

# AIG Women's Open

Press Conference

Wednesday, 21 August 2024

## Catriona Matthew



OLIVIA McMILLAN: We are delighted to welcome former champion of the AIG Women's Open, Catriona Matthew.

Can you just tell us, just how special is this week and being in St Andrews and everything that means to you

CATRIONA MATTHEW: Yeah, it's a really special week. Obviously being Scottish, being British, growing up, the AIG Women's Open was the one you wanted to win. If you were going to win a major, this is the one you wanted to win. It was your dream, holing that putt to win this event.

WHEN they started going around The Open rota courses, to come to St Andrews, always been one of my favourite golf courses and from the days playing the St rule as an amateur.

Yeah, it's always very special coming back to St Andrews and playing.

OLIVIA McMILLAN: Can you reflect on when the championship has come to St Andrews the previous two times, to what the championship is now, and how it's evolved in that time and how you've seen golf grow?

CATRIONA MATTHEW: Yeah, I mean, I think I first played in this event at Woburn maybe as an amateur back in about '94.

So yeah, I've seen it change hugely. You know, once it started growing, maybe what -- ten 15 years ago to The Open rota courses, I think it really elevated the event.

I think certainly the foreign players love coming over and playing the courses. They had watched the men play The Open coming to play St Andrews, Troon, Lytham, Birkdale, all these ones, which just kind of put it on another level.

I would say even in the last four or five years, all the infrastructure and everything there is and the player bit for the recovery and the gym and the nutrition and all the kind of medical things. It's a huge event now.

**Q. How much preparation is there now for a big event like this?**

CATRIONA MATTHEW: Obviously I'm not playing very much at the moment but I've been practising the last couple weeks and had a couple FaceTime lessons from Kevin, my old coach. He's got me hitting it good on the range and I played with Lotte Wood yesterday, and we had a nice little nine holes.

Yeah, I played well but as we all know, teeing it up on Thursday is a whole different ballgame. Certainly the best I've hit it in a wee while, so pleased with that.

**Q. This is your 30th appearance in this event. You turn 55 on Sunday. Is there a significance of this particular appearance?**

CATRIONA MATTHEW: Yeah, I think this will be the last time I play in this event. I think just you want to be -- not like I have no illusion, I'm not going to be winning the event but I think a goal for me this week would be to try and make the cut. You don't want to come and keep playing in the event when you're not competitive. It just felt being in St Andrews, in Scotland, the Home of Golf, what better place to play my last one.

**Q. Curtis Cup next week. A great couple weeks for you?**

CATRIONA MATTHEW: Yeah, looking forward to that down at Sunningdale next week. I've been watching a lot of amateur golf: The ANWA, NCAA, the British Am. They are a great bunch, and we have a great team. We had a weekend down there a couple weeks ago. We'll be big underdogs for that with the Americans but looking forward to it.

**Q. You've got so much history obviously with this event, can you perhaps reveal the sort of emotions that you're likely to feel having said that this is going to be the last time in this event for you, and can we anticipate a little pause on the Swilcan Bridge?**

CATRIONA MATTHEW: I don't know about that -- I'm still kind of competitive.

Yeah, I think probably in a way a little bit of a mixture of relief, knowing myself that this will be the last one I'm going



to play in.

Yeah, obviously you'll be a little sad that you're not in the event. It's so big now and it's such a buzz when you come to these events to play in them. But I've realised, you've just got to, at 55, you're not going to be competitive enough as I want to be. Everything comes to an end.

**Q. It's a very obvious point, clearly, we can see why you would have been playing with Lotte yesterday. But that's a brilliant opportunity, isn't it, in terms of what's to come next week?**

CATRIONA MATTHEW: Yeah, it's good. I've watched them a lot but they have never seen me play. So it was a little bit of pressure on me yesterday. I thought, God, I'd at least let her see that I can still hit the ball.

Yeah, it's good. When you're on the golf course, you can chat away to them, and it's important getting to know all the players. So I think that's been good in that respect.

**Q. One of the great feats of your career is winning so quickly after giving birth. I'm wondering if you can just reflect a little bit on that time and how you managed to do that, and give an update on your girls now.**

CATRIONA MATTHEW: I think at the time in 2009, 11 weeks after I'd had Sophie. Obviously the second one was a little bit easier so it was easier to come back, but at the time you just get on with it and you don't really realise. It's probably not until you look back and reflect on it you think, God, how did I do that. Even now myself and Graeme look back and think how did we travel with them both, traveling on Tour with the two of them and all the luggage and up in the middle of the night with them. You wonder how on earth you ever managed to play any semi-decent golf.

As I say, it's just one of these things, at the time you just get on with it. It doesn't really seem as big a deal as it probably does looking back on it.

**Q. Where are they in school now?**

CATRIONA MATTHEW: Katie, the eldest, is just in her last year of school. Driving now, which is a scary thought. And Sophie has got three years left. Unfortunately they go back to school on Thursday, so they won't be here. They're very keen that I try my hardest to make the cut.

**Q. In an ideal world, how often would you like to see this championship come to the Old Course from a rotation standpoint?**

CATRIONA MATTHEW: Oh, in an ideal world probably

every five years like the men do, five, six years. I hadn't really realised it had been so long since it had been here, 2013 that Stacy won it with the wind delay that year, as well. It would be nice to see it come maybe every seven years.

**Q. If this is your last one, 2009 is an obvious answer, but what other good memories do you have of this championship?**

CATRIONA MATTHEW: I think this was the first professional event I played in back in '94. I remember playing at Woburn. My mum came and caddied for me. I think we made the cut, and I remember playing with Trish Johnson, so at the time she had been a pro for a while and was one of the top players in Europe. So that was quite a nerve-racking experience for me.

