

U.S. Open Championship 2023

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The Los Angeles Country Club

Wyndham Clark

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: Please join me in welcoming the champion of this year's U.S. Open Wyndham Clark. Can you try to put into words what's going through your head?

WYNDHAM CLARK: You know, this is now my second win on the PGA TOUR and first one was surreal and this one is surreal. It hasn't quite hit me yet. Walking up 18 was pretty emotional, and then finishing.

But yeah, it's been a whirlwind of the last five, six weeks. It's been -- just so blessed and humbled to be here.

THE MODERATOR: Talk about your play today and your mindset throughout what was a stressful round.

WYNDHAM CLARK: Yeah, I mean, I started off great, and I felt really good and confident about my game.

Unfortunately I bogeyed the second hole but I felt like I rebounded well in birdieing the fourth, and got a little unlucky on hole 8, but I just felt like I bounced back and kept my emotions about me.

I hit some great shots coming down at the end, and although I made a couple bogeys and it seemed like maybe the rails were coming off, I was inside pretty calm. I'm really pleased with myself with how I performed.

Q. You say you were calm but we also saw the emotions the second it went in. How much are you wrestling with that back nine to keep those kind of emotions out?

WYNDHAM CLARK: Yeah, I'm a fast player in the sense of once I get up to hit it, I just hit it. Maybe my putting is a little slower these days, but when I pull the trigger hitting, I'm fast.

When things were going a little sideways or even good, I want to go fast, and I've just learned that I have to think slow and just kind of let things come to me and take it as it comes.

I think the only time that I didn't was on the par-3. Was that 15? I kind of lost my focus a little bit. It was a terrible

wedge shot.

But honestly, after that, even the bogey on 16, it's a tough tee ball. You hit it in the bunker. But I hit some great shots coming down on 17 and 18. I felt like I kept my emotions in check as much as I could until the green on 18.

Q. Could you take us through the sequence of 8 from when you hit the shot in there to it buries in the bush and you barely move it, and you made a good chip there to make a bogey. Take us through what was going through your mind in that sequence.

WYNDHAM CLARK: Yeah, I thought I could get the original shot up-and-down. The tough thing was the bush that was near where the ball was, if you're playing a money game, you step it out of the way and I get that up-and-down.

But obviously the cameras are here and I don't want to cheat and do anything wrong, so we made sure we brought the rules official in. The tough thing was I couldn't see where I was hitting. The lie was not bad but I couldn't see.

Going under that ball obviously was the worst case scenario, and then I hit the next one. I didn't even know where it went.

But in that moment my mind started going fast, but the good thing is I've done things like that in the past. I've learned from a lot of mistakes I've made, and so has my caddie, John, and he said hey, Dub, we're fine. We're just got to get this up-and-down and we're fine.

It's no big deal. We got my wits about me and I got that up-and-down. Obviously that's momentum. Even though I made a bogey and it looked like I should have made a birdie or par, making bogey there didn't kill me and kept me in the tournament. That was a huge point in the round.

Q. I know you've worked with coaches in the past but you don't have one now. I'm curious how you go about approaching your own game and managing it and optimizing it.

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WYNDHAM CLARK: Yeah, a lot of people say I have a good swing. I believe I have a good swing. My first few years on TOUR it actually really bothered me because people would say, oh, you have such a great swing, and I didn't know where the ball was going, and that was really frustrating for me.

I worked with some great coaches and they were very good at what they do, but I didn't know where the ball was going and I didn't own it.

So when I decided to go on my own -- I do work a little bit with my caddie, but typically it's on my own -- I learned about my game and my swing, and that's what I did when I was younger. I knew how to hit shots and I got away from that when I was with a coach.

Now when I'm in practice, I'm always trying to get back to neutral. So if one day it's really cutty I'm hitting huge draws on the range. And then some days it gets kind of too dry and I hit huge cuts and get it back to neutral, and honestly that's what I've done for the last year and a half.

And so I felt like I've kept my swing in those parameters to where regardless I can play good golf if I'm hitting a little draw or a little cut, and my stats have improved immensely by doing that.

Q. You told us at Wells Fargo that last year you kind of had frustration that you couldn't close out tournaments and you were aggravated. Could you imagine being in the situation are now, just weeks apart between two victories?

