

# AIG Women's Open

Press Conference

Wednesday, 21 August 2024

## Stacy Lewis



MIKE WOODCOCK: We welcome Stacy Lewis to the interview room. Stacy Lewis, our 2013 champion and defending venue champ on at St Andrews.

Thank you for joining us this morning. How much do the memories of 2013 come back to you this week back in St Andrews?

STACY LEWIS: Massively. This is probably one of my favourite places in the world to be, obviously because of the success but just love the history of the game and this golf course and this place. And just the memories I've had here with golf and my family and to be able to bring everybody back again is a really big deal, and it's been a lot of fun this week. It's been very busy but it's been a lot of fun.

MIKE WOODCOCK: I seem to remember in 2013, the weather was kinder than it looks it's being to us at the moment. How challenging do you think this is going to be for the players, and how much will your experience of St Andrews help you this week?

STACY LEWIS: The weather, it always is the biggest test when we come over here and you know, 2013 we had our share of issues, as well. We didn't play at all on Saturday because of wind. But you know, this week looks horrendous to be honest, and you just have to deal with it the best you can and get through it.

I mean, the biggest difference I think is in the golf course itself and how much softer it's playing than 2013. I mean, it was -- I look back at the old yardage book and the pictures and it was much more brown. Ball was running a whole lot more. The golf course plays very different when it's wet like this.

So take as much local knowledge as I can and knowing where to hit it in certain situations and you know, is definitely helpful out here.

**Q. You're talking about loving the history of the place. Now have you -- do you read books on St Andrews or what can you tell us about the history of St Andrews?**

STACY LEWIS: Obviously it's the Home of Golf. It's where golf started. You can go -- specifically all the old buildings, all the -- when I played Curtis Cup here, the local caddie I got, and I don't remember everything he told me. But it was like specific holes of telling me how the golf courses were played and how, you know, the holes were played in reverse, and it was originally 22 holes and how we got back to 18. I mean, I don't know, you can go on forever.

But I just -- I'm a big believer in you don't move forward in anything without knowing your past and knowing how the game started and being on a list of past champions of the greats of the game. You know, for so long, we've watched the guys play here for so many years and have names -- they have won here and to have females names added to that list to me is such a big deal. And to think that my name is now on the list with all of them, to have won at St Andrews is really, really cool, and excited that we'll have a third added after this week.

**Q. What specific memories come back to you when you return to St Andrews?**

STACY LEWIS: The celebrations. Being at the Dunvegan, we celebrated Curtis Cup there, celebrated my win there. You know, certain shots, certain holes, obviously the finish in '13, yeah, just kind of like little bit and pieces you remember. One of my Curtis Cup matches, I was playing alternate-shot with Allison Walsh and we hit it, like as -- it was a pivotal hole but we hit it in the pot bunker on 15, chipped out, got up-and-down and made par, and it was a big moment thing in our match. And you remember little bits and pieces of things.

Honestly it's more the celebrations and other things that I got to do. I had a ton of friends here when I won in '13, so just to be able to do all of that with them.

**Q. Can you talk about just how the championship has grown here since your win in 2013?**

STACY LEWIS: It's night and day. You know, it's really been since AIG and since, really, I think more since the R&A has come on board because they have obviously run the men's championship for a long time and so they set a standard there of what they provide for the players and



how they treat the players, and the golf courses that we're playing.

So it's really, I think the R&A's relationship has really allowed this championship to grow to the level that we're at. And you know, and obviously the sponsor of AIG is important but I think more those connections within the R&A is what's helped us grow.

The list of courses that we played, say, from my first couple years on tour to now, it's night and day better, and so just really happy as a player that has pushed for this for a long time to see where we're going and where we're at.

**Q. Obviously you're wearing a second hat as the Solheim Cup captain. Can you speak to the play of Lauren Coughlin of late, and also how many people are it narrowed down to and what you're looking at last week?**

STACY LEWIS: Yeah, Lauren is probably playing the best golf of anybody on tour right now. And it's interesting because last year, I ended up playing with her several times throughout the year last year, and you know just watching her play, watching her demeanor, how has she not played better.

And so at the end of last year, we said, we're going to watch her and we're going to see what happens, and lo and behold she has kind of figured out the short game and figured out the putting. It's been tremendous to watch. It's been fun to watch her confidence grow. It's been fun to watch her be more comfortable in those positions.

I had a talk with her a couple weeks ago, I think it was after her win in Canada, and I told her, I said, We're not going to think about making Solheim Cup team. We're going to think about playing good golf at the Solheim Cup.

So it's just trying to help her along in the mental kind of shift that she's going through.

But you know, she's got a great caddie on her bag that I think has been a great resource through this -- these last, this last month or so.

