

AIG Women's Open

Press Conference

Tuesday, 20 August 2024

Gemma Dryburgh



Welcome to this afternoon's press conference with Scotland's Gemma Dryburgh.

First of all, how are you feeling about the prospect of playing a major championship in the Ai Women's Open here at St Andrews in front of a home crowd?

GEMMA DRYBURGH: Yeah, it doesn't really get any better than that really. You know it's what dreams are made of, really, playing in Scotland and at the Home of Golf. It's a place where I've come to a lot as a kid, and it's a pretty special place for anyone.

But growing up here -- (looking up) oh, there's the rain on. Yeah,.

It's a pretty special place, and you know, doesn't get more iconic than coming up or going down 1 and coming up 18 and playing 17 as well and gives you goosebumps, really.

MIKE WOODCOCK: Does it give extra motivation knowing you have the home support and they are egging you on, getting behind a fellow Scot?

GEMMA DRYBURGH: Yeah, definitely, I'll have a lot of friends and family out there as, well which, will be pretty special. But yeah, hopefully have lots of home crowd there. Yeah it will be nice to play in front of a home crowd because you don't get to do that too often.

MIKE WOODCOCK: How are preparations going this week? You managed to get going before the weather started. How are preparations going for you?

GEMMA DRYBURGH: Yeah, very good. Unfortunately missed the cut last week, but gave me an opportunity to come here a bit earlier. Played nine holes on Sunday, and then nine holes yesterday and just played 18 this morning.

So had a chance to see the course a few times, which is nice, and I'll play nine holes again tomorrow.

Q. The weather had an impact last week. I think you got on the wrong end. How did that contribute to you missing the cut? The weather is going to be a factor

again this week.

GEMMA DRYBURGH: Yeah. Early on Thursday morning last week, in the kind of worst of the conditions, I actually played quite well, considering. But I guess without the weather, I might have been a few more -- I think I was 1-over through that before we got taken off.

Yeah, it kind of swings in roundabouts. You get the good after the draw sometimes and not-so-good the other half. Hopefully I'll be lucky this week and if not just try and do your best with what you've got.

So obviously the wind looks like it's going to be even stronger this week. Hopefully it will stay dry. You know, if it's just the wind, then we'll hopefully be able to stay with that.

Q. How much did missing that cut sting, and how much of an inspiration is it to do better this week?

GEMMA DRYBURGH: Yeah, definitely, obviously been looking forward to these two weeks for a while now. Hopefully can spur me on for this week and a good motivation to do well this week.

Q. You have The Old Course Hotel on your hat. Talk about the room you've got this week, and how nice is it? Hopefully you're looking down on the course?

GEMMA DRYBURGH: I am actually looking at the car park unfortunately. But it's a great room. It's very comfortable. You know, it's a great location. Obviously can walk to the course. And.

Yeah, it's just a fantastic atmosphere there, and it's obviously iconic, as well. Nice breakfast at the top looking over the Old Course. So yeah, it's just a special place.

Q. What have you learned from your previous experiences in this event, and even going back to, did you attend this event as a spectator at any point?

GEMMA DRYBURGH: I did. I think I was here for a wedding, but we stayed here once. So we were here for that. And yeah, it was great growing up. Always watched it, obviously, and was lucky enough to come to that Open



and played quite a few tournaments in the local area as well.

So yeah, nice to have that, kind of those memories.

Q. Playing in this event, this is your fifth appearance. What have you learned from the previous four experiences?

GEMMA DRYBURGH: Yeah, I guess my first one was Troon a few years ago. We had a lot of wind there, as well, and weather, and then Muirfield and Carnoustie, so it's been amazing to play all these great venues. Played obviously Walton Heath was a bit different last year.

But you're just getting more and more used to playing in it every year. It's obviously the top of my priority every year to peak at this time, and obviously family and friends watching as well which makes it more special.

Q. Did you play St Rule Trophy?

GEMMA DRYBURGH: No, never did. It was always at a time when I was in school over in America, so just missed it.

Q. What's your reaction to being paired with Minjee Lee and Lexi Thompson?

GEMMA DRYBURGH: Oh, I didn't know that. That's great. Yeah, very excited for that. I played with both of them before. Enjoy playing with both of them. Yeah, it will be good fun. Hopefully some good crowds, as well.

Q. I just want to know, where you were back when Lorena won and when Stacy won here, as well?

GEMMA DRYBURGH: I would say when Lorena won, that's probably like one of the most inspirational moments from my childhood watching women's golf, apart from Catriona winning, as well, The Open.

But Lorena was a hero of mine growing up. I just loved way she played and her attitude and obviously when she won at St Andrews, it doesn't get more iconic than that, and obviously watching Stacy win as well.

