

The 152nd Open

Press Conference

Tuesday, 16 July 2024

Tiger Woods



MIKE WOODCOCK: I'd like to welcome to the interview room our three-time Open champion Tiger Woods. Glad to see you back here at The Open competing once again. How much are you looking forward to this test at Royal Troon?

TIGER WOODS: I'm really looking forward to it. I didn't get to play it last time I was here. Looking forward to the challenges. I know they've gone around here a couple times and lengthened quite a few holes. It's a lot longer golf course. A few added bunkers here and there.

Overall, it's one of those courses where you're going to get it on one of the nines. It's either going out it's going to be downwind, or coming home it's going to be into the wind or vice versa. Half of the holes are going to be playing really difficult, and the other ones are definitely gettable.

Q. You spoke about how it's hard for you because you can't practice as much and you have to pick your battles. What have you been able to do in the last month that leads you to believe that this week will be different than the ones so far this year?

TIGER WOODS: I've been training a lot better. We've been busting it pretty hard in the gym, which has been good. Body's been feeling better to be able to do such things, and it translates on being able to hit the ball better.

Can't quite stay out there during a practice session as long as I'd like, but I'm able to do some things that I haven't done all year, which is nice.

Q. Can you take us through your decision not to do the Ryder Cup captaincy this go-around and what your input to Keegan has been, and what kind of a captain do you think he'll be?

TIGER WOODS: Well, the decision was very difficult for me to make. My time has been so loaded with the Tour and everything and what we're trying to accomplish. I'm on so many different subcommittees that it just takes so much time in the day, and I'm always on calls.

I felt -- I told Seth that I just didn't feel like I could do the job properly. I couldn't devote the time. I barely had enough time

to do what I'm doing right now, and add in the TGL starts next year, as well as the Ryder Cup. You add all that together and then with our negotiations with the PIF, all that concurrently going on at exactly the same time, there's only so many hours in the day.

I just didn't feel like I would be doing the captaincy or the players in Team USA justice if I was the captain with everything that I have to do.

Then with Keegan, I think Keegan is going to be a great leader. He's very passionate about what he does. He's very passionate about the event. I think that this is going to be probably a turnover year for us for the captaincies, whether it's the captain himself and his vice captains. I think this is the natural progression, one we've been looking forward to, and I think it's that year.

Q. Always a lot to talk about your future in the game. Hypothetically, if someone ever did advise you to quit, what would you say to them in response, and how would you explain why you keep putting yourself through the pain to play?

TIGER WOODS: I'll play as long as I can play and I feel like I can still win the event.

Q. And has that belief wavered in the last two years, that you can still win?

TIGER WOODS: No.

Q. Tiger, just to almost follow up on that, you've given so much to this game, you've given so much to this championship. You heard those comments last week from Colin Montgomerie who said, why is he here, he should retire, there's no point to this. Do you feel that's a bit hurtful and you've earned the right, that you make the decision when you decide?

TIGER WOODS: Well, as a past champion, I'm exempt until I'm 60. Colin's not. He's not a past champion, so he's not exempt. So he doesn't get the opportunity to make that decision. I do.

Q. You feel that you've earned that, you deserve that?



TIGER WOODS: So when I get to his age, I get to still make that decision, where he doesn't.

Q. Hi, Tiger. I wonder if you could perhaps just talk to us a little bit about playing golf back in Scotland, some of your best memories of playing here and perhaps something about playing golf in front of Scottish fans?

TIGER WOODS: Well, I think that anytime I get a chance to play, not just in Scotland, but just in the UK in general, it's different golf. Links golf is very different. The heaviness of the air is just different. The ball doesn't travel as far.

You're using the ground sometimes as an ally, sometimes as a deterrent. And these pots are unlike any bunkers we see at home. These are very -- they're penalty areas. You go in them, you're probably going sideways or backwards or somewhere not very far. So it's imperative to stay out of them.

There's a way of using the ground to your advantage on hitting shots and shaping it correctly. Look at some of the past champions that have been artists in how they've been able to maneuver the golf ball and use the ground. This golf course allows you to do that.

There are a few forced carries in which you have to send it a little bit, but it's very fair. It's very open right now.

Q. How do you feel about your short game and your putting? You've talked about the lack of reps. Where do you feel you're at right now?

TIGER WOODS: I'd like to tighten up my short game just a little bit. I hadn't seen anything this firm at home. Hot Florida, Bermuda grass is not quite like this. I need to get some more reps chipping around this fescue and how fast that ball -- how fast my blade is going through the ground. It's going through pretty quickly. So I've got to get a little bit of work done today and tomorrow and be ready come Thursday.

Q. Could you describe for us perhaps some of the holes that you said are kind of green light "go" holes and maybe a couple you want to be more cautious on?

TIGER WOODS: The first couple holes starting out are pretty simple, straightforward. 7 is one of those holes that I think you can go for it if you want to. You can drive it down there. You get the right wind, you can almost drive it on the green.

