

# Genesis Scottish Open

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North Berwick, Scotland

The Renaissance Club

## Connor Syme

### Press Conference

CLARE BODEL: We will welcome our first interview this week in the Media Centre, and you're here at The Scottish Open on the back of your first win at the KLM Open.

So, just tell us, does that change things for you? Does it give you a bit of a spring in your step coming in here this week?

CONNOR SYME: Yeah, thank you very much, Clare. We were just chatting about it on the way in, monkey-off-the-back-type thing. So it's been, yeah, four or five weeks since then. Time to sink in and stuff like that. Very, very happy to finally get it done. It's been great.

CLARE BODEL: Last year was your best finish at The Scottish Open, tied 15th. Do you want to keep that trending in that direction?

CONNOR SYME: That would be nice. I do, I love this golf course. We've been coming here for obviously quite a few years now, and it always gets better every year. It gets more linksy, there's something added to try and make it, enhance it each year.

So yeah, it's one I like and hopefully I can kind of feed off the good performance last year and build on that.

**Q. Clare spoke about how it gives you a lift and a spring, but how long do you float on a cloud and how long do you have to say, it's gone, park it now?**

CONNOR SYME: If I'm honest, that was the thing even in Munich, obviously it's been really great to enjoy it. But I even noticed that when I went back to practise, the week leading up to Italy and into Munich, it doesn't become any easier just because you've won.

Still working on the same things in my swing and the same stuff with my chipping and my putting. Obviously the confidence is there, and the evidence that you can do it, in a high-pressure situation to get a win but golf is just as difficult as it was before. But I think, you know, it does, it's amazing, golf, you can use it in a sense where if you've not



had a good week, you've always got next week. And even with the win, it's back to work again the next week. Obviously it's nice to enjoy it but it's kind of back to work in a way.

**Q. Clare mentioned the best finish last year but you've made the cut every year in this event, and you shot of 62 next door at Gullane. Is this an event that's brought out the best in you so far?**

CONNOR SYME: My history has been good. That's been a really pleasing thing. Again, obviously courses we're used to and growing up playing in.

So yeah, hopefully I can kind of keep building on that. Yeah, it's just -- I think the familiarity, I suppose, of links golf, helps and in front of home crowds and stuff like that, family, friends, it's always a nice feeling, not that you try and any harder, but obviously probably keeps you going through difficult moments that little bit easier, probably.

**Q. You played at Portrush in 2019; the last spots are up for grabs this week. How much of an incentive is that?**

CONNOR SYME: Yeah, it would be cool. It would be awesome to go back. You know, obviously looking at this as the last opportunity to try and get in, would be cool.

But I think I was chatting to a few people about it yesterday, this is obviously such a massive tournament and that's the dangling carrot, too. But I'm trying to focus as well as I can and do as well as I can in this tournament and hopefully I can play well enough to tick off a lot of things.

But the thing with golf, there's always something. There's always something; you always want something more. You know, this is a great tournament. I'm going to try my best to do as best I can here and hopefully I can get some nice rewards from that.

**Q. Apologies, a broader question, maybe tricky for you because you're in the middle of it, but do you think Scotland as a professional elite golfing nation punches**



**above its weight? Below its weight? About its weight? Where do you think they are?**

CONNOR SYME: Good question. I think, I guess we are probably kind of getting it back probably. Certainly when I was coming through amateur golf, the talent that we have in Scotland for whatever reason didn't end up making it on tour, certainly, at that point.

I think a few of those guys probably still could do it but it's obviously nice to have, certainly, from my group of -- my age group growing up, there's quite a lot of us have managed to get on tour and have won on tour which is awesome.

So yeah, I think we're all pushing each other on where we can all get to, who knows. But yeah, obviously with the Home of Golf, it definitely carries its pressures and stuff with that about trying to live up to that.

But I think, yeah, obviously it's good. Bob is obviously doing absolutely brilliantly and we are all trying to get, hopefully, to where he gets to.

**Q. Denmark and Sweden always get looked upon as nations that produce a lot of top-level sports people, not just golfers. Do you see anything in those countries that Scotland doesn't do and should do?**

CONNOR SYME: I'm not too sure. I think certainly from my point of view and I guess I can only speak about it from my experience with Scottish Golf, I think I got it really, really good. We had such amazing support, and if I'm honest, I didn't go to college in America because of the support Scottish Golf offered us.

From my point of view, being able to travel to places -- we'd spent eight weeks in South Africa, and a stint, four weeks in the Middle East. In 2016 I won the Australian Amateur, four weeks there and four weeks in South Africa. I think that was a real exposure to what professional golf is like. I don't even play that many events now; four or five weeks in a row you're away from home. But having that experience of being away for long periods of time helped me so much.

It's obviously fun, making it possible for guys, but that was definitely something I look back on as going, wow, that has really, really helped me to get on tour and understand what it's like.

Again, I can't speak from a college standpoint, I never did that. I know obviously, almost feels like you need to go there now with the reward from doing that. But yeah, we got to travel all around the world, which was invaluable,

really.

**Q. You mentioned Bob almost blazing a trail there but what did him winning last year do for you guys? Seeing him winning here, competing, in majors, what has that done for the rest of the guys?**

CONNOR SYME: Yeah, obviously growing up playing golf with him, you always had that kind of tenacity and willingness to do really, really well in tournaments. He's always kind of won big tournaments growing up.

It's not that surprising. But obviously seeing him actually going and doing it is really impressive, and you know, obviously the results he's had here, certainly, the last couple years, he basically won it two years in a row, barring Rory finishing the way he did a couple years ago.

