

LIV Golf Virginia

Friday, 6 June, 2025

Gainesville, Virginia, USA

Robert Trent Jones Golf Club

Smash GC

Graeme McDowell

Press Conference

THE MODERATOR: We've got Smash GC's Graeme McDowell. 4-under 67 today, puts you in a tie for third. Can you sum up the day for us?

GRAEME McDOWELL: Solid day. Hit a lot of greens. I've been working pretty hard on my game the last few weeks. I've really been feeling it trending in the right direction.

This golf course, the wet setup, you've got to drive it well, get it in play off the tee, and then really be sharp with your irons because Robert Trent Jones likes these little sections in the greens and you've got to be pretty accurate.

I was super happy with a lot of shots I hit today. The break kind of killed my momentum a little bit. I kind of felt a bit flat going out there after the break. It's the same for everyone. You've got to get on with it. I was happy to get in at 4, and we'll reset and got a lot of work to do.

Q. Bogey-free today?

GRAEME McDOWELL: Bogey-frees are always nice. A big part of my game lately is I haven't really been making a lot of mistakes, but I haven't been making any birdies either.

It was nice to make four out there today, and I'll obviously have to make a bunch more if you want to try to hang in there this weekend and try and compete and give myself a Sunday afternoon, which is what it's all about.

Q. Wanted to ask you about this course, especially veteran experience. We've got you, Phil was just in here, Marty Kaymer is tied for the lead. Do you feel like it's a course that kind of requires some experience?

GRAEME McDOWELL: Yeah, I think historically I've liked golf courses that require you to maybe think a little bit about what you're doing. It's not just a kind of point and shoot. It's very much a kind of what side of this flag do I need to be on?

 **GOLF VIRGINIA**

PRESENTED BY

 **MAADEN**

I thought some of the pins were pretty tucked out there. You had to be smart. You had to be on the correct side of it. They're firm and fast enough, and the rough is just kind of gnarly enough where, if you do short-side yourself, you're in trouble. It requires a little bit of thought and a little bit of time coming into the greens.

I spent some extra time the last couple of days just trying to figure out where to be on these greens. The place is in unbelievable condition. If you play good, you can kind of make a bunch of birdies, but this golf course will quickly find you out.

Like you say, interesting to see some more veteran-type players like that have been around the block a few times, some more than others.

Q. There's a lot of talk at times when players are off for a while with developing rust. Is it kind of the opposite for veteran players like yourself where it gives you a chance to reset and recharge and get ready?

GRAEME McDOWELL: Good question. I have to say my first couple seasons on LIV, I struggled with it honestly. I struggled with having as much time off as we do have. I'm used to playing 25 to 30 times a year, and all of a sudden, I think I played 16 times last year. So that's a lot less volume for me.

It's a two-sided coin because less volume means more time to kind of look after your body, look after your health, mentally more than anything perhaps. But at the same time, like you say, it's easy to come out here and maybe not be as sharp as you need to be.

I played the U.S. Open qualifier on a Monday, which I saw as a big benefit, kind of win, lose, or draw, because 36 holes with a card in your pocket coming into a week like this after four weeks off. So I really felt like that was a big help because at least I came out of there disappointed not to play better, but I came out of there knowing where my game was at coming into this weekend. Probably a little sharper than I would have been without that.

It is something I've had to figure out a little bit the last couple seasons. I feel like I'm getting better at it. I used to

 . . . when all is said, we're done.®

wonder how Tiger did it. Obviously he was really good, so that helped. But to play as little as he did and to show up kind of so sharp and so ready to play, it's an art form.

It's something I struggled with early on in my LIV career, and I feel like I'm starting to get my head around it a little bit. I'm doing a better job of showing up after two, three weeks off ready to go.

Q. Wanted to ask you one question about obviously The Open is going to your own stomping grounds. You've got this tournament, you've got the one in Dallas. Obviously you want to try to get into that with one of the qualifiers. What's your mindset, how much focus do you have on getting back to Royal Portrush?

GRAEME McDOWELL: With The Open going back to Royal Portrush this year, it's been a big focus. I went to Macao chasing a few of those spots, didn't get it done there. Like you said, I'll play Dallas and fly straight to London, and I'll go down to the qualifier. I'm going to Royal Cinque Ports on the Tuesday right after Dallas. Maybe not the best prep in the world coming from Dallas to London, but I'll be pretty fired up.

It was a dream come true to be there in '19. The RBC Canadian Open is this week. I qualified via the RBC Canadian Open in '19 to get into The Open. Obviously I'll go to Cinque Ports, and it will be a big day for me. I'm excited. It will certainly be bittersweet to not be there, but I'll definitely be giving it my full attention and be trying hard.

It would be amazing. I mean, it's going to be, with everything that Rory's done this year, with Shane being the defending champion, to go back to Portrush, it's going to be a special week. It goes without saying that I'd love to be a part of it.

FastScripts by ASAP Sports