

The G4D Open

Mixed Zone

Monday, 8 May 2023

Kris Aves

KRIS AVES: Always goes down well when you tell people. Everyone, as it happened, gasp, that silence. Breaks the ice and then I just talk to people and say, look, I'm all right about it, so you should be, as well.

Q. The event is stuck in our national consciousness, isn't it?

KRIS AVES: Exactly. It's a national story. When I was in hospital, I used to feel a bit guilty -- fell off a tree and broke my back.

Q. Great to have you here at this inaugural event. Before we start, could you say your name and club, where you're from, just as an introduction?

KRIS AVES: My name is Kris Aves. I play at The Shire London, and I believe in Barnet, North London.

Q. Tell us about your kind of journey in golf to get here?

KRIS AVES: So my original journey started obviously in my late 20s when I used to play able-bodied golf for a little bit for the Societies with the Met Police, but then I was injured in 2017 in the Westminster bridge terrorist attack, I was left with a spinal cord injury and unable to walk, and I didn't think I would ever play golf again. Then I was introduced to the Golf Trust through Cae Menai-Davis and they introduced me as a ParaGolfer --

Q. If you could come back to, I was introduced to the golf trust.

KRIS AVES: So I was introduced to the golf trust through Cae Menai-Davis, and they introduced me to ParaGolfer. I was able to take my first shot as a disabled golfer, and it brought tears to my eyes. I was lucky enough to have a local public in Barnet raise money for a golf day, and with that money, I think it was nearly 17,000 pounds, I was able to buy myself a ParaGolfer, which I use to play at the golf club, The Shire.

I didn't look too much into disability golf events. I just played with members and friends. I used to travel around

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to other golf clubs, as well, with the ParaGolfer. Then there was a couple other associations that I played with, and I became a member, probably six months to a year ago, thinking that I'm going to do something, and I never did, and I always thought, right, I do need to do something.

So when this event comes around, I said, that's it, I'm going to enter and hopefully I'll get a place in it, and here I am today.

Q. This is your first R&A debut event, whatever you want to call it, you must be proud to actually be teeing it up here?

KRIS AVES: Yeah, unbelievable. To be part of the team here, having like the DP World Tour, the R&A, the G4D is a phenomenal event. I've heard so much about it and looking at the player list, I'm in awe of probably all 79 other people. So to get a place on it and to play at Woburn is a dream come true.

Q. As a ParaGolfer, you touched on it there, you're kind of seated. So do you fancy your chances in that class this week?

KRIS AVES: I hope so. I hope so. I haven't played for a long time because a prolapsed disk over the new year, so that went against me. Also weather conditions go against the ParaGolfer as well. It doesn't like the rain. Golf clubs don't like the rain as well, having buggies on them, so it rules you out of playing during certain weather types. If I kind of get my ball-striking going, then yeah, fingers crossed, I can finish up there.

Q. You touched on 2017, but what are your recollections of how horrific they were at the time?

KRIS AVES: So I'm quite lucky when it comes to what happened because yes, I was struck by the SUV on the bridge outside Big Ben but from what I've been told, I was talking to people on the bridge, but I was then put in an induced coma for eight days. When I woke from the coma, I have got no memory and I still haven't to this day.

So everything that I now know about that event, I found out from family, from friends and from the media. So luckily

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enough, my brain has helped me in my kind of recovery, shall we say, my rehabilitation, by not letting me remember, which means I don't look back and I just look forward.

Q. Golf has been a great tonic for you clearly. Tell us about the swing and how you hit the ball, because I think for anyone watching this week, and seeing these different types of golf, explain how tough it is?

KRIS AVES: With someone with any disability, golf is harder than other people with an ability. But what's a little bit more difficult is I've got a spinal injury kind of from my chest down, so I can't put my weight and transfer weight through my legs. I can't turn my hips and bring my arms up behind my head to take a stroke.

So I'm very much half-swings only, not great speed. You know, ball-striking speed isn't that fast as well. Legs are kept together, as well, so we haven't got a nice shoulder width stance, as well as take a stroke.

So it is very difficult. But on top of that, I suffer severe spasms and tones and nerve pain, and that can play up on the course as well, and when that happens, obviously it does affect your golf.

Lastly, anything that's got a slight kind of hill on it or anything like that, any gradient, you're leaning to one side. You can't use your legs to balance yourself out. So it's very, very difficult to take a shot.

Q. These are impressive machines, clearly. Do you stay in touch with the people that you mentioned and the people that raised money?

KRIS AVES: Yeah, so the pub itself has a society as well. So I've been out with them.

Q. So obviously great support from the people who raised funds. Do you still stay in touch with these people?

KRIS AVES: Yeah, it's a local pub in Barnet where I live and they have a society themselves, the railway tavern and I've been out on a couple of their days on the ParaGolfer. Whenever I play at different courses, not The Shire, I have to hire a van to drive around places because it's not a small piece of equipment. But I'm forever grateful and in their debt for raising that cash to help me play.

Q. You talked about a lack of golf over recent months, but the juices were flowing in this Cairns match which I believe you played in, a GBI and Amercia-type match?

KRIS AVES: That's it. The Cairns Cup was set up a few years ago and due to COVID we had to keep postponing it, and we managed to get it off the ground last year, and we did the Team Europe versus Team USA, and it's held at The Shire London. And we are in the process of putting it together again, and we are all set for Michigan next year.

Q. Talking about being awe inspired by the names here, who are the people at the top of the sport that you look up?

KRIS AVES: Obviously when you see the names on there, you've got obviously Kipp, Brendan Lawlor, as well, that you know that are at the top of their game. They have stood out from the DP World Tour, as well, where they were allowed to play, I believe it was over in Japan. To see that is phenomenal.

Then there's a gentleman that I see quite a lot on Instagram and his name is Graham Freeman and he plays in a ParaGolfer as well. To see him, I'd kind of like to follow in his footsteps as well knowing that first-ever event, won't be my last.

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