

The 152nd Open

Mixed Zone

Thursday, 18 July 2024

Michael Hendry



Q. How did it feel to be out there after everything you've gone through in the last?

MICHAEL HENDRY: It was incredible. Words can't really describe how grateful I am, not only to the R&A, but to all of the doctors and nurses who have helped me over the last 12 months. It was extremely special. This is one thing that really got me through my recovery. To finally be here and teeing it up was extremely special.

Q. Can you describe your feelings on the 1st tee.

MICHAEL HENDRY: Nervous, like you always are, I suppose, at the beginning of an Open Championship. Also quite emotional.

Like I said, this was a key to my recovery, knowing that I could play this if I got healthy. So I dedicated myself as much as I could, did as much as was in my control to get healthy.

I feel like this week hopefully will draw a line through that part of my life, and I can move on.

Q. How did you find it playing out there?

MICHAEL HENDRY: It was tricky. Particularly the first sort of six or seven holes. The wind direction changed completely. So you're trying to figure out what club to hit off each tee to put yourself in position.

The wind is -- for me anyway, it's always surprisingly strong when you get up here and playing on links golf. So it took me a little while to sort of figure out how the ball was flying in that heavy wind. It took probably six or seven holes to feel like I was in the tournament to be honest.

Then the last 10 or 11 holes played pretty well.

Q. Back nine is generally more difficult here. I know the wind is not blowing the way it usually is right now. How do you feel about the way you played the back? Obviously the scores were better there.

MICHAEL HENDRY: Yeah, it was solid. It wasn't terrible on the front nine either. I feel like I missed probably two or three

putts, three inches short in the jaws as well. It could have been quite a solid round of golf. Just got off to a bit of a slow start.

I suppose, once I got over the adrenaline and the emotion of the situation, managed to settle into my work and played pretty well.

Q. I assume you've reflected a lot leading into this week and during this week. I wonder during the round do you reflect or do you have to try to block that out and concentrate on what's in front of you?

MICHAEL HENDRY: I believe that was the issue the first six or seven holes today. It was a mixture of too much reminiscing, too many thoughts about, geez, I'm actually here, I'm actually doing this.

I suppose it just took a few holes to get through that. Once I got through that, I managed to sort of just get myself back into tournament mode and played pretty well.

Q. How special was it to have your family out on the course today?

MICHAEL HENDRY: Yeah, very special. I really hoped I was going to be healthy enough to play so I could bring them over. I'm no spring chicken anymore, and playing on the Japan Tour, we don't get that many opportunities to get into major events.

This could very well be my last British Open. So having a young family, and my girls are now just at the age where they can kind of understand what Dad does, and to have them here and experiencing The Open, which is the biggest, the oldest, the best golf tournament of the lot, I think it gives them a really cool perspective as to what Dad does. So it's really cool.

Q. Just going back to last year obviously, you played so well in Hong Kong to qualify for Royal Liverpool, and then obviously to be handed that blow. What was the two or three-week period like from the high to the low?

MICHAEL HENDRY: It was difficult. Obviously there was a period there where I was feeling pretty unwell, but I didn't really think much of it. I thought maybe I just had a bad fever or bad flu.



Thankfully, it wasn't COVID because I think, if I'd been testing positive for COVID that was making me ill, obviously leukemia kind of sits in the background and you'll get sick and it will make you feel awful because you can't -- your immune system simply won't fight it.

I'm kind of thankful it wasn't COVID because, if it was COVID, I may have just brushed it off and not gone to the doctor. I went to the doctor, and he said go to the hospital, get some tests. I went to the hospital on Tuesday, the 11th, and I didn't come out for 6 1/2 weeks. I didn't go home.

It was really difficult. Lost a lot of weight. And I'd been playing so well. I'd won on the Australasian Tour earlier in the year. I'd had a solid finish in the New Zealand Open, even the week before I got diagnosed in Japan, which was the week after Hong Kong, I had like an 11th. So I was playing pretty solid.

Throughout the whole time, feeling a little bit rough obviously, and I just got this cold, and it just knocked me for six, and life changed.

Q. Were there any points over the last 12 months where you thought you wouldn't play again? And how has the golf community and the fraternity and your fellow pros been, and how have they helped you as well?

MICHAEL HENDRY: At no point did I think I wouldn't play golf again. I'd made my mind up that, even if I was sick, if I was healthy enough to play, I was going to try and play.

I decided early on in the piece that I was going to try to dictate my life rather than this dictating my life. I had no doubt that I would get back. To the level, I wasn't sure.

It was a long road back. I mean, I lost a lot of weight, 14 kilogrammes in three weeks, and it was a long road back. I'm super grateful for my support team and getting me back to at least some kind of physical capabilities to play at a decent level.

It's been amazing. I've won in Japan not long ago, just over a month ago. So I was pretty surprised how quickly my game came back to me.

I'd kept it reasonably quiet early on, but the golfing fraternity is pretty small. Word got round pretty quickly. I just remember the first couple weeks being in hospital, my phone just going berserk with messages from all over the world from people I knew well, people I'd never met within the golfing world, send can messages of well wishes. No, it's great.

We're all competitors, but we spend so much time together. At the end of the day, most of us want the best for each other. It really came through when I got sick. It was very humbling.

Q. Who was the biggest name to send you a message?

MICHAEL HENDRY: Probably Stevie Williams is a pretty big name. He's got a lot to do with New Zealand golf. Two days in, Steve was on the e-mail. Obviously through Steve, Scotty was sending messages as well. All the Aussie boys, Japanese players as well. Yeah, just lots of the guys.

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