

Curtis Cup

Thursday, June 9, 2022

Ardmore, Pennsylvania, USA

USA Team

Merion Golf Club

Rachel Kuehn

Megha Ganne

Amari Avery

Press Conference



MEGHA GANNE: Yeah, this Curtis Cup is very, very special to me. Being there last year, I really enjoyed it truly just to know how much of an impact you can have just being a supporter of your teammates. It's more than you would think. Going to carry that on to this year and I'm really glad I can get a chance to play a few matches, as well.

It's very close to home and I don't really have that opportunity to play in front of a lot of friends and family that often, but I have a lot of people coming that have never seen me play before, and it's very exciting.

Q. I know some of you were here a few weeks ago, and Rachel, this was probably your first time. First impressions of Merion.

AMARI AVERY: My first impression of Merion is just pure. It's super lush out here. The fairways are like carpet. They're perfect. Of course the wicker baskets is always the iconic Merion staple here, so it's very cool. I love the course, and it's a good balance of challenge but it's gettable, as well.

RACHEL KUEHN: I want to echo what Amari said. The course is incredible. It's in perfect condition. The greens are fast, the fairways are lush, the rough is thick. But I definitely think it's a ball striker's golf course. I think it's so important to hit the fairways here and hit the greens and give yourself as many looks even if it's from 40 feet away, you're better off trying to two-putt from anywhere on the green than trying to get up-and-down from this rough.

MEGHA GANNE: Yeah, just echoing what they said, ball striker's golf course, very pure, really pretty. The membership is so nice to everyone here, and they've welcomed us, and everything from our transportation to our food to the hospitality to just the vibe of playing in our home country has been really good, so we're all happy to be here.

THE MODERATOR: Rachel, since you were at last year's, as well, what has been the reaction you've gotten from friends and family about this being held at Merion that kind of feels like it's elevated it?

THE MODERATOR: Welcome to the interview area of the 2022 Curtis Cup. We have Amari Avery and Rachel Kuehn and Megha Ganne.

Rachel, you've been asked this before, but talk a little bit about the experience over at Wales and what you expect on home soil.

RACHEL KUEHN: Yeah, Wales was incredible. There was a whole lot of -- we weren't sure exactly what to expect, and to be able to get over there and there weren't a ton of American supporters but to still be able to play the matches and they were hard-fought matches, it was just an incredible experience, but I think we're all really excited to play on home soil. It'll be a little different experience, a little more American fans out.

The golf course is in perfect shape, so I definitely think there's a little more hype to this one because it is over here but it's going to be a really exciting week.

THE MODERATOR: Amari, you've probably heard from your teammates here about Curtis Cup. What are your expectations.

AMARI AVERY: I'm just kind of here to have fun. It's nice to have basically all the girls come from Wales and have that previous experience. I'm glad they kind of put me under their wing a little bit and kind of showing me the ropes. Like she said, I'm glad to have my first Curtis Cup on home soil, so I know it's going to get pretty hyped out there and we're going to have some fun.

THE MODERATOR: Megha, I know it was a goal of yours to make the Curtis Cup this year. Talk about the expectations this week.

RACHEL KUEHN: Yeah, definitely in the weeks leading up to this, I was telling the members at my home golf course they were like, oh, what's your next event, I was like well, it's actually Curtis Cup and it's up at Merion. Everyone's reaction was, oh, my gosh, that's going to be incredible. They're 100 percent right. There's just so much history here, and you watch the U.S. Open on TV and you watch footage of shots being hit here and the stories that our caddies have for us, just to know that we're going to be able to add our names to that little piece of history at this incredible golf course and just an incredible tournament, I think it's something really special and I think we all appreciate it.

THE MODERATOR: Amari, can you talk a little bit about the team chemistry?

AMARI AVERY: Yeah, this team chemistry is off the charts. I've known these girls since junior golf and I sort of expected a very close team, but this is something that not even I saw. I think we're all very close. We love each other. We can also talk crap about each other, too, and just kind of give each other everything on the course.

But our games are all really great, and to kind of put it all together, I think it team is probably one of the best Curtis Cup teams in a while for sure.

Q. Last time the Curtis Cup was contested at Merion, 1954, pre-Title IX, golf was a very different game back then. I'm curious what you feel this team signifies as far as the advancement of women's golf?

RACHEL KUEHN: I think it's interesting, kind of as the Curtis Cup has progressed, you tend to see a lot more college aged players, so I definitely think kind of the demographic there is a lot younger. But I think it's really cool because that's kind of amateur golf right now, a lot of the top amateurs do tend to come from college players.

I think we have a diverse team, and I think just with Title IX this year, I know it's the 50th anniversary, women's sports in general, women's golf has come such a long way. When the Curtis Cup was started I'm sure they couldn't have dreamed it was going to become the event that it has, and just the relationships that have come from it, I think Title IX and the Curtis Cup has done such an incredible job of providing opportunities for us to play and for us to see our counterparts from across the ocean.

Q. I know Sara ultimately decides these, but how are the pairings and partnerships decided and do you have any say?

MEGHA GANNE: Yeah, everyone on this team gels very, very well. In my opinion I think any pairing of the two of us together would work just fine. But Sara is really good at balancing -- just observing because we've been here for six days how we work together, and what she thinks, as well as taking our input. I think regardless of what the pairings are, they'll be great, but I know she has a good plan in mind.

