

Curtis Cup

Press Conference

Wednesday, 25 August 2021

Team GB&I

Elaine Ratcliffe

Lauren Walsh

Louise Duncan



CURTIS CUP
Conwy 2021

THE MODERATOR: Good afternoon, everyone. We'll make a start to our opening preview press conference of the 41st Curtis Cup match. I'm delighted to be joined this afternoon by Elaine Ratcliffe, the captain of the GB&I team, and Lauren Walsh and Louise Duncan, who play for GB&I this week. Elaine, can you sum up how you feel the preparations have gone for you for the match and what the mood in the team is?

ELAINE RATCLIFFE: Yeah, it's been a great week. We've had fantastic weather. I think we came prepared for the worst, but Wales weather has been really kind so far. I think once we got the PCR testing out of the way, Sunday morning we got all the good news that everyone is negative. It's been a great week since then. The bonus was when the three that played at The Open joined us on Monday night.

It's like a long but a short week. It's a week of two halves. We had a couple of days without the three who played in The Open, and we had the last two days with the three and the whole team. I think because of that, it's actually felt shorter. The worry is getting here too early, but because we had that little bit disjointed, it feels like the week has gone quickly.

It's been great. Today having this weather, having family here, and seeing people out on the golf course, it's really brought us home to where we are and raised the excitement levels, that's for sure.

THE MODERATOR: It's nice to feel the excitement is building. Lauren and Louise, to you guys, you both played extremely well at Carnoustie at the AIG Women's Open. How much confidence does that give you and how much momentum coming in here? Let me start with you, Louise.

LOUISE DUNCAN: Both Lauren and I made the cut, which is great. We were up against the best players in the world.

Making the cut was huge. It's going to bring a lot of (indiscernible) obviously. Hopefully, brings about buzz as well. The atmosphere is good. Yeah, I thoroughly enjoyed it, it was nice with all the media and the crowds.

Overall, it's going to be a good week.

THE MODERATOR: Lauren, again, a look at your performance at Carnoustie as well. Are you looking forward to continuing this week?

LAUREN WALSH: I think definitely, as Louise said, we compete with the best players in the world. Like that (indiscernible). Carnoustie's a tough golf course. If you can play well around there, you can play well anywhere. Yeah, we're lucky. The course is just really, really good right now. Yeah, as Louise said, we're all positive and excited to compete.

THE MODERATOR: With that, we'll take some questions.

Q. Is there anything that we should learn from the fact that you brought these two in together?

ELAINE RATCLIFFE: If I say yes, if I say no. I think the two girls that are sitting beside me here are here because of how well they did last week, and I think everybody wants to know more about who they are, having seen them play some wonderful golf last week.

I'm really blessed to have a team of eight and two travelling reserves. I have some crackings foursomes pairings and some other cracking four-ball pairings. I think with the situation of COVID, where we're probably interchangeable as well because of the people they are and the golf they play. They are sitting there, and whatever I say, you can read into whichever one, so I'm saying nothing. They're looking mighty suspicious (Laughter).

I think Martin's made the announcement of 4:30 at the opening ceremony, the team is in for tomorrow morning.

Q. Louise, obviously it's been a fantastic couple of months for you. 31st in the ranking, and you were 370th going into the Women's Amateur. Coming off a

top-ten finish at Carnoustie. Is that added pressure to perform this week? Obviously, you performed at the top level in these massive events in the last weeks.

LOUISE DUNCAN: I'm really thrilled to enter match play. Yeah, it's great to end up 31st from 370th to start the season. Yeah, it's great but it's really irrelevant. At the end of the day, we play the course, and that's really all we have to do. As I said, it's great to move on. Just play the course and just try our best.

Q. Do you feel that match play, obviously the changes to the match play format, do you feel that experience is going to help you as well?

LOUISE DUNCAN: Definitely. Playing against good players in match play to get through to the final, that gave me a lot of experience playing the match play. We didn't have any last year due to COVID, so it's been a while since we've played match play golf. (Indiscernible). Most of us played there. We've all got really good experience this year, and we're all in top form.

Q. Louise and Lauren, you both played the AIG Women's Open last week, and you were in amongst some really talented players, Georgia Hall you played with, Catriona Matthew. Anyone that you spoke to last week about playing in the Curtis Cup?

LAUREN WALSH: Yeah, I played a practice round with Lexi Thompson. She's the top from the American perspective. She was just saying that the Curtis Cup was definitely one of the highlights of her career, a week she looks back and has very fond memories of. Just hearing that made me excited. I was already excited to come down. You hear that from her.

