

Aberdeen Standard Investments Scottish Open

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North Berwick, Scotland

The Renaissance Club

Robert MacIntyre

Press Conference

NEIL AHERN: Robert, returning to the Aberdeen Standard Investments Scottish Open for the second time, it's a little bit of a different affair this year, different time of the year and obviously no fans, but it still retains the prestige and the Rolex Series status. Can you tell me how excited you are about this week.

ROBERT MACINTYRE: Yeah, again, it's only my second Scottish Open, so Scottish Open is a Scottish Open for us Scottish guys. It's the one that you want to win. And if you can have a chance at winning it come Sunday, then you've done everything well over the week. The prestige is always there, being a Scotsman, and obviously it's the one that you want to win.

NEIL AHERN: Obviously there's a few differences in the course this year. Have you been out there and how is it looking this year?

ROBERT MACINTYRE: Yeah, it's definitely tougher than last year. The weather of course is a bit cooler. Looks like it's going to be a wee bit windier. There's new tee boxes on a few of the holes. They've lengthened it, so it's going to be a good test this week.

NEIL AHERN: Obviously you've made the cut in all but one event this season but obviously not just quite challenged at the weekend. How is your game coming into this week and how are you looking to change that?

ROBERT MACINTYRE: Just do what I've been doing. It's just not been -- my game has not been on the level I'd hope it to be, but it's coming along nicely. I've played in some top, top events this year and made the cut in them. It's not like I am not playing good, it's just I've not got the cutting edge this year that I did last year. We'll just try and find it.

Q. You didn't play in the Irish Open; had you originally meant to play in the Irish Open? And if you did and you came out, you wanted to work at your game at home; is that right?



A Rolex Series Event

ROBERT MACINTYRE: Yeah, before I knew I was in the U.S. Open I'd planned on playing the Irish, but it was just the travel and what I'd heard of the U.S. Open. Obviously hadn't seen it until Winged Foot, but I knew it was going to be more of a mental test than anything else, so I had to go home and try and regroup, and the worst thing I could have done and go and try and compete again. No, I felt like I had to go back and regroup and see Davey a couple of times and whatnot and just try and iron things out.

Q. Is there anything that he spotted at all in your game during your week back home?

ROBERT MACINTYRE: No, well, I already knew what my weakness was or what I've been struggling with this year, so I've just tried to tweak a few things to try and improve that. I mean, last year my iron play was as good as anyone out here. This year it's not been on the same level, but I feel like just now the things we're working on are starting to come good.

Q. You've had a remarkable start to your European Tour career by any standard. I know obviously you want to push on and you're a bit of a perfectionist; nothing wrong with that. Do you feel at times you're almost too hard on yourself?

ROBERT MACINTYRE: No, I wouldn't -- I mean, I feel like you've got to be. If you're wanting to push on to do something in the game. I mean, I could just accept it and be a middle-of-the-road man, but I don't want to be that. I feel like I've put too much work in for me just to be almost just a journeyman, as I'd say. I want to be challenging for titles every week when I pitch up.

But the way I'm playing just now, I can't do that. But we're starting to see good movements in the game.

This is probably the best I've ever driven the ball in my life this year. But iron play hasn't been quite on. Putting is coming together now. I just feel like you've got to be looking to improve every day, every week.

Q. I know there's no such thing as second-season syndrome, but did you imagine this might happen? You had such a wonderful season last year.



ROBERT MACINTYRE: Yeah, well, I had an injury, so I had to fix that first and foremost. And then it was just like, right, we need to -- when everything kicked in, this COVID and the lockdown and whatnot, and the way that the European Tour have almost secured our status for the next year, it's given me a year to try and figure stuff out. Not that I'm pitching up not trying to win, but still, I'm trying new things just because I've got -- at the end of the day I've got a year to test things, and obviously come later in the year I'll try and go back to everything -- I'll take note of everything and come back and position what works and what doesn't.

This year I'm just trial-and-error on a lot of things, but I'm still here to compete.

Q. I understand you've made a change of caddie; is that right?

ROBERT MACINTYRE: Yeah.