WYNDHAM CLARK: You know, I think in the past, no. Now I've learned -- winning Wells was huge for me because I had some people telling me in my ear, they're like, hey, what if something greater is going to happen, and what if it's -- you losing this means something better is going to happen and you learn from it.

I think that was one of the first times, and especially after Wells, I said, okay, you know what? I believe that.

I honestly think I should have won the Memorial Tournament just a few weeks ago, and Viktor played great, but I was right there in contention and had a chance and kind of fumbled at the end.

In the back of my mind I said, well, what if this is saving me for something greater.

Obviously I didn't know it was going to be a U.S. Open, but I just had that attitude and belief that something better was going to happen.

Yeah, it did.

Q. Rickie was just in here and he said he told you in the scoring area I think that your mom would be proud. Can you talk about those emotions?

WYNDHAM CLARK: Yeah, I know my mom is proud of me. She's always been proud of me, regardless of how I'm doing or what I'm doing. I just wish she could be here and we could enjoy this.

It's been a pretty amazing week because my mom lived in LA for a few years and I've had some people come up to me and show pictures of my mom when they knew her back in her 20s and early 30s when she was living here.

That just happened this week, so it was kind of a special vibe all week being here in LA. My parents got married at Riviera Country Club. I have some roots a little bit in this area.

All I really wish is that my mom could be here and I could just hug her and we could celebrate together. But I know she's proud of me.

Q. I think it's fair to say that there's probably some people watching who didn't know a lot about you. Now having won on this stage, I'm wondering what you hope people learned about you through your play this week and especially today.

WYNDHAM CLARK: You know, I feel like I belong on this stage, and even two, three years ago when people didn't know who I was, I felt like I could still play and compete against the best players in the world. I felt like I've shown that this year.

I've come up close, and obviously everyone sees the person that hoists the trophy, but I've been trending in the right direction for a long time now. I've made a lot of cuts. I've had a handful of top 10s and top 20s, and I feel like I've been on a great trajectory to get to this place.

Obviously it's gone faster than I thought as far as just starting to do some stuff mentally that I've never done before, but I feel like I'm one of the best players in the world. Obviously this just shows what I believe can happen.

But at the same time I'm a pretty humble, calm guy, and I don't try to get too high or too low on things. I'm obviously going to celebrate this, but I like to compete. I like to play against -- I'm so competitive. I want to beat everybody but also be friends with everybody. So I try to have a good mix

of that.

Q. You had a long embrace with John on the 18th green there. Can you talk about your relationship and what he means to you.

WYNDHAM CLARK: Yeah, I mean, I think this is a pretty emotional tournament for both John and I because John lost his dad only a couple years ago, and obviously being Father's Day, I hope this brings joy in his dad's eyes and obviously to John.

And also happy Father's Day to my dad. He's unfortunately not here, but I love him and I can't wait to celebrate with him.

But John and I, our relationship has been so close and John has been kind of my rock out here. He's a great caddie, and he's had opportunities to caddie for other people and he turned it down because he wanted to be there for me.

I owe a lot to him. I feel like John is meant to be my caddie, but it's so much more than just a business relationship. We're really close and good friends, and I'm close with his family and he's close with mine.

This just makes it so much more special that we have that bond and relationship.

Q. Back nine, Sunday, U.S. Open, holding a narrow lead all afternoon. How tough is that?

WYNDHAM CLARK: The hardest thing. This is where the game is so mental because your mind starts to race. Obviously you turn and it's like, man, I should be at 12 or 13 and I should have a two-, three-shot lead.

Then I'm almost eagling, birdie 14, it's like I've got a three-shot lead. All I've got to do is coast in and then you make a couple bogeys. So it's so mental because you have to keep your mind so present.

The minute you get ahead or behind, you feel like you make mistakes, especially at this level.

It's more mentally tough than anything, but I feel like if you just stay within yourself, you can pull off the shots that you need to.

John and I, we're trying to keep it light. Fortunately I was walking with Rickie and his caddie Ricky, and they're such class acts and great guys, and they were also trying to keep it light the last couple holes, which just gets your mind away from it just for a quick second.

So that really helped.