But yeah, I guess it shows it's possible, and he's doing just absolutely brilliantly, and it is really good to see. Obviously watched all the U.S. Open, and he looked like the guy that was going to win it to be honest. It's very inspiring.

**Q. Did you picture yourself doing the same thing, standing here lifting the trophy?**

CONNOR SYME: Even when I won in Holland, it was like taking you back as a kid to when you're put to go try and win tournaments. That's what I was thinking about to be honest when I had that putt to win. It was like all the kind of reps you'd done to try and have a moment like that, and obviously for us, being Scottish, they are the ones you think about more, The Open, The Scottish Open, the Masters, they are the stuff you dream about.

Obviously having got a win, it's definitely given me a lot of belief that I can do that.

But yeah, obviously I keep thinking like that, and when I look back at Holland, where I would have been better at there than previously is bringing myself back to the moment of this next shot. I know it's so cliché but it does work. You find yourself trying to start like the night before, you're imagining it. Sometimes even at the start of the week on Thursday, you have a good round, and you think about Sunday; it's far away because there's so much golf.

But obviously that is a dream to have that sort of moment. But you've got to play so much golf to get to that point and that's the kind of work we're doing out there, to try and make moments like that possible.

**Q. Going back to Ewan's question, when you came through the ranks there, was an amateur to pro scheme in place. How much did you benefit from that,**

 . . . when all is said, we're done.®

**and do you think that's something we're missing at the moment? Because it's not in place at the moment.**

CONNOR SYME: It's obviously difficult because I don't know enough about what's happening, but I think I definitely benefitted a lot from that for sure. I know, there was sport Scotland, and we had support from Johann Rupert and stuff to be able to do what we did back then. It's all money-related, really, what they can afford to do. I definitely did benefit from it.

Obviously I had support from my parents, as well, but the stuff from Scottish golf where I was able to travel more and obviously working on my dad's range and go back out and play. I basically had -- when I didn't go to college, my dad was like to me, "Right, we're going to do this for four years like you're at college almost." I was almost serving my apprenticeship of a wee amateur kind of trying to be a pro almost through that. Although I was still working at the range. I was practising and preparing like I would be like I am now.

But yeah, it's difficult. But definitely the funding and support that we had at that point was amazing and how they can get that back, it would obviously be -- it would obviously be brilliant for the guys and girls coming through.

**Q. You played in Challenge Tour events as an amateur. The experience you got was invaluable.**

CONNOR SYME: Yeah, I think after I won the Australian Amateur I played Joburg Open as well, which was on the DP World Tour at that point. Because me and my dad spoke about that a lot. These were all little milestones I wanted to try and expose myself to before turning professional. At least I played in The Open and Walker Cup and stuff like that. That was all stuff that I drew on to then turn pro and then start off quite well.

I probably didn't appreciate how important starting off my pro career was. Because obviously I got straight onto the Tour, but obviously the worrying thing would be not having anywhere to play but thankful I was able to get off to a good start and have somewhere to play, you know.

**Q. Even though you only know the route you took, if you had a young team from Scotland ask you which direction should go, would you tell them to go year-round or college?**

CONNOR SYME: Again, I don't know enough about it but I think college now probably, just seems like it's going that way. I think the talent that's come from college golf in the States is just -- you can't -- the numbers don't lie, I suppose. I think that way -- and the strength of

tournaments, to be honest, it's probably even going that way a little bit in Europe with the World Rankings and stuff like that.

America has a lot and it's certainly the same from amateur golf as well. They were still the bigger tournaments. Obviously we have the British Am, but I remember going over to play the U.S. Am and Western Am, they were the biggest amateur golf tournaments, and I think college tournaments are getting that big as well.

**Q. I don't think anyone has won more than twice on the Tour this year. Why do you think that is and is that good or bad? Am I right, Clare?**

CLARE BODEL: Correct.

**Q. You know that, right?**

CONNOR SYME: I don't know. There's been so many first-time winners. We were actually talking about that yesterday. Dan obviously had won more than once. But I think the last seven, eight tournaments, there's like seven first-time winners, it's crazy. I'm not sure. I don't know. Certainly from my point of view, maybe Adrian as well, a lot of chances maybe and a lot of tournaments played, and it was amazing to get it done. But then you can mix that with some new talent coming through from the Challenge Tour, which is obviously really exciting and are doing really well, as well.

Yeah, I'm not sure why nobody's done it twice. I'm sure they will by the end of the year. I'm sure there will be guys that get multiple wins. I'm not sure. Everyone is so good, and it's really hard to win. I think maybe you're seeing a bit of that, as well. There's such a broad level of talent and guys are managing to get wins.

**Q. Do you think that a lot of Scottish golfers are sort of lurking in the Highlands that we never capture?**

CONNOR SYME: Possibly. I'm not sure. It is beautiful up there to be fair. Maybe that's why they don't want to leave. It's pretty.

**Q. But you've got Bob MacIntyre doing it from Oban, which is halfway there. He's still devoted to the place. It makes me think that maybe there are a lot of left-handed golfers, shinty ones, who are playing, and should be -- are the Scottish golf people doing anything to catch them?**

CONNOR SYME: Yeah, possibly. Yeah, again, I'm not too sure exactly what -- certainly from when I was growing up, there was different attachment areas and I'm sure it's the

same there where there's a Highland division for golf. I know Bob was Bute, I think.

It's definitely opportunities, isn't it and just having the platform to go to play. Yeah, I'm not too sure but hopefully if they are, they can find their way out on tour.

CLARE BODEL: On that atmospheric note, we can say thank you, Connor, and good luck this week.

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