

# The 151st Open

Press Conference

Friday, 21 July 2023

## Brian Harman



MIKE WOODCOCK: We'll make a start. I'm very pleased to welcome our clubhouse leader to the interview room, Brian Harman. It was a fabulous round of 6-under par today, takes you to 10-under par for the championship. Obviously just a crowning cherry on the cake with the eagle at the last.

Take us through how you feel about your round today and where that leaves you for the championship.

BRIAN HARMAN: Yeah, I've had a hot putter the last couple days so try to ride it through the weekend. 36 holes to go, so try to rest up and get ready.

MIKE WOODCOCK: A great start to pull off, which is you're halfway towards ^ 132, matches lowest in The Open, which was set by two people in 2006 and 2014, Tiger Woods and Rory McIlroy, and you know what they did.

You must be delighted to be in that position at the halfway stage.

BRIAN HARMAN: Delighted with how I'm playing. Just really focused on getting some rest and getting after it tomorrow.

**Q. Not the first time you've been close to contention at a major. What have you learned from the previous times that you might take into the next couple days?**

BRIAN HARMAN: Yeah, just not trying to get too caught up in it. It's just golf. I've probably -- I think when I held the 54-hole lead at the U.S. Open, I just probably thought about it too much.

Just didn't focus on getting sleep and eating right. So that would be my focus this weekend.

**Q. Can you just talk about the eagle on 18 because that seems like something where well, he might have a nice lead, now he has a really nice lead.**

BRIAN HARMAN: Made two really nice pars on 16 and 17. I think that's just as important, to where I felt kind of freed up on 18, and I made probably my two best swings of the day and got up there to 12, 15 feet for eagle.

Just played a really nice hole.

**Q. What did you hit?**

BRIAN HARMAN: Drive, 5-iron.

**Q. What's been your history with links golf? Did you like it from the beginning? Did it take some getting used to? How did that evolve?**

BRIAN HARMAN: Royal Liverpool was my first Open Championship in 2014. Won the John Deere, got in last minute, had the 4:45 tee time on Friday, finished at 10:15, made the cut, loved the golf.

I love the golf over here. I was really excited, and I think I missed four or five cuts in a row coming over here, and I couldn't figure out why I wasn't playing well.

Then last couple years I had some good finishes and just kind of felt like, all right, now at least I feel like I love the golf and I'm playing decently over here.

I was excited to come for the Scottish Open the last couple years to try and get over and get adjusted and get ready, so I think that's helped.

**Q. Have you ever experienced any of the other links golf over here?**

BRIAN HARMAN: No.

**Q. Do you recall your conversation with Trevino on the driving range last year, and did that have any kind of lingering effect with you?**

BRIAN HARMAN: That was a technical golf swing question. Lee has always been incredibly nice to me. I wouldn't expect him to know me from -- couldn't pick me out of a lineup of two I would imagine, but he's always made it a point to say hello so I've always appreciated him and always made it a point whenever I'm around him to talk to him.

**Q. Can you talk about the save on 12, how big that was?**

BRIAN HARMAN: Yeah, I hit an okay drive, but I knew it was



going in that bunker. It's hard to hold that wind, especially on that hole.

Was not a good lie in the bunker, had to play out backwards, and I was kind of just like, all right, would have been extremely happy to walk off that hole with a 5.

Wasn't an overly difficult chip, but I was trying to hit that 6-iron to the middle of the green.

Unfortunate that I didn't pull the shot off, but I hit a really nice chip, and it went in.

**Q. Your record in the majors this year, despite having a pretty good year otherwise, haven't been good, especially lately you've been playing well. What's been going on in the majors, and were you particularly ticked off at missing the cut at the Masters?**

BRIAN HARMAN: Yeah, I started the year with really high aspirations. I had played very well all of last year and into the fall. Just missed out on the Presidents Cup I felt like.

I was just kind of springboarded. Had two runner-ups in the fall, was feeling great, and then I just hit this odd sort of wall at the beginning of the year and I couldn't claw my way out of it. Just kind of doubled down on my process and started playing some really good golf here of late.

But I wasn't playing any good at Augusta, so I didn't have very high expectations there.

**Q. You're double digits clear of some of the biggest names in golf. What is it specifically about your game that you think has given you an edge here at Hoylelake?**

BRIAN HARMAN: Well, I've been hitting a lot of fairways, and then I've been hitting it on to most of the greens and I'm putting well. I don't know what anybody else has been doing, other than the two guys I played with. They played great today.

**Q. You got those birdies quite early on. Was there an element afterwards that you might be protecting your lead?**

BRIAN HARMAN: No. No, I was trying to hit as good a shot as I could. I even short-sided myself a couple times.

Had a really good look on 9.

Got out of position on 10.

Yeah, there's some really difficult holes. Even the birdies that I made were a couple lengthy putts. Happy to play to the fat side most of the time and try and make a 20- or 30-footer.

