



Ludvig Åberg

Press Conference

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THE MODERATOR: Good morning, ladies and gentlemen. It's a pleasure to welcome Ludvig Åberg back to the interview room. Ludvig, thank you for joining us here today. You really made a statement in your Masters debut last April with an impressive runner-up finish. What learnings have you taken from last year's performance as you prepare for this week?

LUDVIG ÅBERG: Yeah, it was really cool. Obviously looking back to what we did 12 months ago, it was a really cool experience. Obviously it was my first major, so going into that, I didn't really know what to expect. But it exceeded my expectations by a mile, and it was really cool to sort of feel all the buzz and have a chance to win late on Sunday was really cool, and it was very justifying in terms of where we were in my progress and in my ability.

I've used that sort of in the preparation, and it's really nice to sort of know that you can, and deep down know that you're able to do that and to be in that situation. Before I had done it, I didn't really know, and I feel like at this point in time, I feel like I do know.

It's been good to be back, and looking forward to a good week.

Q. Ludvig, how would you describe your demeanor on the golf course? You don't seem to get too flustered by very much.

LUDVIG ÅBERG: Yeah, I'd like to think I'm very consistent in terms of the way that I approach -- whether I'm 5-under or 5-over. I'd like to think that I do the same things. I'd like to think that I'm just as chatty to my caddie if I'm 5-over or 5-under. I like to view myself as a consistent player and person.

This game is so hard, and it's going to get you up and down. And it's tricky as it is, and I'd like to remain somewhat consistent in what I do.

Q. Is that the way you are in life generally?

LUDVIG ÅBERG: I'd say so, yeah. I feel very comfortable in my own skin, and I try not to be someone who I'm not. And yeah, I think that resonates to how I play golf on the golf course, too.

Q. You had your biggest win as a professional earlier this year, and I believe you're coming off back-to-back missed cuts for the first time. How would you describe the up-and-down nature of the year so far?

LUDVIG ÅBERG: Yeah, it's been a little up and down. Obviously San Diego was the biggest win that I've had in my career so far, and it was probably the highest of highs that I've felt in my career, and like you said, too, I came off two missed cuts, which is probably the lowest of lows that I've had in my career so far.

Also, I respect and I understand that the game is going to take you there sometimes, and it's going to be up and down, and it's going to be tricky. Alluding to the previous question, I think that's when that comes into play a lot.

No matter if I win or tournament or lose a tournament or miss the cut in a tournament, I still do the same things. I still wake up and try to do the same things in terms of practice, in terms of training, and that's not going to change.

I feel like that's how I've approached these last couple of weeks, even though things have been going a little bit up and down. I understand it's part of the game and it's going to be like that if you have a long and successful career.

Q. Is there something technical that you're trying to work on?

LUDVIG ÅBERG: Yeah, a little bit. There's a few things that I'd like to do a little bit better, and I've felt like these last two weeks that I had off before San Antonio I worked on a few things. And even though the results weren't amazing at San Antonio, I could still see a few things that I really liked, which was very nice.

Like I said, golf is going to be up and down. There's always something that you work on. I'd like to see those things a little bit better this week, which I'm optimistic about.

Q. Coming into your second Masters, how does it feel any different than your first? And along with that, what's your comfort level? Obviously you played well last year. What is it that makes you comfortable or feels comfortable around here?

LUDVIG ÅBERG: Yeah, it's a little bit -- it feels a little different compared to last year. I know where player parking is. I know where to get my coffee and those things. Those things make it a little bit easier.

Yeah, I do feel comfortable. I feel like the experiences that I've had in the last 12 months have helped me to get to this point in my career. And it's still really hard. It's still -- Augusta is still a really hard place to go out and play at. But I like it. It demands a lot of creativity. It demands a lot of shot shaping, and the greens are obviously the way they are. It's just a really cool place to come play golf at.

Q. Curious if there's any places or anything that you've run into since being back that have triggered any memories from last year or have brought you some joy or good vibes.

LUDVIG ÅBERG: Good question. When we got here a couple days ago, obviously yesterday got cut short a little bit, but it was just cool to get on the course. We were fortunate enough to be here a couple weeks ago with Mr. Nelson next to me and we got to play the golf course.

It's just really cool to sort of resonate. We played a practice round the other day, and I felt like me and Joe, my caddie, we said last year like 15 times based on this is what we did last year, this is what we did last year.

I think having those experiences in your back pocket is really nice, but come Thursday morning it's not going to change anything. You still have to go out and hit the golf shots and hit the putts and do as good as you can.

Q. You mentioned working on a couple of things leading into the Masters. What have you been most focused on?

LUDVIG ÅBERG: Yeah, I sort of have this thing in my backswing where I get a little bit quick technically and my spine leans towards the target in my backswing, and I really don't like that because from there I have to go this way and I get across and underneath it.

It's just sort of my tendencies that I always have to work on, and I've felt like over these last couple weeks those have been a little bit more apparent. I've felt like I've buttoned up a little bit last week, even though it wasn't amazing. But I still feel very optimistic about the way it's looking at the moment.