**Q. You're paired Catriona Matthew, who has announced it will be her last time playing in the AIG Women's Open. To play with her, how special will that be?**

STACY LEWIS: Well, one, I get to play with her and Karrie Webb. That was like most exciting news to happen all week is my pairing.

Catriona, she's meant a tremendous amount to women's golf, especially here in Scotland where, you know, we don't have a ton of tour players coming out of here, and you can see, because the weather.

She's been such a tremendous competitor and to go up against her in Solheim Cup and watch her be a leader there, and she's really become a leader in women's golf I feel like off the golf course and has helped us continue to grow. It's just a huge honour for me to get to play with her, and then also Karrie, someone that I've admired so much growing up.

So I'm really, really excited for Thursday and Friday.

**Q. Taking you back to your win in 2013, your second shot into 17, does that still rank as probably the best shot you've ever hit in your life, and having hit it at St Andrews, at this competition, that's got to make it skyrocket in your view, I would guess.**

STACY LEWIS: It's by far the best golf shot of my career. The moment, the pressure, where you are, everything has to come off perfectly. And yeah, I have the 5-iron -- it's in my office in the golf bag, and it's the only club I have in there. It's the only club I've actually saved over the years.

Just to hit it in that moment. You know, you're really -- on that hole you're trying to get it down to the bottom of the hill and if it bounces up, great, and if it doesn't, you 2-putt, and you get out of there. It just came off perfectly and bounced up there the way it was supposed to, and you need that. You need that in this championship. You need some bounces to go the right way. It was one of those in the air that you didn't have to say anything to. You just kind of knew it was going to be good.

**Q. So again, looking ahead to next month, possible being at the wrong end of a tied match I guess you guys were last year, having the better part of a year to reflect on that, what was it like leaving Spain having not lost but the other team with the trophy, can you talk about the weirdness of that?**

STACY LEWIS: Yeah, it was hard. In the moment and kind of the aftermath, I was more concerned about the players. I didn't want them to see this as a super negative thing because I felt like they did a lot of good things. I was trying to encourage them in all of that.

And I just remember on the plane ride home, my daughter had fallen asleep. It was just her and I and I kind of had a little cry moment. Like we worked so hard and we put so much into this and it was a tie, you know, and it was like -- but that was the only moment I gave myself.

It was like, as soon as I got home, it just has felt like a carryover. It's felt like, call it unfinished business. You know, so I mean in a way it worked out nicely that Suzann and I are both coming back because we get to kind of settle the score is the way I feel about it.

I'm sure she feels differently but I feel like it's time to settle the score and yeah, I mean, they are so close together that it really -- I haven't had a break from it. We got home from Spain and immediately started in to the next one. It's been a long three years, I will say that.

**Q. Instead of a tie, would you be in favour of something being done to do away with ties, whether it's one player from each side playing over and over until we get a definitive result?**

STACY LEWIS: I would be open to it but I think it would be something that happened at the Solheim Cup as well as the Ryder Cup. I think we have to -- not we have to, but I think it would be in our best interests to do it together; that way for the fans and for everybody watching, it's the same, whether it's the men's or the women's.

I would actually see it more of a two-person -- because it is a team event, I would like to keep the team element to it versus a single player going out with all the weight of the world on their shoulders. I see it more as an alternate-shot. Send two players out, you start out there on 14 or 15 where they got all the builds and let them play it all over.

**Q. Catriona obviously winning, it was 11 weeks after giving birth, and you're the last player on tour to win as a mom. How hard is that? Can you put into perspective, because we just don't see it that often.**

STACY LEWIS: Yeah, I mean, I couldn't even swing a golf club until nine weeks after birth. So I couldn't imagine winning a golf tournament 11 weeks after having a child. I mean, that in itself is so impressive.

Being a mom -- when I first came on tour, her kids were pretty little, and you don't really look into what they are doing very much. But once you do it yourself, it is not easy and I have a lot of respect for the moms that have done it before.

You know, just the travel to -- you don't really have any time off. There's no downtime. There's no just go back to my room and watch a show or watch a movie. There's none of that. Just a lot of respect for all the women that have done it before me.

But those women have allowed me to have child care and be able to travel with my daughter and be able to show her the world. Just really grateful for them and for the opportunities they have given me.

**Q. At 54, Catriona has till 60 to play in this championship but she's not going to take those opportunities because it's hard to be competitive when there's no senior tour. You have a while before you reach that age, but what are you hoping is in place to maybe allow players to compete longer?**

STACY LEWIS: Yeah, you know, we do have a little something, it is called the Legends Tour. But really, it's not a tour; it's a few events here and there.