Yeah, like this team golf, it's great. Last week we were playing as individuals, and joining the team now, it's such a good atmosphere with the team. It's just going to be a lot of fun. Lexi looked back on this week with a lot of great memories.

LOUISE DUNCAN: I'm just basically going to repeat that. Catriona, Georgia, they all said the same thing. They said it was the best week that we could have. They had great memories and great fans from it. Yeah, really looking forward to the week and hopefully come in with the win as well. That would be great.

THE MODERATOR: One last question from me, Elaine. Is there anything in particular you've asked the players to concentrate on this week? Obviously, you want everyone to make the most of this match. Is there anything you're asking players to focus on?

ELAINE RATCLIFFE: No, there's nothing in particular. We've fortunately been here twice before and done a lot of work. We knew the Women's Open was the week before, and I also knew the team would make it to final qualifying. I, in my worst-case scenario, saw Susan and I have having breakfast on Sunday morning because I know the team are just good golfers.

So we did a lot of work before. This week has been getting out, getting to know the course and the conditions at the moment. It has changed a little bit, the greens are rolling beautifully now. I feel we did a little work before we got here. So we've only really looked at the course pairings and just checked out the course.

They're all individual golfers. We're bringing them together as a team. So this week, these last few days have been doing what they need to do as individuals. Each person has different demands and different needs to be ready for tomorrow. Some have played the back nine today. Some have done things differently, and I believe you have to allow people to do that.

We've done as much as we can together for three days, and today is all about the final preparation. This is it. We're ready to go. How long we've been waiting for it to happen, and then when it comes, my God, it goes quickly. I think anything I'm going to ask them to do is just take some rest and enjoy it. The last four days has gone quickly, so I'm sure the next three will as well.

That would be the only thing I'd like them to do.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you for your time this afternoon.

Q. If I could ask both of you, what do you make of the course?

LAUREN WALSH: Yeah, the course is good. We played a couple times before, as Elaine said. We've been down the past couple months. It's playing actually a quite bit different. Before it was a wee bit burnt out because of the weather. No, it's lush, and it's a little bit soft.

Then, as Elaine said, the greens are running really, really pure just now. I think the course is definitely -- hit fairways and greens. That's all we can really do, and that's what we're going to strive for.

Q. (Inaudible.)

LAUREN WALSH: Definitely. To be fair, we've been here a number of times, and all the members and everyone

around here have been very supportive of Team GB&I, which has been great for us as a team. It's been welcoming. It's a great venue to come to. We're all delighted to come here.

Q. Just ask Louise, first of all, whether she's been home yet, and is her excitement level still high after the weekend?

LOUISE DUNCAN: Yeah, went home Sunday night just after The Open. Then straight here Monday morning. Up here last week and then starting tomorrow. Yeah, can't wait. Everyone's really excited.

Q. Obviously, it's very different this week in a team environment. Is that going to take some getting used to, or can you slot into that no problem given your experience in general amateur team events?

LOUISE DUNCAN: Yeah, it's quite easy to come into this team because everyone gets on well and we all know each other. We all play a lot of golf with each other as well. We all get along. So it's very easy to come into this environment. It's not that much different. It's just a golf course.

LAUREN WALSH: It's a golf course, yeah.

Q. Louise, what kind of reception did you get from the rest of the girls? Were you carried in on a sedan chair, or was it all very low key?

LOUISE DUNCAN: There was no chairs about. Everyone was excited for me, gave me hugs, fist bumps and whatever. It was great to come into this environment.

Q. Having come off the back, obviously, of such a big event and the attention, is it quite good actually, it goes straight into kind of a very big event in the amateur front, as well, just to keep that kind of adrenaline going?

LOUISE DUNCAN: Yeah, I think so. I think if we'd taken a week off or two weeks, we all would have played The Open and have maybe a wee lull, so keep the adrenaline going and the excitement level is high. It's been good. It will help carry us through the next few days.

Q. Your stature has obviously grown in the last few days. You can relish in possibly having a little bit of a target on your back as far as maybe some of the U.S. players are concerned?

LOUISE DUNCAN: Not entirely sure, to be honest. Might be a wee target on my back, but it doesn't really matter at

the end of the day. I'm just going to go out there and play some golf and play some good golf.

Q. One final one from me. A couple of years ago when things weren't going too well, would you envisage this, Women's Amateur champion, top ten at The Open, and now a Curtis Cup in the space of a few weeks?

