

U.S. Amateur Championship

Sunday, August 21, 2022

Paramus, New Jersey, USA

The Ridgewood Country Club

Sam Bennett

Press Conference

Q. You're the 122nd U.S. Amateur champion. When you hear those words, what comes to mind?

SAM BENNETT: I don't know. I beat a lot of good players, I guess. That's what comes to mind. It's surreal. I don't know. That's what I dreamed of, what I wanted all my life, I guess. From trying to qualify when I was a junior and not being able to make it and then still not being able to make it in college, and finally being exempt to be able to play in three, that was pretty cool, and this being my last one, to go out like this, this kind of just tops it off.

I think this kind of puts a note on my college career I've had so far with winning four times and playing in some TOUR events, adding this to my resume kind of tops that off.

Q. The names on that trophy, legends of the game, Nicklaus, Woods, Jones. You think about your name is going to be alongside those guys.

SAM BENNETT: Yeah, that's going to be pretty cool. I haven't looked, I'll look tonight, but that's going to be pretty cool seeing my name beside Tiger, Nicklaus, Jones, all those people you said. It's a true honor.

Q. You're coming back for a fifth year. You easily could have turned pro with your credentials. You decided to come back to school. That decision is now looking pretty good. You just added the U.S. Amateur to your resume.

SAM BENNETT: Yeah, it's looking pretty good. After nationals next year it looks like I'm going to have a pretty good schedule now, so kind of looking forward to that. I'm going to enjoy it and talk to my team and talk to my coaches, have fun in college, and it's going to be fun playing with the guys this year. I love my teammates and I love A&M. I can't wait to get back home and celebrate with my teammates and us get going, start the fall.

Q. Kortan said that one of the reasons you came back



is to prepare yourself for moments like this, to be able to handle it. Last summer could you have done that?

SAM BENNETT: I don't know. I don't think so. I was not ready. I mean, starting before I played my first TOUR events, I was nervous. I couldn't barely get the ball on the tee on the first couple TOUR events. Playing the U.S. Open really helped playing the weekend, and it showed today. I was nervous, but I enjoyed the crowds and the people. Ben, he made it real tough. Closing out any match is tough, nevertheless the final match, and to have it come down to 18 when I was 5-up with a chance to go 6-up at one point, kind of letting that slip, but he played great and he made the putts when it mattered.

I was kind of just hanging on by the edge all day, but I was somehow able to get it done.

Q. When were you most nervous on that back nine? Was it the putt on 14?

SAM BENNETT: No, that was a bad break. No, I was 3-up at that point. No, probably the most nervous I got was probably the second shot on 18, honestly. I knew he was kind of in trouble, but I just knew -- I was holding my breath when it started turning. I did not want it to cross the line.

Q. What did you have?

SAM BENNETT: It was 177 and I was trying to hit a high 60 shot with an 8-iron, just a choked-down straighter one, and I kind of turned it over a smidge and luckily it landed soft and stayed out there and it was actually a good spot to putt from. But I was not trying to go left of that pin.

Q. You said to Steve Burkowski you looked at your tattoo a couple sometimes coming down the stretch. Do you feel like maybe you drew some inspiration from above?

SAM BENNETT: For sure, maybe. I believe in the golfing gods and breaks and stuff like that. Yeah, I don't know. I don't know.

Q. Talk about feeling slighted all week; did you really feel that way or was that just a motivation --

SAM BENNETT: Yeah, a little bit at first, for sure. But I



... when all is said, we're done.®

mean, everybody knows who I am, I know who I am. I mean, I said I had something to prove, but I mean, in a way, not really. I mean, I guess, but here we are. I guess my comment, I backed it up. I knew I was going to get a lot of s--- for it if I didn't.

Q. Pretty pro-Ben Carr crowd. Did that motivate you?

SAM BENNETT: For sure. That was awesome. I was telling Kortan walking up the -- I guess after the lunch break, my coach, everybody was yelling "Ben," and I was like, this is exactly what I want. Just to play and try to hush the crowd a little bit. It kind of added pressure to him because everybody was rooting for him so hard. So I think that made it a little tougher for him, as well.

Q. When you look back on this week and the guys that you beat, coming in the average World Ranking of the five opponents was 13.6. When you look back maybe a month or two from now and think about the guys you knocked off to get here, you obviously earned it.

SAM BENNETT: Yeah, I definitely earned this championship. Someone from our side of the bracket definitely earned it. Everybody that -- like you said, closing out a match or beating anybody in this championship is hard, but to knock off the players I did, that's a pretty good feat.

Q. You said in the past just kind of growing up on a nine-hole course, you really couldn't have dreamed to be in the position that you're in. Can you just maybe talk about all the way back then and kind of your dreams in golf and how you've now maybe exceeded what you --

SAM BENNETT: For sure. I started off growing up on a nine-hole course, going out there in my bathing suit and tee shirt and flip flops and hitting off dirt and putting on not very good greens. Then I got good and got a membership at a country club, at Traditions where I practice. Then once I got to college I was totally content freshman and sophomore year with just shooting around even par and helping out my team, getting a good score up on the board.

I don't know what clicked. I don't know if it was something with my dad or something with my game, but all of a sudden I just got good out of nowhere. I don't know how that happened.

Q. When was that, when you --

SAM BENNETT: I don't know. It was not until really junior year until I was anybody. But I don't know, here we are now. But yeah, it's definitely crazy from where I grew up, if

people saw that course where I played, to be standing here and playing on this U.S. Open style setup, it's a pretty cool accomplishment.

Q. You turned down the World Amateur a couple weeks ago. You win this, are you still going to turn it down?

SAM BENNETT: Yeah, I'm turning it down. I don't know who they're going to invite, but I know Sargent is going, but I've been over across the pond one time this summer, and I don't want to miss the first week of school, and there's some other reasons, but I don't even know where the last world Am was or who played on it or anything like that.

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