

Aberdeen Standard Investments Ladies Scottish Open

Tuesday, August 11, 2020

North Berwick, Scotland, UK

The Renaissance Club

Catriona Matthew

Dr. Andrew Murray

Alan Grant

Jill Maxwell

Press Conference

THE MODERATOR: Welcome, on our panel today we have Catriona Matthew, two-time winner of the Aberdeen Standard Investments Ladies Scottish Open and winning 2019 European Solheim Cup Captain; Dr. Andrew Murray, director of Murray Sport and Medicine and the medical advisor for the Aberdeen Standard Investments Ladies Scottish Open and IMG. We have Jill Maxwell Global Head of Brand Activation of Aberdeen Standard Investments, and Alan Grant, senior golf manager of VisitScotland.

First of all, I'd like to put my first question to Dr. Andrew Murray. Can you talk about the extensive measures we've put in place to enable this tournament to go ahead?

DR. ANDREW MURRAY: Good morning. There have been very extensive measures put in place to enable the tournament going ahead safely this week, and it's about looking at international best practise.

So we've worked on the documentation provided by the World Health Organization, looking specifically at risk assessments and all the control and safety measures that can be put in place for major sporting events. What we have done there is conducted some very careful planning with our colleagues at the Scottish government and with our colleagues in public health, with IMG, with the LPGA and the Ladies European Tour and all relevant stakeholders to put the concrete things in place that will make things proceed as safely as feasible.

Because we recognise there are many benefits to golf events in terms of the event itself and the wide infrastructure that is there, but some of the key things really



have been physical distancing. So recognising that two metres done consistently by our players, by our caddies, by all the people on course can minimise the contacts that people make and minimise the risk.

There's also the use of face mask in any indoor area. People will be wearing face masks all the time and also hand sanitiser. I believe there is 750 litres of hand sanitiser that will be used extensively throughout the week to keep people safe, and really it's about careful planning.

So every single day that someone comes into the golf tournament, they will complete a symptom check: Have you a new continuous cough; have you got shortness of breathe; new lost of taste or smell, and if any of these applies, they'll be consulted to immediately by myself or one of my medical colleagues. They will also have a temperature check every single day.

And prior to coming to the event, any players or colleagues from overseas, any players or colleagues or staff will have a PCR test prior to coming; and also when they arrive on site with our testing partners, SignPost, they will have a PCR test prior to getting to the golf course or any shared facility.

So there has been a huge amount of planning that has been put in place, and in close consultation with the Scottish government, with public health authorities, and it's about a safe return to for our players, our caddies and our staff. I think people are excited that the risk assessment, the planning and the processes have been robust and that there's a good opportunity to play golf in Scotland, having had successful events conducted in Austria and England and a lot of European markets.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you, I know Catriona, initially you were thinking, was it a good idea for these events to go ahead. What sort of measures in place have made this acceptable for yourself?

CATRIONA MATTHEW: Yeah, I must say, I was a little nervous to start with when I heard about it, but I think like Andrew said, all the measures that have put in place kind of put my mind at ease.

The players, I would say, are being very good at keeping their distance, wearing the face mask, hand sanitising.

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Like anyone, I was nervous. There are a lot of players coming from other countries where perhaps the virus rates are higher but now you're here and you can see it all happening. I think all the hard work that's been done by varying different bodies is really paying off, and I feel very happy and excited to be starting play.

THE MODERATOR: Do you feel like all the girls are feeling very similar?

CATRIONA MATTHEW: I think so, yeah. I think so. Everyone who is here, I think the hotel is working out well. Obviously they came over on a charter, which is great. I think the players are just very excited to be playing. Come over here for two weeks, and I think it's great to see women's golf and sport back on television.

Q. What are the reasons that the Scottish government did support this event going ahead?

ALAN GRANT: I think as Catriona said there, I think it's great to see the return of not only women's golf, but international women's sport to Scotland and the U.K. this week and we are very proud of the role that Scotland has played in this, helping down the line of commitment across sport and society and you're obviously building on the success that we had at the Solheim Cup last year.

