

# The 152nd Open

Press Conference

Monday, 15 July 2024

**Brian Harman**



LIV McMILLAN: Good afternoon, ladies and gentlemen, and welcome to the 152nd Open at Royal Troon. It's a delight to see you all back here again. It is even more delightful to be joined by Brian Harman, of course our Champion Golfer of the Year from last year.

Brian, you just had to return the Claret Jug. Was it a sad moment to have to hand that one back?

BRIAN HARMAN: It's been a great year. Yeah, a little sad to give it back, but I'll remember everywhere it's been forever. I'm happy to give it back, happy to be here. Ready to get going.

**Q. Brian, can you just reflect on the past 12 months and what it's meant to you to be the Champion Golfer of the Year?**

BRIAN HARMAN: Anytime that you become a major champion, it certainly elevates your status in the game, elevates the way that you're perceived in the game. I try to take all of that in stride, but at the same time understand that the golf is the most important thing, and I've tried to improve my golf game and get it in a place where I can maybe contend in some more majors down the road.

**Q. Brian, good to see you once again. When we chatted a few weeks ago, you said you hadn't been here yet, and you were asking for some tips. What do you make of the bunkers here?**

Secondly, your fellow lefty had a decent day yesterday. What was your take on his victory?

BRIAN HARMAN: I still haven't seen the bunkers. Going to play this afternoon and get my first look at it. Really excited to get out. Got some nice weather today.

Bob and I have become friends. He's an excellent, excellent player. That was a really cool finish yesterday. I was really happy for him.

**Q. Brian, I hear a lot of players talking about windows this week. I'm just wondering how you make sense of them, why it's so important during a week like this, and why that's so important for you guys.**

BRIAN HARMAN: Windows in what regard? The way that they're fighting their golf balls?

**Q. Yeah, hitting certain windows they're looking at.**

BRIAN HARMAN: Yeah, I think that's probably one of the most important things when you're playing links golf, being able to hit a piercing golf shot that stays underneath the wind. Being able to work the ball against the wind, whichever way it's blowing.

A lot of times, if you let a ball kind of go with the wind, it has trouble stopping going that way. Yeah, that's the rub of the Open Championship and links golf in general. You've got to control the trajectory on your golf ball.

That's what makes this my favorite major to play in because that's still a skill that I think is very important and sometimes gets lost in some other places.

**Q. Brian, did you go through the procedure with Martin Slumbers, being filmed as you arrived and handing the trophy back to him and all that?**

BRIAN HARMAN: I practiced getting out of the car one time.

**Q. Are you good at it?**

BRIAN HARMAN: I don't know. I'll have to go back and watch the tape and see how I did.

Yeah, I wish Martin all the best in his retirement. I think he's done a fantastic job. Hope he spends his time doing all the stuff he really likes to do.

**Q. What do you think of that sort of thing? Does that strike you as a quintessentially British thing to do, to be filmed handing the trophy over?**

BRIAN HARMAN: In my opinion, it's the coolest trophy in all of sports. So I think it's deserving of all of the pageantry that is involved with it.

**Q. You talked about the mentality change of being an Open champion, a major champion. Does that bring more pressure coming into a week like this, or does it make you**



## **kind of puff your chest out a little bit?**

BRIAN HARMAN: No, it doesn't -- I think it would probably add a little bit of pressure, but I don't think you ever really know what you're capable of until something like that happens.

At least now I know that if things go my way, I'm well prepared. I'm a tough guy to beat, and if I just prepare the proper way, then take care of what I can do, then I'll give myself the best opportunity to have another chance.

**Q. You talked about becoming friends with Bob. Did that come about firstly because you were left-handers? And Bob talked a couple of months back about the difficulty of adjusting to the PGA TOUR life. Can you understand someone from the UK or outside America coming there and taking time to sort of adjust to life and everything that's different over there?**

BRIAN HARMAN: I chatted with him -- I forget exactly where he's living. I think he's down in Orlando. I think they were having a little bit of trouble kind of adjusting. It's got to be -- I can't imagine how hard that is to uproot and go somewhere else and then base out of there.

He certainly had a tough go of it as far as adjusting, but he's played fantastic. I think he's -- obviously his game speaks for itself. He's doing great.

At the end of the struggle is usually something really cool. So I think he's doing fantastic.

**Q. Padraig Harrington is the last player to successfully defend an Open in 2007 and 2008. Obviously it's difficult to defend any Open, but how do you feel your game is in shape to hopefully try and emulate what Padraig achieved?**

BRIAN HARMAN: My stats this year have been really good. My ball striking has been as good as it's ever been.

The only thing I haven't done well this year is I haven't putted especially well. So I'm just kind of waiting for it all to line up correctly.

You can work and work and work. You just never know when that work is going to pay off. You never know when the peak is coming. You never know when you're going to catch a little bit of momentum. So you just have to hope it's a big week.

You never really know when it's coming. Like I said, I've worked really hard, and my game is in really good shape. I'm happy with what I'm going into this week.

**Q. Just a little bit further down the road, obviously you'll have your eyes on the Ryder Cup team. What did you make**

## **of Keegan Bradley being made team captain for USA?**

BRIAN HARMAN: I shared everyone's surprise that he was named, but as far as tenacity, I don't know if anyone loves the Ryder Cup as much as Keegan does. I think he'll be a fantastic captain.

The players are going to mirror the -- I don't want to say morale, but the enthusiasm of their captain, and he won't be lacking for any in that regard. I think he'll do great.

**Q. Just being a bit of a younger guy as a captain, do you think that makes it easier for him to maybe resonate with you guys, sort of drive things in that team room?**

BRIAN HARMAN: I don't know. I've only played one. I thought Zach, as far as relating with players, did a really good job. You always have this respect for a guy that's done it a bunch of times, and Keegan's played plenty of Ryder Cups.