Q. What's the reason for that? And it's Mikey Thompson, I believe, from London Links?

ROBERT MACINTYRE: Yeah. No, I just felt like the time was right. Me and Greg had a good, what, two years, two and a half years. We came from the Challenge Tour together.

So me and Greg, great mates. It was just the time was right to change. Not just for me but for Greg. The two of us were, I don't know, almost getting -- I'd say almost stagnant in what we were doing. We almost spent too much time together. I think that was one of the problems.

We're good mates, and Greg has gone on to get another bag, and I had my main sit once me and Greg parted I was always getting Mikey. I had to see if he was willing to come and do the job, so thankfully he's come out and he's been good this week already, so here's hoping.

Q. He's a guy with a lot of experience and had some good bags in the past, as well, which must have attracted you?

ROBERT MACINTYRE: Yeah, I'm at a level or a stage in my career that I can go two ways; you can either go back into the pack or you can take off and get into the top 50 in the world, top 30s. That's obviously where I want to be. I don't want to be just in a pack. I want to be a standout. I want to be up there competing in majors. So that's one of the reasons I've got Mikey on the bag.

Q. How difficult a decision was it to let the caddie go, let Greg go?

ROBERT MACINTYRE: Yeah, it's not nice at all to do it. It's one of the hardest decisions I've ever done in my life. But it's my job and my business. If I don't perform, I've not got a job, but Greg will always -- he'll be able to pick up a bag. At the end of the day it's my job that's on the line, so I just felt like it was something that I needed to do to just try and take the next step. I just wasn't -- Greg almost -- I need more experience and Greg needs more experience, and me and Greg had a great chat when we parted company, still close mates. He messages me all the time. I message him. Last week he done well with Toby, Toby Tree, and it's one of those things where we're going to be mates. Down the line I'm sure we'll be back together, but for now it's just Mikey is the man for the job I feel.

Q. Taking you back a few years, have you got a sort of first Scottish Open experience? And I know this is only your second Scottish Open, but if you had gone to a Scottish Open as a youngster, is there a Scottish Open moment that you can remember?

ROBERT MACINTYRE: Scottish Open was the one I used to go to all the time with my family because it was at Loch Lomond, just an hour and a half from home. So I've pretty much seen them all. Mickelson, Woods and them walking from behind the 18th at Loch Lomond coming through the archway. So Loch Lomond has obviously been -- almost every year we used to go; just what a spot it is to be. So I've not really got a specific one, but no, I went to them all.

Q. In terms of how things have gone for you this year and what you've learned about yourself, given that last year was really a consistently positive trajectory that you were on, I wonder if this year you've even learned more about yourself as a player and as a person, the different challenges that you've had to deal with, the likes of what's happened with Greg for starters?

ROBERT MACINTYRE: The main thing for me is the mental side of the game. I know I've got the game to compete, but everything with lockdown, coming back out, the bubble, everything has just been quite tough. So it's been one of them years that I've learnt more about myself than my golf game, if I'm being honest. The mental side of the game, I've played probably two of the toughest tests I've ever played, U.S. PGA and then the U.S. Open. So the mental side of the game has been a huge factor.

I used to get down on myself. Even though I was cheery, still inside I'd be raging at myself. But this year, especially U.S. Open, you had to accept -- you were hitting good shots and getting punished in the rough, being able to move it 60 yards. It was more about accepting -- once you hit the ball, there's nothing you can do. You've just got to

go and try and find it again. And that's one thing that I feel like I'm starting to learn, how to handle myself in tough situations.

Q. Just on Greg again, can you talk us through the time and did you feel it was coming over a period of time, and you mentioned experience. What exactly do you feel you need from a caddie going forward at the moment?

ROBERT MACINTYRE: Yeah, it was a difficult decision. I mean, caddies are so different and so are players. One caddie that works for say Grant might not work for me because we're completely different people. But I mean, Greg done his job to his absolute best for me every week, and it showed. My results were good.

But when things aren't going well, you have to change something to try and get a different -- for me it's like any other sport, like football, shinty, whatever. If something is not going well, you've got to change it to try and get different momentum, and that's pretty much one of the reasons I've done it, just to try and get something different, try and see a different angle on it, and I mean, that's really the main reason.