Q. I talked to Coach McGraw this morning and he talked about your freshman spring semester, 2013, how you took a redshirt and how that was a big mental challenge for you those few months, and he recommended you step away for a little bit. Talk about that moment and how crucial that was in your development, and have you had any mental challenges since 2013 that you've had to overcome and leaned on that?

WYNDHAM CLARK: Yeah. You know, Mike McGraw is like a father figure to me, especially during that time. I came in and was highly recruited out of high school. Right as I got there, I only made it into maybe one or two events in the fall, and then when I got home I found out my mom was sick.

I came back, and Mike -- Coach McGraw had the wisdom to just -- he could see that it was affecting me so much more and the golf was where it was coming out. I didn't show any emotion off the course, but when I was on the golf course I couldn't have been angrier. I was breaking clubs when I didn't even hit that bad of a shot. I was walking off golf courses.

He said, hey, I think it's just best if you step away from golf. At first I really was mad. I'm competitive. I didn't want to not play, and I thought it was bad if you redshirted, that you weren't good enough.

But it was also the best thing for me. I owe Mike a lot for that.

As we went on longer, or forward, when I transferred from Oklahoma State to Oregon was another low point. I had a great freshman -- redshirt freshman year at Oklahoma State and then I had two bad seasons, and I ultimately transferred and I was in a really low spot, and I think that was a lot of carryover from my mom passing.

So when I went to Oregon and Casey Martin then took over as my head coach, he instilled that I was one of the best players in the world, and he goes, you're good enough to play on this stage but also in college and win. Then I had my best year ever.

He instilled the confidence in me that maybe I lost.

I got out here pretty quick, but even those first few years I felt like I underperformed, and I've had many times where I've gone home and was yelling in my car and punching things and just so mad that I'm like, why can't I do what my

peers are doing that I know I can play with and against and beat.

I've probably had three to four really defining moments in my career since college, but I'm really glad that I stuck it through. And God has a plan for me, and it's obviously far greater than I ever could have imagined.

Being here now, I just feel so blessed. It's honestly surreal to look back and think about the journey the last seven to ten years.

Q. You come into today, you've got some pretty big names around you, Rory, Scottie, Rickie, naturally some of the focus goes on them. Coming into this morning did you feel that took some of the pressure off you, that you were flying under the radar a wee bit?

WYNDHAM CLARK: A little bit. I think Rickie had some of the most pressure being a California boy and everyone wanted him probably more than anyone.

Obviously I put my own pressure on myself, but yeah, I guess it's nice being the underdog. It was great walking by hearing a lot of people chant for Rickie's name because it kind of fueled the fire underneath me that I could do it.

My mental coach, Julie, told me, she goes, every time you hear someone chant "Rickie," think of your goals and get cocky and go show them who you are. I did that. It was like 100 plus times today I reminded myself of the goals.

Now maybe they'll be chanting my name in the future.

Q. I saw you warming up right before the round with Julie. She was standing right next to you talking you through some shots. It was loose but, can you share a little bit about what she was talking to you about or what she's meant to you in helping you understand your potential?

WYNDHAM CLARK: We were talking about anything but golf actually. We were talking about traveling. We were talking about the beautiful homes out here. She was just trying to keep it light.

It's huge in a major championship because you can kind of get really tunnel vision, and it's great to sometimes just look up and see what's going on and be like, hey, this is just like any other day. I've done this a thousand times.

She has a great calmness and presence about her that just makes me calm and relaxed. I'm just so glad that my caddie and agent in November said, hey, we've got this lady that we think you should work with.

I was a little reluctant to do it, and I'm just so glad that she was brought into my life, and what these honestly six months, it's crazy to see how much I've improved and how much she's helped me.

I wouldn't have thought I'd be a major champion six, seven months ago.

Q. We've talked the past couple days. What do you think your mom would say right now?

WYNDHAM CLARK: You know, my mom was -- she was so positive and such a motivator in what she did. She'd be crying tears of joy. She would just -- she called me winner when I was little, so she would just say, "I love you, Winner." She had that mantra of play big.

But really, I was a mama's boy, so there would be a lot of hugging and crying together. But I know she'd be very proud of me. I miss her, and it's obviously great to think about her, and being here in LA and winning something like this makes me think of her even more than maybe my day-to-day when I'm not playing a championship.

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