Having been involved in this event since its return to the schedule in 2006, VisitScotland and Scottish government have given extraordinary support to the Ladies Scottish Open, and I don't think there's another country in the world that gives so much support to women's golf, and it's something that we are very proud of, and is sometimes perhaps often overlooked here, as well.

This year, that support has really come to the fore, and with the new landscape that we are all having to deal with, it's fair to say that our support and that of the Scottish government's medical advisor, working alongside Dr. Murray and IMG in delivering the plan that's in place this week has ensured that the event can go ahead with the confidence of everybody amid this pandemic.

I was down at Renaissance last week and having seen the amount of measures in place, it's incredible the amount of work that's gone into making this event happen, and hopefully we get a great championship at the end of it.

As you say, tourism and welcoming people to this country is something that we are focussed on in VisitScotland and it's important that Scotland remains on TV screens around the globe and in front of mind of potential visitors in the future. But our focus is that this event goes ahead and signifies part of our social and recovery for this in Scotland.

Anecdotally, it's been heartening to see more people out playing golf in Scotland since the easing of lockdown. Many clubs are reporting additional members and visitors, our hope is the Ladies Scottish Open this week and the Women's Open next week can continue to press home that message that golf in Scotland is for everybody, and keep capitalising on the platforms of the Solheim Cup and encouraging more women, girls and many others to consider golf as a sport.

THE MODERATOR: I know, Dr. Murray, one of huge drivers in getting this event back up was the health benefits of golf. If you could touch on that and the importance of it.

DR. ANDREW MURRAY: Absolutely. I had the great pleasure of my Ph.D looking at golf and health and what the benefits are of playing golf and also what the health disadvantages might be of playing golf, and the science shows, having looked at this for five years is that golf can have a huge range of benefits for all of society in terms of those that play.

Golf can be played to the age of 103 and there are substantial longevity benefits. Those that play golf tend to live five years longer than those that don't regardless of socioeconomic status. People are benefitted by a range of other physical health things. So regular physical activity like golf is one of the best things you can do for your physical health. You might be 30 to 40 per cent more likely to get athlete's foot, but you do get about a 50 per cent reduction of cardiovascular disease, a significant reduction in some types of cancer and it's extremely good for the brain as well.

Playing golf regularly has been shown to increase self-confidence, self-worth, and when golf does return this week, it will be the health benefits our golfers get out but in time it may well be possible when spectators are safely reintroduced in due course to get the benefits that spectators get because the research done in collaboration again with VisitScotland and the government and events in Scotland highlighted that while you might not be Catriona Matthew on the course, as a spectator or through involvement in golf tournaments you'll take an average of 11,500 steps, which as we know is good for health.

So overall playing golf can bring considerable benefits to yourself, and it can be for all society.

And I suppose just one reflection, as a dad of three, I have kids 5, 3 and 1, can you think of a present that can give people better marks at school, that can help them live longer and be happier and essentially regular physical activity in golf can give you that. So allowing people to

participate in golf may be the single best present we can give our children and as a great present we can give each other.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you. Makes me want to get back on the course.

For Jill Maxwell from Aberdeen Standard Investments, you've shown extraordinary commitment to ensure this event stayed on the calendar when it must have been tempting to think about postponing to next year, an easier path. What made you so committed to make sure it took place this week?

JILL MAXWELL: Honestly there's a number of reasons, and you're right; we were under some pressure internally. These are challenging times.

But the relationship that we have with the Scottish government and VisitScotland and just really our commitment to this event, this is the 11th year that we've sponsored it, which for A sponsorship is a really long time.

We just wanted to help give that kind of vital boost to Scotland's events sector. The support that the Scottish government and VisitScotland have given us and the partnership that we have is really valuable and so that was really one of our main reasons. We're a global company -- so it really means a lot to us.

We also really wanted to give something back to the community and the charities that are kind of situated here. So our official tournament charity here is East Lothian Food Bank, which I know Catriona you visited last week. That was something that was really important to us. Obviously the commercial aspect is important for business objectives, but to give back to the community and charities is really important.

Another social enterprise we have been involved with is Soul Food Sisters in Glasgow. Google them. They are amazing. They work with migrant women to boost their self-esteem, and a great initiative for us to be involved in.