Mikey is obviously experienced, been through a lot, and I just felt like I got on great with him, so it was one of them -- it was a pretty easy decision for me. I approached Mikey and seen if he could do the job, and here we are this week.

Q. As was the case last year you've been handed a great draw with Tommy and Bernd. How excited are you to be in that marquee group?

ROBERT MACINTYRE: I'm actually a wee bit more comfortable with this draw than I was last year. Last year I was in the deep end, but it was a great learning experience. Tommy and Bernd I get on great with. I know Bernd more than Tommy, obviously, from the battles me and him have had over the last year.

We know each other well, but no, to get put into that group is huge for me because it keeps you -- it almost keeps you a level up. If you can stick in with these guys in the first two days, then nine times out of ten you're going to be there or thereabouts come the weekend.

Q. It's just fascinating that you come across to some people as being incredibly hard on yourself. I was just interested, did you speak to guys in other sports? Would you speak to people outside the golf just to try and get that extra bit? Have you done any reading to give you that extra edge?

ROBERT MACINTYRE: No, not really. I mean, I'm just -- I just try and be myself. People see me as an easygoing guy, but I'm really ruthless when it comes to things. But that comes from inside, that comes from the family background. When it comes to -- I mean, it's just you've got to learn it. If you've not got it, you learn it, and I feel like I've got to learn this. I mean, it's not something that comes naturally to me.

But I feel like the things that I'm doing, the people I've got in my team, that I'm doing the right things. Mikey, for instance, is a winner. He's not scared to take on folk, and the feel like that's perfect for me because I'm at a stage where that I need to push on and become ruthless when it comes to the crunch.

Q. To be even talking about crossroads and things like that at this stage of your career, that's quite eye-opening. It's incredible at your age to be talking like that.

ROBERT MACINTYRE: Yeah, I mean, I'm only 24 years old, but I feel like it's a big chance for me at this stage to -- who knows, maybe at 29 years old it might happen. But I want it to happen at 24 years old. I want it to happen now, and I've got a great chance with these next couple of weeks. Thankfully my game is looking pretty good just now, so who knows.

Q. I was just wondering, did your new caddie take much persuading? Did you have to go down on one knee and beg or did he drive a hard bargain over wages or anything like that?

ROBERT MACINTYRE: No, no, it was pretty smooth. I'm pretty easygoing when it comes to that. I asked him, and we had a good chat, and it was just -- for me it was do you want it as much as me, and he came back and he said, yeah, brilliant, let's get going. For me it's like you're wanting to do something in golf. As I keep saying, it's where I want to be, and Mikey I feel is the right guy for that job.

Q. Was he doing a regular job at the time?

ROBERT MACINTYRE: Yeah, he was doing delivery for a bakery, started at 3:00 a.m., finished by midday. Actually the first time I messaged him to see, what are you working as, Mate, what are you doing, and he didn't get back to me. I messaged him maybe at 9:00 at night, and then he replied midday the next day, like, oh, sorry I was in bed, I was up for 3:00, and it's like, right, well --

Q. Easy decision then.

ROBERT MACINTYRE: -- are you wanting a job, and here we are this week. He's delighted and I'm delighted is more the fact.

Q. Mikey obviously caddied for Brooks Koepka when he won. Is it that type of experience and success that you're looking for?

ROBERT MACINTYRE: It is, and the main thing is that trust. He's got a lot of stories he could tell. I mean, some of them are out of this world. But it's not just about his experiences, it's about him as a guy. For me I'm pretty chill on the golf course normally, so it's about having stories to chat about on the way around. When I'm hitting a golf shot I'm thoroughly focused on golf, but between -- you've got 300 yards to walk maybe 10 times a round. That's a lot of time to be thinking.

Mikey is obviously from Scotland, so he's got the same kind of -- he watches the same things I watch, he does the same things, he's into sport. We've got a good connection on that kind of thing. Then it comes down to trust; does he trust me hitting the shots that I want to hit, and I trust him with the information he's giving me, and I feel like we're 100 per cent in it with each other.

NEIL AHERN: Thank you very much, Robert, and hope you have a great week.

ROBERT MACINTYRE: Thank you. Cheers.

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