Yeah, I was in the Dunvegan two weeks ago and I saw Stacy's photo right in front of the bar. It's just so cool to have those moments in women's golf, and I think women's golf going to more venues like St Andrews and Pebble Beach last year, just iconic places where people know all these shots and all these moments, and it's just great that we can make our own history.

Q. An obvious question but just being one of the Scots in the field, how long have you circled this week specifically in your calendar and your season?

GEMMA DRYBURGH: I think we probably knew it was coming here for maybe three or four years, I want to say. So yeah, pretty much since then.

Q. If the wind gets up this weekend, how much of an advantage could that be to yourself and the local players who used to play links in that condition?

GEMMA DRYBURGH: Yeah, I think it's definitely an advantage having played in that wind before, and my ball flight is still a bit lower anyway, as well. So that's obviously very helpful.

But everyone is so good out here, as well. If you strike it well, usually you'll play pretty decent in the wind as well but we'll try and take advantage of it.

Q. A bit of talk a couple years ago when the men's championship came here whether some of the par 4s were too easily accessible, taking the bunkers out of play. Wanted to get your thoughts on that.

GEMMA DRYBURGH: Yeah, not so much for us. I think this plays really well for us. 16 today -- the other day, we played it downwind, and I could actually carry those bunkers but today it was maybe in off the right. So a lot of kind of bailing out left into that rough.

So they are definitely more in play for us, and I think even 14 we were today having to go down to the 4th fairway, to the left there, to avoid Hell's Bunker. I think it will play a lot better for us. The men can obviously carry a lot of that trouble. I think it will be good.

Q. The prize fund in this event has increased significantly in recent years, and the R&A do a great job in certainly growing women's golf. How important is that, and how exciting is that for you to see that happen?

GEMMA DRYBURGH: Yeah, it's so important. Even since I played it and Troon was my first one, it's just increased exponentially. It's great to see and you know, every year the majors, all the tournaments, seems to be going up and up and up, which is great. I think women's golf definitely deserves that.

Q. The prize funds you play for, some say women's golf should still have bigger prize funds, but at the moment, do you feel you're lucky with what's on the table for women's golf?

GEMMA DRYBURGH: Yeah, obviously it's a good time to be playing women's golf. Obviously ten years or so ago, it wasn't quite as lucrative, but yeah I would agree that we obviously deserve even better. But yeah, very privileged to be playing in a good I am too.

Q. You mentioned the venues that you're getting to play these days, the Old Course, Pebble Beach and so on. There is one obvious one missing, and that is Augusta National. I know we have ANWA and that's fantastic, but do you ever still allow yourself to dream about the potential of a women's event there at some point down the line?

GEMMA DRYBURGH: I always think that we will get there eventually. I don't think it will be when I'm still playing; that's my prediction.

But it would be great to have a women's professional event there. It's obviously a nice step in the right direction that we've got an amateur event there now but yeah would I love to see a professional event there.

Q. You talked there about Lorena's win in 2007 and the fact that she was a hero of yours. Can you just elaborate on that, and do you have any specific memories of that championship and watching her win?

GEMMA DRYBURGH: Yeah, I mean, Sunningdale -- I remember going to watch that one, as well, and going to watch her there. I just loved her demeanor and how positive she was, and the way she played the game, as well. I was really sad when she ended up retiring. But she was obviously in a good point in her life.

But yeah, I just remember watching it and being like, that was kind of what I maybe wanted to do one day. You know, she was a great ambassador for the game, and yeah, just have that lasting memory of her on 18 winning.

Q. And having said that, that's what you want to do some day, must be cool to be here this week now doing it.

GEMMA DRYBURGH: Yeah, absolutely. Kind of when I was on that first tee the first day at the practise rounds, it's like, this is why you practise all those hours when it's freezing cold, raining outside. This is why it's all worth it for moments like these.

Just going to really enjoy this week as much as I can.

Q. How many times in your estimation have you played the Old Course, and where do you think you

can make an impact with your game? I know the weather conditions are going to change but are there holes out there for you that are more scorable than others?

GEMMA DRYBURGH: Funny enough I've actually only played the Old Course once. So yeah, still learning it. Getting used to it and everything. But in terms of specific holes -- I mean, I'm pretty straight off the tee. So I mean, 17 is probably a good one. I hopefully can take advantage of that. Hit a nice shot in there.

I mean, obviously the 1st and 18 are quite wide. So wherever you can -- I mean, around here, if you miss usually left, it's quite safe on every hole. So that's a good tip we had with a local caddie that walked around with us the first day, and he gave myself a lot of good tips to my caddie, as well. So try to take advantage of that.

Q. (You never played here before)?

GEMMA DRYBURGH: I didn't actually manage to get on before. I tried. I got on the New.

MIKE WOODCOCK: Thank you for your time, and very best of luck this week.

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