I think he's a little bit of both. He's younger, and he'll relate a little bit better, but then he's also got the experience to go along with it.

**Q. What's something you didn't expect over the course of this past year as Open champion?**

BRIAN HARMAN: That's a good question. Not that I expect -- all of it's been unexpected. You never know -- you never know how it's going to go, but I think just the reception from everyone back home and like the reception back home was overwhelming, like how positive. Nothing more, just how excited everyone was.

I was obviously very excited, but to be able to share that excitement with people that I care about was probably the best.

**Q. Did you drink anything unusual out of it or damage it in any way?**

BRIAN HARMAN: I drank some unusually expensive wine and some unusually exceptional bourbon out of it.

**Q. They just released the purse for this year, and it's gone up about a half million dollars. In the release, Martin Slumbers talked about the fact that this is probably not sustainable to keep going this route. The question to you is would you play this tournament if you got paid less or maybe nothing at all?**

BRIAN HARMAN: Yeah, I would personally. I'm not sure everyone would, but I would.

**Q. Why do you think others may not?**



BRIAN HARMAN: Because some people care more about money than I do, I suppose. I play golf to -- I play golf for me. Like I play golf to see how good I can get at golf. I play golf because I enjoy torturing myself with things that are really hard to do. That's just me.

Most times when I get done with a tournament, I couldn't tell you within commas of how much that I made that week.

**Q. When we spoke to you on the final day of Hoylake last year, you were talking about going back home and driving your tractor to reflect. I was just wondering in that time what was the moment when it really dawned that you were The Open champion and everything, when the whirlwind had passed, when it started settling in?**

BRIAN HARMAN: I had one day. I was at my farm, and it's wintertime, and I'm riding my four-wheeler. I just kind of like had a moment where it's just me. It's cold, and it was just like I was so happy that I was there.

It's like, this is just really nice. It's nice to be The Open champion and still be doing the same thing that I would have been doing otherwise.

**Q. That was kind of what you implied that night. You just wanted to go back and be away from everything and let everything sink in. Was this like a few months later?**

BRIAN HARMAN: It's nice being in a place where no one's there, no one knows who you are, no one can get in touch with you.

As golfers, we spend so much time playing in front of people. I think a lot of us kind of crave going to a place where there's no one watching, there's nothing. You're just there. I don't know if that makes sense or not.

It's somewhere to disappear. Somewhere to disappear and just really enjoy time.

**Q. But it's also having that thing in the back of your mind that you know what you achieved that moment in history, and no one will take it away from you?**

BRIAN HARMAN: It's nice to be able to reflect on all that and always have pleasant, pleasant memories to think about.

**Q. Brian, you had a really, very rough time at the hands of some spectators last year. You were very open about it then, and you repeated it in a Golf Digest piece. Have you had what you might call a warmer welcome this time? Do you anticipate that things will be more kind towards you or however you want to describe it this year? Or does it bother you?**

BRIAN HARMAN: It doesn't bother me. I'm ready to take whatever in stride. I'm here to play the best golf that I possibly can. That's my main focus.

I've always loved the fans over here. I've spoken a bunch of times about how I find them the most knowledgeable fans of any that we play in front of.

I kind of chalk last year up as more of an anomaly than anything else.

**Q. I just wonder with your experiences of winning prior, what does it feel like coming here as a past champion versus other places? Is there a level of pressure maybe that you have with yourself because this is such a huge championship, to do it again or fare well?**

BRIAN HARMAN: The pressure I feel is always from internally, just trying to have my game in as good a shape as I possibly can.

As far as being a defending champion, yeah, being a defending -- I can't speak for other majors, but there's lots of stuff you have to do. You've got to get here and do all this. It's certainly a different experience.

You've got to take it in stride, and it's part of being The Open champion, and I'm happy to oblige.

**Q. You're such a good driver of the ball. When you're looking at a hole from the tee box, where are you deciding where to actually tee off from, like to what angles into the fairways? Like based on the wind or based on any other factors? How are you picking the location of where you start the hole from on the tee box?**

BRIAN HARMAN: I almost always favor the left side of the tee box. The best explanation I can have is it's the closest to where the bag gets set down.

I don't really have any sort of strategic reason why I do left other than that's kind of what I've always done. I favor the left side of the tee box.

**Q. You spoke earlier about having that quiet moment when you were out on your tractor. Rory spoke last week about how he can't remember the last time he had a proper holiday. I mean, years ago. Is it difficult being a global sporting superstar and just going out with your family for a coffee and trying to have a little bit of what we would feel as being normality?**

BRIAN HARMAN: It's all perspective, right? You can only experience it through your own experience.



I can't imagine being Rory. Rory would have trouble going out to eat somewhere. Yeah, that's a part of this gig that's probably been the hardest adjustment is not having enough of your own time, I guess you could say, to where it's hard to escape it sometimes.

That's why I think like my farm and being out on the boat and stuff like that are the places that we crave because it's the place where you get to escape all of it, and you just get to be by yourself for a little while.

**Q. Is there any part of you that felt like you needed to act differently as The Open champion, either on the golf course or off the golf course, just because of what you did and what you almost represent with your name on that little jug?**

BRIAN HARMAN: I'm just not sure that I would be capable of acting any differently if I wanted to. I just -- (laughter). I just try and be really honest. I try and be myself. That way I don't ever have to pretend to be something I'm not. That's just kind of the way I've always done it.

LIV McMILLAN: Brian, it's been a pleasure having you as our champion, and we wish you the best of luck this week.

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