The event underpins our commitment to equality. As you know we sponsor the Men's Scottish Open as well, and it's really, really important for us to show that we're sponsoring both events and that we are supporting both.

Again, just with my sponsorship hat on, people have had no live sport to watch for the past five months and my job is to get our brand out there and actually both brands. We have got our ASI brand and our Standard Life brand out on the golf course this week, and it was just a fantastic opportunity to get a lot of the right eyeballs on our brand.

So we are hoping lots of people tune in. We are grateful to SKY Sports for coverage in the U.K. and the various other broadcasters globally.

A few different reasons, but yeah, we are delighted the event is going ahead this week.

THE MODERATOR: And if you could talk about Georgia Oboh, the first Nigerian golfer that has benefitted from a sponsor's invitation from yourself.

JILL MAXWELL: Yeah, I'm delighted to talk about Georgia. We've invited her because of the accolades that she's received so far in a very short professional career. I don't know if anyone follows her on social media, but she's one of the most enthusiastic golfers. She's so grateful to be here.

And really as a company, inclusion is very important to us, and we're aware that there are certain stigmas around the game of golf as it relates to access ability.

We really want to -- as I say, it works for us from a business objective. We are targeting a lot of people that invest money and that save money like golf. They like to watch it; they like to play it, but we are very keen to make golf as accessible as possible, as Alan was saying, and as Andrew says. I know Catriona plays with her girls. It's about making it open to everyone.

So we really wanted Georgia to be here to represent and to show young boys and girls that golf is open to everyone. As a global sponsor we really want to use our platform to show that golf is open and that it's back in Scotland this week.

Q. Catriona, you might have played a practise round with Georgia?

CATRIONA MATTHEW: Yeah, I played with Georgia on Friday at North Berwick, myself and Liona and Clara. We all played together on Friday. It was great. I had met Georgia in Spain at the end of last year at an event, and like Jill said, very enthusiastic, keen, a good golfer. I wish her all best this week.

Q. How did it come about that you set that up?

CATRIONA MATTHEW: She sent me a message on Instagram, actually, the world of social media. Even I'm up-to-date on that.

Q. You've gotten awfully fit during your lockdown. Can you tell us about your Peleton addiction?

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CATRIONA MATTHEW: Yeah, we got a Peleton about six weeks into lockdown and it's kept us sane. Really because I went out running and my knee started hurting. I thought, I'm getting old now so I need these low impact exercises. I'm enjoying the bike, I must say. Can get quite competitive with it riding against different people. Yeah, we are loving it.

Q. If you were going to take on one of the European Tour boys that have been obsessed with their Peleton, which one do you think you could take?

CATRIONA MATTHEW: I don't know if I could take many. I've been watching Westwood's scores and his are unbelievable. I think I need a lot more practise.

Q. For Andrew and Jill, sports obviously in the spotlight at the moment and due to the silly behaviour of some football players. Has this been hammered home to the players this week that they really have to abide by all these measures that are in place more than ever now with what's happened the last few days in football?

DR. ANDREW MURRAY: Martin, thank you for that question. Again, I think that the Ladies European Tour, the LPGA, IMG, and all the key stakeholders this week have been really consistent for some weeks in terms of providing information to our players, as of what is expected as well.

So for example, everybody has completed some mandatory education on coronavirus, on the symptoms, what to do on social distancing and the effect of hygiene, etc., as well as providing information to the basics, at each stage of the journey, people have been met and given a warm welcome and a return to Scotland and people are loving being back in Scotland. But also clearing stating information of what we need to do in terms of our obligations to proceed with this golf event in Scotland, recognising that people are coming from all over the place.

But in terms of the golfers, I've been so impressed in the questions that people are asking, and the behaviours that they are exhibiting in terms of the social distancing, watching the hand sanitiser pump going up and down has been a thing that I've enjoyed seeing.

Sport has always been in the spotlight and I suppose sport can be a force for enormous good. There are huge benefits to the game of football, the game of rugby, the game of golf not only for players but also for people getting the opportunity to watch and to put a smile on people's faces by seeing Catriona and their heroes going up against the course.

