

BMW PGA Championship

Tuesday, 15 September, 2026

Virginia Water, Surrey, England

Wentworth Golf Club

Aaron Rai

Press Conference

BRIONY CARLYON: I'm delighted to welcome the U.S. PGA Champion Aaron Rai back to the centre here for the BMW PGA Championship. Aaron, is it a different feeling coming to your home event here as a major winner, and how have you felt so far this week?

AARON RAI: Personally speaking, it doesn't feel massively different. This is a huge event in its own right and an event that has meant a lot to me for a long time.

Really nice reception from the crowd even though it's only a Tuesday, so that part has felt a little bit different. Yeah, it's great to be here really.

BRIONY CARLYON: And coming into this week, just how you're feeling with your game and where everything is at.

AARON RAI: Yeah, not too bad. I haven't competed, I think, for three weeks. The second playoff event over on the PGA TOUR was the last event. Again, when there's a break of three weeks, you never quite know how it's going to stack up in terms of tournaments.

Yeah, practice has felt pretty good, so we'll see how it goes.

Q. How much has your life changed over the past few months? I know you're pretty grounded, but do you feel your life has changed at all, becoming a major winner?

AARON RAI: It feels a little busier for sure, and I think just getting used to the speed of it is a little different, whether that's practice or coming into contact with more people, events as well. Just whether it's fans, whether it's media, it's definitely a little different than before, but that's also part and parcel of what comes with it.

It's a great -- an incredible achievement and a great position to be in. Getting used to a couple of things still, but great nonetheless.

Q. Another big event on the DP World Tour, just give



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us a flavour of how it feels different coming back this year to maybe when you made your debut here.

AARON RAI: I think the first time playing in this tournament was 2018 and an absolute dream come true to even compete in this tournament. Came to this event as a junior golfer and absolutely loved being able to walk the course, watch some of the legends of European and world golf play. So it was a real big achievement just to make it here in 2018.

Yeah, it's nice to have had some experience at the golf course and kind of grown into what needs to be -- how you need to approach the course. Yeah, it's definitely changed a little bit since then, but only for the positive.

Q. I'm assuming that winning has been the high point of the year for you so far. What in particular about it? What's the thing that's brought you the most pleasure as a result of having won?

AARON RAI: That's a really good question. Personally the really quiet moments of -- and there's so many of them. Sometimes I find myself even randomly during the day or during practice just thinking, wow, has that happened? And then going over certain shots in certain situations, certain things about the week that I did extremely well.

I think those quiet moments of reflection, how I handled a lot of the situations that came up during the week, not just the Sunday, and just the proudness of what went into that week, I think those things have really stood out, and those have happened at different periods over the last four months really.

Q. I think I may have this right. You didn't go on the scouting trip to Adare Manor, correct?

AARON RAI: No, I didn't.

Q. Were you invited?

AARON RAI: I was. I was.

Q. What was the reason you couldn't go?

AARON RAI: I've been in the States for the last three



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weeks, and it was actually a close friend's wedding on Sunday, which was in Portugal, which I said I would go to a few months ago. So I felt the travel from America to Portugal, then Portugal to Ireland, then Ireland to here would have just felt like a lot.

This is a really big event, and it means a lot to me. So I felt like I wanted to kind of prepare for this, especially on the back end of that busyness. It would have just felt like a lot really.

Q. Can you just talk about the fact that you are clearly in the mix, at least at this point, which is a long way to go to be in the mix on the European team. Can you talk about that?

AARON RAI: Yeah, I think, as you said, it's still a very long way away. I think qualifications started two weeks ago in France. I don't think I've even earned any points yet to earn the Ryder Cup team. In that sense, it's a long way away. Obviously it's a huge honour to even get close to representing the European team.

Obviously I'll try and do my best, prepare as well as I can and try to control the things I can control to give myself a good chance at playing well over the next year.

Q. Do you feel maybe a little disadvantaged by the fact that you're not going to be playing as much in Europe, and would you actually make some allowances to play more here to give yourself a chance to play on the team?

AARON RAI: I think there's a lot of really good opportunities, whether that's over here or whether that's over in the states to play in big events and to play well.

I am looking to play three more events in the DP World Tour after this week, which obviously is great for the Race to Dubai. First and foremost, I love playing over here. Obviously that gives opportunity to accumulate points. I think next year I'll see how the schedule looks on the DP World Tour. I might play an extra one or two here depending how things fit.

