

AIG Women's Open

Press Conference

Tuesday, 2 August 2022

Catriona Matthew



MIKE WOODCOCK: We'll make a start. Delighted to welcome to the interview room Catriona Matthew. Obviously a former champion in the AIG Women's Open and winning Solheim Cup Captain.

Catriona, can I start by thanking you for joining us, and by asking you how much it means playing in this event so close to home and at a place as historic as Muirfield.

CATRIONA MATTHEW: I think it's going to be a great experience. To come and have a chance to play Muirfield in a Women's Open, I think all the players will have watched the men play here over the years, and I think, too, they are delighted to have that opportunity that they are now able to come here and play their own Open here.

For me personally, obviously living along the road and growing up along road, I never would have imagine the ever playing a major so close to home.

MIKE WOODCOCK: You've been given the honour of hitting the first tee shot on Thursday morning. How much will that mean to you?

CATRIONA MATTHEW: Yeah, that will be great, actually. Perfect. Because there hopefully won't be too many people there.

No, obviously it's a great honour. I think it's something the R&A have started recently in the men's and ladies open. Obviously it's a huge honour when you're asked to do something like that.

Q. What do you remember from your first time visiting Muirfield?

CATRIONA MATTHEW: I think probably one of the first times was I remember I was a litter picker for one of The Opens here, and then I was actually a scorer a couple of times.

So I do remember it was horrific weather one of the times I was scoring, and then I was actually fortunate enough to be in John Cook's group the last day when Faldo won with 18 pars, and John Cook I think missed that little putt on 17.

So that's kind of the memories I have of here.

Q. A question a lot of people think of this week is: What does it actually mean it the women involved to play here?

CATRIONA MATTHEW: Yeah, I think it's great to come here. Obviously over the last probably ten years, we started going to all The Open venues that over the last 50, 60 years you've seen the men playing in, and I think that just elevates this championship and we are now going to courses that people are used to seeing The Open and the major on.

I think it's good for us.

Q. You're obviously aware that the backstory of the women members finally being admitted here, that process was ongoing but what were your thoughts? Did you think the initial vote when it was no that the chance was gone or were you hoping that eventually they would see sides?

CATRIONA MATTHEW: I mean, obviously with the initial vote, was obviously disappointing but I suppose that was quickly reversed, and obviously I think they are delighted now to have lady members. You know, I've got a couple of friends who are members.

Yeah, I mean, I think everything is always moving forward, and I think you just have to -- you know, they have now got women members who are allowed to come and play here. I think you just have to look forward rather than look backwards.

Golf, starting in Scotland, we had a lot more traditions perhaps; that we're just gradually moving with the times.

Q. At this stage in your career, to play here and hit that opening shot, where does that rank in terms of things you've done?

CATRIONA MATTHEW: Yeah, I think it will be great. Quite early, 6.30, but yeah, I think obviously I've been fortunate enough to win it, and you know, to play so close to home and obviously staying at home and hit the first tee shot, I think I'm with Louise (Duncan) and Sophia Schubert



who I don't know. Yeah, it will be fun.

Q. Sorry, I'm worried about the children. Who is cooking their breakfast?

CATRIONA MATTHEW: Pardon, sorry, I didn't hear that.

Q. Who is cooking the kid's breakfast then?

CATRIONA MATTHEW: I think they will just need to do their own. They are old enough now. Hopefully they will be coming out to watch at 6.30. That might be more of a challenge than breakfast.

Q. You played in the Pro-Am, in a wind like that, can you talk about the challenge, some of the more difficult holes, and would you hope the wind is going to be there for the four days or some of the four days?

CATRIONA MATTHEW: I think for me, my stage of career, probably need a little bit of wind for me.

I think this is the wind it's going to be for the week. I think obviously they were just saying, I think you have to try and do well those kind of first five holes. Certainly the front nine, I think in this wind, does play a little bit easier and the back nine you've got 12, 14, 15 are tough par 4s. I was hitting woods into I think all of them actually.

