

# Aberdeen Standard Investments Scottish Open

Wednesday, 30 September, 2020

North Berwick, Scotland

The Renaissance Club

## Bernd Wiesberger

### Press Conference

NEIL AHERN: Tell us about your memories of that memorable win last year, that first Rolex Series victory.

BERND WIESBERGER: Yeah, it was obviously memorable week for me. Going to stick with me for a long time. I've had a lovely week here last year. Not only from the golf side but in general, I love coming to Scotland and play tournament golf up here in various sorts of conditions whether it be links courses or green land, parkland courses and obviously found April pretty good set up for me last year. It's nice to be back and hopefully we can recreate some of the stuff we did here last year.

**Q. Obviously a different time of the year but some changes at the Renaissance Club since last year. Can you talk about how different the course is looking this week?**

BERND WIESBERGER: Yeah, obviously the main difference is the time of the year. Obviously you it's cold, four layers, wind has picked up and pretty cold. We can expect a lot cooler conditions, last year than in the summer and wetter. We've had perfect conditions in 2019, which then obviously led to very low scoring. It seemed like everyone around here at Renaissance had intentions to protect the golf course a little bit against low scoring. They have lengthened a couple holes, a bit of rerouting, as well, going on, so we started off with what used to be 10 and 11 and they have lengthened those two holes by, I'd say, 70, 80 yards easily, so a couple odd holes have followed up, as well, 15 and 16 have lengthened, as well. On top of that, end much the summer, rough a little bit thicker. They have had a little bit of rain, as well, and you want to be a bit more precise probably off the tee than what was asked for last year. All in all I'm assuming that scoring is not going to go anywhere near where we had it last year.

**Q. I saw you Tweet joking after the U.S. Open where you regained your amateur status. Where do you feel your form is after a few decent finishes, but you've shot some high numbers like everyone in the field. Does that affect your form coming from those difficult**



A Rolex Series Event

courses, the U.S. Open and Valderrama?

BERND WIESBERGER: For me, Valderrama was purely a mental preparation for the U.S. Open. I've not played Valderrama before. I've heard that it can be just as tough as it did play in that week, and so that was obviously trying to play somewhat into a major but also getting mentally ready a little bit and not get ahead of yourself and not get frustrated with tougher conditions, and that's exactly what we found. Therefore, the scoring -- well, obviously I would have preferred to play a little bit better and scored a little better throughout week, but was more a little bit of a prep for Winged Foot. All in all I was quite pleased with the way I played at Winged Foot. Obviously I've had a couple not too good spells with my approach to play. I drove it well through the week. A couple shots, but all in all, I was somewhat happy with how it turned out. It was a great test, but hopefully, you know, we're going to be able to definitely score a little bit lower in the upcoming weeks, and that those two events made a bit of an exception to the norm, at least from a scoring point of view.

**Q. Serious note, I noticed you've won about seven or eight tournaments and all in different countries. What sort of is the strength of your game that you can win in different countries, and in talking about winning in different countries, what was the key do you think to your Scottish Open success and where does The Scottish Open win comma among is the those wins in seven different countries?**

BERND WIESBERGER: Yeah, I take great pride that I've been able to win around the world. I've had a couple of successful events in Asia. Obviously my home country, in Austria, and up here in the Scottish links. I'm very proud about being able to perform well in all sorts of conditions.

I think what we faced on The European Tour, spreading out all over the globe, you need to adapt well to different conditions in a short period of time. You know, get your preparation well on those practice days. I think my game in general, if I'm feeling comfortable and swinging well, I've got a pretty good idea of how to manage my game, and therefore -- as I said, I'm pretty proud to have been able to play well under different, all sorts of conditions.

Definitely winning on a links course as a European player in a tournament like The Scottish Open, which, you know



I've seen great champions over the years. I'm very proud to have added my name to that list, and also, to get that win ticked off in a way on a links course, a game that I've always enjoyed playing and thought I could do well; and therefore, was very pleased with getting that win here last year.