Q. Amari, who are the leaders of the team? Is it one or two people that maybe stick out?

AMARI AVERY: Yeah, we have Rachel here. I think she's one of our biggest leaders, just coming back from Wales, kind of having that back-to-back Curtis Cup. But we also have our team mom, Amelia. I think she's one of our biggest leaders for sure on the team, just from being the oldest and having the most experience.

RACHEL KUEHN: I think we definitely play a huge part. The team doesn't work when you just have one or two people leading it. All eight of us and our captain and our team manager, everyone plays a role in team success, and I think we all know that, we all appreciate that. There is no one or two people. I think we've all earned our spots here. We've all done incredible things in golf, and I think everyone has that respect for each other, and I think it is part of what helps us gel so well.

Q. You mentioned earlier, Rachel, about the caddie stories that they've told you. Can you enlighten us on some of those stories?

RACHEL KUEHN: Oh, gosh. I just hear the stories, so my caddie was fortunate to caddie in the U.S. Open when it was here for I think it was Michael Kim and made the cut. All the stories about who he played with, and Sergio Garcia I think he made an 11 or something on hole No. 15, still made the cut. But just all that, and they just have so much knowledge that I just -- I'm the kind of person that I like to soak it all in. He'll talk and I listen for hours, so it's been a really nice dynamic.

Q. What's his name?

RACHEL KUEHN: Larue Temple.

Q. How about you, ladies? Have you --

MEGHA GANNE: Yeah, we all got randomly assigned our caddies, but I think they're really good fits. My caddie actually caddied for our captain, Sara, in 1994 in the finals of the Women's Western Amateur. That was cool that we had the same caddie that she had. He came out of retirement, he said, just to caddie in the Curtis Cup. You

could tell how much they want to be here just as much as we do. I thought that said a lot.

AMARI AVERY: My caddie is Matt McChesney. He's a little bit younger but he's also the assistant master caddie here. He's one of the best. I've heard from the membership here that he's one of the best caddies out here and I'm glad to have him. Haven't heard much story from him yet, but we'll see how the week goes.

Q. Can you just talk about the baskets and how --

MEGHA GANNE: They're heavy. I hadn't picked one up because our caddies had been doing it for us, and Amari is like, can you pull it, and I did, and I tried to pick it up with my left hand. They're very heavy.

RACHEL KUEHN: It's really cool. They're really iconic. I wasn't sure coming in whether they were going to switch the flags because the USGA always puts in USGA flags or Curtis Cup flags but I'm really glad they've kept the baskets. It's just really cool.

Q. Does it bother that you have to look around and there's not as many trees as there used to be, that you have a hard time trying to figure out the wind?

MEGHA GANNE: A little bit. I feel like we've adjusted. First day I would look at the pin and I would forget that there's wind because the pin wasn't even moving.

RACHEL KUEHN: I also feel like the golf course sets up where you can feel it from the fairways. It's not super free lined so you can throw up grass and still feel it.

THE MODERATOR: Rachel, you guys had a caddie that helped your team last year and she's actually here from Wales. Talk a little bit about that.

RACHEL KUEHN: So Katie who caddied for Rachel Heck last year has made the trip over to watch us this year. I knew she was coming. Rachel told me she was coming. We were playing yesterday and she kind of shows up, and I think it just speaks to how cool this tournament is, the bond that we had with our caddies, and I know more of them wanted to come, but Katie was the only one that could make the trip.

They made an impact on us, we made an impact on them, and the fact that she's flown across the world to come support us, it's so special I can't even put it into words. I'm getting goosebumps just talking about it.

Q. Megha, you were basically part of the team last year. Can you talk a little bit about this year's Curtis

Cup being a little bit removed? What does that do to the atmosphere and the competition that the teams are so similar?

MEGHA GANNE: Yeah, I think in other Curtis Cups it feels a lot more new than it does this year because they have a lot of returning players just as we do. Both the teams know each other really well and then our teams themselves have a lot of bonding. Like we know way too much about each other, which is a great thing, and it's become a lot more intimate of an experience than it would have been where there's a two-year separation. We'll definitely have a lot of memories that will last a lifetime.

Q. Megha, you are the closest thing to a hometown player here. What's it like, and do you have a lot of family and friends coming down?

MEGHA GANNE: Yeah, absolutely. I'm like an hour and 15 away, so it's very close. A lot of the tournaments that I have had here were during COVID, so friends and family couldn't watch. It feels like almost everyone in my life is going to be showing up this week, which is very exciting, and it's not an opportunity a get a lot, so very thankful I made this Curtis Cup team because I knew it was going to be so close to home.

Q. Have you played a lot of tournaments in this general area, Philadelphia area?

MEGHA GANNE: Not in the Philly area, more like New York, New Jersey area.

Q. Rachel, you mentioned the history of Merion. Is that something you've learned over the years, the history of the courses, and what do you have to say about Merion's sense of history?

RACHEL KUEHN: Absolutely. I think I'm so fortunate that I've been able to play some of the coolest golf courses across the country. I think it speaks for itself when I told the people back home that I was going to play Merion, they all went, oh, my gosh. But yeah, golf in this part of the country is incredible, and at Merion in particular.

I think one of the coolest things for me was going into their archives room and seeing all the signatures and all the pictures and their ledger and all that stuff. The history here is just so deep, and you kind of -- as you walk the fairways you can just kind of feel it and you can see it. It's something that I don't think is lost on our team.

Q. That's one of the coolest places around --

RACHEL KUEHN: It really is.



THE MODERATOR: Thank you, girls, so much. Good luck this week.

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