

# U.S. Open Championship 2020

Thursday, September 17, 2020

Mamaroneck, New York, USA

Winged Foot Golf Club

## Lee Westwood

### Flash Interview



**Q. Lee Westwood, 3-under 67. Lee, can you talk us through your round a little bit.**

LEE WESTWOOD: Yeah, I got off to a good start, hit some good shots on the first few holes. Missed from 18 feet on the first. Birdied the second, which was the 11th. Hit it close on 13 with a 4 iron to about three feet. Misread my putt, missed that one. Bogeyed the next. Missed the fairway, but a horrible lie. Any time you miss a fairway around here, you expect to struggle to make par. So I made bogey. Bounced back with a birdie on the next, the 15, and then hit solid shots all the way around.

Hit close on 2, holed from four feet there for birdie. Hit a pretty good shot on 3, but it's a long 235-yard par 3. Had a decent shot but missed about 12 feet for par.

Solid coming in. Lovely up and down on the last. Hit a good drive. It just broke right off the fairway up against the collar. When I came in with my hybrid, it just caught the toe open of the club face and sent it out to the right, which was the last place I wanted to miss it. That was really sort of position zed. But played a fantastic pitch to about 15 feet and rolled it in for birdie.

Yeah, it was a good round of golf. Really solid in every aspect of the game. So I'm pleased with that start.

**Q. Lee, a couple things. One, did you expect this golf course to yield the numbers it yielded? And did you expect coming in to shoot a number like you shot today?**

LEE WESTWOOD: I expected people to score better than everybody was thinking, certainly in the first round if there wasn't too much breeze, which there hasn't been. The greens are holed in. The guys drive the ball so well now -- look, the 5th hole, for instance, I don't consider myself long by any means out here. I'm 47 years of age. 505 yards uphill, I slung it around the corner and went in with 9 iron from 151. If I do that, Rory, D.J., guys like that are probably doing the same. You get it in the fairway regularly around here, you can score well.

With them being bold greens, you can use them to your advantage. Obviously, as the golf course firms out and a little bit of wind picks up, which is likely, and the pin positions obviously get tougher, it won't yield as many low scores. Today was obviously the day to get off to a decent start and get some credit.

**Q. Did you expect to shoot a number like today? Have you seen things in your game that led you to believe that?**

LEE WESTWOOD: Yeah, I played great the last round at Valderrama, which is a difficult golf course. You can't really afford to hit many bad shots around there. I shot 67, and I felt like I left four or five shots out on the golf course. I felt like it could have really been a spectacular round of golf.

I've built on that and fed off confidence again from that. In the practice rounds, I hit it well. I hit a lot of fairways. I'm driving the ball well. I felt like, if I did that, then there's a low score out there for me.

**Q. About a month, six weeks ago, you sounded reluctant to come over here. What changed your mind?**

LEE WESTWOOD: Reluctant for anything. I was reluctant to go to Spain for the Valderrama tournament. It's just a strange world that we're living in right now, and people have different opinions on things, don't they? They evaluate things and see things in different ways. You've got to respect the individual's view on it.

I don't really criticize anybody that takes an opinion opposite to mine. It's just that you shouldn't be at a golf tournament if you don't feel like it's right. I'm not saying it isn't right for certain people, but just for me it wasn't right. I assume you're talking about the World Golf Championship and the PGA that I missed. It felt too early coming out -- not even out of it. We're going into second waves here and there. Felt too early to start traveling ten hours on an airplane. So that was the view and the route I took.

**Q. But what changed your mind, if any -- I mean,**

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**something changed your mind.**

LEE WESTWOOD: Just feedback from other people that have been at tournaments and telling me what's going on at tournaments and stuff like that, and I felt comfortable coming here.

**Q. Did you enjoy playing with James today?**

LEE WESTWOOD: Yeah, it was good. I'd obviously seen that he'd won the British amateur. I watched a little bit on TV. Obviously, he's a good player to win the British amateur. We were chatting all the way around. He's got nice game. He just makes mistakes that an amateur would make at a U.S. Open. I think it's his first U.S. Open. Somebody playing in their first U.S. Open.

And the kind of mistakes we all make. Threw a few away on the greens three-putting and missed a few in the wrong spots. These kind of tournaments will get you, and they come as a shock to you when you've not played them before. He's obviously got a very bright future. Really surprised that nobody's given him an invite for the Irish Open next week. He's the British amateur champion from Ireland, and he's not got an invite to the Irish open. Little bit shocked at that. Maybe should be a late one in there.

**Q. How do the severity of these greens compare to the other ones?**

LEE WESTWOOD: You come across greens as severe as this now and again, but they're fairly unique. I guess, it felt, you know -- Oakland Hills may be a comparable, somewhere like that. But these generally major championship golf courses that -- where you're putting on greens as severe as this and as quick as this. Augusta are fairly severe as well and fairly speedy.

There's a couple of golf courses there, but you don't see them very often. It's nice to play on greens like this. You need to use your imagination, and you need to be very disciplined to certain flags, miss it in the right places. Or else, you know, it creeps up on you quickly how difficult the golf course can get.

**Q. In '06, there was one guy under par first round, Montgomerie, and then one guy under par second round, Stricker, and that was it. The amount of people you have under par, I know it's the first day. I know it's a little soft, so forth and so on, but is this a testament of how much better players have gotten just in that short period of time?**

LEE WESTWOOD: I think it's a testament to that and equipment probably. You know, everybody drives the ball

so well now that how long are we going to -- how much are we going to keep extending golf courses? I'm 47 years of age. I bet, if you look at my driving stats today, I probably averaged 315 yards, maybe longer.

You know, it's difficult to -- when there's no wind and the greens are receptive and the greens are good, you can make putts. It's very difficult to, say, pro proof a golf course. We're good, and we hit it straight generally. We're going to shoot low scores in certain conditions.

There's not a lot of breeze out there, and the greens are still receptive.

**Q. Historically, the scores have gotten worse as we've gone along. The winner has always been over par. Do you think -- and I know it's not your number -- but if Justin Thomas is 5 under, could that be the winning score?**

LEE WESTWOOD: Possibly. It's very condition dependent, I think. I'm not shocked to see somebody shot 5 under par and see a few scores right behind him.

But you can -- they can dry the greens out. They can hide the flags a lot more. It would surprise me if 5 under is not the best score of the week at the end of the week. If anyone shoots any lower than that, they'll have really played well, I think.

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