelings about links golf and how it suits your game, and then the state of your game?

WYNDHAM CLARK: I love links golf. I think it's the purest test of golf. It's more fun than I think any other golf that we have around the world just because every day is so different.

The wind might come out of the same direction, but every hole seems to have so much variety. You get into different spots where one hole -- the same hole you might be hitting a chip 8-iron; the next day it might be a 4-iron or you could be near the green. I love the variety.

As far as experience, I played the amateur championship at Portrush, which would have been like 2013, and then I spent another six, seven days in Ireland. Played a bunch of links courses, and that's where I was first exposed to it. Just fell in love with just those exact things, the variety and the imagination and how much fun it was.

Then last year playing the Scottish and then The Open Championship were really the only experiences I've had on it.

Q. And your game, how is it?

WYNDHAM CLARK: Right now, currently?

Q. Yeah.

WYNDHAM CLARK: It's good. Last week I hit it very good at the Scottish. Unfortunately I didn't make some putts, but we're going to chalk that up to slow greens and just having two weeks off enjoying winning a major.

But yeah, I feel good, and going into this week I feel confident.



Q. What possessed you to go to Portrush? There's not a lot of Americans that come over to the Amateur.

WYNDHAM CLARK: I'm trying to remember, to think back. I think more than anything just because it was a bucket list thing to do, go and travel and play. Oh, also we had the Palmer Cup, so the Palmer Cup was the following week after the U.S. plays Europe and we were playing at Walton Heath, so it's like, let's go play the Amateur, see how our game is, and then get ready for that Palmer Cup.

Q. Did the rest of the team go, as well?

WYNDHAM CLARK: I would say there was less than -- I think it was just myself and Brandon Hagy that were the only two Americans that came over for that event.

Q. Do you have any LACC clothes, and did you have them before you won?

WYNDHAM CLARK: No and no. I think at my house I have everything you can imagine as far as memorabilia and hats and whatnot. I haven't been home since I won. This is my sixth week away from home, so I'm definitely looking forward to getting home and seeing what I have there.

Q. Have you seen any video of your win? And how much do you find yourself on long flights or quiet moments reflecting on what a week it was, and how did that compare with Wells Fargo?

WYNDHAM CLARK: I have not seen the full coverage. I don't really like watching myself or hearing myself talk or anything like that.

I think my team are going to force me to watch it I would imagine, especially some sort of mental exercise to see good, positive things happening.

I've seen like the last putt and all that stuff multiple times.

Then as far as daydreaming, yeah, there's multiple times where I look back and I actually have to pinch myself and go, I can't believe I won the U.S. Open. That's something I've dreamed about since I started watching golf and watching Tiger Woods win tournaments and other great major champions in the year that I was coming through the ranks.

So I have multiple times. Even this week having people -- I'm signing LACC flags, U.S. Open flags, and it's just very humbling, and it's an amazing feeling.

Q. Do you think about the shots you hit?

WYNDHAM CLARK: Yeah, I think any golfer does. When we

tee it up tomorrow and I have to hit some sort of shot or I'm grinding out something, you kind of lean on times where things were going your way and you did pull it off.

So I've already done that a couple times since I've won the U.S. Open.

Then I think about shots, I can't believe I hit that shot or I can't believe I pulled that off. Yeah, I definitely think about those.

Q. Does that then also give you increased confidence when you're now obviously in the glut of all the star names going out in the big TV pairings and the atmosphere tomorrow is going to be buzzing when you guys are kind of teeing it up?

WYNDHAM CLARK: I think it's fun. Fortunately I've got a great pairing. Cam Smith and I are buddies and so are Xander and I, and both their caddies are friends with my caddie, so it's a great pairing and it's going to have fun watching everyone watching our group. It's the things that I've always wanted.

If anything it just inspires me to play better golf.

Q. Do you feel as well that knowledgeable aspect, the slightly different aspect of the crowds and their reactions when you come over to this side of the world?

WYNDHAM CLARK: As far as their knowledge in golf? Yeah, I'd say anyone that gets up here, I bet you they'd say the same thing, just the knowledge of -- knowledge and respect that the fans have for what we do and then the shots that we hit.

They understand that maybe you'll hit it to 30 feet and it might not look good, but how difficult the shot was, it was a very difficult shot. Or chipping out and making the correct play, that's the proper play. That's the stuff that they understand, and we appreciate it.