**Q. You alluded to your putting there. I think this week you've gained eight strokes in putting, and your putter, I think it came out about six or seven years ago. Could you take us through your affection for your putter and why you still stick with it?**

BRIAN HARMAN: Yeah, there was a time middle of this year to where we were seriously thinking about going to the bullpen and pulling out something different. It's been a good putter, but she's been misbehaving a lot this year.

Last few weeks I found a little something on the greens that I felt like gave me a little better roll. I've been putting -- I had one really nice day of putting at the U.S. Open, and then the following weeks I putted really nice.

Just trying to maintain that. Just good fundamentals and putting a good roll on it.

**Q. You are the leader in the stats most top 10s since the 2017-18 season. You haven't won, though, since 2017. What has held you back from winning?**

BRIAN HARMAN: I'm not sure. I think about it a lot, obviously. I'm around the lead a bunch. It's been hard to stay patient. I felt that after I won the tournament and had the really good chance at the U.S. Open in 2017 that I would probably pop a few more off, and it just hasn't happened. I've been right there, and it just hasn't happened.

I don't know. I don't know why it hasn't happened, but I'm not going to quit. I'm going to stick with it and just keep after it, and hopefully it'll pop one day.

**Q. Do you see this week as your stage to make a case for Ryder Cup team?**

BRIAN HARMAN: I've spent I don't know how many years chasing a -- it always seems it's right there at the end and I end up in between 13th and 18th on the list and I'm hoping for a pick. It would mean the world to me to play on the Ryder Cup team. I think I would do very well.

But I'm not thinking about that at all.

**Q. You tied for 12th in the Scottish Open last week. What do you take from that performance and particularly the last round when it was windy, obviously?**

BRIAN HARMAN: Yeah, had a bad Sunday. Was in contention all week and just couldn't make any putts on Sunday. Was happy to use the Scottish to really get used to the conditions, and boy, congratulations to Scotland; they have the worst weather on the planet. They win. They win.

**Q. You talked after the Masters how disappointed you were and you went home and you killed a pig and a turkey. I take it the sheep and the cows are safe around here at the moment, are they?**

BRIAN HARMAN: Sheep don't taste as good as the turkeys do I would imagine.

**Q. Is that something to get the frustration out of your system?**

BRIAN HARMAN: I've been a Hunter my entire life. I enjoy the strategy of it.

Yeah, we eat a lot of wild meat at my house, so I enjoy butchering, and I do a lot of hunting.

**Q. What do you particularly like about links golf, and could you share at all what Trevino told you?**

BRIAN HARMAN: Trevino and I -- we talked about how as players got older they tended to drop their back foot back to help brace their golf swing, so it wasn't anything crazy.

I like links golf -- I like when courses don't force you to carry. There's several different options to play golf holes. If you're into the wind you can hit way more club and send it up in the air to try to stop it, or you can try to finesse something lower, so I enjoy the variety of shots you have to hit.

**Q. Just wanted to know if you're still working with Justin Parsons? And secondly, given that he comes from this part of the world, how big a role has he played in making you appreciate and get better on links courses?**

BRIAN HARMAN: Yeah, Justin and I have done some really good work on my golf swing. I've always been a really good putter and good around the greens, and the last couple years my ball-striking has really rounded into form.

I've just been waiting for it to all kind of come together at the same time.

**Q. It sounds like just listening to you that you're playing well and you know it, and you just want to make sure you don't get ahead of yourself. Is that difficult for you to do?**

BRIAN HARMAN: It is, yeah. I have a very active mind. It's hard for me -- I've always struggled with trying to predict the future and trying to forecast what's going to happen. I've just tried to get really comfortable just not knowing.

**Q. A friend of mine just texted me and I don't know whether you have a nickname. He called you the Harmanator. You**

**like that?**

BRIAN HARMAN: That's dreadful. Dreadful. You don't get to pick your own nicknames, but that one is not going to stick.

**Q. I think you had a good Friday or second round last year at St Andrews if I remember correctly. Did that kick start that run you ended up going on for the rest of the year?**

BRIAN HARMAN: Yeah, it really did. I came over early for the Scottish last year, and I think I beat two people at the Scottish Open. Played horrible. Then played bad the first day at St Andrews, was like, golly, I love coming over here but I'm getting my teeth kicked in.

I had a really nice back nine, made the cut by a couple, and then played really well on the weekend.

I'd say it was nice to finally turn the corner last year to where -- this is probably my seventh or eighth Open Championship. Before last year had never really even been anywhere close to in contention or even doing halfway decent.

**Q. When you have a round like this, are you able to tell early on that this is going to be a good day for you, or is golf not predictable enough? You talk to basketball players who have a great game, they say from the start it just was working. Do you have that in golf, or is golf not able to have that type of feeling?**

BRIAN HARMAN: No, very rarely do I -- it's usually you get done and you're like, well, that was a pretty good day. You get so focused on the moment and just trying to execute shots.

There was several holes where it could have gone either way. I could have made several bogeys on the back nine.

Yeah, just really fortunate to finish where I did and real pleased with it.

MIKE WOODCOCK: Well played, Brian, and best of luck for the weekend.

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