

# The G4D Open

Mixed Zone

Monday, 8 May 2023

## Fiona Gray

FIONA GRAY: My name is Fiona Gray from Northern Ireland and I live in a town called Downpatrick, and I play at St. Patrick's Golf Club.

### **Q. Welcome to Woburn. Can you tell me about your journey to the G4D?**

FIONA GRAY: It only started last year, one door opens and a lot more doors opens, I say. I started from The Irish Open last year and I followed on to play in The Italian Open, and then I had to go for a full knee replacement. I took the winter out and recovered and came back and played in France in Saint-Omer, first Open and applied for the G4D. I didn't expect to get in. I was astonished that I got a place and fantastic, I can't believe it. It's brilliant.

### **Q. And your background is in the Army and that's where you sustained the injuries that qualified you to play in those events. Can you tell me about those injuries and the journey?**

FIONA GRAY: Yes, I served 20 years in the Army. Majority of it is playing sport. I played hockey, cricket and golf but golf was my main sport. I injured myself first time in '97 with a knee injury, and then progressed from that, furthered the injury, back injury, dislocated my shoulder, three surgeries on that and I've had ten operations on my left knee, and I'm still going with ongoing back pain, as well.

But I'm still waking up in the morning and getting out of bed and saying, this is me, this is my day and this is my week this week as well.

### **Q. How does playing golf help? There's a lot of people here that might have a similar background to you, either the sustained injuries or sustained injuries in the Armed Forces. How has golf helped that recovery?**

FIONA GRAY: Through golf in the Army, I played through the Army, and once I left the Army, through Battle Back which is a charity for injured servicemen and women. They had a lot of amputees, guys with amputees missing limbs and things like that. My injuries are not visible compared to

# THE G4D

OPEN

some of the guys and girls. I do accept that I have a disability, but obviously -- lost my words there.

### **Q. What was playing golf helped with your injuries you sustained?**

FIONA GRAY: I can still good out and play golf. I can get out on the buggy and get on the course and be me and play on my own. I sometimes prefer to be on my own. When I was really in a competitive mood, I would hardly talk to anybody on the course.

But when my injuries started to get worse, I started to relax more and I started to talk more, and then that made me feel more relaxed. Now I'm back in the competitive mode. I've tried to talk to people because it calms me down, and it doesn't make me so nervous and not think about my injuries and things like that.

I just want to get out there and play golf, and I sometimes don't warm up enough and that's my problem because you do enough warming up out on the course, that's what I feel, you do enough golf out there. I feel that I'm ready to go on the first tee normally.

### **Q. And you're one to watch this week, coming off a win at Wentworth. Tell us about your golf game just now, where you're feeling confident and how you're feeling?**

FIONA GRAY: I'm feeling good. Wentworth was phenomenal. The greens were, I have to say, the greens were lightning. You really had to read the greens and read your game. Brought me back into the competitive spirit there. It was nice to play competitive again because you were actually playing against somebody and you were having to win. You wanted to win and you wanted to win this. The game slipped a little bit but came back, but I couldn't believe that I won in the end and I was presented the trophy and it was phenomenal.

But this week, it's going to be good. Just it's going to be wet so you have to keep your mind steady, keep your game focused and just keep your mind on the game and keep it in play. The main thing is to keep it in play here because it's tight, tight fairways, tight trees, and just play

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my game that I'm good at.

**Q. You're sponsored by Golf Ireland.**

FIONA GRAY: Representing Ireland is another achievement for me this week. It's absolutely fantastic. I didn't think it in any dreams but it's come true that I'm actually representing Ireland. I've dreamt of this all my life and now I'm doing it. Thank you very much, Golf Ireland. It's a huge achievement. Thank you very much.

**Q. Is that a real marker point for disability golf, as well?**

FIONA GRAY: Absolutely. Disability golf in Ireland is growing. I've recruited a few ladies, which is nice, and it's up-and-coming. People just need to get out there. We need to get out there and show that we are welcome on the course. Yes, disability, as I said, isn't visible to some people but to us, it is. And we need to keep the game growing, especially with women in golf. There's a lot of men out there this week, especially, so we compete against the men and I compete against some ladies. So it will be a good week.

**Q. Going back to your Army days, what did you do in the Army?**

FIONA GRAY: So I joined the Royal Artillery and I was based at lock hill. But through injury and through work injury, I had to transfer to the Adjunct General's Corp., and then I was an HR administrator, and then I finished off as an HR in 2014.

**Q. Being from Royal County Down is that where your interest started in golf?**

FIONA GRAY: Yes, I started at the age of 13. I was sporty. I was playing hockey at the same time. My parents played golf, so I wanted to play golf. I actually played against Allison coffee at Royal County Down. I took her to the 18th. This is my claim to fame in those days, so that was a massive achievement check.

Then as soon as I joined the Army, they got a hold that I played golf, and that took off from there. I was just like a sports Billy in the Army. I loved being in the Army but I also loved playing sport.

**Q. So golf has been that one constant in your life that stayed throughout your 50 years?**

FIONA GRAY: Yes, it has. And it's a massive achievement that I'm captain of St. Patrick's Golf Club this year. I said I'm not going to be there all the time, ladies,

because I'm going to be flying over the seas to many tournaments. It's one door opens and another opens, so you have to take your opportunities.

**Q. Thinking about your chances here at Woburn this week, what kind of golfer do you think is going to have success?**

FIONA GRAY: Keeping the ball in play. If you go for it, you can put yourself in difficulty. This course is like my old Army course where it's tight fairways and you have to keep the ball in play. Keep the ball in play, read the greens and you'll have success around here.

**Q. If you can introduce yourself, who you are and where you are come from.**

FIONA GRAY: My name is fine oh gray. I'm from Northern Ireland, a place called Downpatrick, and I play at St. Patrick's Golf Club.

**Q. Can you please tell me briefly your journey in golf and life and how you got to this point playing in the very first G4D open?**

FIONA GRAY: My journey started off when I was 13, I started playing golf and then I played golf up until the age of, actual now, basically. I also joined the Army when I was 21 and I had 20-year service in the Army. But through the service, I suffered injuries. I sustained a back injury, first of all, and then back injury led to knee injuries. Knee injury led to shoulder injury. I'm standing here today to play in this fantastic competition to hopefully come out here as top girl.

When I heard about the disability at Woburn, I thought, gosh, I'll enter but I don't think I'll get the chance because obviously my disability couldn't come under one of the categories. So I thought, right, okay, I'll enter it and I'll see. A couple of weeks I was waiting and waiting, and I was like really, I thought -- and it came through, I was so excited. I was over the moon that I got a place here. It's absolutely fantastic. Fantastic venue to hold this. So I'm really looking forward to the week.

**Q. Describe how you're feeling right now, now that the week is here and you're here and doing this media and all the competitors, how do you feel?**

FIONA GRAY: Very, very nervous. I'm very nervous because I did so well at Wentworth, the expectations are to do very well here. But I just need to go out there, play my game and just enjoy it. The thing is, to enjoy it. But if it goes bad, you know, you can rectify it.



**Q. Just have fun.**

FIONA GRAY: Just have fun, yes.

**Q. Did you mention you're lady captain?**

FIONA GRAY: Yes.

**Q. But she's not going to be spending too much time at St. Pat's doing this?**

FIONA GRAY: I don't know if you want to say, I'm off to Sweden next, and I'm off to Holland to the individuals in Holland.

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