

WM Phoenix Open

Wednesday, February 5, 2025

Scottsdale, Arizona, USA

TPC Scottsdale

Luke Clanton

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: We'd like to welcome Luke Clanton to the interview room here at the WM Phoenix Open, making your first start here at the WM Phoenix Open, three starts this season on TOUR and just a few points shy from that PGA TOUR University 20-point threshold which you actually earned your 19th point today for being 26 weeks straight in the World Amateur Golf Rankings. How do you approach this week, Luke?

LUKE CLANTON: Yeah, I think I'm going to kind of approach it the same I've approached it basically the last eight months. Just kind of go out there and play the best I can. It's kind of a boring answer to say. I know everyone wants me to say something different. But to kind of keep that mentality and keep going and keep pushing forward.

It's tough out here, so no matter what you do, you just keep just thinking about the next shot, not the future.

I'm going to keep my focus in on what I need to do and my goals.

Q. Coming into the week, most recently a T15 at the Farmers Insurance Open. How has your game been this season?

LUKE CLANTON: Yeah, it's been good. I had a little bit of a chatter after the Sony, but I think it was a good learning experience for me to kind of travel that far and the time difference and everything.

But I played really well at Torrey, just a few missed putts here and there, and it's been great. My game has been there for a while now, and it's been fun to play golf out here no matter what, so it's been a pleasure, especially to be out here at Waste Management. I've been watching this event since I was like 10 years old, so it's been amazing.

Q. One of the most recognizable golf tournaments we have here on the PGA TOUR. Are there any iconic memories or moments that you recall as you were watching on TV?

LUKE CLANTON: I watched Sam Ryder's hole-in-one on TV, so that was pretty cool to see that, no doubt.

Again, I think everyone loves to watch this event and come out and watch. Even on a Tuesday yesterday on 16 it was pretty crazy, so I'm excited to see what it's going to be like over the weekend or Thursday and Friday, so we'll see what happens.

Q. Yesterday I talked to Gray Albright and Coach Jones and both said you really love the stage and performing in front of a crowd. Where do you think that comes from, and how will it help you rise to the occasion this week?

LUKE CLANTON: Yeah, I love giving the crowd a good show I guess you could say. I think it's just the preparation we do as a team back in college or on my own. It's been a lot of preparation over the last couple months for this.

It's been amazing. Every single PGA TOUR event you play you've got a lot of people watching you, and you just kind of have to stay in your zone and do what you need to do.

Q. How does playing with great players at FSU make you better and more prepared for these professional events?

LUKE CLANTON: Yeah, we're all competitors for sure. We don't like to lose. It's fun going out there playing nine or 18 holes and competing against each other all the time.

But it's been -- again, all my teammates back there, they are so supportive for what I do, coming out here and playing, and when I come back they're still trying to kick my butt every single day. It's been amazing.

Q. The U.S. Open I guess is kind of where your run on the PGA TOUR began. How long or short ago does that seem, and what do you remember from that week at Pinehurst?

LUKE CLANTON: (Laughing) Yeah, it kind of feels like yesterday, honestly. But again, it's been pretty crazy. The



journey has been just unbelievable. To even kind of realize what I've done in the last eight months, seven months has been incredible.

Again, I'm just trying to kind of take it one step at a time, not trying to look too far into the future, but to see where I've come from from my freshman year of college to now has just been amazing.

I'm just excited to see what happens in the future, and we'll see what happens.

Q. I know you played a practice round with Scottie that week of Pinehurst. Is there anything from that round that sticks with you or you were able to implement into your approach?

LUKE CLANTON: Yeah, I mean, he's such a humble dude. We were walking down 16 and I asked him, I said, how do you deal with adversity, the temptations, because he's close with his faith and so am I. He kind of looked at me and he goes, get about three to five minutes of enjoyable time after a win and then you go right back into the zone. Golf you're always chasing more and more and more, to realize golf is not everything in your life and you've got a lot more to it.

It's been an incredible journey in my faith over the last eight months because of that one answer for me.

But he's an idol to me, and I always looked up to him, and to see what he's doing and how he's kind of talking about his faith all the time has been incredible.

