

The Chevron Championship

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Houston, Texas, USA

Memorial Park Golf Course

Farah O'Keefe

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: Joining us ahead of the The Chevron Championship is one of our amateurs in the field, Farah O'Keefe. Farah, you've had an exciting year, a few collegiate wins, played at the Augusta National Women's Amateur, and now you're making your debut here at Chevron. Take us through some of the emotions of your year and how you're feeling with your game right now.

FARAH O'KEEFE: This year, you know, I felt like I had a really strong fall. I had a lot of really close calls coming down the stretch. I remember talking with my coach. We have post-tournament meetings one on one. I just told her I'm feeling real frustrated. I feel like I'm right there knocking on door but I just can't break through.

We did a mental performance training over the winter where we basically talked about different strategies and how to close out tournaments, how to stay really level headed throughout the week. I think it showed up in my results more, but I think at the end of the day it was like a confidence thing and mentally I just felt so much more at peace.

Like no matter what the result was, whether I won or finished eighth place, I had a tough tournament in Florida at Moon. I don't know, I think I had like eight three putts. It was not great. I talked about that at Darius. I went and got the putter checked and all of a sudden everything started going in.

Yeah, I think that was kind of the biggest turning point for me was doing that mental training and figuring out where to go from there.

Q. You're from Texas. Played for the University of Texas. Talk about what it means to you to be playing in a major in your home state.

FARAH O'KEEFE: It's a big deal. You know, I think this is the only LPGA event here and it's a major, so to be able to be at home, in my home state, and represent kind of my Texas heritage I think is big deal for me and for my family and all my friends and entire support group.

It's not every day you get to play in your home state. We barely have collegiate tournaments here for some reason, so it's cool. It's a very cool opportunity and I'm super excited.

Q. We have a great group of amateurs out here this week. I saw you played a practice round with a few of them this morning. Can you talk about the group of am out here and your relationship with them?

FARAH O'KEEFE: Yeah, I. Feel like I know pretty much everybody on the am side. I'm a bit of a talker so I feel like I connect with people in that way.

It was cool. Played the World Am with Megha. We were able to win that with Cathy Park. It's cool any time you get to play with her or any of the girls on that team. We're going to have that connection for the rest of our lives.

It's just super special to look back on that week. And then obviously Kiara just got announced on to the Curtis Cup team and we're going to be teammates here pretty soon, too.

It's just special to play with those girls. We're probably going to be playing with each other for the rest of our lives, the rest of golf careers. We're going to play in Solheim Cups. We're going to come down the stretch trying to battle it out at a major at the U.S. Open and all that kind of stuff.

It's just special. It's just really special and means a lot to be able to play with them.

Q. I think there is eight amateurs here this week. Do you feel like as a group that you want to prove that amateurs are just not an add-on but you belong out here and you want to -- you know, girls that have been playing 20, 15, ten years want to show what you can do as well?

FARAH O'KEEFE: Absolutely. I don't think any of us come to a tournament without the intention of winning and playing well, otherwise there is not really a point to be



there. You're just teeing it up for fun at that point.

So I think everybody here is competitive. Obviously all the pros are because that's their life, how they make their money. But I think at the end of the day for us amateurs it's a great opportunity for us to go kind of show what we're made of and show the future of the game.

The direction of the game is in a really cool spot. I think everybody here playing as an amateur is representing that to the highest capacity and they're really, I don't know, just putting a good face on the game for the future.

It's just exciting for us. It's not every day we get to tee it up in a major that we haven't gone through like local qualifying like the U.S. Open or maybe the British Open.

So at the end of the day I think we're all going to play the best golf we possibly can and see where it stacks up against everybody else.

Q. I wanted you to talk to us about the possible tone from the weather and how maybe there was an unwelcoming tone, how you combat that energy before you start?

FARAH O'KEEFE: Yeah, I mean, I grew up in Texas so I feel like April showers were like, we get them; it happens. But I think like the weather and everything has kind of softened up the course a lot. We had a lot of mud balls today, so I think that will probably be something to be expected for the tournament.

But I don't know. I think -- I mean it's rare -- I wouldn't say it's rare to get this kind of rain in April. It's kind of a given. I think the course will be cool and we'll be fine. It's supposed to look good for the weekend and everything and for Thursday and Friday.

Q. How do you look at competition as an amateur and how do you look at that where you do have like relationships with your teammates and opponents as well?

FARAH O'KEEFE: That's a good question. I feel like -- I don't know. I play on our college team and so when we are playing, just qualifying or something, we're trying to make the lineup, we are super competitive. They're my best friends, my sisters basically. I lived with them.

