

U.S. Senior Open Championship

Tuesday, June 25, 2024
Newport, Rhode Island, USA
Newport Country Club

Lee Westwood

Press Conference

THE MODERATOR: Please welcome Lee Westwood to the interview room at the 44th U.S. Senior Open hosted at Newport Country Club. Lee, this is your first Senior Open. You're one of 52 players playing in your first Senior Open. How does it feel to be the new guy again?

LEE WESTWOOD: Yeah, it's good. I've had fun the last couple of days. Meeting a lot of people I haven't seen in a long time that I played out here with, people that I haven't seen since my amateur days.

I recognized some faces, and then they introduced themselves, and I'm like, wow, yeah, it's been 35 years.

Yeah, it's been nice. I've enjoyed it.

Q. There's been a lot of talk about LIV and the PGA TOUR, less maybe how it affects the Senior Tour. Wondering, I know you've been vocal about it, having your opportunity to play on the Senior Tour and why you're here this week.

LEE WESTWOOD: Yeah, no matter what the level of golf is, I think if the best players at every level don't come together and play, there's only one loser, and that's the fans watching.

We need to somehow figure a way that we can get the best players playing against each other more often. Yeah, for sure.

Q. And choosing to play here and maybe not some previous tournaments --

LEE WESTWOOD: Choosing to play this one?

Q. Yes.

LEE WESTWOOD: I could have, yeah, but it was in the middle of a long run of tournaments. So it meant crossing the Atlantic more than I would have wanted to. 51 there,



so I have to plan these things.

Q. You're tied for third in Nashville in LIV. Can you talk about where your confidence level is right now and what you're doing well?

LEE WESTWOOD: Yeah, I started to swing well, and my whole game was coming together when I played at LIV Houston three weeks ago.

Then I went home and did a little bit of work on it. I probably haven't been working as hard on my game as I would have liked to, but I put in a bit more work in the week off.

I went to Nashville and carried on really with that theme, those swing thoughts. Puted well last week. I sharpened my short game up because I've been playing more, and my game is in a really good place.

Obviously third place finish last week is my best result this season. Played well on the final day, which was good. I haven't been finishing tournaments off, so fun for the last four holes and finish that tournament off strongly has given me a lot of confidence going into this week.

Q. Do you feel like a strong performance would help make that case you were trying to make before about letting players play?

LEE WESTWOOD: I don't know whether it's that, but the consensus of opinion of everybody that I talked to said it's great to see myself and Richard playing here. I think, when you look at the U.S. Open two weeks ago or the Masters or the PGA Championship, people are happy to see Bryson or Cam or Jon Rahm coming and playing in those big events.

It's basically getting all the best players together in one tournament to compete against each other, and that's what you want at the highest level. You want all the best players there.

We've been asked to play well this week. Carry on the form of last week. Like I said, my game is in very good shape -- hitting the ball well, hitting it a long way. Putting's good, which it has to be to contend in tournaments no matter where you play.



I'm looking forward to this week. Looking forward to the first couple of rounds, playing with a couple of old friends, Miguel and Jerry Kelly.

What I have noticed is practice rounds out here are way faster than everywhere else. It's such a joy, and it's so refreshing to play nine holes in two hours in a practice round. It's incredible. If the old guys can do it, why can't the young guys do it?

Q. This Senior Tour is more kind of about the fans and getting the names out and stuff like that than even the regular TOUR. Is it disappointing to have them then resolve that for guys like you?

LEE WESTWOOD: I think so. I think at any level it's disappointing they can't resolve it. But the Champions Tour for me is important because people have watched myself play and other guys out here play for the last 30, 40 years, and they build relationships with those players and they've seen us grow as players and people.

Yes, people want to see the youngsters, the new guys on the block coming through and contending, but they also want to see the guys they've made a bond with over the last 30, 40 years. Because, from what I've seen, watching a bit of the tournament last week, Pádraig is still playing some great golf and it's entertaining. At the end of the day, we're in the entertainment industry.

It's nice that the USGA and PGA of America and the R&A are trying to find a way to get everybody together more often, yeah.

Q. You just played nine holes out there. What does this course remind you of? Is there something in England that this course is similar to?

LEE WESTWOOD: Yeah, I was really impressed actually. It's a beautiful golf course. It's in great condition. It reminds me a little bit of Shinnecock, I guess. It reminds me a little bit of links courses back home. When you're standing on some of the tees and you look over at the landscape, it reminds me of somewhere like Birkdale or Hillside, somewhere like that, in that area.

Yeah, it was a pleasure to play. The wind did what a breeze does on links golf courses, and it switched after I played about three holes. Played the first three holes into the wind, and then -- or downwind, and then it switched round and played the next few downwind as well.

That's part of the fun of playing on the coast. Yeah, it looks quite a strategic golf course. There's some bunkers well

placed, and I'm looking forward to playing it competitively on Thursday.

Q. Whoever wins here, what do you think they'll have to do well to hold the trophy?

LEE WESTWOOD: I guess there's a little bit of breeze in the forecast. You're controlling your ball flight, which is a lot easier if you're coming from the fairways.

The fairways are fairly generous if you're comparing it to, say, a U.S. Open setup. They're normally tighter there and a little less rough, not quite as severe on the rough.

It's an old style green, so it could firm up by the end of the week, I guess. Yeah, controlling your ball flight, controlling your spin, and then like any tournament, you have to putt well.

Q. You did very well in USGA Championships and setups over the years. Obviously you didn't get a trophy in your hand, but you were right there a number of times. What is it about playing in these that gets you all fired up about it?

LEE WESTWOOD: I think the major championships, and more so maybe a U.S. Open, test every aspect of your game. You have to hit the ball straight, keep it in the fairway. Obviously your iron play has to be good, and it's easier from the fairway.

You are going to miss greens, so your short game has to be good. You're going to have to scramble a little bit, so you know you need to make those 5- to 10-footers. And like I said earlier, you have to putt well.

It really does test every aspect, and generally the best player on the week comes out on top.

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