I'll just try to play as well as I can and prepare as well as I can and see where that takes me.

Q. One of the things that struck those of us who were in Aronimink with you was how popular your victory was. Can you reflect on that and how that made you feel, and why do you think you're so popular? What is it that makes you so popular amongst your peers?

AARON RAI: That was something I felt very surprised by

in such a positive way, just how well received that it was. I felt extremely appreciative, grateful, and a little bit blown away, if I'm honest, even the words Rory had said, Xander, Jon Rahm, immediately in the aftermath of the PGA. So obviously felt extremely grateful for all of those comments.

It's hard for me to answer why it was so popular or so well received. I guess for the most part I try to do my own thing. I try to do what I think is best. I try to stay respectful to everyone, whether that's players, media, caddies, fans, and maybe that's a part of it. But it's hard for me to really explain why that was in totality.

Q. Because it's hard for you, and that's why you're so popular probably.

AARON RAI: Possibly, I'm not sure. I'm not sure.

Q. Following on from the last question, your achievement, Aaron, qualifies you to be a poster boy for English golf, and your youthful start to the game has been well documented. How would you feel about being somebody who would be encouraging youngsters, other youngsters to take up the game and try to do what you've achieved?

AARON RAI: I don't really see myself in that role, if I'm honest. I think whether it's me, whether it's anyone that's playing on the DP World Tour, we do have a very good platform. I think how we go about doing things, how we go about practising, how we go about engaging, how we go about speaking to whether that's media, whether that's fans, I think that's a responsibility each and every player has.

So in that regard, I'll always do my best to be as genuine as I can, but also in the times it maybe feels a little more difficult, still try and hold myself in the best way that I can because I think that's a responsibility that everyone has out here.

Yeah, whether that's through English golf or whatever it might be, that's just something I feel personally and everyone who has a great platform to compete on the PGA or the DP World Tour, whatever that may be.

Q. I know you saying thanks but no thanks to the Adare Manor trip wasn't easy, but was Luke quite understanding of the reasons for it?

AARON RAI: Luke was very understanding. We actually briefly spoke at The Open Championship a few months ago. That was the first that I'd heard of the trip, and I said I'll definitely think about it, but I explained to him the situation even then.

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I took my time, and I really did try and make that trip, but I just felt like it would be a lot on me in terms of the travel. I think with this tournament as well, on top of the travel, it just felt like it was the right decision overall not to go, try to explain it and apologise. Obviously I was grateful for the opportunity to be asked, but yeah, it was a tricky decision overall.

Q. What's the best thing that's happened to you since Aronimink?

AARON RAI: In what regard?

Q. Any regard.

AARON RAI: That's a really tricky one to answer. It's the personal things for me that really stand out. It's just the fulfillment of that achievement, the fulfillment of the journey of junior golf, amateur golf, professional golf. It's just extremely satisfying to play in the biggest of events and to feel like I held myself in the best way that I could and that resulted in a victory, which was incredible.

I think even if I would have finished second, fifth, tenth, whatever it might have been, I think for me those are the things that hold a lot of power that go even beyond the achievements because those are extremely challenging circumstances and you learn a lot about yourself in those situations.

And to feel like I did things in the way that I felt were right and truly gave it my best, I felt like my best came out in that kind of moment, that's something I feel extremely proud of.

Again, it's hard to describe it as a moment or one thing that is the best thing, but just the fulfillment overall feels like the most satisfying part of that week.

Q. Another PGA Championship question, Aaron. After winning, was there someone you heard from that maybe surprised you? I'm sure you got lots of great congratulations messages, but is there one that stood out like, wow, that person got in touch with me. I didn't expect that.

AARON RAI: There were moments that kind of blew me away who reached out, whether it was online or via letter. The one that stands out for me was Jack Nicklaus. He sent a note to our house that was a handwritten letter, and that was the following week after the PGA Championship. So opening that letter and reading it was quite surreal.

Q. Had you ever heard from him before, or was that the first communication you'd had?

AARON RAI: I'd met him -- I was fortunate enough to meet him a few times before at the Memorial event, which he hosts. Met him a couple of times at the Cognizant event as well. That's a golf course that he's designed, which is a PGA TOUR event. But generally in passing, very brief conversation.

But, yeah, that was the first time that he had reached out and written.

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