And then 17, you know, we are playing it pretty long, I would say, even it's downwind, but you do have a chance of getting there.

And 18 is no bargain. I had a wood in there as well. I think you've got to try and make your score in those first five holes, first nine holes, and then kind of hang on on the back nine.

Q. (Is the course still fair and reward good shots.)

CATRIONA MATTHEW: It's very fair, actually. It's not one of these ones where you tend to have too many -- it's not one of these ones where if you hit a shot down the middle of the fairway, you're still watching it thinking, oh, is it going to kick into a bunker.

I think here, if you hit a good shot you're going to stay on the fairway and you're going to stay on the green. I think in that respect, it's probably quite fair.

And I think I like the way -- you go in all different directions. So you've got the wind; you've got it into; you've got it across; you've got it downwind. It's a challenge because you get the wind in every direction on the holes.

I think the par 3s are going to be tough. I don't think any of the par 3s have any bail-out area. You just have to stand up and hit a good shot on them. I think if you can get four pars on the par 3, and obviously try to make your score in the first few holes.

But a hole like 5, I hit a good drive and had maybe 5-, 6-iron in and pulled it a little and had no stance in the bunker, and then struggling to make par even though you're seeing those as birdie holes, they are still not easy downwind.

Q. You talked about elevating the status of the tournament. How does it differ from your first Open and what are your memories?

CATRIONA MATTHEW: First one, I remember I played as an amateur at Woburn at the Duke's Course. When I played it, it felt like the pinnacle, and that was the event to play in. It just felt -- it had big crowds and all the people I looked up to watching playing. Looking back, it still felt huge.

But now coming to these venues that like I said people have watched over the years and the same venues that the men are playing just putts it to another level.

Q. So how much can this inspire the next generation of girls coming through now; the fact that you get to play venues such as this?

CATRIONA MATTHEW: Yeah, hopefully it can. Hopefully any girls or boys who are golfing, they can see both the men and the women playing the same golf courses, which is good. Hopefully we will put on a good show here and inspire some people to take up the game.

Q. The money conversation surroundings men's golf, LIV Golf, has really been avoiding the women's game for much of the summer, and now it's slowly there are women's trickling in. Like, there are rumours like Greg Norman would want to start a LIV league. Curious if you have any opinion on that, and have you reached any conclusion on whether that would be good for the women's game?

CATRIONA MATTHEW: I think the women's game is probably global already. The LPGA the last ten or 15 years have gone, and they have tournaments, probably a third of their tour is around the world. I think that's always been Norman's beef is that it's not been a world tour, but for the ladies it is a world tour already.

I mean, that is a obviously question for people higher up for me but obviously the money in the men's game and LIV

Golf is ridiculous kind of at the moment. I think you just need to probably wait and see what happens in the next six months to a year.

Q. This is a much nicer question. I'm an American living in Scotland for the summer, and I've enjoyed your hometown, North Berwick, quite frankly. Curious, does it feel like a golf utopia can't being able to look out your back porch on the 18 hole, watching the qualifier there yesterday, what that looked like to you?

CATRIONA MATTHEW: I think it's like anything; when you live there, just kind of take it for granted. I was talking to the one of the reps, and he had been to Balmoral and Floors Castle and Hopetoun House, and I don't think I've been to any of them.

I think when something is there on your doorstep, you do take it for granted. I suppose that's where I've grown up, that's obviously that's what I'm always used to. Obviously we are fortunate to live there. It's a beautiful spot.

So I think it's not until you hear of someone like yourself coming and visiting and saying how wonderful it is that you maybe appreciate it a little more.

Q. What does it cost for a children's membership on the little course outside your window?

CATRIONA MATTHEW: For the kid's course, I think it's maybe ten pounds for the year. Certainly accessible.

MIKE WOODCOCK: Catriona, thank you for joining us, and all the best this week.

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