

KitchenAid Senior PGA Championship

PGA Frisco

Frisco, Texas, USA

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Darren Clarke

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: Darren Clarke is joining us now at the 83rd KitchenAid Senior PGA Championship. Welcome to Frisco. What are your first impressions of Fields Ranch East?

DARREN CLARKE: Yeah, I think the course is awesome. I really do. I think it's brilliant.

I don't quite get where they're going with -- we did it a little bit at Southern Hills, as well, where there's no teeing grounds, there's just like fairways and slopes and all that. I don't quite get that. I don't know why we're going down that road and we end up -- you look at the home of golf, St Andrews, it's one of the oldest, but every tee is flat. I don't understand why you just don't have tees.

You've got a couple out there where you're trying to hit a little fade off the tee and you've got a sloped tee that's going like this.

But that's just a little thing. But the rest of course is just fabulous. It's a big boy's golf course, this one, and I think looking at where some of the tee positions are when you have the younger kids here, as well, looking in the future and for the main PGA and then possibly Ryder Cups and stuff, this is all you want, this golf course. Just brilliant, absolutely brilliant.

Q. How are you feeling about your game coming into Thursday?

DARREN CLARKE: Yeah, pretty good. I spent last week in the boat fishing for tarpon down in Boca Grande, so I had a nice week off. I played not too bad in Birmingham. I've been playing a little bit better than my scores would suggest, so hopefully one of these weeks it's going to click. I had a good last round in Birmingham at Regions, and hopefully carry that form on to this week.

Q. When you arrive to a place sight unseen, what's the key for you in learning a golf course?

DARREN CLARKE: Ooh, good question. You try to learn more than anything probably the greens, the nuances of the greens, where the grain is going from and the slopes, and these have got quite a few contours in these greens.

I spent quite a bit of time. Played nine holes on Sunday. Got here Saturday evening and had my instructor here from London. He spent a couple of days with me. Played nine holes with Vijay on Sunday afternoon. We spent a lot of time around the greens then. Played nine holes yesterday. Did the same thing again. Spent a lot of time on the greens to maybe possible pin positions, learning where you can hit it and where you can't hit it.

I think for us, especially in a major championship like this, you've got to try and figure out real quick where not to hit it as opposed to where you want to hit it. The big miss is going to be a big miss around this golf course and on these greens. You're just not going to have any chance.

The par-5s, there's a few of those greens that even when you do hit it, I've hit a couple of tee balls 310, 315, but still going into those greens, they're so small, it's just not worth the risk-reward. Great par-5s tease you. These ones, there's not enough reward for having a go at it.

A little bit more patience is going to be required, which has not always been my forte, unfortunately, but I'm going to have to listen to my caddie and lay up a little bit more often. But you're trying to learn what you can do and what you can't, and that's what it's been.

I'd love to go and play another nine or 18 tomorrow, but that would sap too much energy, I think, so I've had my really good two nine holes working out and then today as well in the pro-am again looking out. Tomorrow will just be a little bit of practice and do a little bit of work.

Q. Is there a stretch of holes in particular that got your attention?

DARREN CLARKE: No, all of them -- there's a couple of breather holes out there, but there's not many. You start on the 10th. With the guys starting on the 10th tee, the

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10th is maybe one of the hardest holes on the golf course. That's going to be a tough start.

The first par-5 -- but it's like I want to go for it, but you can't go for it. You miss it left, it's going to be really hard to keep it on green; you're going to make 6.

There's a run where every hole is -- if you just switch off a little bit at all, a bogey is pretty easy to make.

The beauty of the design is that it appears it's very wide off the tee, which some holes are, but then for some of the guys that maybe hit it a little bit longer in that 300 mark, it bottlenecks up quite a lot, so you've got to be careful. You've got hazards coming into play and stuff that aren't in play if you're laying back to 280, but you don't want to lay back to 280 because then you're going to have 4-irons and stuff into the greens.

It's just trying to figure out basically where it's going.