I think just going around all the good golf courses, all the Open venues and playing them. Perhaps my record -- obviously I won in '09, but my record probably hasn't been as good as I would have liked in this event. I think before that I just tried too hard, put too much pressure on myself coming back. Playing in Britain, you're wanting to play well in front of the home fans and family and friends. Delighted that I managed to get the win the one time, but wish my record had perhaps been a little bit better than it was.

**Q. In all the times you've played this championship, how much change have you seen over the years?**

CATRIONA MATTHEW: I've seen a huge change. It's just now -- well, obviously it's a major, but it's a huge event now. You can just see that just from all the infrastructure around it. The prize money has gone up hugely in the last probably five, six years, and it's kind of where it deserves to be.

**Q. In 2009 were you being woken in the middle of the night?**

CATRIONA MATTHEW: No, no, my mum and dad actually came down, so my mum said she would do the 3:00 feed for Sophie. She did it during the week, but then on the Sunday night I remember saying, our great celebration, that I would get up and feed Sophie. I remember my mum and me sitting there at the kitchen table at 3:00 in the morning with a cup of tea with the trophy sitting there feeding Sophie.

**Q. Can you remember your actual first round at St Andrews, as in casually or whatever? Was it love at first sight or take a bit of getting used to?**

CATRIONA MATTHEW: I can't remember my first round.

It would probably be a practice round for the St Rule or playing in the St Rule. I don't know. I've always liked it, so whether it was from my first round, I don't know.

**Q. Has there been a secret to your longevity and success?**

CATRIONA MATTHEW: I don't know. I think certainly when I was playing on Tour, I always liked coming back to Scotland in the winter, and with the weather you're kind of forced to take a break. I'd always take at least probably two, three, four weeks off, which I think just kind of refreshed you and got you ready for the next season.

I think that just taking a break, and then I think with having the family, it gave you something else to focus on and not golf. So it kind of took away everything on golf.

**Q. The forecast this week looks pretty challenging. What's the most difficult weather that you've played in in this championship?**

CATRIONA MATTHEW: I would say probably Turnberry -- I can't remember which year that was. I remember Turnberry one of the days was just horrific. And Lytham, I know one of the years Sherri Steinhauer won it. Actually I remember the first round she shot something like 81 and had her bags packed and flight changed to fly home on the Friday and then ended up making the cut and winning the tournament.

**Q. The prize money for this event increasing over the years, the R&A also do a lot of great work in terms of growing women's golf. How impressive is that, meaning how important is that, and can more still be done in Scotland?**

CATRIONA MATTHEW: I mean, I think they're doing a great job. Obviously they cover the whole of the world apart from the U.S. and North America. Yeah, I think they've got lots of great initiatives, even just for boys and girls and for I think trying to get women into golf in their Get Into Golf programs. I think Scotland is like many countries perhaps in Europe; it can be a struggle to try and get girls into it, and that's kind of an ongoing battle, trying to get more girls playing golf.

**Q. Do your girls play?**

CATRIONA MATTHEW: Well, I'm obviously not the greatest role model because Sophie plays a little, but I wouldn't really say either of them play.

**Q. Obviously you're bidding farewell to this event this week. We've seen Sir Andy Murray bid farewell to**

**tennis. The question of legacy obviously comes up. The question in tennis is has enough been done to capitalise on the Murrays, and I suppose looking at the lack of Scottish involvement in the field this week, the same question could be asked of have we done enough to capitalise on your extraordinary career? What's your take on that? Has enough been done, and what more could be done?**

CATRIONA MATTHEW: Yeah, that's a really difficult question. If people knew what more could be done, I think it would be being done. I know Scottish golf and the R&A, they have programs trying their hardest to try and get young girls and boys -- not so much the problem with boys into golf but to try and get girls into golf. I think they just need to need to keep doing what they're doing. I think it's trying to get little groups of girls playing. Certainly from my experience if their friends will play, more of them, they'll play.

It's just a difficult one. I wish I knew the answer to your question.

**Q. Do you think the whole thing is just bad luck or is there more to it?**

CATRIONA MATTHEW: When I was playing amateur golf there was a really good group of players, and I think we all pushed each other on. Quite a few of us went on and turned pro and we all kind of pushed each other on the various tours.

I think it is; at every level you need little groups to kind of push each other on.

**Q. Relating it to tennis, in tennis it's been mixed for years and years, but when you started playing, there were still a lot of courses that were men only, and there weren't a lot of clubs where they encouraged girls necessarily. Has that been why maybe we haven't got as quickly off the mark?**

CATRIONA MATTHEW: I think that's certainly changed a lot now. Yeah, certainly when I started there were a lot of men-only clubs, but that I think has evolved and changed. I think that is far less now. I don't really think that's holding back. I think even the image of golf improving now, it's not the kind of stuffy kind of old men playing that used to be maybe perhaps in Scotland.

So I think the clubs are trying. They see that's their future membership, so they're trying to encourage juniors into golf. Things never seem to change overly quickly.

**Q. Did you ever have an altercation with a stuffy old**

**man?**

CATRIONA MATTHEW: You know, I was fairly lucky, to be honest. Playing North Berwick and Gullane are both very supportive of me. The ladies' clubs were really supportive. There's always probably going to be a little incident here or there at different clubs, but on the whole, my experience was pretty good.

OLIVIA McMILLAN: It's been a pleasure having you in here with us this morning, and we hope this is a really special week for you here at St Andrews at the AIG Women's Open.

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