

The 153rd Open

Mixed Zone

Thursday, 17 July 2025

Darren Clarke



Q. Darren, you're still smiling.

DARREN CLARKE: I played really nicely and practised and everything was good. Then today just didn't quite have it. That was it.

Q. Quite a solid front nine, though.

DARREN CLARKE: You'd think I've never played here before, some of the places I hit it to. That's frustrating. I know you can't hit it short of the 3rd. I know you can't hit it right on 7. I just hit it a few places that you cannot hit it here. I know better. Unfortunately, I just did.

Then I couldn't really borrow a putt to go with it. It was a tricky day, could have been worse. Just got to play better tomorrow.

Q. That nice chip-in on 17?

DARREN CLARKE: Of course. Something went my way, which was nice. You don't hole ones like that too often. So that was pretty cool. I had a really enjoyable day, just disappointed with the score obviously.

Q. The 1st, I have to take you back to that drive off the 1st because it was perfect.

DARREN CLARKE: It was. The boys -- I seen everybody else going with iron, leaving themselves 4-iron or something like that into the green. I said, I'm not doing that. Driver this time. Wasn't like the last time whenever I wanted a bigger hit. Driver this time was because I wanted to get it down there as far as could, so I did. Then the other two boys who hit irons hit it in closer than me anyway. So maybe they know more than I do.

Q. The mindset overall, what's the right attitude when you show up in a place like this with these conditions?

DARREN CLARKE: It's going to be hard. You know it's going to be hard. It's going to be tricky. It's going to be difficult. You're going to get a few funny bounces, but you've just got to go with it. On a day like today, when the rain starts coming in and getting heavier, you've really got to have your feel around the greens because people are going to miss greens, and you've

got to knock the putts in.

There's so much slope on these greens that, if you do miss them, it takes a helluva shot to get it within a couple of feet. You're going to have the 5-, 6-footers a lot. You've got to be solid with those. It's tricky out there when the breeze is blowing and raining a bit. Those are tough ones to keep on knocking in. That's what you've got to do. Swings.

Q. Padraig hit the opening tee shot this morning; you might have heard a couple of roars there.

DARREN CLARKE: I did. He made 3, didn't he? I told him. I told him the other day, I made 3, so you should do the same. And he did.

Q. He went in with two 3-irons this time.

DARREN CLARKE: Did he? Yeah, I didn't fancy that one.

Q. When he asked to do it, did he approach you for any advice?

DARREN CLARKE: No. We did speak about it a couple of weeks ago at the U.S. Senior Open where he won. We spoke about it, but he doesn't need my advice in any way, shape or form.

Q. He did say that was one of the most emotional moments he's had. Do you agree with that?

DARREN CLARKE: Oh, 100 per cent. It's one of those sorts of things where, if you haven't played a Ryder Cup, you don't understand what it's all about until you do something like that. It's a huge honour to hit the opening tee shot, especially for somebody like Padraig in Ireland. As much as I told him he was going to feel nervous and feel a bit of pressure when he walked down the steps, he probably didn't believe me, knowing Padraig like I do.

But I guess whenever he got there and got on the tee, oh, this is pretty big. So I'm glad to hear he was emotional about it.

Q. Darren, what's it been like this year for your first round in comparison to 2019, the tournament and the supporters in general. It's bigger and better, isn't it?



DARREN CLARKE: Oh, it is bigger and better. The whole build-out for the event is bigger and better. It's getting better every year, The Open Championship. It's great to see. We had bad weather last time. Looks like we're going to have iffy weather again. The fans are still going to come and watch.

From a personal point of view, they were really good to me. They were shouting and roaring at me and encouraging me even when I was struggling a bit on the back nine there.

It's great to see so many people out there. It's just a shame we got some of this inclement weather. That's links golf. That's what happens.

Q. Speaking of links golf, the Women's Open is going to Royal Porthcawl in Wales. What do you think of that course?

DARREN CLARKE: I hit a lot of shots there the last time we played a few years ago. It's a brilliant golf course. It's a great, fair test of golf. It's not quite as good as Royal Portrush, but it's a really good golf course, and I'm sure the ladies will really enjoy it.

Q. Any advice to them?

DARREN CLARKE: Same thing with most links. Prepare yourself. You're going to get bumps and bounces. It's going to go sideways a few times. Their fairways are a little bit more undulating than we have here. They will get a few more funky bounces. That's links golf. You've got to use the ground in your favor at times and know where you can land and know where you can't.

Q. Darren, you've only played one round, but when you look at how the course is playing and the weather that's forecast, in your head, is there a score that players need to get to?

DARREN CLARKE: I'm not clever enough to get ahead of myself to come up with a score. It just depends. We had almost perfect conditions there on the front nine this morning when the holes were playing downwind. It was pretty straightforward. Pretty not that difficult, to be honest.

On the back nine when the rain come in, the holes turned brutal. I hit a drive there as good as I could possibly hit it down 18 into the breeze, and I only hit it like 260, and that's as good as I could get it. That's the conditions. That's the way they go. You take that into account, a bit of rain, the ball shoots off, you never know what's going to happen on links.

What's the leading score? 4-under. Those are good scores. Again, as I said, the conditions were there this morning for the front nine that you could get something going. 4-under is

really, really good scoring. We shall see. I'm sure -- what did Shane win with last time? 15-under last time? It just depends what the weather does.

Q. You just said about not getting home much, Darren. How much have you enjoyed being home? It's a rare thing these days.

DARREN CLARKE: It's been brilliant. I really enjoyed it. I've been holding out for two weeks. I've been down here practising a lot, hitting putts, doing everything. Coming in here shooting 4-over, maybe I should have spent more time in the Harbour Bar than out here.

It's great. I love getting home. It's one of those things. Unfortunately, I'm so busy now over in the States, it's tough for me to get home as much as I want.

Q. Any tossed iron or maybe a bearing out of the odd --

DARREN CLARKE: I don't know. I've just shot 4-over. I'm a good 4-over because I birdied 17. I don't know, I'll see. As I said, all week I've hit the ball really well in practice. I've putted nicely, done everything nicely. Today I didn't quite have it, simple as that.

Q. I didn't mean you're past it. Just ceremonial, but you're far from that.

DARREN CLARKE: No, you're cool. It was me that said it last year that Troon may have been the last one. I made the cut and played nicely. All this week I've been playing nicely. I played nicely in the Champions Tour all year.

It's one of those things where if I got to the stage I didn't have a chance of making the cut or have a half decent week, I wouldn't play. I wouldn't want to feel I was taking a spot away from a young, maybe more deserving kid. That's maybe me 35 years ago or whatever.

If I think I can still compete, fortunately I've earned the right to still play for another four of them if I want to. If I don't think I could put on and play half decent, I wouldn't do it. We shall see.

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