That being said, they've been very kind to us with the rough this week. The rough is not too severe, touch wood. Anytime you hit it in there, you'll have a pretty decent lie, that first cut of rough.

We'll see, but there's no real stretch where you can get after it. You're not playing defense, but you're trying to play smart all the time.

Q. Have you had time to look around the campus as a whole and see what's here?

DARREN CLARKE: Just from what's here. The whole facility, the big putting green there to the par-3 course, the floodlit par-3 course to the range, the facilities are second to none. They're as good as you get. They really are.

Obviously the PGA have made a big move from PGA National down in West Palm to here, and they've spared no expense. They've done a wonderful job on the facility they've got here. They genuinely really have. It's brilliant to see. It's a pleasure to come somewhere like this.

That being said, it's a hard walk. I've got the compression leggings on every night for like 30 minutes, then into a hot Epsom bath. It's okay for the young kids. For the older guys, it's a pretty tough walk, this one.

Q. You mentioned it's a big-boy course and suitable for majors on the regular tour and maybe a Ryder Cup.

DARREN CLARKE: No question.

Q. Is there anything in particular that makes you feel

that way about it?

DARREN CLARKE: I just think with the length, the way the modern guys are hitting the golf ball now, and I hope that rollback of the golf ball doesn't happen. I'm not a huge fan of it, so the guys are going to keep hitting it that distance.

This golf course will give them all they want. They've got so many different options from different tee lengths and tee angles, this course should suit that. It's that good a design.

I think I would imagine the PGA will schedule a lot of major championships here and big tournaments here, and I think it's richly deserved for what they've done.

Q. You are one of the few -- not everybody in the world can walk on to a golf course and visualize whether a Ryder Cup could be played there. You've been in the middle of many. What in particular would make this a good Ryder Cup venue? Is it the routing or --

DARREN CLARKE: I think everything. The acreage, for a start. You can accommodate whatever tournament you want here.

I think that the holes, the way the holes are designed, they're set up for that excitement. I wish we were playing match play this week because you'd be able to be a little bit more aggressive. A Ryder Cup with match play around there, they can set up holes that are drivable, for example, holes that are going to play so long, and just make it enjoyable but challenging, as well, at the same time, and give the spectators the opportunity where guys can go at things and they can make 2s, 3s, 5s, 6s, whatever. But you can do that in match play, you can't really do that in stroke play. As you know, you've got to be a little bit more conservative in your play.

But with the design of the golf course, it sets up where all depending upon tee markers, you could add as much excitement as you want.

Q. Now that you've done this over-50 thing a few years, has it met expectations, exceeded expectations? How much fun are you having?

DARREN CLARKE: I'm having a great time. The game of golf has been very good to me. I'm very fortunate. I basically live in the Bahamas in the Abaco Club on Winding Bay in the Bahamas, so I come and play for two weeks, go to the Bahamas for two weeks, play for three weeks, go to the Bahamas for two weeks. It's not all bad.

But I just spoke to Stewart Cink. He come up and said hello this morning, and this is his first week out here. I



said, it's brilliant to have -- anytime we have a new guy coming out to join us, it's brilliant for our Champions Tour. Stewart come out, and I said, you're going to enjoy it out here. I said, make no mistake, it's all fun and we're having a laugh, but as soon as gets to a normal week on a Friday morning, we go back to tour pros on a Friday morning. Everybody is trying to win.

I said, you'll be surprised at how good the scoring is.

I think that three-round mentality, that took me the longest to get used to whenever I come out here. You spend your whole career playing four-round tournaments and then you come to one that you've got to get after it from the start, so it's a completely different way of playing, and obviously it took me a year to get used to it, but when I did, I've won four times already on the Champions Tour. I'd like to win more. I hope to win more. But that took me a bit of time to get used to.

But Stewart Cink is an unbelievable player. His record speaks for itself. He's a major champion. Many, many Tour victories. It's great to have somebody of his stature joining us. How much he's going to play on the Champions Tour, I don't know. You guys probably know that better than I will. But I hope he plays a lot because he's a great addition for us.

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