Q. Game-wise Rory mentioned after winning at Pebble that he's tried to emulate Scottie a bit in reining in some aggressive impulses on the course. I was wondering anything along those lines from Scottie's game that you've observed watching him on TV or talking to him that you've been inspired by?

LUKE CLANTON: I mean, he flushes it. No doubt about it. The nine holes I played with him, I don't think he missed a golf shot. Kind of made me realize that maybe this guy is pretty good at golf, no doubt.

But yeah, he just kind of plots it around the golf course all day. I think we all see it enough that he doesn't really make a mistake. That's pretty hard to do in golf. You make a lot.

Yeah, just kind of tried to follow in his footsteps as much as I can. It's hard to because he's really good, so I'm just kind of learning as I go.

Q. What do you expect your nerves to be like when you get to 16?

LUKE CLANTON: (Laughing) I think I'm going to be pretty pumped up for sure. I think nerves is -- I don't like to say that word, I like to say excitement as much as I can. So definitely will be taking 10 yards off the number for sure because of the excitement and the adrenaline.

But again, I think it's just a once in a lifetime experience to even be in this event and to play on that hole, and even 17 and 18, as well. I'm just super blessed to be here and I'm excited.

Q. Finally, how do you think your game will suit TPC Scottsdale?

LUKE CLANTON: I love it out here. It's a great golf course. It challenges you off the tee and into the greens and putting and everything like that.

Again, I think you've just got to hit it in the fairway and just got to hit middle of greens out here. I think the score is going to be pretty low no matter what. We're not going to try to chase too many birdies or try to chase too many flags. Just give ourselves opportunities.

Q. Do you remember either the first time you played in front of a crowd or an early time in your life where fans were out and it kind of struck you, like wow, people are watching me play golf?

LUKE CLANTON: I mean, I had it a couple times in amateur golf, but U.S. Open was the first time. It was actually the practice round with Scottie, so we were on 10 tee and no one was out there, and we showed up like 20 minutes early to the tee time because we were so nervous to play with him. We see him walk up and it was like, I couldn't even imagine -- he looked like a video game character to me, honestly, and to see thousands of people start lining up the fairway, he was like, oh, you can go first. I said, all right, I put down the tee and I just whacked it as hard as I could just to get it down there.

It was pretty incredible just to see the amount of people that follow the game of golf. After that it was kind of cool just to experience even in a practice round on a Tuesday.

I can't imagine what it would have been like on a Sunday in a final group with him, but hopefully that happens in the future.

Q. Why do you love golf, would you say?

LUKE CLANTON: Ooh. Man, I'm a competitor. I think

that's a big thing for me. I love golf because I love to compete. But golf is not my identity. I learned that one from Scottie, as well. He talks about that a ton.

Again, he's a role model for me, so I try to follow in his footsteps as much as I can, but golf is a game. We play it to be a competitor, but at the end of the day it's not my life. But I love, love to compete. Almost a little too much.

Q. What would making the cut this week mean to you in the context of your journey?

LUKE CLANTON: Yeah, it would mean a lot for sure. We train to get our card. We train to be out here. We train to play with the best. Again, it would be amazing, but I'm going to try not to think about that too much. I know everyone is worrying about it, but I'm just excited to be out here. I'm excited to be in this event.

We didn't think we were going to be in here, and to be here now and to be able to play practice rounds and see the place and even see the people in practice rounds are pretty crazy, so I'm just excited to be out here.

Q. A lot of golf being played. How is the schoolwork going for you at Florida State right now?

LUKE CLANTON: It's good. No, it's good. We're keeping up. We're keeping up. Everyone back at FSU has been incredibly supportive for everything I've done. The coaching staff, all the teammates, my academic advisors, everyone has been super supportive.

It's been incredible.

Q. I know Nick Dunlap won last year as an am. Have you talked to him about what that experience was like, going back to school after a win? Hopefully you can get a win and go back to school. Have you talked to him about that?

LUKE CLANTON: We chatter. We chat a lot. I'm going to kind of keep it a little private between us, but he's one heck of a dude. Incredible person. He's very serious on the course, but off the course he's a funny dude. I've known him for too long now I guess you could say. But I was watching every shot on that final round at Amex for him, and to see him win was incredible. Again, I'm trying to follow in his footsteps.

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