**Q. Congratulations for last year. This year, of course, as you know only two well, there are no spectators, so definitely changes the intensity in play, I suppose, but you have the draw of the first round, certainly, with Tommy and Bob MacIntyre, does that help?**

BERND WIESBERGER:

BERND WIESBERGER: Does it help to not have spectators? Is that the question?

**Q. Without spectator, but you have a very good draw. Does that pull you out, as well?**

BERND WIESBERGER: Yeah, absolutely. I've played plenty of golf with both Tommy and Bob MacIntyre, and looking forward to it. Obviously Tommy is always playing well, doesn't matter where around the world, and I know Bobby is eager to have a great week here, at least in his home country, unfortunately not in front of his home fans, but I'm looking forward to play with the guys. I'm sure we're going to stir each other up to bring out the best in our games for the first two rounds here.

**Q. In terms of when you don't have the spectators, do you find yourself maybe speaking to your playing partners more and trying to lift each other up and get more atmosphere into the round?**

BERND WIESBERGER: Not what I've experienced so far. The behaviour, let's say, within the group is very similar. I would say you get a little bit more energy, especially, out of playing well.

I think the fans, especially here in Scotland and Great Britain are very supportive, and if you do well, you get some energy from the crowds. We are definitely missing them out on the links as we do every week, but especially I feel like in Scotland, you have great crowds supporting the events. But I wouldn't say that's the -- within the group, the atmosphere is changing much. You know, some guys are a little bit more chatty than others, but I wouldn't say that we are trying to, you know, to be cheerleader to ourselves in a way. In that case, within the group, it's been quite similar, at least what I've experienced over the last couple of weeks since the return to golf.

**Q. You've already touched on last year, but the**

**conditions for the four days, were they the easiest conditions you've played on a links course of over the four days?**

BERND WIESBERGER: Well, not only the four days, but what I believe was the weather leading up to it. I think it was quite soft the week before, the weekend before, where we had rain, and then virtually perfect, calm conditions, and you could see, I think it doesn't really matter where it is, what kind of golf course it is if the best players in the world get conditions that are favourable, no golf course has complete protection. If it's windy, if it's challenging, I think there's no golf course that won't challenge over the duration of a week, either. Yeah, it was relatively easy, easier than everybody would have wanted and would have wanted to see the golf course give a little bit more trickiness maybe to it, and it certainly has that. I played yesterday and this morning in a bit of wind. The golf course is a bit longer and not running out quite as much as last year where the rough is a little bit and where the greens feel a little bit firmer, and all of a sudden, you know you're facing quite a different beast in a way. It's going to be interesting to see how the week turns out weather-wise, but having said that from when we get the odd week where everything plans out perfect, get somewhat soft-ish golf course with no wind and beautiful weather, then guys are going to take it apart, and that's what happened last year. I'm expecting it not to happen again this year.

**Q. I take it you were surprised when you came back to see the setup was tougher than last year, despite the conditions being different?**

BERND WIESBERGER: Visually it's a little different. They have taken out a couple trees and gives it a more open, linky feel. I don't think the trees they have taken out had a massive effect if it would have been windy, but visually, it's a little bit more open.

As I said, just off the first and second they have added 70, 80 yards, and again at the end of the round. On top of that, obviously there's bunkers where you were able to fly it over, for example, what is now 16, you're not able to do that anymore. Certainly not this morning. And then rough is a little bit tricky, so it makes you be a bit more precise. Last year you could be a bit more lenient and get away with stuff and this year I think it's going to be a bit different.

**Q. Do the changes make it a better course, more interesting or better or is it just different?**

BERND WIESBERGER: I don't exactly know the reasons why certain things were added and taken out of the golf course. I have not had a chance to talk to any of the superintendent or the owners the reason behind it.