As you say, we have all got obligations here, and it's been fantastic to see the collaboration of the Scottish government with the public health authorities and to take those key messages and ensure everyone has got them and humans are humans, but in terms of observing their behaviours here at the official hotels and at the Renaissance Club, which is a fantastic venue, the behaviours have been really strong and very impressive so far.

But we just absolutely need to be on our guard and do the right things consistently, and if that is the case, I think we'll have a hugely enjoyable golf event.

But I think all of our players, all of our caddies and staff recognise their obligations, and it's like people in the street, as well. If you go to Tesco, if you go to the butcher shop, if you go to other places, the vast majority of people are getting stuff, they are social distancing or physical distancing, using their hand hygiene effectively; they are wearing face coverings indoors at all times, etc., and doing the right things consistently.

So I suppose like the science -- but particularly in sport, we absolutely have got the obligation but I've been so heartened to see the approach of IMG, the LET and LPGA, and also the opportunity to put those messaging out to the general public.

Our golfers here this week are absolutely fantastic ambassadors for the sport, but just for healthy behaviours, anyway. In previous years, we've the likes of many of the world's Top-10 talking about benefits of physical activity and talking about the importance of the mental health, talking about the importance of hand hygiene and stuff.

So I suppose our players have been doing the right things consistently, but I think it's also hugely partial for media and SKY to talk about things that are not only good for golfers to decrease the risk of the virus, but also for general society in terms of measures that can make a difference for any issues with the virus in Scotland and keep it further ahead.

Q. Important no one steps out of line this week?

JILL MAXWELL: Yeah, very much so. It was a big decision internally that we would go ahead with our support of the event with everyone on board, all the stakeholders, that we could deliver this event safely. That was everyone's No. 1 priority. When you go up to the Renaissance, it's going to be difficult for the players to get close to each other. IMG have done a tremendous job with the setup of the tournament.

Outdoor dining, which should be quite interesting with the weather this week, but under canopies and two players per table. Inside if it is raining, there are no chairs at any tables. So we are not encouraging anyone to hang around and a lot of thought has gone into this.

Honestly a lot of these players haven't been able to earn a wage for the past four or five months and there's a real kind of scale on the LET and the LPGA of some players who financially it probably hasn't really impacted them, but for some, they have no option but to adhere to all of these safety measures because they need to play this week.

So I think more than ever, everyone is on board and all the players that I have seen so far have been very respectful. They understand this is just the way it has to be this year, and you know, they are embracing it and as Andrew said, I think coming from different destinations, there are different levels of precautions that are being taken in different countries, but everyone has arrived in Scotland and has just got on board.

So yeah, I'm confident that we are going to go ahead this week without too many hitches.

Q. Obviously you're very used to playing in big game atmospheres, particularly Solheim Cup, for example but no fans going to be at this tournament. So how much of a difference is that going to be for everybody, do you think?

CATRIONA MATTHEW: Yeah, I think that's going to be a little strange. I've been watching some of the men's golf that's been on the past few weeks. The first week was a little odd, but it's amazing how you get used to just watching it without the fans.

I think playing is going to be slightly different. I think it will probably perhaps take a couple of days or a couple of rounds just to get used to the fact that there's no one out there watching. But you know, I think as everybody has been saying, as players we are all just very excited to have the opportunity and chance to get out playing. I think that's something you'll just get used to. There's so many different things this week that that's just one other thing.

I think the main thing is that we are out there playing.

Q. We spoke a few weeks ago after Close House about the operation there and how thorough it was and how successful it was. Since then, have you picked up anything that you've added to the regime, the health regime that's been on The European Tour, similar the same type of regime that's going to be around here

and next week, as well?

DR. ANDREW MURRAY: Again, a tribute to colleagues for this specific event, because I do think they have done a terrific job in collaborating with the Scottish government and the public health authorities here and also with Aberdeen Standard Investments, and also with the players, thinking about the things that are important for safety but also the things that are important to the players.

For the events that we've had in Austria and the U.K. it's been largely dealing with the Austrian government and English government so there are subtle differences as to what the requirements are and what the things that are important are.

