

CME Group Tour Championship

Saturday, November 20, 2021
Naples, Florida, USA
Tiburon Golf Club

Leona Maguire

Quick Quotes

Q. Leona, bogey-free 66. Your low round here at Tiburon Golf Club. How would you describe the conditions out there today?

LEONA MAGUIRE: I think it's the toughest day so far. It was windy, it was gusty. I had to stay really patient, and I feel like we did a pretty good job sort of judging the wind, picking our targets, and executed pretty well.

Q. We are seeing you here atop the leaderboard for the second week in a row after that career-low 62 last week. What did you take away from that experience that's helping you here this week?

LEONA MAGUIRE: Yeah, I mean, I tried to take as many positives from last week as I could. Didn't finish the last round off as well as I would've liked, but I know my game is in good shape and just need to hole a few putts.

Didn't hole any yesterday, but a few more dropped today, so, yeah, one more good round tomorrow to finish off the season hopefully.

Q. Speaking of tomorrow, what do you expect it will take to give yourself a chance here on Sunday?

LEONA MAGUIRE: Yeah, that all depends on (wind.) There is a lot of great golfers ahead of me on the leaderboard and around me, so it's going to take another low one.

At the same time, it's a golf course you have to stay really patient on, take your chances when you get them, and be smart about it.

So that's the kind of golf I like, so excited for another day.

Q. Bogey-free 66 in the third round of the CME Group Tour Championship. Birdies today at 3, 4, 6, 8, 10, and 18. Any of those particularly stand out, or was there a shot that stood out in helping get your round going in the right direction?



LEONA MAGUIRE: Yeah, I mean, I felt like the opening few holes were playing really tough. They were playing long. Hit a nice 9-wood into 3; set up a birdie there.

And nice hybrid into 4.

So I feel like they were playing tough today, so to get two birdies on them early on was big.

Birdied 6 for the first time this week. It just gave me some good momentum heading into the rest of the round.

Yeah, picked up a nice birdie on 10, and it's always nice to finish with a birdie on 18.

Q. You mentioned yesterday the putting was something you were working on. What did you do after the round yesterday to get kind of in that good space for today?

LEONA MAGUIRE: Yeah, I mean, I putted well the first day so I knew it wasn't too far away. Went back to a few of my drills again last night and again this morning.

It's just a case of being patient. It's easy to get frustrated on these bermuda greens. There is grain, there is wind, all of that.

So just trying to keep giving myself chances and have the patience that some of them will drop. A few more did today, which was nice.

Q. There are a lot of people on birdie runs out there. This morning when we saw that north wind I don't think anybody predicted this. Why are we seeing so many birdies on a day that's this windy?

LEONA MAGUIRE: Because you've got the best players in the world here, I think. (Laughter.) It's not easy out there. You have to hit really good, quality golf shots, and people are doing that.

I think there is a lot of people in really good form right now. Jin Young, Nelly, Lexi, Lydia. I mean, it's a who's who of the LPGA here this week. I think everybody has come to play. I played with Celine the first day and she really did nothing wrong.

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So I think the course is set up as tough as it can. Yeah, there are a few tees up, but I think it's just world class golfers hitting world class shots.

Q. That list you just ran down, where do you put yourself in that category?

LEONA MAGUIRE: I mean, I haven't as much on my resume as a lot of them, so I'm getting there. I'm working my way up.

Q. I think I saw recently that Jin Young had hit like her last 29 greens in regulation the last two days. When you hear that, like what goes through your head?

LEONA MAGUIRE: Yeah, I mean, Jin Young is impressive. I got to play with her the first time a few weeks ago. She didn't do a whole lot wrong. Hits a lot of fairways, hits a lot of greens, and that's what have to do out here, give yourself as many chances.

And when you putt as good as she does you're definitely going to make a lot of birdies, and that's why she had the streak going for so long with so many rounds in the 60s.

I mean, every week, like I said, I think I said that at the start of the week, there are 60 players here. There are probably 60 players that had a chance to win this week.

It's just the strength and depth of the LPGA right now.

Q. How would you sum up this year for you?

LEONA MAGUIRE: Yeah, I mean, it's as good a rookie year as I think I could have expected. It's gone better than I expected. I've achieved pretty much all my goals for this year. Obviously nice to get a win, but I've pretty much done everything but that.

It's been really consistent, consistently a lot higher than last year. Did well in the majors. Solheim Cup obviously was the highlight, but it's been really, really good year.

Q. What were some of the goals that you accomplished?

LEONA MAGUIRE: Obviously to get back to this event. I wanted to qualify for all the majors. Did that, except U.S. Open. Nearly got U.S. Open.

Obviously qualified for Solheim Cup.