I suppose a classic links course doesn't normally have huge trees within the hole, so visually, it looks -- especially around 10, 1, 2, it looks a little bit more open like a links course. Normally it does. I don't think it has much effect on how it's going to play. Certainly the weather will have much greater impact on that.

**Q. You've obviously played many America at the U.S. Open and US PGA and you've played in Europe, as well. What's the difference between the top two bubbles, if you like, on the PGA TOUR and The European Tour, and did you have a preference?**

BERND WIESBERGER: I mean, I'm not sure if you can call the American system a bubble because it certainly has holes and everybody knows that, but not holes in a way that are -- I would think make it more vulnerable. It's very tight when you get on the golf course and you get your temperature checked and you have your COVID test ahead of the week and you have daily updates that you need to provide before you head to the golf course, so that's very similar to what we have on Tour in Europe.

I think once you exit the golf course, you're more to the same standard of everyone else in the country. You know, you're obliged to same guidelines and laws, given everybody is allowed to stay in any hotel that they want. Obviously, let's say the restaurants and everything, you have to oblige to whatever the guidelines. For example, the PGA in California is very strict. You weren't allowed to dine indoors, just outdoors limited. Anybody, doesn't matter a golfer or anybody who lived there, applied to the same rules and laws.

In Europe we have a different approach, obviously trying to keep it as tight as possible, the players and caddies staying in the same hotels in a way and everybody is just allowed to buddy up. There's a difference obviously from a point of view of an individual, you prefer a little bit more freedom I suppose. I don't think that's anything that's going to surprise anyone.

But our first and most important thing we need to remember is that we are able to play golf and able to have golf tournaments on round, and these are the measures we need to take in order to have them. You know, The European Tour, it was lenient enough to not force anyone to play if they didn't feel like they wanted to, so therefore, nobody is going to lose their European Tour card, but just if you want to play, you have to be in a little bit of a tighter bubble.

I think personally, I'd prefer a little bit more freedom. I'm not going to be stupid with what I'm going to do. I'm not

going to go to clubs and party at night and party forever. I'm going to wear my mask and be responsible with everything, but you can definitely understand the different approach of what guys have taken on The European Tour, given, also, we have had a lot more people immigrating from different countries, different laws, and I think so far The European Tour has tried our best to keep it tight and we've had very few cases, as well.

**Q. Must be lovely to walk in and see your picture and image with some of the real elite players of the game, but I'm pretty sure none of them have been able to defend it. So must be some excitement this week that you have a chance to better some of them by actually.**

BERND WIESBERGER: Doesn't happen very often for me that you defend a title, especially one of this magnitude. We walked in on Monday after taking the COVID test, staying on site for the week and walked past a couple -- not a couple but everyone who is on that list is a legend of European and international golfer, so very proud to have added my name to that. I'm aware that nobody has successfully defended it, so I will do my best to do that and certainly looking forward to a little bit of a different challenge this year with the scorecard conditions probably, and hopefully will be able to come out successful again at the end of the week.

**Q. What's your playing schedule leading up to the Masters?**

BERND WIESBERGER: So I'll be playing obviously this week and next week at Wentworth. I'm going to defend in Italy in a couple weeks' time, as well, and then maybe I'll add one more week in Cyprus before heading over to Augusta and then probably stay a couple weeks in the States. But definitely going to be here next week and then in Italy and then it depends a little bit on the scheduling the weeks immediately before and after Augusta.

**Q. Any invitations to play in the States?**

BERND WIESBERGER: It's pending a little bit, so just seeing how we can schedule it best. Right now, Brendan Taylor from Wasserman is trying to find the best solution for me. I'm looking forward to defend in Italy in a couple weeks' time and then have Augusta. It's more likely I'll stay a couple weeks after the Masters rather than play before, but you know, we'll see. For now my focus is on this week and then going into Wentworth, the BMW PGA and then defending again in Italy and leading up that way to play at the Masters.

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