But essentially the principles are the same and it doesn't matter whether you're a golfer or whether you're a builder or whether you're a doctor or whatever. If you're physical distancing, if you're washing your hands effectively on a frequent basis, if you're using a face mask when you're inside and if you're following government advice, then things will generally go well. If we don't do those things consistently, there be issues but essentially, because most sporting organisations are using the World Health Organization principles and then applying it to their country and to their sport, very similar things have been done by The European Tour, by the Ladies European Tour, by the LPGA to safeguard the safety of the individuals but then also the events themselves.

So it's the same core principles. We continue to learn. We continue to speak to our players, and I suppose the difference this week is that we've got such an international constituent group, so many players coming, some of the world's top players coming from North America and from Asia and from Europe, etc., etc.

So again, it's just been that strong education again, providing information about what's appropriate in Scotland and what are the sort of things can keep us safe and what are the sort of things that can be done consistently that will make a difference.

Again I think the feedback that we have had from the players and the feedback that we have had from the governments and public health authorities and indeed from the media has been very supportive, and we hope that a continued approach of that, recognising that the virus hasn't gone away, it's something that we still need to take very seriously and continue to put control measures in place, and I think, again, it's recognising the unique opportunity we have in Scotland to also share the really positive public health messages that are in golf.

And it's great, again, as Catriona highlighted to see an uptick of a 30 per cent increase of people attending golf clubs at this time of year and that's something that we can strongly especially courage.

What we have done is established and good safety and protocols across sport, but now there's a good opportunity to tell a positive story about the health benefits of golf not only for the golfers playing this week but for the 60 million people that play globally and for the physical health and mental health benefits there.

We continue to learn and speak to our players and speak on a daily basis to the Scottish government, etc., and then just recognise all the different things that can happen and the things that might pop up and the things that we might need to consider as we move forward.

A bit of a wooly answer there, but I hope some of that was helpful.

Q. Accepting that all the precautions are in place, it's still a very, very international cosmopolitan event and I'm just wondering what contingencies you have in place for, say, one or two coronavirus cases, positive tests, to emerge, and ultimately, worst-case scenario, at what point with you pull the tournament, would you call it off? And whose decision would that be? Do you have the authority to do that?

DR. ANDREW MURRAY: Yeah, thank you for those questions. Again, what we recognise is that what the World Health Organization would say, and indeed the Scottish government would say is it difficult to pull the risk of anything in life down to zero. We may just sit in our front rooms for the rest of our lives, but there are considerable disbenefits to that.

It's about recognising what the risks are and what the benefits are and how the risks can be best controlled. So without the control measures that IMG, Ladies European Tour and the LPGA and all stakeholders have, but that's been reduced to low or very low due to all the things that have been put in place.

So it's not zero -- but it's viewed as being acceptable to the Scottish government and public health authorities and we continue to work with them. Again, if people presented with symptoms or if people presented with coronavirus as in the community, of course we would immediately provide medical attention, immediately isolate that individual and provide whatever support was necessary.

We would also speak to our health protection team and we would also speak to government, and ascertaining exactly

how we can best support any action that's necessary in terms of contact tracing, etc.

Now, where events have gone ahead, be that in terms of football or rugby or golf events in different parts of the world, one positive case has been safely dealt with with the health protection team, and with the public health consultants, and if that individual has only spent time with their caddie or a very modest number of individuals, then you're speaking about a very small number of people that would need to go into self-isolation.

So of course, the first thing we would do if people presented with symptoms suspicious of coronavirus, or indeed with coronavirus, is we would speak to the health protection team and put in place whatever actions are necessary, however when you have had isolated cases down south or up normal relating to various sports, and social distancing has been put in place so people have got a very small number of contacts, it has been possible to safely proceed with that tournament in collaboration with public health.

Where you see much larger outbreaks, and again, that would, I would hope, seem very unlucky given the control measures put in place and all the symptom checking and all the temperature checking and all the testing thus far being reassuring. But in that unlikely scenario, of course we recognise that there's not zero risk associated with that, so all the key stakeholders with the tournament would be involved with discussions with the government and public health as would be normal for any sport in Scotland, or indeed globally.

Q. How important is the event, despite the lack of spectators, and does the tournament mean that little bit more to you as a former winner and also given its location?

CATRIONA MATTHEW: The tournament, definitely is one of the biggest ones on my schedule, obviously as a former winner and being local, living five minutes along the road in North Berwick. Been a very special event for the 11 years it been on.