So I think when you transfer that and go and play in a major championship you don't know everybody that you're playing against, you know, you don't live with them so you don't know how they do their laundry and all that kind of stuff.

But, I mean, it's really at the end of the day just you and the golf ball, just you and the golf course. Whatever score you can put up is the score that you have that day. I think sometimes it beats everybody else and sometimes it doesn't.

So I feel like at the end of the day I'm just trying to go out there and play the best that I can. Sure, I'm competitive and I want to beat people. If I'm somewhere at the top of the leaderboard at the end of the week I might be watching that a little bit to see where I am.

Really I'm just trying to play the best golf I can and hit the best shot I can at that moment.

Q. Kind of attempted to ask you (mic cut out) different ways to do it.

FARAH O'KEEFE: Yeah.

Q. What is being on the National Team, what has it done for you?

FARAH O'KEEFE: It's done a lot actually. I've had the opportunity to play -- I played in one event where I traveled with the team which was really cool. Went to Scotland for the British Amateur last summer.

I think having that group of people that you can travel with overseas is kind of a game changer. I've been to the British. That was my third year going. Two years prior I'd gone with my college team and my mom.

It's when you go over there it's kind of -- almost feels isolating, but when you go with the U.S. National Development Team they're seasoned people. They've already done that. So it gets some of the stress out of the way early in the week.

But also I think the knowledge that those coaches and the managers and everything have for the game is really second to none. I've learned a lot just from hanging out with them for a week at a time or maybe sometimes they just come down to Austin for a day.

I feel like I get little nuggets here and there that really improve my game in the long run.

Q. I think you've answered this (mic cutting out)...just being around competition, is that pretty much it?

FARAH O'KEEFE: Yeah, competition. Absolutely, you go to those -- the days or the tournaments where you're with the that team and you go down the list and you're with one

through five in the world, right, or whatever it is. You have top 20 in the world there sometimes.

So it's just special. You don't get to compete with them every day. I don't play in a tournament with Kiara Romero every single week. To have that built-in connection is very cool, but really it's just a place where you get elite amateurs together and you're just sharing tips, building on each other's games, observing things, picking things up.

And I feel like the coaches are really, really good at if they see something they might not say it right away. Might not be like, you need to fix this. They'll just kind of ask you, is that normal -- like do you normally do that? If it's like, no, I don't normally hook it or something like that, they'll try to step in and kind of help you out.

I think most of the time we're just having fun. We're just having a good time. It's just been really cool.

Q. Question for you: From Austin. Played UT. Are your friends and family going to be here with you?

FARAH O'KEEFE: Yes. I will have quite a bit of family coming down. So my mom is a school teacher and gets out of work on Friday at around 3:00 and she'll be driving over. My younger brother who is a senior in high school is coming and my dad also. Then I have my swing coach, Mark Brooks, coming. We were going to have the whole team out but they have their U.S. Open qualifiers, so they're going to try to qualify for another major championship.

Coach will be coming with her husband I think either tomorrow or Friday. And then it's kind of random, but I have -- I play Fortnite and I have one of the kids that's in my squad, he's coming down from Oklahoma. It's kind of random, but he plays golf and actually is from Austin too and I've become good friends with him. Yeah, it'll be good.

And then I have my old college teammate on the bag this week so some of her family might come as well.

Q. That's pretty cool.

FARAH O'KEEFE: Yeah.

Q. Deep down, having family close, does that make you play a little harder so they can see the fruits of all of their labor?

FARAH O'KEEFE: 100%, yeah. I mean, I wouldn't be here without my family truly. You know, I grew up in a place where we weren't off the best financially, so my family, my parents, they made a lot of different sacrifices

so that I could continue to play golf.

I really wouldn't be here -- I mean, of course I wouldn't be here -- but I wouldn't be playing golf if it weren't for them and the sacrifice they put in to allow me to play my game, the game that I love.

I feel like every time they get to come watch it's kind of like, okay, let's do them right. Let's do them justice and show them all the struggle we went through when I was young was 100% worth it.

Q. Back to Fortnite. I don't know a ton about it but did you know this guy since you said he was from Austin before, and so you guys talked about let's play Fortnite together?

FARAH O'KEEFE: Yeah, I actually met him -- so the caddie I have on the bag this week is Bentley Cotton and she's a member of a little course in Austin called Balcones Country Club. I would go out there to practice just because it's probably the tightest golf course in Austin. Really good to work on tee shots and all that stuff.

