

The Amateur Championship

Quick Quotes

Monday, 13 June 2022

Kipp Popert

Q. You must be super excited to be here.

KIPP POPERT: Yeah, I am. It's something, weirdly, I didn't ever really think I would play in The Amateur because of all my operations in key development years as a golfer. So from 15, 14 to 18, I was having operations.

So in my head, actually I was always thinking that I would finish uni and just turn pro. But I'm pleased I didn't.

With the change to The Amateur rules, the biggest reason why was to be able to get sponsorship and funding. Obviously with the change to The Amateur rules I've been able to get sponsored funding to give this my best shot possible, because I don't do anything half-heartedly. So it's awesome to be here and I'm relishing it.

Q. How many operations have you had?

KIPP POPERT: Ten total, back to when I was born with cerebral palsy. My younger operations were especially around my calves because they were tight and contracted. Then because of the way I walk and the pressure that I put through my feet, obviously as a kid, your foot isn't fully developed. And so basically I developed a massive foot deformity and all the bones in my feet moved and I had to realign them. They were quite major surgeries around 16 and 18.

Q. How old are you now?

KIPP POPERT: 23.

And weirdly, sort of I remember going into the surgeries thinking what I would achieve in golf. Getting those foot corrections meant that I'm able to rotate and turn through the ball a bit better.

So golf has been a huge part of me waking up in the morning, doing all my physio and looking after my body since I was three or four. You know, it's a very motivating thing in my life, I guess.

Q. But playing amongst these guys in one of the biggest amateur events in the world, I know you've

won a lot of events as well, but is this the biggest stage for you in terms of your golf game?

KIPP POPERT: I think so. It's definitely the strongest field I've ever played in. But I feel like I'm very well collected, and I just -- every tournament I do, it doesn't matter if it's disability, golf, able-bodied golf, if it's a major down the line, I'll put the same attitude and focus into every shot.

Q. And you mentioned university, have you finished?

KIPP POPERT: So I went to the University of Birmingham. I did the AGMS, so applied golf management studies, and you can get your, like, PGA qualification as well. Obviously I have not taken that up.

But I sort of love golf and like business, so I did both at uni.

Q. Just talk about the victories. I saw you won at the Fairmont St Andrews.

KIPP POPERT: I'm very pleased with the start I've had to the year. As I mentioned, I had an operation in December after the DP World Tour event, championship. Basically my right foot was in quite a lot pain.

Last season I basically had steroid injections a handful of times a year last year to reduce the pain. Because I wanted to get the surgery I had just had done before COVID, but because it was COVID, they wouldn't do the surgery. So the option was these things called steroid injections into my right big toe, which basically took away all swelling and the pain, but obviously when they start to wear off, the pain got even worse.

Last year just before The Brabazon, I went into hospital and had the steroid injection so I can play. And that's just my mentality. I want to be the best golfer full-stop. When I finish my career, I believe and hope it will be a nice long one, is I'd love to be someone known as being one of the best over-achievers. That's what I want to be known for.

So yeah, start of the season has been brilliant because I didn't actually have an off-season. Sort of turned up to the event, it was, right, see what I've got.

What the 4GD Tour, especially the EDGA Tour, and I've mentioned Tony Bennett have done for me, you know, I never realised there were other golfers like me or other golfers with disability.

And the first event I did was the EDGA Algarve Open in 2019. And yeah, it was awesome to be in a room where everyone else has used golf to help them through their tough times, it was just really nice to be in a room that everyone sort of understands or can appreciate what each individual has had to go through.

Q. As a sport golf, particularly disability side, Tony is doing a lot of great work, but you hear more golfers with a disability now.

KIPP POPERT: Yeah, I think it would be great if you can mention that last week, it was quite a really tough decision for me. I had my first-ever England call-up for the European Disability Championship. And because of, basically, how disability golf is going, the organisations, especially in golf have got behind it and put a team in.

They obviously asked me and I was absolutely thrilled. As I mentioned, hospital beds, physiotherapy in the morning; it's the reason, golf's got me through that. And to have a chance to represent my country is something I would be very proud to be asked to do.

However, this is obviously the first year The Amateur had qualifying, and it was on the same day. So it was a very tough decision. I had to waive my spot or give my spot away. As I say, I was watching the leaderboard like a hawk. England finished third and we did absolutely amazing.

I think for me to have to almost say no to my first England call-up, just to have a chance to get here, and then to get here, I'm very pleased and proud of that. Because it was a big, like -- it was a tough one. It was a tough decision to make but I think -- and especially with England finishing third.

Q. And you got in here, so you're okay.

KIPP POPERT: Well, that's it. That was my aim. As I said, I knew my teammates would do their best and they finished third, which can't get much better than that.

Q. What's your home golf club?

KIPP POPERT: Wildernesse Golf Club in Sevenoaks, and then I also play at Royal Cinque Ports. I do my links golf at Royal Cinque Ports.

Q. I believe you're here to watch The Open in 2001. Seems like a lifetime accurate. You were only, what, three? So probably very little memories but cool to be back here 20 years late.

KIPP POPERT: Yeah, to be honest, it was quite -- I don't know if you spoke to my dad, in the article, it mentioned that and I didn't even realise it.

So I came here with my grand dad when I was three, and I was hitting some wedge shots with a plastic club towards the bin. The story is that I think Cam Brown saw me hitting and I think I must have hit a handful of collections quite close to this bucket and they said, oh, can we film him.

Because I think especially as well at that age, he wouldn't have known I had cerebral palsy, and since my balance was off, but also that could have just been a thing for a young kid. Long story short is they actually ended up filming me for 45 minutes. So the BBC had that footage and I saw it this year. It was quite cool; I was in the promo for The Open.

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