Q. Now that you're a major champion and your status has soared, do you feel like your personality has changed at all or your mindset or your views of life in general?

WYNDHAM CLARK: No, I would hope not. If it does, I hope someone punches me in the face and says, get back to who you were. I really hope nothing changes.

I think it fuels my confidence and belief in myself. Obviously certain things change, my status and how much people know who I am. But as a person I don't think -- I hope I don't change.

I think I've instilled a lot of great values and have a really good team around me to help keep me in check. But yeah, I hope I haven't changed.

Q. Just wondering if this Open feels any different with the



Ryder Cup just around the corner? Do you feel under a bit more pressure to catch Zach's eye, and do you talk to the other Americans in the field? Do you think a strong performance from the Americans here would give you guys momentum, or is it such a different test in Rome later this autumn?

WYNDHAM CLARK: You know, all that stuff is a little new to me, so I don't know what the other guys on our team are feeling. But it is fun. Ryder Cup is so big in both countries. It probably feels a little bigger here, or at least talked more about. So being over here, it's fun. It's enemy territory, so it's kind of fun being here.

But yeah, I love match play, and I love competition, and so I think any tournament is kind of a way to match yourself up against other players and see how you -- I do that all the time, of feeling like all right, I feel like I'm as good as you if not better. That kind of happens for me every event.

Q. You've talked very openly about your relationship with your mom, a lot of the big picture stuff. Was there any golf nerdy stuff that she gave you, as well, such as ball position or grip --

WYNDHAM CLARK: My mom knows nothing about golf. Yeah, I mean, she -- I'll give you a great story. She showed up one time, I was in high school and I was playing a tournament. I made like an eight-footer for I think triple bogey, and my mom started clapping like, yeah, yay, Wyndham.

I was like, mom, I just made triple bogey. She had no idea. She just was cheering because I made something and she thought that was good. My mom's golf knowledge is little to none.

Q. You mentioned Tiger earlier. Of course everybody knows about Earl and Tiger; we've heard about that for years. But when Tiger got in the Hall of Fame last year he talked about when he won the Masters in 2019, he talked about how his mom drove him to junior tournaments and very much emphasized the role his mom played in his life. Were you aware of that and did you think about your own mother when you heard Tiger talking about his own mother?

WYNDHAM CLARK: Yeah, I think anytime any athlete talks about that I reflect and those are times that I think about my mom.

It's been a long time since my mom passed, so I don't think about her as much as maybe I did the first few years. But things like that, there's little moments, little movies that come on that we used to watch or people talk about their family that kind of reminds me of her.

But yeah, there's a lot of similarities when Tiger was talking

about the role that his mom or dad played in his life that I kind of see in my life.

Q. Are you a goal setter? And if so, with the success you've had, have you had to reshape those goals?

WYNDHAM CLARK: Yeah, I mean, I've always set goals I think in the past, and it's been a result-oriented goal. Then in this year I've done more process like mind goals where I'm trying to get better mentally and let the results take care of themselves.

As far as going forward, we've had an amazing year, and I don't see why we'd change what we've done. I'm just going to continue to focus on what helps me play the best that I can and then let the results take care of themselves.

Why would I want to put a limit on the amount of tournaments I could win or the things I could do? I'd rather just leave it a clean slate and see what happens.

Q. Who's the most surprising person that reached out to you after you won?

WYNDHAM CLARK: I would just say the amount of players that reached out to me. The respect that they showed me was honestly the most humbling, just having peers. Guys like Tony Finau or Justin Thomas or Max Homa or whoever, our top players congratulating me I think is what really stuck with me the most, because they didn't have to do that.

I'm a competitor at the end of the day and a guy that they want to beat, and the fact that they would say that and think highly of me speaks a lot to them and honestly made me feel really appreciated and respected.

Q. Obviously the big prize this week is the Claret Jug, but given there's so much talk about money in the game right now, just wondering how you'd feel if, say, the prize fund this week or next year or the year after was dramatically reduced or even reduced to zero for the winner or for all the players? Would this tournament make any difference to you? Would you still be here? Would it still have a massive appeal even if there was zero money for the winner?

WYNDHAM CLARK: It wouldn't make a difference. I mean, obviously this is our living, and I think the money in our sport is a bonus personally. Some people make it more than others, and I think we've all seen that in this last year or two.