So I went out there one day and this kid is out there and he's hitting the ball 330 yards, and I'm like, who is that guy? We ended up joining up with him, Austin Skierski. Now we play Fortnite and it's the most random thing ever. It's me, Bentley, my brother, and then Austin. We run quads on Friday and Saturday nights when I'm home.

Q. What does that do for you? Nice escape?

FARAH O'KEEFE: Yeah, 100%. I don't know, student-athlete you're doing -- you do golf full time and school full time. You're trying to basically juggle two very full time jobs at the same time. It's not always the easiest thing and can kind of weigh on you a little bit mentally.

So I try to play some games when I'm not smoked with homework or whatever. So it's just kind of -- I don't know, it's kind of fun, wholesome. Kind of, I don't know, just kind of a funny thing to do.

I think on a Friday night after a long week it's like, okay, I can relax, play video games for two hours and go to bed and I'll be fine.

Q. Are you pretty good at it?

FARAH O'KEEFE: No. I'm definitely the one person in our squad that let's everybody down. I've had a couple really good moments where everybody else is knocked and I'm still alive and I end up winning the game or whatever, but when we're in the middle of the season I get a little rusty on

on the joystick. I don't know, but, yeah, I'm normally the one person that dies first.

Q. Where are you at in terms of schoolwork now? Are you approaching finals?

FARAH O'KEEFE: Yeah, so this week is -- I guess next Monday is our last day of class. I'm actually playing my U.S. Open qualifier on Monday, so I told all my professors, yeah, I'm missing the last three weeks of school. Which is kind of crazy. But they were like it's okay, it's fine, you're a golfer, we get it.

I been lucky. I feel like I've had really good professors at Texas. We're a pretty strong athletic school, so when you tell them you're an athlete they are generally pretty forgiving and understanding. I'm pretty lucky that all the classes I had finals in this year were just papers so I didn't actually have to go in and take a final.

So, yeah, I'm ready to be done and just play golf for the rest of the semester. It's crazy. It's like a never ending loop. You play your spring semester which is like ten tournaments, and then you have one-week break and you go play your summer schedule.

Like our only offseason is over winter which is when you cram in other classes to fill your credits. It's just a constant grind.

Q. What is the key -- you were talking about closing out tournaments. What's the key to close out a tournament?

FARAH O'KEEFE: I think just -- we talked about it. You know, my dad has been my long-term coach. He's the person that started me in the game. One of the things we always talked about is like if it works, don't change it. It's very simple but it's kind of the reason of attack on anything.

So if you're leading the tournament through -- we play 54 holes. If you're leading the tournament through 36 holes, whatever you did in those 36 holes clearly worked. Try to go do the same thing tomorrow. Continue what's working. Don't press. Don't change anything. Don't try to play safe, more aggressive. Just keep doing what you're doing.

I think in the past I've kind of gotten in the situations where I'm right on the bubble. Maybe I'm two back or something and I haven't stuck to my game plan, and so I get to the third day, the last round, and I try to play too safe and protect what I have instead of just keep going. Just keep going to the next number and the next hole and hit the next shot.

So that's been one of the things that we talked about, is focusing on the next 200 feet in front of you. I think they say like comparison is the thief of all joy. As soon as you start comparing yourself to the field, start looking backwards, you're going to get depressed and upset, and soon as you looking forward you're building anxiety.

So that's been the biggest thing, is just stay where your feet are. Focus on the next 200 feet. Make it through those 200 feet and do it again and go through the next 200. It's really simple and seems like something that you wouldn't really think about, but it's really helped.

Q. You mentioned earlier that you love to chat a little bit. I love that. As someone who also has the gift of gab. Do you have any go-to, in-round ice breakers that you love to go to when you're playing with somebody new?

FARAH O'KEEFE: I feel like the typical chain of command when you're playing college is what's your year, what's your major, that kind of stuff. And then do you have any siblings, any pets.

But I feel like I have a gift of building connection and so I've been really blessed to be on a team that's so culturally diverse. We have girls from everywhere in the world.

Any time that I get to play with somebody that I don't know, where you from? What's your favorite food? That kind of stuff. Kind of find something that -- an interest that's in common and talk about that for the rest of the day.

Q. That said, do you have any players out here, LPGA pros that you kind of turn to that you look to for advice this week? If so, what have they told you?

FARAH O'KEEFE: Yeah, I don't know. Melanie Green texted me last week. She was like, hey, do you need a caddie? I was like, no, I'm okay. Thanks. So I just saw her the other day. We got to catch up a little bit which was good.

We played on the same Palmer Cup team after my freshman year of college. It was good to see her.

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