I must say, just really looking forward to playing in it. Obviously it's going to be different being for the local community this year that none of them can physically come and watch it, but as someone said earlier, hopefully people will be watching on television. I myself, I didn't realise how much live sport I didn't watch on TV until there wasn't any. I was struggling to find things to watch.

I think people are excited. I've been watching some of the men's golf on television and I think people are just excited

and it gives them something to watch on the TV and to have women's golf, women's sport up there will be good and I'm really looking forward to these next two weeks.

Q. Am I right in thinking that since The European Tour restart, there's not been a single positive test among players and caddies?

DR. ANDREW MURRAY: There has been no positive tests on site. What we have done is our players and our caddies have been hugely responsible, so what they have done is they have cleared symptoms consistent with coronavirus prior to travelling and there have been a small number of positive tests at home, so the player receiving an at-home test, taking a test before they leave to come to the tournament and thus far that's helped us have any positive tests on The European Tour thus far, in excess of 2,500.

Again with coronavirus being very common globally we would expect to have positive tests at golf events at some points in the future, as have been the case with other major sports. But again, you know, I just wanted to reiterate that as Nelson Mandela said, "Sport has the power to change the world." It's got the power to inspire. It can bring folk together. It can speak to folk. It can create hope. It can provide great sporting theatre. I've really missed it, as a sports fan myself.

So while we are taking these responsible actions, it's reassuring that so far we haven't had positive tests on site. We do expect that to occur at some point in time but we can do everything we can to decrease that and also I suppose let's also celebrate the power of sport and the opportunity it brings, and also the fact that our golfers so far have been really responsible, along with our caddies are promptly reporting symptoms, promptly reporting and taking the test before they came on site, and it's been the same this week.

The players, the caddies, the staff are here on site. They have reported symptoms; they have taken tests before they have arrived, etc., etc., and again, it's been great just to see the setup has been so safe and has been so secure and actually it's a great golf course. I went out for a run at the Renaissance Club, absolutely fantastic; the views back to Edinburgh, brilliant.

Q. Christina Kim has been quite vocal over the past couple weeks, some of the lengths she's gone to, vocal on social media about the lengths she's gone to about taking precautions traveling to tournaments. How influential is she in driving home that message?

CATRIONA MATTHEW: Yeah, I did see her outfit for flying

to Toledo. She was certainly going to be secure.

I suppose it's one of these things. You've got to respect everyone. Some people don't want to travel. If she wants to take those precautions, extreme precautions, that's great. As Andrew says, I think the distancing and hand sanitising and the face masks indoors are what's being recommended for the majority.

But yeah, it's an individual thing, and I think you just have to respect everyone's decision as to what they want to do to keep safe.

Q. To quickly double-check, in terms of accommodation, are all players staying on site or a couple of different hotels?

CATRIONA MATTHEW: All the players are in the Marriott in Edinburgh. Perhaps myself and another player because we live locally are allowed to isolate in our houses, but apart from that, I think everyone is at the hotel. Even our dog's been thrown out, the kids and the dog are all with my mum.

Q. You're so careful, you're not even walking your dog.

CATRIONA MATTHEW: Yeah.

Q. Can you clarify your domestic arrangements there, throwing the dog out and the kids and all that? And I suppose you've got to make a bubble of your own home, so you can't even pop out to buy a pint of milk or anything. That's part one of my question. Second part, no other Scottish women golfer really followed in your footsteps to the same extent and success you were having a few years ago. Does that disappoint you, and do you see any signs for optimism anywhere?

CATRIONA MATTHEW: To your first question, fortunate that my mom lives along the road, so the kids and the dog have gone along there for the week.

But yeah, on the other one, I think it's great. We've got I think there's a lot of Scots playing this week which is good. Obviously Gemma Dryburgh has been playing well. She played well in the Rose Series winning one and got her first Top-10 on the LPGA. I think this is maybe her third season out there and it does take a couple of years perhaps for the majority of players just to find their feet on Tour. Hopefully she can build on that and go from strength-to-strength.

You know, obviously you've got Kelsey and Carly and Kylie. Hopefully one of them can perhaps break through

and have some good years.

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