

The 152nd Open

Press Conference

Tuesday, 30 April 2024

Brian Harman



STUART MOFFATT: Good afternoon, everyone. First of all, hope you enjoyed the golf today and it whetted the appetite ahead of the championship in July. At least the rain stayed off, but I know it was windy out there and there are some tired faces coming through the clubhouse.

Welcome to our press conference with the 2023 Champion Golfer Brian Harman.

Good morning, Brian, and thank you for taking the time out of your schedule to join us from the United States. Nice to see you've brought the Claret Jug with you, too.

BRIAN HARMAN: Oh, yeah. I don't let it get very far away from me. That's for sure.

STUART MOFFATT: It's been just over nine months now since you held the trophy aloft at Royal Liverpool. How do you reflect back on that week, and what has winning The Open meant to you?

BRIAN HARMAN: Yeah, it's been an incredible experience thus far. Being announced as the Champion Golfer of the Year over here in the States is something that I will never forget.

I'm absolutely honoured to be The Open champion, and I'm really looking forward to getting to Troon. I've never seen the golf course, so maybe some of the guys that played today can give me some tips.

STUART MOFFATT: I'm sure they can. Whether they're good or not is another matter. Today we announced we're going to have a record attendance for Troon of 250,000 spectators. How much are you looking forward to coming to Royal Troon and defending your title?

BRIAN HARMAN: I absolutely adore the golf over there. It just seems like the purest form of the game. I'm so elated that it's receiving so much support, as well it should, and I'll be very excited to get over there and get going.

Q. The enormity of winning The Open Championship, does it only really sink in more and hit you more now than it did when you lifted the Claret Jug last July? As each passing day goes, does it more sink in, the enormity of it?

BRIAN HARMAN: Yeah, certainly there's different levels of it. I didn't realise -- it didn't really sink in -- I went and spent like a week on vacation with my family the week afterwards, so it didn't really sink in until I got home, and it just didn't occur to me that I had as much support back home as I did. I know that sounds silly, but I'm over there -- we've got a very tight group over there, and it's not like my family doesn't travel. It's not like the normal friends and faces aren't over there.

When I got home, it really sank in, and the amount of reverence -- not that I didn't have it already for The Open Championship, but the amount of reverence for it worldwide has been pretty staggering.

Q. It would take a lot to top winning an Open Championship anywhere, but to win one in the country where the game was born, would that take it up a notch?

BRIAN HARMAN: It certainly would. Yeah, there's so much history, and it's just a different feel about being in Scotland. I'm very excited to come back.

Q. You said you have never seen the golf course before. Are there guys or peers who you may go and talk to for advice or people who have played it previously that you would look to for guidance or tips, or do you just prefer to do your own thing and come over and see it yourself when the time is right?

BRIAN HARMAN: I kind of like getting just my set of eyes on it first and kind of making my own -- I don't want to have any expectations going to the week.

Unfortunately it usually takes me a couple laps to kind of get ready and kind of figure a place out and kind of what it's asking of you. I'm going to try to get as much golf in there as I can. I'm planning on playing the Scottish the week before, but I'll probably have to up my preparation Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday to get a few laps around that place.

Q. Stay out of the bunkers. That's one tip.

BRIAN HARMAN: That's always a tip over there.

Q. Can you tell us about the journey the Claret Jug has been



on since you've been here? You look as if you're in a little bit of a man den.

BRIAN HARMAN: Yeah, this is my getaway here at my house. The jug, we took it to Augusta National for a prep trip in October, and they told me it was the first time it had been there. It went to an Atlanta Braves baseball game. I got to throw out the first pitch with the jug, which was really neat. Then it was on the field for halftime at a University of Georgia football game, which is probably the closest thing that we have over here to Premier League soccer as far as fan engagement and support.

It certainly made the rounds, and I have enjoyed my time with it I'm sure as much as anyone.

Q. What sort of response did you have from the fans of the baseball when you're turning up with the Claret Jug? Obviously it's the trophy to have in golf.

BRIAN HARMAN: Yeah, the amount of reverence and just the excitement that people have around the Claret Jug, for me it's been jarring. Honestly, I think it's either the top -- either the most iconic, second or third -- top three for sure iconic trophies in sports. People are really, really very enthusiastic to get to be around it, to take a picture, to hold it for a second. It's been a really cool experience.

Q. It's good to hear you're coming back to the Scottish Open again at the Renaissance Club. How much do you put your success last year down to becoming acclimatized to what can happen on a links course?

BRIAN HARMAN: Yeah, the weather -- getting used to the weather, the time change -- I feel like it takes me two or three days to get used to the time change. You feel fine the first couple days, and that third and fourth day you're just dragging. Getting all that out of your system, getting used to a good routine and just getting accustomed to the weather, and the turf is so much firmer than what we're accustomed to over here when we play normally. So getting used to that, getting used to the strike, the way the ball wants to run out around the greens. There's a lot of stuff. There's a lot of nuance to golf over there, and it takes a lot of preparation.

Q. In one of your previous press conferences you said when you looked inside the Claret Jug you felt it needed a good scrub because you put some things in it. We know you were on the Guinness the first night. What else have you put in the jug?

BRIAN HARMAN: Well, it was made as a decanter, so it holds a bottle of wine to perfection. Lots of wine, lots of Guinness, maybe even a little bit of Kentucky's finest bourbon in there.

Q. What are you looking forward to most about going to Troon, and are you expecting any hostility from the crowds given there's a little bit of Liverpool on your march to victory there, given there's going to be huge crowds here, as well?

BRIAN HARMAN: What am I most looking forward to?

