

Meijer LPGA Classic

Sunday, June 18, 2023

Grand Rapids, Michigan, USA

Blythefield Country Club

Leona Maguire

Press Conference

^

THE MODERATOR: Welcome inside and outside here at the Meijer LPGA Classic for Simply Give, online media center.

I am pleased to be joined by this year's champion Leona Maguire. We have a number of people here in the tent. I'm going to start it off and then open it up for questions.

Leona, the monkey is off the back after two runner-up performances; a 64 today seals it. What are your thoughts standing there?

LEONA MAGUIRE: Yeah, I felt like I was playing some really good golf this week. Been trying to be as patient as possible. The goal today was just to go out and shoot as low a score as possible and see where I ended up.

I mean, this one is I think that little bit sweeter after coming so close two years in a row. I know a lot of people this week were saying you're due one, this course owes you something, all the rest.

But I suppose that's not golf. Golf usually doesn't work like that. But nice that it all worked out well for me this week.

Q. We hear about patience all the time. Here on the 13th tee at 2-under today, you had that great closing stretch. What was the role of patience for you today?

LEONA MAGUIRE: Yeah, I think it was massive I think all week. It's that kind of golf course where there's chances, you just have to be ready to take them when you get them. I played the par-3s really, really well today and didn't quite play the par-5s as well as I would have liked, but I suppose that's golf. That putt going in on 13 was sort of a bit of a mental shift for me, and then obviously to get that eagle on 14 was huge.

I played 14 really well all week, and when that ball went to where I was getting flashbacks of Nelly two years ago a little bit. We were pretty tight going down the stretch there



two years ago and when she made eagle there, so I was getting good feelings from it that maybe I'd come out the right side.

Q. What's the inner satisfaction of needing to shoot a low number and pulling it off as you did?

LEONA MAGUIRE: Yeah, I mean, it's hugely satisfying. I think it's one thing knowing what to do; another thing executing on it. I feel like I've been playing some really good golf lately, and it's nice that everything sort of just of clicked together on the back nine.

Q. So many people in contention. It seems to happen like this every year. How are you able to shut all of that out and focus, especially having been through it the last two years and you know what that could bring?

LEONA MAGUIRE: Yeah, I think I said last night I was on both ends of it. I was leading from the front and then also came from behind last year, so I know anything can happen on this golf course.

My goal today was to shoot 20-under par. I thought if I got to 20 that would be a good target to set for the girls coming behind. I didn't look at leaderboards. I didn't know what anybody was doing, and I think, yeah, it was obviously a bonus to go one better, 21, and obviously bogey free on a Sunday is very nice, as well.

Q. 6-under through the final six holes. At what point or did you at all start to feel a little nerves? Were you like, oh, this is happening; been here before? How do you settle those nerves as well and just really focus on the game?

LEONA MAGUIRE: Yeah, I think the fact that I had the goal of getting to 20-under was good on my head. I didn't know what the girls were doing behind. I know what Ariya was doing with me, but other than that I didn't know what was happening.

So I didn't know if I was in front, behind, whatever it was. I that helped me stay on target and keep committing to my



shots and my putts.

Q. What was the moment when you finally looked up and figured it out?

LEONA MAGUIRE: On 18 that chip in front of the green. I was surprised honestly. I thought maybe I had to get up-and-down to win or at least for a playoff. I was surprised when I looked up and the girls were on 18.

Q. What do you think it is about this course that seems to bring the best out of so many people every year?

LEONA MAGUIRE: Yeah, I think there's a lot of birdie opportunities. It's a great golf course. It's a really fair test. You need to drive it well, and as I said, took a lot more chances.

The greens were a lot firmer this year. I think it was a trickier test than it has been the last couple years. The wind was slightly different today, as well, so it was kind swirly little gusts, which made it interesting.

I love coming here, and, yeah, can't wait to come back next year.

Q. It looked like your wedges were right on point today. Especially on 17. Ariya was off to the left and it looked like you were -- what was your number on 17, and what did you hit into that green?

LEONA MAGUIRE: Yeah, I had 102, I think, into 17. It was my U wedge, my 50-degree. It was just a really nice number. It's one of those days when all your numbers seem to be good.

And then same on 16. Hit like a little sort of right between -- not quite sure what the wind was doing up that green, whether it was strong or not. (Audio distortion.) It's up there, believe me. So I did, and yeah, nice to hit that one in close. That's probably one of the trickiest pins all week, I would say, that one on 16, so it was nice to be able to walk up there and tap that one in.

Q. Speaking of tapping it in, you marked the ball on 18. Looked like maybe to us it didn't look like it was a very long putt. You took your time with it, of course. As you were over that putt, what was the emotion? What were you feeling?

LEONA MAGUIRE: Yeah, I mean, yeah, I think it was nice obviously it being short and whatever. I missed a short one on the (indiscernible) last year on that green, so wasn't taking any chances this year.

So nice to be able to finish it off with a birdie and finish it off in style. Yeah, relief probably more than anything. I feel like I've been really close for a year and a half, and it's nice to get that second win finally, and some really good momentum heading into the majors in a couple of weeks.

Q. We've seen you in three different scenarios in this tournament, obviously with Nelly a couple years ago, the playoff with that same putt, and this year with a lot of people in contention, wild leaderboard. Did you call back on those previous experiences here to try to win this tournament here today or was it kind of, well, I'm here, I'm just going to play golf, nothing to it?

LEONA MAGUIRE: Yeah, I think Saturday was big for me. I think yesterday was a big day for me. Didn't quite hit it the way I wanted, didn't give myself as many chances as I would have liked to have yesterday, but stayed patient and gave myself a chance going into today, so I think that was really key.