Then coming home, coming home is no joke. You've got some tough tee shots coming home. You've got to hit some good shots.

But overall, I think there are some gettable holes on the par-5s

-- well, the two par-5s on the front. Depends what 16 is doing with the wind. You can get it whistling into the wind, it's a three-shot hole no matter what. Or if the wind lays down, you can get there in two. You've just got to be careful with the burn coming across the fairway.

Other than that, you'll see a lot of the guys lay up to the same spots. There will be occasional areas where, with the right wind conditions, guys can be aggressive, especially some of the longer hitters. They can be aggressive. It does allow for that. But in general if we get the winds we're forecasted, I think we're all going to be playing from about the same areas.

Q. On the holes, can you -- the Postage Stamp is one of the most iconic holes on The Open. Can you give us your insight into playing it and the challenge it presents.

TIGER WOODS: It's just a simple -- I hit 9-iron and a pitching wedge the last two times I played it. I've hit as much as a 7-iron. But it's a very simple hole; just hit the ball on the green. That's it. Green good, miss green bad. It doesn't get any more simple than that.

You don't need a 240-yard par-3 for it to be hard.

Q. Tiger, you've always embraced links golf almost from the beginning it seems. Does it present your best opportunity going forward, whether it's this week or next year into the future to win again or to be competitive just because of the style and maybe it doesn't require some things that are harder for you now?

TIGER WOODS: I think the older you get, the less you can carry the golf ball. But over here, you can run the golf ball 100 yards if you get the right wind and the right trajectory.

It negates somewhat of the high launch conditions that most of the times you see on the Tour that nowadays that populate the world. Here it's a little bit different. You can play on the ground. You can burn it on the ground with a 1-iron, 2-iron, 3-wood, whatever, even drivers, and just flight it and get a bunch of run.

I think that's one of the reasons why you see older champions up there on the board because they're not forced to have to carry the ball 320 yards any more.

Q. I know it's been 20 years since you were last here, but does this one rate highly for you?

TIGER WOODS: Yeah, I've always loved playing here. I've only played here twice. I played in '97 and in '04. I loved them both. I got a chance to play with Tom Weiskopf in his last practice round. That was neat for him to take me back to some of his holes and how he played them, and I obviously gave him

some stick, and he's giving me stick, like we always do. We had a wonderful time playing just a wonderful practice round.

Q. Tiger, when you're doing all this subcommittees and committees and everything and you have the homework that goes with it, aren't you wishing you were out on the practice ground, or are you beginning to enjoy it?

TIGER WOODS: I never would have foreseen myself doing this, no. It's a lot of work. It's enjoyable in the sense that I'm able to help the Tour and I'm able to help the next generation of players.

Now the players that are coming up now, they have equity in the Tour, and that's never been done in any major sport in history. It's a way of me giving back to the game in a different way other than just playing.

But, yes, there are days I wish I had a sand wedge and I had a driver out and I was out hitting golf balls instead of sitting in the three-hour subcommittee meeting. Some of these gentlemen I work with, they're just incredible, the knowledge, the breadth of knowledge, and the endurance, the mental endurance it takes to do this, and they do it every day.

I can only understand it from golf; I used to do this every day. But these guys never seem to get tired.

Q. Rory revealed recently that Michael Jordan and Rafael Nadal were two of the people who reached out to him after what he went through at Pinehurst. I was just wondering if you'd spoken to him about that or if you could offer advice on how you get over such a tough loss.

TIGER WOODS: I just sent him a nice text. That was it. I waited a week before I sent it. I wanted to let it calm down, and I didn't want it to be -- didn't want him -- I know he was being besieged by a lot of different things going on, and just let it cool down for a week. Then I sent him a nice text, and that's it.

I think he played last week, and now he's playing this week.

Q. Are you able to share with us roughly what you said to him?

TIGER WOODS: Just basically, as you know, I'm your friend. I know this is a difficult moment. We've all been there as champions. We all lose. Unfortunately, it just happened, and the raw emotion of it, it's still there, and it's going to be there for, I'm sure, some time. The faster he's able to get back on a horse and get back into contention, like he did last week, the better it is for him.

Q. I know you just ran us through why you're battling not enough time to be a Ryder Cup captain. Would you embrace

the idea to be a vice captain if Keegan were to ask you?

TIGER WOODS: He hasn't asked me.

Q. In regards to this week, it's obviously a lot different to what the guys play week in and week out. How have you adapted your setup in your bag? Have you changed any particular clubs, or have you added more weight or less weight in particular?

TIGER WOODS: Let's see. I'm monkeying around with the bounce on my 60. I got a couple 60s I'm kind of experimenting right now, one with a little bit less bounce for the chipping areas. Also, I need -- I like the way my older 60 is going through the bunkers and then getting out. It's not digging. So I've got to make a call on that.