The goal at the start of the year was to finish in the top 40. CME, obviously well inside that now. And the goal was to

get back to U.S. Open and be in Pine Needles next year, and I think I secured that up already.

Nice to be back playing a U.S. Open next year down the road from where I went to college.

Q. Yeah, is that just because it's in North Carolina?

LEONA MAGUIRE: Yeah, I mean, North Carolina has been good to me. That was the first event I ever played in the States was at Pinehurst, a U.S. kids event in 2006 I think it was, 2006, 2007, something like that.

So it's going to be nice going back to familiar territory again and have some home support from Duke I would imagine.

Q. What do you remember from that week? I know it was a long time ago.

LEONA MAGUIRE: It was July, in the middle of the summer. I had never been to the States before. It was boiling hot. I think it was over 100 every day. I think two little Irish girls had never experienced anything like that.

It was a lot of fun. Looking back it would be interesting to see. There is quite a few of the names I think that were there that week that are now out on the LPGA. Annie Park I remember being there, and few of the other girls.

So it was eye opening for us. I had never played a whole lot outside of Ireland before then. To see the ranged lined kids from all over the world and all day and how good they were, it was, yeah, quite an eye opening experience.

Q. What changed from last year to this year for you? Obviously the pandemic factors in there somewhere, but like what really helped you turn the corner?

LEONA MAGUIRE: I hit my irons a lot better this year. Hit a lot more greens. My irons have always been a strength of mine. They kind of went a bit off last year. I messed around with different irons and irons I played at the end of the last year just didn't really work.

And then went back to graphite shafts and they have been a lot more consistent. Back to giving myself a lot more birdie chances. Kept working on my putting, holing more putts, put a little bit of extra distance on.

So all in all I feel like all my -- all parts of my game have gotten that bit better and feel a bit more comfortable every week.

Sort of playing with the best players in the world I think raises your game without you even realizing it.

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Q. How long did you have steel shafts? Did you play graphite in college?

LEONA MAGUIRE: No, steel shafts -- I've had steel shafts for, I don't know, six seven years now.

Q. So going graphite was a new thing for you you?

LEONA MAGUIRE: Uh-huh. Yeah, lighter and more consistent. Yeah, just been a good switch.

Q. You also mentioned calling Nona home in the U.S. has been huge for your game. How and why?

LEONA MAGUIRE: Yeah, I mean, I think the facilities are so good there. That was something that the transition from college to the pro ranks, obviously in college I had a lot of people to play with, a lot of people to practice with, Monday games, all that sort of thing.

We had our qualifiers in college that used to be more competitive, playing with Celine and people like that every week when we were at home.

So kind of replicated that a little bit at Nona. Obviously Nasa is there, Lydia is there, Anne is there, Jutanugarns are there, Annika. Played a few rounds with Annika early in the year, which really helped.

So I think just being in that environment has been good for me. Really nice facilities to work on my game. There is really no excuses. It's a lot nicer weather than Ireland in sort of December, January, February.

Q. I got one more question about Q-Series. I know that you are kind of a unicorn in college and that you stayed all four years. Didn't leave midway through your senior year. What was kind of your opinion on that kind of format when in you were in school, like in terms of how it forced girls to choose between their college teams and...

LEONA MAGUIRE: Yeah, I mean, loyalty is something that's always been big to me. There is maybe a lack of it these days. The four years that I spent at Duke I wouldn't trade for the world.

It definitely helped me prepare for the pro game. I'm definitely a better golfer now than I was when I went to Duke. The LPGA is not going anywhere.

I think there are a lot of people in a rush to get to the LPGA, and I mean, everybody has to do their thing. There is different ways that work for different people.

Just because I went that way I felt like that was the way for me to do it, and I'm glad I did it that way. Coach Brooks believed in me a lot, trusted me a lot.

I mean, there was a lot of great people at Duke that put a lot into me, and I felt that I owed it to them and owed it to my team to stay the four years.

Q. Where does your college degree rank on your list of accomplishments, athletic can and academic?

LEONA MAGUIRE: Yeah, it wasn't easy to balance both. Duke is one of the best academic institutions in the country.

I mean, a Duke degree in my back pocket is very valuable and something that I'm very proud of. The people that I've got to meet while I was there, the alumni that I've met all across the country on different trips, it's something that I'm very proud of.

Yeah, it's definitely up there. It's something that I know that the same hard work that went into doing my studies, staying in school, is the same that it takes to succeed on the golf course.

Porter Carrington was someone that really reminded me of that a few times when I had been talking to him. Yeah, never for a second did I regret staying and getting my degree.

Q. What was your major?

LEONA MAGUIRE: Psychology and marketing.

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