But at the end of the day, to have someone like Tiger Woods continue to try to play and try to win majors I think shows where his mind is at, that he cares more about maybe the record books or going down in history or winning majors and he loves to compete.

I'm not comparing myself to Tiger, but I love competition, and wherever the best players are I want to be and I want to play and I want to compete.

So yeah, I would be here if I had to pay to play. But if I could play in a major championship, I want to be there.

Q. Just wanted to ask you about what might be a contrast in how you prepare for a links event like this relative to a parkland course that you might normally play back in the U.S., and in those kind of contexts, what are the different nuances that your caddie or you are looking at as you prepare for Thursday?

WYNDHAM CLARK: Well, you definitely hit a lot more shots with different winds, and you try to make sure that you feel comfortable with winds off the left, winds off the right, into the wind.

You work on certain tee shots because you know there's a predominant wind and you know it's going to be this way. It might be that way the whole week versus normal parkland courses, especially in the U.S., you might get three winds all week or there might not be as much wind or whatever so you don't have to worry about that as much.

But here there's a lot of holes where it's going to be three or four straight holes in a row in off the left, so we'll work on the range in preparation on those tee shots.

You also work on a lot of lag putts because you do -- lag putts and putting off the green, which maybe you normally wouldn't work on in parkland golf. Normally I'm pulling a 60 degree wedge and hitting a low spinner versus here you're maybe keeping it on the ground.

What was the other part of your question?

Q. Just checking how your caddie and you, what kind of nuances --

WYNDHAM CLARK: Yeah, and then you hit -- even in the practice rounds, like you put yourself in situations where hey, this is a very tough tee ball more than likely we're going to be over here, so let's practice this.

Then you hit the shot and see where it goes and then you go, okay, let's play from there.

There's a lot more plotting and strategy that goes into links golf and where you can and cannot be versus I think in parkland golf with the ability that guys have now on the PGA TOUR that we can kind of get up-and-down and do anything from anywhere versus sometimes in links golf you almost can't.

There's certain places you just can and cannot be.

Q. Having won twice this year, would you see yourself as sort of a confirmed Ryder Cup player? And in the last few weeks, how much have you spoken to Zach Johnson, or during this season how much have you spoken to Zach Johnson?

WYNDHAM CLARK: Obviously I know where I stand in the rankings. I don't know how it would play out the rest of the year. I would like to think I'm on the team, but at the same time, I believe I've still got to go earn it.

I'm going to continue to do the stuff that I do that makes me successful, and I still have a lot of -- I want to compete and play and hopefully win other tournaments as the year goes on, and if I've earned my spot on the team, then great. That's awesome.

As far as talking to Zach, Zach and I have had a pretty good relationship. When I was with PXG we always bounced stuff off of each other and talked about clubs and talked about things. We did a few sponsor things together, so we've had a relationship over the last four or five years.

As far as Ryder Cup stuff we haven't talked too much. I imagine here in the next -- after this week, I imagine maybe there will be more talks.

Q. Why haven't you been home?

WYNDHAM CLARK: Right afterwards I played the Travelers Championship, and then I had a wedding in Italy. So I went to Italy, and then I said, well, why not have -- let's just stay. We just won a major; let's enjoy it.

So my girlfriend and I stayed there for another 10 days and then played the Scottish last week. We were already over here, so might as well just keep it going.

Q. So you've been in Europe for three weeks between Travelers and Scottish?

WYNDHAM CLARK: Yeah, this is my last one.

Q. Has anyone asked you what you thought about the deal with the Saudis and your opinion of Jay as a commissioner?

WYNDHAM CLARK: No one has asked my opinion. I'm probably not going to give my opinion. I'm going to continue to focus on what I'm doing, and if I continue to play great golf, I'm hoping I get to benefit depending on where the Tour goes.

I just hope what happens is what's best for the game of golf.



Q. I actually wasn't going to ask your opinion. I think I was more curious about you -- should your opinion matter now as a U.S. Open champion compared with just being a one-time PGA TOUR winner when probably no one bothered to care what you thought?

WYNDHAM CLARK: I mean, no. I don't think it's -- it is funny in the sport how you can win a couple times and then people think your opinion matters. Clearly my opinion didn't matter about four or five months ago, so I don't know why it would matter now.

OLIVIA McMILLAN: Wyndham, thanks very much for your time today. Best of luck this week.

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