I just bent my 3-iron yesterday one degree stronger just to be able to hit it off the deck and get that thing down and flighted and running. And I added lead tape to my putter just because the greens are so slow.

Q. Keegan Bradley has only just been appointed, but there's already a lot of speculation about who might captain the United States in Ireland in '27. Given your relationship with J.P. and your friendship there, if the PGA of America were to ask you, what would be your feelings on being a captain there?

TIGER WOODS: Whether J.P. is -- I know it's near and dear to his heart that he wants to be there for the event, and I hope he is there, obviously the conditions that he's going through, and I hope he's there, and I hope he's healthy and happy.

As I said, I'll put my hat in the ring again when I have more time and I feel like I can devote myself to a Ryder Cup. As of right now, I've got so many different things I'm juggling and trying to get right at the same time for all the players that are a part of the PGA TOUR.

It's one of those things where you just can't get it wrong.

Q. Given your experiences in Ireland over the years, what do you imagine that Ryder Cup might be like?

TIGER WOODS: We played at the K Club. Hopefully it won't be as wet as it was there. Hopefully my caddie doesn't drop a 9-iron in the water.

We had a fun week as a team. Unfortunately, we lost. I played the first match out against Darren after he just lost Heather, so that was very emotional. Darren and I have been very close. It was tough to lose that match, but I was -- I couldn't have been more happy and tearful myself for him for what that match meant and what the Irish crowd meant to him and the energy

they brought to him during that difficult period.

Q. Tiger, in your role as a negotiator or being involved in the negotiations, can you tell us whether you think the light at the end of the tunnel is any nearer than it was?

TIGER WOODS: I can tell you we're making progress. I can't tell you more than that just because we're not going to negotiate on the outside. We've got to keep everything at a high level and private, but things are moving and things are changing. It's evolving each and every day. There's e-mails and chains and texts and ideas that we bounce back and forth from both sides.

There's a good interchange of ideas and thoughts of how the game could look like going forward. It's just a matter of putting that all together legally. Obviously we have the DOJ with oversight looking into that as well and making sure that we don't do anything improperly there, as well, but also making sure that all the players benefit from this as well as everyone who's involved. They want to make money as well. They want to make that return.

We're now into not just charitable endeavors, we're into a for-profit model. So we have to make returns.

Q. Would you say you're happy with the way things are going?

TIGER WOODS: Yes, I am.

Q. Do you feel like with where your body's at right now, getting the light on exemption into the Signature Events, that you feel like you're in a position where you can play more this season and next season in those events?

TIGER WOODS: Well, that was nice of them to do that. I told them, if I was going to get that exemption, I wasn't going to take away the last player's spot. If it happened to be -- let's hypothetically say there's 72 players in the field at each one of the Signature Events. If I want to play, I'll be the 73rd player. There will be an odd man and be a twosome out or whatever.

I'm not going to take another person's spot. Even though it's nice of them to do that and ask me to play more often and have that ability to play Signature Events, these guys have earned their spots, and I'm not going to take that spot away.

But if I can be included somehow, that would be great. It is nice to be able to be included, but I'm not going to take anyone's spot.

Q. Rory said, I think the word he used was "discomfort" was what he was feeling when he was standing over the putt on the 16th hole at the U.S. Open. Just wondering, as someone

who's been in the lead late at a lot of tournaments, have you ever experienced that emotion?

TIGER WOODS: Yeah, lots of times. There's a lot of times I felt discomfort. Yes, absolutely. Nervous, shaky, uncomfortable, yeah, all of it. That's part of it. That's why you love it. That's why we practice, to build up ourselves in that one uncomfortable situation and bury it.

Q. How do you handle that?

TIGER WOODS: Practice. I work hard at it, and I've done it my entire life. I've worked hard to put myself there.

You look at the highlights, I've missed plenty of putts. I've missed plenty of shots. Just like Jordan, when they said how many shots have you taken? You see all the game-winning shots, but also he's missed a ton of game-winning shots too. The thing is you still take the game-winning shot, and I still want the last putt.

Q. Wanted to follow real quickly. In a perfect world, how many Signature Events would you like to play next year?

TIGER WOODS: I don't know because I haven't looked at the schedule. I don't know how many there are going to be. I don't know what the cadence is going to be next year anyways. Once I find out in a few months, you'll be the first to know.

Q. I wanted to ask you too, what do you consider the most crushing loss you've had in your career? And how long did it take you to process it?

TIGER WOODS: Probably the hardest loss to get over was the Y.E. Yang loss because I had the lead. I had never lost a major championship while leading. That was the first.

That took a little bit of time to get over that because I had made some pretty stupid mistakes in the middle part of the round. I made a huge rally at the end, but too late. I made too many mistakes in the middle. You can't afford to make the mistakes that I made and expect to win tournaments. I know better than that.

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