Q. Has that been more apparent in your driver or irons?

LUDVIG ÅBERG: I think the longer the club is, obviously the more force, the more power you put into it, the more it obviously gets. Yeah, you can still sort of get away with it with a short iron, 9-iron, pitching wedge. As soon as you get up to a 4-iron or a driver, it gets a little bit more obvious, I think.

Q. Are you one of the players who tries to approach this tournament as just a regular tournament, and why would that be so hard to do?

LUDVIG ÅBERG: No, I don't. I do approach it as one of the biggest events of the year. I do think it's important to do that because I think if you don't it's going to be really -- you're almost going to hit a wall in terms of when you actually experience it.

I had the same sort of approach last year where I just tried to embrace it. I tried to really sort of hug it, if you will, and I think it's important to do that because it is a big tournament. I'm not trying to be delusional. I'm not trying to create it into something that it's not. I feel like an important thing for me is to acknowledge that and be okay with that.

Q. There's been a lot of replays of the final round last year on the air lately. I was wondering, have you watched a replay of the final round? You hit a lot of great shots and had the 11th hole, and did you have any thoughts about that replay?

LUDVIG ÅBERG: Yeah, I remember I watched it sort of the week after when I got home after Hilton Head last year, but then I haven't seen it in a long time. Maybe I should. Maybe I should. That was a good idea.

But I sort of remember the shots. I can probably play the round in my head as we speak. But I haven't rewatched it yet.

Q. What did you take out of that replay?

LUDVIG ÅBERG: I just thought it was really cool. A few of those putts that I made, I made a really good putt on No. 2 from the back of the green for birdie and just felt very steady, felt very consistent in the way that I approached that round. It was cool to sort of see myself tee off in one of the last groups and to do that in the final round.

Q. How do you like your new outfit, and are you into fashion at all in your everyday life?

LUDVIG ÅBERG: Yeah, it's nice. I like it. So this is the new originals line from Adidas, which is new for this week. I like it. I've always sort of been interested in fashion. I wear a lot of original stuff off the golf course when I'm home, lots of the trefoil originals logo on the hoodies and on the pants and tee shirts, so I do feel very comfortable. I think it's very cool, and I'm proud to be a part of it.

Q. The Højgaard brothers are reaching out to play with some more experienced players in the practice round to learn as much as possible. Did you do that last year and also this year and who, if so?

LUDVIG ÅBERG: Yeah, I remember I played Tuesday and Wednesday with Rory McIlroy last year. It was cool to see him, listen to how he talked about the golf course and sort of how his approach to the golf course has changed over the years.

I have nothing planned for this year. We'll see. I'm planning on playing the back nine today in the afternoon, so we'll sort of see what group I can crash on the tee box and see who shows up.

But yeah, I think Augusta is a place where experience comes in, and it's very important. I feel like I can lean a lot on my caddie, Joe, on that; but to hear from other players could be valuable, as well.

Q. You've said before that you like playing the week leading into a major. I imagine part of that is for momentum and rhythm and stuff like that. Is there any trick when it's coming off a missed cut this week?

LUDVIG ÅBERG: I think so, definitely. It definitely makes it a little bit different. Obviously I only got two days of tournament instead of four, which I know for a fact that the more I play, the better I get.

So yeah, it probably changed a little bit, but I also think it was -- I'm trying to be optimistic, but I think it was a little bit more the good, as well, that I was able to get here. We played Sunday. Obviously couldn't do too much yesterday, and prepared that way. I do think it altered it a little bit.

But I'd like to think it was for the good.

Q. As you were driving here and looking forward to this event, what's the one thing that you looked forward to most of all? Don't say the whole place because that's pretty obvious.

LUDVIG ÅBERG: Good question. Very good question. I think one thing that's very underrated about Augusta -- it's not underrated, but I think just because of the fact that the patrons don't have their phones out, it actually makes it feel like they're so much more engaged. It's a lot more eye contact with the fans. It's a lot more -- you can really tell that they watch and appreciate good golf.

I remember walking a couple holes where -- like yesterday when we played, it almost felt like a tournament round because there was so much people, and the fact that no one is on their phone, no one is taking pictures, no one is doing that, it feels like they're a lot more engaged, which I as a player really appreciate. I think that's very cool.

Q. Along similar lines, I'm wondering if you could share what your favorite shot to hit on the golf course is, and at the same time, what shot gives you some trepidation, anxiety and challenges you the most?

LUDVIG ÅBERG: Yeah, I think it depends if you pull it off or not. There's a lot of cool shots. Obviously one of my favorites is probably the second shot on 13 just because of the fact that you have the ball above your feet, you need to sort of aim over the creek and let the slope take it in. But it can also be very nerve-racking. I remember last year we had wind off the left so it was sort of like an S-curve 4-iron ball sort of, which can be a little tricky.

Yeah, I think if you want to win this tournament, you need to pull off those shots. You need to pull off obviously the second shot on 11, the second shot on 15, first shot, tee ball on 16. There's a lot that can go either way, and I think that's why there have been so many dramatic and iconic sort of back nines in the history of this tournament.

