

# Curtis Cup

GB&I Press Conference (Zoom)

Monday, 9 August 2021

**Elaine Ratcliffe**

**Annabell Fuller**

**Hannah Darling**



OLIVIA McMILLAN: I want to say welcome to everybody and thank you so much for joining us for this call ahead of the 41st Curtis Cup. Obviously it's a very exciting day with the GB&I being announced. We are joined today by Elaine Ratcliffe, who is the captain of the team, as well as Annabell Fuller, and hopefully Hannah Darling if she gets her wi-fi issues sorted.

Elaine, I'll ask for your general overview and thoughts on the GB&I team that you've named today.

ELAINE RATCLIFFE: Delighted with the eight and two travelling reserves that we've selected. Yeah, just over the moon with the players that we've got.

Obviously it's been a trying year or so with the postponement, but it has allowed for some players to come through who have been playing really well, so really excited about those that have made the team and the prospect of the match happening now in two weeks because now for the first time it feels very real. Fortunate to have a lot of winners on the team, and we're hoping that we can continue that momentum.

OLIVIA McMILLAN: Annabell, I'll come to you. If you can just give us your reactions to receiving the call this morning letting you know that you've made the team.

ANNABELL FULLER: Yeah, I mean, it was so exciting to kind of see Elaine calling me, and it was kind of catch-up again. I think it was mostly anticipation so long over the whole summer and we did all the trainings and we felt like a team. It's like so much excitement now that it's confirmed.

OLIVIA McMILLAN: I believe this will be your second time making the Curtis Cup team. Do you feel like you're going to bring a little bit of experience to the team this year?

ANNABELL FULLER: I'm hoping to. I know kind of what

the USA team bring, and I think we're definitely capable of being better and beating them and kind of being one kind of step further than them, and I think we need to bring a strong drive, and I think we can do it.

OLIVIA McMILLAN: Elaine, looking at some of the past Curtis Cup matches, the GB&I team have had a lot of success on home soil. Is that something that you'll really bring to the team to try and motivate them for the match this year?

ELAINE RATCLIFFE: Yes, definitely. Obviously being at home, we will still get some support this year, which will be brilliant, and we have been to Conwy, and we've visited the course. We've had the opportunity, some of it misfortune of the fact Ayano (phonetic) being postponed and then also the European Individual moving, and we took both of those opportunities and went and played Conwy. The fact that we now know the course better than we did and we have a few new people that have joined the squad and are on the team, it feels like we do have home advantage, and I would be absolutely delighted to continue the run of success that previous captains and previous teams have had.

**Q. Can you just talk about the qualities that you feel both Louise and Hannah are going to bring to your team at Conwy, please?**

ELAINE RATCLIFFE: Yes, both of them hit it a long way. They both strike the ball beautifully. Both have won this season, and both are great team players. They do everything they do as well as they can, and I'm just delighted that they are playing for us rather than against us, that's for sure.

Louise obviously came through at the British but played the consistently best golf I say of anybody there that week. Just was very steady and got a wonderful win. We've continued to see her grow and play in the European team and also at Conwy, and she's continued to play some good golf.

Hannah is just Hannah. Hannah is a tremendous golfer, and she's having got exams out of the way, got her highers out of the way, has just had a great season, considering

everything she's been up against. Both a credit to golf, credit to Scotland and just delighted to have both of them playing for us, so it's wonderful.

**Q. Annabell, I think you played Hannah in the Women's Home Internationals last week. Do you feel she'll handle the Curtis Cup occasion?**

ANNABELL FULLER: One hundred percent. I've played with Hannah multiple times and I was lucky enough to be partnered with her at the Junior Solheim Cup, as well, a couple years ago, and I think she's the kind of player that has a lot of drive, which we're going to need.

OLIVIA McMILLAN: Great timing there from Hannah. I can see she's managed to join us on the call. Thank you so much for your time. Can I ask you what it means to have been named on the GB&I team for the Curtis Cup.

HANNAH DARLING: Yeah, it's a great honour. It's been something I've worked towards and dreamed of for quite a long time. I think when you're a young player in Britain, it's obviously something you strive for. Not many people get to achieve it, and you look at the people that do, they go on to do some great things. So yeah, I'm very lucky and very, yeah, honoured to be part of such a great team, as well.

**Q. Just a question for the captain and any of the players who might like to answer. Just wondering what qualities Lauren Walsh and Annabel Wilson bring to your team.**

ELAINE RATCLIFFE: Yes, Lauren is a wonderful, consistent player. She strikes the ball well but is just very much a consistently good golfer. You see that in the results that she's had over in the States, and I think has just grown hugely over the last couple of years being over in America and building on everything that she had already before she went there.

Annabel Wilson, again, we're blessed with a lot of good ball strikers, and ball strikers don't always earn you money. There's many ways of playing the game, but she strikes the ball beautifully, hits it a good distance, and again, has some great form from America but also has experience going back a number of years, having broke through when she was incredibly young, doing what she did at the World Team.

Yeah, it's been lovely. She's perhaps had a couple of quieter years because of her studying for her A levels, but she seems to have really come back being at UCLA, come back stronger, and is just another good golfer really. She does a lot of things well.

Yeah, I think the other thing is they're both great team players, as well.