LOUISE DUNCAN: No, that wasn't in the plan really. Wasn't in the crystal ball that I envisioned. It's been great. It's been a great season for me. To cap it off with Curtis Cup, it's been great. I couldn't have dreamt of it.

Q. I just wanted to ask Lauren, did Leona Maguire's call-up for the Solheim Cup give you all a bit of a boost at all? Were you speaking to them at all at The Open, and does what she's doing encourage you maybe to do something special yourself this week?

LAUREN WALSH: Yeah, I got to play nine holes with her one of the practice days, and seeing her do so well, like first Irish woman to make the Solheim Cup is definitely inspirational. Solheim Cup is definitely something that everyone can aspire to. That's the top of the professional game.

Yeah, it's great to see her doing so well. She's paved the path for Irish golf and ladies golf and even just she's come through the Curtis Cup. She played a number of these. So for us all on the team to kind of look at what she's doing now, yeah, it's been great.

Q. To follow up, any idea who you might be playing with yet? I know maybe pairings aren't set, but would Annabel somebody that you'd love to play with, or are you happy enough to play with anybody at all?

LAUREN WALSH: I think we have such a strong team, we all get along very well. So we're very lucky in the sense we have a lot of good pairings to put out there and a lot of kind of different pairings that we could have.

So I think the team's going to be announced later on around or in the opening ceremony, and we'll find out then.

Q. Hi, Elaine. I just wanted to ask you, obviously, it was a very one-sided result three years ago in America. Could you just talk about sort of the size of the task you think you might have this week and how confident you are that it will be a lot closer result this time.

ELAINE RATCLIFFE: I think every time you play America there is no doubt that you are playing against some of the best players in the world. So the task is always going to be

a tough one. We have only retained this ten times, so in some ways we are generally seen as the underdogs. However, the team that I have partly sitting beside me and back in the team room are all exceptionally good golfers.

They've all proven that they can play at a high standard. As far as I'm concerned, we will bring a match to America, and I feel we will come out the other end with the right amount of points, whether that be half a point more, one point, two points, three points more. We've certainly got golfers that can golf.

With the crowd, with the support that we've got, I think that they will be able to raise their game to a higher level. I don't know -- I mean, it sounds dreadful saying I'm pretty sure we can win in that I don't mean that at all. What I know is I know that we can golf and I know that we can play at a high standard. The girls do that, and we've got a very good chance to bring the trophy home.

Q. One for the girls first, please, and then one for Elaine. I want to just start with the girls. Carnoustie is a notoriously very difficult golf course, and you managed that very well. I'm just curious how you feel like that was a nice tune-up for Conwy and maybe helped you a little bit coming into this week. Just thoughts on that.

LAUREN WALSH: Yeah, definitely, Carnoustie is a difficult golf course. I think, if you can get it around Carnoustie, you can play well in a lot of places. I think for both me and Louise and Annabel too, who played in the Women's Open, it's definitely a big confidence boost coming into the week. Conwy here is in great condition. It's a really good golf course too.

Yeah, I think after playing well last week on such a difficult golf course, it definitely gives us a bit of a boost being out here. We're looking forward to it.

LOUISE DUNCAN: Yeah, I'd probably just say the same thing really. Carnoustie is a tough track. Everyone knows that. For us to go out against the best professionals in the world, it's a massive boost for us all. Gives us the belief that we can play well, can do well amongst such great players.

Q. How much time have you had at Conwy this week? How many looks have you gotten at the golf course? How comfortable are you there?

LOUISE DUNCAN: We both played here in 2016, a wee while ago, and then we both played a couple times in previous couple months, and then we got here Monday. So we've seen the course a relatively good amount of

times, and we know where we're going, and we know how to play it.

Q. I believe I read in the pre-championship notes, Elaine, that you had, as a Curtis Cup player yourself, you had defeated Sarah Ingram, which I like that little tidbit. Do you have much recollection from that match? If so, what do you remember?

ELAINE RATCLIFFE: That's a tough one. Yeah, that is a tough one. I feel dreadful. I don't have a lot of recollection. Well, I'm going to explain to the girls that what you find is when years pass, and we're talking decades have passed, the golf blends. However, what you do remember is the daft things you got up to and the things that you did.

I've had a message in -- my memory of Killarney is being in a buggy driving down 18 singing, and then in Minikahda, when I was over there, my huge memory being over there is just what a stunning golf course and how well we were treated by the American, by the USGA, and all the supporters and just what a tremendous experience it was.

A lot of the detail of the golf, it's sadly missing. So I don't know whether that's my age.

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