Q. What are you looking forward to most about coming to Troon?

BRIAN HARMAN: I love the golf over there. I absolutely love it. Growing up in the state of Georgia, the Masters was always something that I had circled as a kid, and obviously I always watched The Open Championship, but I didn't realise until I qualified in 2014 to play that it was my favourite major.

I adore the golf over there. It's a thinking-man's game. You have to be able to hit every single type of golf shot. Around the greens is so important. There's a lot of strategy off the tee. I look forward to that. I feel as though the game gets away from that sometimes, and so it feels like it's refreshing to go over there and play hard golf that's not just a one-stop shop.

Do I expect hostility? I have no idea. I'll be ready for whatever. I've always really enjoyed playing golf in front of the fans over there because they're so knowledgeable about the game. They understand what a good shot is. They understand what a bad shot is.

I like how knowledgeable they are. They get it. They're a joy to play in front of.

Q. You made a lot of headlines with all the stuff about hunting, and we had a lot of fun with it, the butcher of Hoylake and all that. Did you enjoy that? Are you expecting more of that? Would you rather that went away? How much did you enjoy that, and do you expect to be "butchering" the field again?

BRIAN HARMAN: No, I don't expect to be butchering the field again. Winning a golf tournament is really, really hard. It'll be an uphill battle for sure. There's incredible players over there.

My wife -- when we threw a party at home, it was a Brian the Butcher theme party. We had tee shirts and Koozies and everything made up, so everyone around here got a good kick out of it.

As far as the hunting goes, I don't mind answering questions about it. It's a part of who I am, and I'm not changing that anytime soon. I've been very forthcoming. When we hunt animals, we kill them, we eat them, and that's just a part of what we do around here. We probably feed on wild game of some sort at my house I would imagine three or four nights a

week, between the fish and the animals that we hunt.

Q. You talk passionately about playing links golf. Can you recall the first time that ever happened, and did you instantly like it? Some people take time to grow into it.

BRIAN HARMAN: Yeah, so the first time I played links golf, I qualified for the Palmer Cup and it was at Prestwick, and I hated links golf. It ate me to pieces. I kept trying to hit lob wedge around the greens, and the weather was bad, and I got whipped over there. I got killed. Lost all my matches.

Then the next time I played links golf was at Hoylake. I won the John Deere Classic, qualified for The Open, got to play and just absolutely fell in love with it.

Then I had a stretch there where I missed three or four cuts in a row at the Open and just couldn't quite get it figured out but I knew that I really enjoyed the golf. I always enjoyed the golf even when I wasn't playing it great. Like I said, I love the variety of the type of shots and the type of -- there's lots of different ways to be successful over there, and I think that's -- like I said, I think that's something that's lacking in our game week to week that I wish we had a little bit more of.

Q. When you spoke at the Masters, it almost seemed as if you think it's going to be really difficult for you to win at Augusta. Do you feel links golf, as you showed last year, is more suited to you?

BRIAN HARMAN: Yeah, Augusta, I love playing the Masters. It's incredible. Yeah, being able to hit it a little bit further at Augusta would certainly help my chances over there, and I'm doing everything I can to be a little bit more competitive.

I just haven't quite figured that place out. It just eats me alive every time I go. I just can't quite get a handle on it.

As far as links golf, I don't think links golf really suits anyone's game. It's just very difficult. You can catch a bad wave of the weather and there's nothing you can do about that or you can hit some really good shots that end up against -- you have to get lucky in those bunkers if you hit it in them. It just seems like the more control you have over your golf ball, the better off you are over there, and that's something I've always been able to do pretty well.

Q. You got a little bit of stick on social media for your interview during the RBC Heritage a couple weeks ago, but you fronted up and came and spoke to people. Can you sort of talk us through your thoughts during that interview? Should you maybe not have done it?

BRIAN HARMAN: Yeah, I don't care to be that way. I don't like coming off as curt or disrespectful. Everyone has got a job

to do. I hate that it came off that way.

As far as the way I was feeling, it's just as raw as it gets. I read some of the stuff -- I don't want to come off as ungrateful for what I get to do. I love what I do. It's the only thing that I could do every day. I've always wanted to be a golfer, so I'm grateful for the opportunity.

But I do care a lot, and when things -- when I do something that's not up to par as far as execution on the golf course, like I'm upset about it. I take a lot of pride in what I do, and I was hot, man. I was hot coming off. I had a really good day and ruined it with the last couple holes, and probably should have just not done the interview in hindsight.

Q. I believe you're a contemporary and I think even a Walker Cup teammate of Anthony Kim. Curious to get your take on how good it is to see Anthony back in the game after everything he's had to overcome. Obviously he's playing in a different environment to you, but just your thoughts on his comeback please?

BRIAN HARMAN: Yeah, I'm always interested when someone kind of picks up the pieces and comes back. It's nice to see him playing golf again. He sure was tough to beat when he was playing good. Hope he finds a little bit of that form.

I heard that his personal life is going really well from all reports. I haven't talked to Anthony personally in probably 12 years or so, but yeah, I've been rooting for him from the sidelines. We always exchange Anthony Kim stories, and he's an easy guy to pull for. Hope he keeps it up and hope he gets a little bit of his form back.

Q. When you said you got beat up at Prestwick. You obviously know how close Prestwick is to Troon. Do you think you'll take a walk down there and go and have a look and just say, guess what, I've figured it out?

BRIAN HARMAN: I would just like to go hit that first tee shot and not have to hit it right-handed off that wall. Felt like I did that four straight days over there. The train tracks and that wall right there ate my lunch off that first tee.

STUART MOFFATT: Brian, it's been a pleasure for us to join us this afternoon, and thanks for giving us your time. Very much looking forward to seeing you here in July.

BRIAN HARMAN: Thanks for everyone's time. Appreciate you guys.

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