But I would like to see a place. Maybe it's just like two-day events. It doesn't have to be full week-long schedules because obviously as you get older, you don't want to play full weeks.

I do think it's something as a tour, as the LPGA that we can do better of is continuing to celebrate our past players, keeping them involved in the LPGA somehow and I'd love to see -- I think it would be very cool to see kind of a senior LPGA event with Epson players to allow the mentoring process, to allow, to, help those Epson players be more prepared for when they do come on the LPGA.

I think we could use our former players a lot better in that sense, and so how you use them? Well, you give them a platform. Give them a place to play golf.

**Q. Just following on from what you were speaking about there about the demands on tour, it's a really, really demanding schedule, fifth major in five months, crisscrossing the planet. Eight and a half months into the season, with that schedule, is anyone really at a hundred percent this week?**

STACY LEWIS: Probably not, no. Especially those -- you add the Olympics in there, as well. Those that played the Olympics, you talk to most of them that I've talked to, and it's just emotionally so taxing that week.

So no, our schedule, especially Olympic years, is really, really tough. The five majors, it's expanded. It's highlighted more when we are in an Olympic year.

So yeah, it the nature of it, and you know, there's been a lot of talk of schedule lately but also at the same time, I've been doing this for 15 or 16 years. You learn how to deal with it, and you learn how to be ready in those moments and really just do the best you can.

**Q. (Opportunities with less distance travelled.)**

STACY LEWIS: I think that's the ideal but the sponsors, a lot of it is when do sponsors want to play and when do we get the golf courses where we don't have the luxury of the PGA TOUR that says, you know, we want to play, we're playing this week, or we're giving you X amount of dollars and we're playing this week.

We don't have the money to just throw around to people and say, this is when we want to play.

We are kind of at the mercy of sponsors. We are at the mercy of golf courses and it's the nature of where we are. And would we like to be better? Yeah, absolutely.

I think our team behind the scenes works like crazy on it night and day but it's also, we're a global tour, and I think, you know, players kind of forget about that is that, you know, if we -- like I want to compete against the best players every week, and so to do that, we've got to go play in Thailand because we have players from Thailand. We're going to go play in Korea because we have players from Korea. I think that's just the nature of it.

It's more getting into your head to me that this is a global tour, and you say you're going to go play on the LPGA Tour, this is also what you signed up for.

**Q. When we get weather like we are going to have tomorrow with it being cold, wet and windy, what specifically over your career has kind of been most difficult when you get those conditions?**

STACY LEWIS: Keeping everything dry. That is the biggest challenge, especially here because it's going to be raining sideways and it's not like you can just stand under an umbrella and hide. To me it's keeping the hands dry. Keeping grips dry.

It's a perspective, right. You've got to do the best you can. There may be times where you can't get to a green in two because of where you're driving, and you've got to go get the ball up-and-down.

I think somebody that's going to win this week is somebody that's going to be a good wedge player that can manage their game really well and has a good mindset about it because ultimately that's going to be the biggest challenge.

**Q. What percentage of the field this week, do you think, may not have the mindset for that?**

STACY LEWIS: I used to say you could take half the field out. It's probably less than half, or the other way. It's

probably grown. You could say maybe 60 percent of the field. There's a lot of people when they get off the plane and they see the weather, it's not going to fit them.

But you know, to me, I get excited about it. I see the weather. I see the forecast. I'm ready. I'm excited.

**Q. Going back to children. Is there a case of saying that having a child or two, however many, that it takes your mind off golf; and therefore, you've got less pressure on the golf?**

STACY LEWIS: That's very fair. I would say the list of priorities in your life changes where especially back in '13, golf was No. 1. You know, it was No. 1 on the list. Everything I ate, everything did I, how I slept, the amount I slept, everything revolved around playing good golf.

And now, my daughter is No. 1 on that list. So golf gets kind of shoved down there a little bit, and so it changes. But it also changes your perspective in that, you know, bad rounds don't seem -- they don't bother me as much as they used to. Because when I come home I have a kid that all she wants to do is play, have dinner and hang out, and she doesn't care what I shot that day. It changes the mindset on both sides.

**Q. People say Americans maybe don't like playing in tough conditions. As you proved here in 2013, that's not the case. Do you laugh when people say that?**

STACY LEWIS: I mean, it's fair, though, because we haven't had a ton of American winners of this championship.

But I grew up in Texas. I grew up where it's windy. I'm used to playing in the hot elements, not the cold but I'm used to playing in the elements. I've always enjoyed when golf courses play harder. I'd rather 5-under win than 25-under.

So maybe it's just me, I don't know.

MIKE WOODCOCK: Let's hope the weather is not quite as bad this week. Best of luck. Thanks for joining us.

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