

AIG Women's Open

Press Conference

Wednesday, 18 August 2021

Catriona Matthew



OLIVIA McMILLAN: Delighted to be joined now by our 2009 champion, Catriona Matthew. Thank you so much for joining us here at the AIG Women's Open here at Carnoustie. How are you feeling this week, and what's the buzz been like around the championship?

CATRIONA MATTHEW: Yeah, feeling good. I think the main buzz is just how got golf course i. I think it's in fantastic shape this year. You know, the rough's thick but playable. You know you can get -- it's the kind of rough which is perfect because you can get flyers, it's unpredictable but you can still have a chance at the green. Like most links courses, it's keeping out of the bunkers off the tee will be crucial. And see what the wind does. I think it's completely opposite the four rounds of the tournament. You know the course will play completely different to what it has the last few days.

OLIVIA McMILLAN: Carnoustie is known as golf's greatest test. Do you feel like it will live up to that reputation this week?

CATRIONA MATTHEW: Yeah, I think so. Like links golf, it depends on the wind. I think it's not to be particularly windy perhaps the next two days but then the windiest day is Sunday. When that wind picks up, it's going to be a tough test. Even without the wind, it's a tricky test with positioning your tee shots and getting it on the greens.

OLIVIA McMILLAN: Aside from the course, obviously great to be back in Scotland as the Scottish champion of this event. What does it mean to have all the crowds coming back out to support everybody this week?

CATRIONA MATTHEW: I think it will be great to see some fans out there. Certainly in Europe, we haven't had that many fans in the last year and a half. It will be nice to play with some people out there watching you and cheering you on.

Q. How are you finding the course setup different than in 2011?

CATRIONA MATTHEW: I mean, I would say to be honest it's fairly similar. Do I remember much about -- I think I

believe someone said 17 perhaps played as a par 5 in 2011, and it's a par 4 this year. Apart from that I would say it's fairly similar. Maybe a couple of tees pushed back a little bit on a couple of the par 5s, but I can't say I noticed really a huge difference.

Q. Obviously a big week for Solheim Cup as well. Do you have like a bunch of spreadsheets going on for your six picks, and is this occupying a lot of head space as you try to compete in a major?

CATRIONA MATTHEW: Yeah, it's quite nice to get on the golf course and I can hopefully try and forget about it a little bit. Obviously it's on my mind and you're looking -- like you say, you're looking at players stats and how they have been doing. Obviously I have a few players I have my eye on this, week and it's going to be an interesting week and to be honest I'll be quite glad when it's all over and I can concentrate on the Solheim.

Q. How are you feeling compared to two years ago? Are you more relaxed with things? Is it quite similar?

CATRIONA MATTHEW: I would say it's fairly similar. It's always difficult making the picks, and I think that's the hardest bit is obviously the players are trying their hardest for two years to make that team. And unfortunately you can only pick 12, and you know there's going to be a few disappointed people on Sunday.

But I think that without a doubt is the hardest bit is telling those two or three players that they have not quite made it. You know, in a way, I'll be quite relieved when that's over.

But yeah, apart from that, I think the team is shaping up really well actually. We'll probably have a few probably new faces on the side but a lot of players are playing well and I'm confident. I think we're going to have a great team.

Q. Just confirmation, you pick the team on Sunday and it's announced on Monday or is it being announced on Sunday?

CATRIONA MATTHEW: I believe it's Monday, yeah.

Q. And just to this week, obviously one of your last outings was in the US women's Senior Open and you



gave a great account of yourself. How much of a step-up is it to come to Carnoustie and play in the Women's Open in terms of a test?

CATRIONA MATTHEW: Obviously it's a completely different golf course to Brooklawn, but it was nice to get under that pressure again and have the nerves jangling again. But obviously this is playing longer. The Senior Open played probably about 500 yards shorter.

I think on links courses, you get that run, and hopefully I can run my ball up closer to some of the other players.

Q. Your earliest memories of Carnoustie? Did you play here in your amateur days as well?

CATRIONA MATTHEW: Yeah, I remember I played Scottish Women's Amateur here, must have been maybe the early 90s, I remember the weather was awful. I think the first qualifying round I shot 79 and was the only person to break 80. That first week in May was usually pretty bad weather.

Q. Just wanted to ask you a question about Nelly Korda, her performances over the last couple of months, what have you made of them, and do you think she has the ability to become the dominant force in the women's golf, and if so, do you think that would be a good thing for the women's game?

CATRIONA MATTHEW: Yeah, she's obviously been very impressive the last few months. I think without a doubt, she's got that potential to be dominant. You know, she hits it long. Well, to be world No. 1 you have to do everything well. If she can keep that form going, I don't see why she couldn't be dominant.