**Q. Hannah, obviously the postponement of the Curtis Cup last year was obviously a bit of a blow, but do you think the delay has possibly helped you a little bit develop more as a player as well over the last 12 months or so?**

HANNAH DARLING: Yeah, definitely. I think for me, obviously Curtis Cup was a goal last year, but I didn't feel like I really handled that very well. The first few events before COVID hit I didn't feel like I'd played as well as I probably could have, so this was almost a second go for me and a second time to prove myself, I guess, and I've just really tried to just do what I do and stick to my process and not get too ahead of myself this year, which I feel pretty happy with how I've performed over the last kind of run of events.

So yeah, I think it's almost helped the team develop a bit more, as well. You look at a few players have obviously turned pro, but the players that are in our team, we've got Louise who won the British a few weeks ago and like a few other players have done really well at Home Internationals last week, and you've obviously got four English players who were on the team when they won Europeans. So yeah, it just builds on that and brings a lot of confidence to our team.

**Q. Elaine, obviously you were a Curtis Cup player back in '96 was it?**

ELAINE RATCLIFFE: Yeah, I know, back in the day.

**Q. Back in the day, yes. Is it going to be strange, a bit more kind of nervous standing on the sidelines when you can't influence much really? It's obviously a new role that you're going to quite obviously embrace.**

ELAINE RATCLIFFE: Yes, I -- without a shadow of a doubt I'm going to be nervous. I can only say how I felt this morning. I wasn't aware how I would feel. But yeah, I think -- yeah, I remember the '96 Curtis Cup and how nervous I was then, and I think like most things, similar to what Hannah has just said, having done it once and done other things, I won't be as nervous, but I think I will still be nervous.

However, I've got a lovely feeling that we've been to Conwy, we've put some hard work in, and the manner in which the team are playing at the moment, I think it'll be a calmness there because I know they can play, and I know that they can play to the standard in which you need to play to win the Curtis Cup.

So as much as I will be nervous, there will be a calmness there because of just experience now, which I definitely didn't have in '96 when I played. Having captained a few more teams and things, always will be nervous, and I think this will be the most nervous one I've ever done, but at the same time I do feel there will be a lovely calmness there, as well, because these are the girls who's going to get the points, not me, and I know they can. Really, really looking forward to it and excited about the challenge ahead.

**Q. Hannah, four years ago you were out in Des Moines as part of sort of a Junior-Senior Solheim Cup. How much a part has that experience been in the jump that you've made over the past four years?**

HANNAH DARLING: Yeah, it's been -- yeah, like that was a long time ago, and I do feel like I was quite young then and obviously didn't have as much experience as I do now. But it has been a very good and probably long journey since then, and from that point in Des Moines, I've seen the Junior Solheim Cup team and then built on that and thought that's where I need to get to, to then play the Junior Solheim a few years ago. Looking at the pros then, I could then build on that again and say, right, well, that's where I need to try and get my game to, which has obviously helped me make this team.

It's always the experiences and seeing people and knowing where your game needs to get to, but yeah, ever everything that's happened over the last years has helped me and given me more experience and taught me how to deal with certain situations that ultimately have helped me make this team, as well.

**Q. I would imagine Broomieknowe Golf Club is now going to be pretty quiet at the end of August with a lot of them heading down to Conwy?**

HANNAH DARLING: Yeah, I think a few of them will try and get down, but the ladies section, they all kind of came to Junior Solheim, so it would be really nice to see them again down at Conwy, but even if they can't make it down, the amount of support that they give me, we have a Facebook page or whatever for the members, and it's pretty hectic at the moment. They're all messaging in with good luck and congratulations.

Even if they don't make it there, I'll still kind of know they're supporting me from afar.

OLIVIA McMILLAN: We've obviously heard the reaction from Hannah about her friends and family. What has the support been like for you since you've made the team?

ANNABELL FULLER: I think like everybody at my golf club, the Royal Hampton Club, they've been like messaging me all morning, like congrats, well done, this is an amazing achievement. Royal Hampton have supported me during my whole golfing career and they've seen me start in tiny small events to now being here, and I think they've showed the support my whole life, and especially now when I have big achievements like this, they're just really happy for me, as well.

OLIVIA McMILLAN: Elaine mentioned that you've all had a look at Conwy. Was that the players, as well? Annabell, have you been to Conwy?

ANNABELL FULLER: Yeah, we had a couple of trainings there. We were able to play a couple rounds, which was really nice.

OLIVIA McMILLAN: Can you give us your thoughts on the course and what we can all maybe expect when we come out for the Curtis Cup?

ANNABELL FULLER: I think the course is playing, for me at least, pretty long. I know that Hannah hits it a little bit past me, I'm a little bit shorter than her, but I think depending on the weather conditions, as well, that week, that will affect the course. But it's playing like a links course, and depending if the wind is a certain direction the course can play a different format.

I think there's a lot of par-3s where you can attack them or you can also lose shots on because there's a couple long ones. But I think it's a pretty good match play course, and I think we might - I dare say this - have the upper hand, knowing the links courses and having played practice rounds there.

OLIVIA McMILLAN: I just want to say thank you so much to the three of you for giving us your time today. We're all very excited for you and we're all very much looking forward to watching the 41st Curtis Cup match in just a couple of weeks now.

ELAINE RATCLIFFE: Thank you very much for the questions, and we're excited about playing it. It feels a long time coming, but now it's great that it's only weeks away, so looking forward to it hugely.

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