

# Aberdeen Standard Investments Scottish Open

Wednesday, 7 July, 2021

North Berwick, Scotland

The Renaissance Club

## Aaron Rai

### Press Conference

**Q. How does it feel to be back here as defending champion?**

AARON RAI: It's great to be back here. Really enjoyed playing the course. It's set up a little bit differently this year with the wind that we've had and a little bit softer. But it's in great shape, and, yeah, looking forward to the week ahead.

**Q. You're coming off the back of your best result of the year in Ireland last week. How important is it to have that momentum going into a big couple of weeks?**

AARON RAI: It was nice. Last week was very solid, the best I've played all year-to-date. So to have that this week is nice, a little more comfortable with the things we're doing and it's good to see the game is getting there for sure. So you can definitely take that coming into this week. Ultimately every week is slightly different. You never know how it's going to pan out, so it's definitely a layer of confidence going into it but we'll see what happens this week.

**Q. If memory serves, did you play in sort of a local-tier event this year just before the British Masters?**

AARON RAI: Yeah, just before the PGA, Kiawah Island, I think before that at the start of May.

**Q. What was the thinking of that? I'd have thought you'd play the British Masters with this year being so close to where you live?**

AARON RAI: Yeah, if it that was at any other point during the year, I'd have been there. I love playing the British Masters, and the course is very close by to where I live but it just didn't fall well schedule-wise with it being the week before the PGA, with having a long flight, potentially jet-lag. It felt like I needed a little bit more time to prepare for that particular tournament.



A Rolex Series Event

So I unfortunately had to miss the British Masters, and also with the COVID restrictions now and how hard it is to travel, it was tricky to play in the Spanish events before that, because I didn't want to risk not being able to go to the States. It was definitely not ideal and not something I would have done under normal circumstances, but I felt like it was the best decision at this time to miss those European Tour events. But to still play competitive golf.

**Q. Did you get much reaction from other players when you turned up?**

AARON RAI: It was nice. It's at a course, again, that was local to me and a course I practise at, and everyone there was very welcoming. It was very nice to be there. I treated it just like I treat any other event. I prepared for a couple of days. So I didn't see it any differently. Everyone was very welcoming for sure.

**Q. When you arrived here early in the week, the memories from last year would come flooding back. How would you sum up what you've achieved since then or have you kicked on or stalled or how would you describe what's happened in your career since then?**

AARON RAI: Yeah, that's an interesting question, I, think in terms of results, it's definitely been close to the side of stalling. Been a couple of good results but it's been quite mixed over the last few months.

Yeah, as I said in terms of results, it could have been better for sure. But I've also learned a lot in that period through some period of maybe not playing well through trying to figure a couple of things out.

So it's not a period that I would have changed at all. Been a lot of great learnings. It's nice to be back this week and we'll see how things go. Certainly helps being in a familiar place, and, yeah, we'll see.

**Q. You obviously beat a strong field last year. How does it feel to be the defending champion and the strongest ever field for The Scottish Open and one of the strongest fields for The European Tour?**

AARON RAI: It's nice. The field is incredible this week. Some of the best players in the world are here. The



Scottish Open is an incredible event and they should attract the best players in the world, so it's a privilege to be here. I'm very much looking forward to the week ahead.

**Q. Coming here as defending champion, does that put any extra pressure on you at all?**

AARON RAI: To an extent, I would say so. It definitely is a little bit different to last year, for instance. In previous years, I could definitely go under the radar a little bit more.

But it's a great thing, as well. It shows I've had a period of success. I've played well on this course. And to have those memories and to have certain things to draw on about course knowledge with certain pin positions and certain situations that we find ourselves in over the last year and even the year before that in 2019, certainly helps regardless of added pressure, regardless of being defending champion.

And ultimately that's the most important thing, and because when we tee it up tomorrow, it makes no difference whether you won it last year or you came in last. Everyone starts at exactly the same start point, and it's purely about how well we do over the next four days.

**Q. Is it all about what Aaron Rai does, never mind what the others are doing, just focus on yourself?**

AARON RAI: Yeah, it has to be, and I think it has to be that way for probably a number of players out here. Again, it's a world-class field, and the level of competition is always high on the European Tour.

But as cliché as it sounds, we're only in control, I'm only in control of what I do and how I play. So that has to be my main focus.

**Q. And are you confident you can come north of the border and conquer and return south triumphant?**

AARON RAI: It's tricky to say what lies ahead in this game. There are periods where you feel fantastic going into tournaments, but the results don't always showcase that. There other periods where things are not quite clicking beforehand but then they fall into place on a given week.

So it's very hard for me to say whether it's going to be good or it's not going to be so well. But I've prepared well and the game feels in pretty good shape. We'll see what happens.

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