I think it is good for women's golf to have a dominant player. You saw how Tiger elevated the PGA TOUR. If you have someone that becomes in a dominant, she start to be known by non-golfers, which then maybe encourages them to come and watch golf. So yeah, I think it would be a good thing.

Q. As an opposing Solheim Cup captain, do you have mixed feelings about that or do you feel she's great for that competition as well?

CATRIONA MATTHEW: I think it's great. For Solheim to have the world No. 1 player, it's a great thing and in match play, as we've seen in a lot of 18-hole events, anyone can beat anyone. Certainly all the pressure will be on her to beat our team.

Q. Can I ask you, this is a hugely important event for

women's golf. Is there an opportunity for someone this week to come from nowhere and force their way into your thoughts and give you a real tough decision to make on Sunday night?

CATRIONA MATTHEW: Absolutely. I mean, you saw Sophia last year just came out of nowhere and has then continued to play well after that. So yeah, I mean, there's always that possibility.

Q. For Kelsey McDonald this week, this is a very special week. She's hitting the opening tee shot tomorrow morning. That's special, isn't it? And what will she be feeling like come 6.30 tomorrow as she steps on to that first tee?

CATRIONA MATTHEW: Yeah, I think it will be very special. She obviously has played well the last couple of weeks, qualifying there at the Scottish. I think she'll be excited to hit the opening tee shot in your home country and a major, will be a great experience and I'm sure she'll love it.

Q. On fans being back again, 8,000 per day, that will be good, and a lot of them of course will be here to try and cheer yourself on and the other four Scottish girls competing this week.

CATRIONA MATTHEW: Yeah, I think it's great, it will be great to have people there. It's always nice to play at home and obviously as you say you get the home support. Be nice to see people out there. Hopefully not with their umbrellas.

Q. Hopefully not, too. And finally, do you feel under any pressure given you're defending Solheim Cup this time?

CATRIONA MATTHEW: I think on paper the Americans are always the stronger team but 18 holes match play anyone can win, so I'm sure we'll probably go in as the underdog, especially with it being an away game.

As I said earlier, I think we are going to have a great team, a real mixture of some experienced players and some new, younger exciting players. I'm really looking forward to it.

Q. Just a question on the Solheim Cup again. You haven't mentioned any names. Are you prepared to throw a few into the mix that you're looking at, who are contenders and who needs to impress you this week?

CATRIONA MATTHEW: I don't think I need to throw any out there. I think the players know themselves who they are. They don't me telling the media who they are.

Q. So that's a no?

CATRIONA MATTHEW: That's a no.

Q. Another Solheim question. How does six wild cards sound to you? Is that a blessing or a curse at this point?

CATRIONA MATTHEW: Do you know what, I don't think it's any more difficult than having in four picks. There will be probably four or five that play their way in and if you had four picks, there would be probably two or three that played their way in. It's always that last one or two spots that are up for grabs.

In that respect, I don't think it's really going to be any more difficult or any -- it will certainly still be stressful but it's always going to be down to that last one or two spots regardless of how many picks you have.

Q. Do you have a spreadsheet out which players that can mathematically qualify, or do you have a rough idea of what they need to do?

CATRIONA MATTHEW: No, I know what people have to do.

Q. You mention exciting young players earlier, and I know you've gotten to know young Hannah Darling quite well the last few years. Can you talk about her achievements in the recent weeks in the Girls' Amateur and getting picked for the Curtis Cup?

CATRIONA MATTHEW: It's a very exciting for her. That's her first big win -- well, obviously she won the St Rule. But the British Girls' is a big, prestigious win. Obviously getting in the Curtis Cup, another huge -- that's the pinnacle of amateur golf in Britain.

To get in those and then to be starting college just in the next couple of weeks, it's an exciting time and she's certainly got all talent and all the potential, and I would be quite surprised if she didn't do well to be honest.

Q. And other girls doing well, too, and for Scottish golf that must be quite pleasing?

CATRIONA MATTHEW: Yeah, it's really good. And I had a chance to play a practise round with Louise Duncan this week, another prospect. She was playing well, very excited and maybe a little bit nervous to be playing in her first pro event and her first major. I think it will be great preparation for the Curtis Cup coming up.

Obviously to have Louise win the British Amateur and hand in a win the girls, it's hopefully an exciting time for Scottish women's golf and we can get some more players out on Tour getting to the top.

OLIVIA McMILLAN: Catriona, thank you so much for your time today. We really appreciate it and wish you the best of luck in the AIG Women's Open.

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