Q. People are still talking about last year in the sense that -- I'm sure you know the history. Only two players have ever won this tournament in their first try. The first player, Horton Smith, and Fuzzy Zoeller in 1979, and yet you almost did it. What's your reflection on that? Did it surprise you?

LUDVIG ÅBERG: Yeah, it sucks that I don't get a second try on that, that I can't do it again.

But yeah, I think obviously looking back to last year, it was really cool, and it would have been cool to do that and to sort of put my name on that list, but I hope to do it in another way. Yeah, it was a culmination of a lot of things, I think.

Obviously Augusta is I think in my opinion the coolest place in the world when it comes to the game of golf, and yeah, I'm just really excited to go play it.

Q. Ludvig, you mentioned you like doing everything the same, as you're warming up, as you're preparing. We're going to be able to track your shots pretty specifically this week through the app. What should we be looking for? What are those checklist things that you're always doing when you're practicing?

LUDVIG ÅBERG: Do you mean practicing or a warmup --

Q. Either or both, whatever.

LUDVIG ÅBERG: Obviously because if I'm working on some things I like to spend a little bit of time on that, but not too much, and then try to be done with that. Then I always like to go in to hit into different shots, sort of hit a draw 8-iron right of this pin, hit a fade 7-iron to this pin because that keeps me very matched, and it keeps me very attuned into what I'm doing. I would probably look out for that, if I was looking on the range.

But then, yeah, when it comes to the warmup before the round, there's not a whole lot going on. I'm just making sure that my body is ready to go. I try not to pay attention a whole lot too much to what I'm doing when I'm warming up.

Q. Last year a key factor to your success was your putting here. Can you explain how it is to putt on these greens?

LUDVIG ÅBERG: Yeah, they're tricky. Obviously you've got to play a lot of break. A lot of these putts -- I'm doing the AimPoint system and there's a lot of two, two and a half, three percent, so that's a little bit different from a normal tournament, I would say, where you don't necessarily have that as much, especially last week where I felt like I didn't hit a lot of putts above one. So it makes it a little bit trickier, but I also like that side of it. I enjoy the challenge of it doesn't have to be that specific, you just need to sort of match up the line and the speed.

I think that was one of the reasons why I was able to do that well last year, and it all comes down to what you do in terms of preparation on the putting green and being comfortable with starting a three-foot putt a cup and a half outside. It's a little bit different, but it's also very fun.

Q. Just to continue on the topic of experience, is there a phase of the game maybe that you've found most difficult in terms of shooting a score at Augusta National last year that maybe factors into a changed game plan this week? We talk about experience and just learning how to shoot a score out here and getting notes from other guys. I'm wondering if there's one thing that's surprised you in terms of this thing is really difficult in terms of learning the course and shooting a good score out here.

LUDVIG ÅBERG: Good question. Yeah, I think so. I think Augusta in general, it's a second-shot golf course, and obviously we don't have a lot of rough. It feels like either fairway or pine straw. If you can position your second shots into the par-4s, tee balls into par-3s, I think if you can just sort of be on the correct side, it feels like you can -- you don't have to necessarily play amazing, as long as you sort of stay very disciplined.

That's what I try to do. I know it sounds so much easier than it really is. But yeah, getting a score together, especially when the wind gets blowing a little bit at Augusta, it gets really tricky. I think, like I talked about before, you can't really force it. You just have to sort of try all the time to just hit the right shot, try to make the right decisions all the time and see where that ends up at the end.

Q. As a follow-up to the question about the putting, I know last season you went back and forth with having Joe stepping in and reading the greens. How do you approach this week given the fact that Joe has so much experience on Augusta National?

LUDVIG ÅBERG: Yeah, for sure. I remember we had long conversations about that ahead of this tournament last year, and this was the first tournament last year that he was sort of being a big part of my routine. Later on in the season, I got away from that a little bit. I felt like I needed to own it myself a little bit more rather than relying on someone else. But I do think there is value in listening to his advice, and obviously he's seen these putts so many times.

The greens at Augusta are a little bit tricky. There is that little pull to Rae's Creek and there is that little bit of extra where you've got to play it, and sometimes it's nice just to have that second opinion and to validate your own decisions to make sure that I see this, do you agree with me or not, and then you have conversations about it.

I don't think I'll bring him in as much as I did last year, but he's definitely going to help me a ton.

Q. I'm wondering when Adidas sends you your scripting for the week, do you envision how your Sunday outfit would pair with the green jacket, and is that a helpful thing to think about or are you wary of jinxing something or thinking too far ahead?

LUDVIG ÅBERG: That's a good question. Yeah, I think so. I think so, naturally. I've pictured myself wearing a green jacket many times, not only wearing this. I think, yeah, hopefully it goes well together, and we can sit here on Sunday.

Q. Do we have a new plan this year for mid-round snack security and interacting with fans?

LUDVIG ÅBERG: High fives right hand, snacks in left hand.