I feel like I've drawn on both years. They were both very different years. But yeah, nice to come out on top this year.

Q. For a fun one, who were you talking to on the phone there with Stephanie?

LEONA MAGUIRE: (Distortion) and then mom and dad came in. So, yeah, Lisa has been here the last two years. She's going to be out at Baltusrol next week, so that'll be nice.

But, yeah, managed to get this one without her, unfortunately. Hopefully I'll get one some day with her there watching.

Q. Speaking of Baltusrol, did you get an early look at it? Have you been there yet? What do you know about it?

LEONA MAGUIRE: Yeah, I played the Monday after my Mizuho. It's a beastly golf course. It's a real major venue. I think this week is good preparation for it. I feel like I drove the ball really well this week.

I think the greens are going to be firm and fast there like they were here. A slightly different test it being a major and all.

But yeah, I think the biggest thing will be resting and recovering after this as quickly as I can and resetting and going again tomorrow once we get on-site.

Q. Keeping in line with where you're from, big day potentially for Rory. How much inspiration have you drawn from him over the years, and do you still?

LEONA MAGUIRE: Yeah, obviously he's been incredibly impressive, everything that he's done throughout his career.

He was kind of gone out of junior golf in Ireland when I was growing up, but I think yes, Rory has been a big inspiration for a lot of people. The big one for me has been Padraig Harrington.

I said Dermott, I had a few really key up-and-downs this week especially on 17 both Friday and Saturday. Padraig showed me some shots, so I have to thank him for it. I got to spend some time with him, and yeah, all the Irish guys are great.

I think it's nice being from that sort of close-knit community, Shane and Padraig, Paul McGinley. They're there to give me advice or give Dermott advice whenever we need it, so it's nice to have that sort of camaraderie give the people at home more to cheer about.

Q. When did Padraig teach you those shots?

LEONA MAGUIRE: Last summer. So I potentially have to pay him another trip this summer. Right before the British Open last year. He's a little busy today at the U.S. Open, but I'll have to check in with him again and see if we can do it again.

Q. This win is part of a series of consistent performances for you near the top of the leaderboard. Is there anything you and your team worked on heading ahead of the Bank of Hope that has allowed you to be so consistent over this run?

LEONA MAGUIRE: Yeah, I think after LA, I went home for two weeks. It was nice to sort of be at home and reset and recharge with family and friends and my team, my coaches, my physio, all of that. I think I needed that. I was supposed to play Founders and skipped it. I think that was sort of a rest that I needed at that point in the season.

My coach last week Orlando few days we doesn't major adjustments fine tuned a few things and I've been pretty confident with where my game has been. It's been really steady for the past few weeks now, so it was just a case of having that patience to let it all come together.

Q. You talked about that closing stretch, something clicked. Can you elaborate on what clicked over the close, and where would you rank that stretch

compared to any other stretch in your career?

LEONA MAGUIRE: Yeah, it's all a bit of a blur right now. Not even sure what I did. I think one of the turning points in my season this year was Chevron, was the back nine at Chevron on Friday.

I think I was 4-under on that back nine just to make the cut, and it was very different situation but same mentality and same execution. When we walked off that day on Friday, Dermott said, you don't realize how important this round has just been, and I think today was a really good example of that.

Q. I was wondering what you think this means to all the other Irish women looking to play pro golf, to win twice on the LPGA Tour is some achievement. We saw Olivia had a good week this week, as well, and encouragement to see her doing so well. How much inspiration do you think you're giving others?

LEONA MAGUIRE: Yeah, absolutely. It was great to see Olivia playing really well this week in Germany. I was chatting to her early in the week. It was nice to have Stephanie there at the end, as well. We've all played a lot of golf together over the years and nice to see her put in a good week this week, as well.

I feel like there's a lot of good girls coming up through the ranks. It was nice to see Beth Coulter get the leading qualifier at the British Am this week, as well, something that I've done in the past.

Yeah, I feel like there's a lot of girls coming up. Hopefully Lauren Walsh will be out here soon. I know Aine Donegan has qualified for the U.S. Open. That's going to be a really cool experience for her.

Yeah, I'm just trying to do what I do and hopefully it'll inspire a younger generation of Irish girls.

Q. Do you have to change majors coming up low ish scoring prospect over the next few weeks? Does that take a change of chip at all or just the same office work?

LEONA MAGUIRE: Not really. I think you still need to hit really good shots. You need to hit a lot of fairways, hit a lot of greens, putt well.

So I think overall it doesn't really change. I think Baltusrol will probably be a little longer next week, probably the par-5s will be a little trickier.

But overall really happy with where my game is at and just



try to, like I said before, rest and recover and reset as quickly as possible tonight, tomorrow, leading into it, so we're ready to go on Thursday.

Q. Confidence must be pretty good.

LEONA MAGUIRE: Yeah, I feel like my confidence has been few weeks case of getting it all to come together and the goal was to be coming into good form heading into Baltusrol and Pebble, so we've peaked a week early, which is nice, so hopefully we can continue that run of form.

Q. Are you aware of the stat here that all the champions here have won major championships? No pressure.

LEONA MAGUIRE: I mean, it's a nice one. Obviously to get my second win is obviously very nice, and I'll try and give myself as best a chance as possible in the remaining majors this year.

But I didn't put any pressure on myself this week, so not going to do that for the rest of the season and just enjoy my golf as much as I can.

FastScripts by ASAP Sports