

U.S. Senior Open Championship

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Columbus, Ohio, USA

Scioto Country Club

Padraig Harrington

Press Conference

THE MODERATOR: It's my pleasure to welcome the 46th U.S. Senior Open champion, Padraig Harrington. This is your third one of these; how does it feel.

PADRAIG HARRINGTON: It's different, I've got to say. It feels great, but obviously there wasn't the drama that I know we normally provide down the stretch. That doesn't mean that I wasn't feeling it. I was really trying to stay in it, stay focused. I knew I had a nice lead which let me play to the middle of the greens, let me hit the shots.

But I did, I hit some big shots coming on the way home to take all the stress out of it.

I had a great week putting, which wow, golf is easier when you putt well.

On the back of that, obviously the lads challenged; Stewart in particular. Didn't materialize, but that good start really got me going and put me in good position, probably the birdie on 6 being pivotal after the bogey on 5. That got me back in the comfort zone.

Big putt on 8.

You know, I hit the shots I needed to hit on the way home, and very, very pleased not to have created too much drama today.

Q. You mentioned briefly, but how important was that fast start birdieing the first two?

PADRAIG HARRINGTON: Yeah, it changed everything around. I went from being one behind to three ahead. You know, I just hit nice shots the first couple of holes. That helps. It's not just the birdies, I hit a nice tee shot on the first, I hit a particularly nice drive down the second, and that's an awkward hole today because if you're left you could be blocked out.

Those two shots then gave me positions to -- I hit pitching



wedge on both holes, and it gave me opportunities to make birdie. I hit good shots on 3 and 4 afterwards. I got myself in a little bit of trouble on 5 with a three-putt from off the edge of the green. Just was an awkward spot. And I practiced that putt in a practice round, and I putted it off the green by going up the slope.

I was worried if I hit it too hard up the hill it would actually come back off the left-hand side of the green.

Yeah, maybe a little bit cautious, but the driving 6-iron to the edge of the next hole was the big one for me. It got me back feeling good about my game. I hit nice shots really -- the 3-wood, 6-iron into 8, Stewart was obviously pushing a bit when he went with driver, and I think from there on, it was just -- well, I didn't make any mistakes. I'm sure if I did, it would have got a little tighter.

But the fact is I kept hitting it into the green and hitting good first putts.

Q. On Tuesday, I think you said this course didn't set up for you that well. You predicted that because of the driver, took it out of your hands. How satisfying is it to win when you showed up thinking, well, maybe this isn't the place for me?

PADRAIG HARRINGTON: You know, obviously we say things in warmup to tournaments just to get our head in the right space. Maybe I'm not the straightest driver in the world and maybe this course actually ended up suiting me, that I could actually play it quite a bit with my 3-wood and 5-wood and not have to hit driver. I do have an advantage off the tee -- well, I have no advantage over Stewart. Over the field, yes, I would have an advantage with my driver.

But I'm substantially straighter with the other clubs, so today that proved that -- I kept the ball in play nicely by not using my driver and obviously hit it in the middle of the greens, good iron play and good putting.

I might have thought it didn't suit me, but it might have had at the end of the day.

Q. These tournaments come down to small moments a lot of times. I think it was six or maybe seven when you were on the mound. You're on that mound and then you just hit it tight. How important was that, and



you ended up parring?

PADRAIG HARRINGTON: Yeah, I think coming off the back of the birdie on 6, yes, it would have been a shame. I kind of -- yeah, sometimes I do that off the back of birdies. I can get a little bit lax with my focus.

Yeah, chipping and putting there, I had practiced on 18 yesterday evening off the side of a mound on that grass, so I already had one go at it.

I chipped it up stiff, as well, so it wasn't like I was grinding over a five-footer or six-footer. I chipped it up to two feet pretty easy.

I think I wasn't losing -- that creates the momentum of 6. I kept it going with that up-and-down. It was important, yes.

Q. How does it feel to have tied Miller Barber with three U.S. Senior Open titles now?

PADRAIG HARRINGTON: I didn't realize, so is myself and Miller the most that's --

Q. Yeah, the most.

PADRAIG HARRINGTON: Fantastic. I wasn't sure if it was the score I tied, the low score. But no, I like creating records, and to be part of that is a big deal. It just goes to show how hard it is.

There's a little element to me -- I'm 54, and there's new guys coming on, and it's the first time that I've been knocked back a little bit since I've got to the Champions Tour when I see these new guys like, oh, these guys are good, as in I had an advantage.

Now I'm seeing guys coming along, and I'm kind of realizing there is only a window to win these tournaments. They have told me, other players, that it's kind of up to about 56, 57, then it starts going downhill pretty quickly.

But certainly I was thinking that way and feeling that way, that you only have a set period to get your major wins on the Senior Tour because not that you're getting older but new guys are coming in.

Q. We asked Stewart the same question, but 8 seemed like a big hole. You make a 30-footer for birdie, he had to scratch out a bogey, and two more shots go your way.

PADRAIG HARRINGTON: Yeah, I think 8 was a big hole in the sense of him making bogey, but also me holing the putt and George missing the putt. It was a big hole all

around because Stewart -- a two-shot swing with Stewart, but George thinking that if anybody is going to make birdie, he's going to be invigorated by that.

But I holed a long putt and he misses.

So yeah, I think there's no doubt 8 is the toughest hole out there. I've hit that 6-iron right in the middle of the green, and I can tell you it's probably 15 feet left of where I was trying to hit it. You're only trying to hit it up on the right half of the green there.

It's a hole which you feel you can mess up on, and to come off making a birdie putt -- I will say, like yesterday, I holed two 10-footers on that hole for pars during the week. That was a big hole for me every day. I played it in 1-under par all week, but I holed some nice putts on it for those pars.

When you've got a tough hole like that and you play it well, it does help every round, and it helps the tournament no end.

Q. If you could relive one shot from this championship, which one would it be and why?

PADRAIG HARRINGTON: One shot from the championship? I'd say the most anxious I was all day is the second shot on 8. I've hit a really nice draw into the middle of the green, whereas every other day I had the same shot and just blocked it up the right-hand side safe. It wouldn't have been the end of the world, but that's probably the most anxious I was all day.

So yeah, second shot there on 8, and holing the putt -- I won't say it was over from there on in, but it gave me a great platform to close it out.

Q. There are a lot of young golfers watching this Open right now; what's the biggest lesson from your journey, and what would you want the next generation to know?

PADRAIG HARRINGTON: You know, it's so easy to become good at this game physically now with the technology that's out there. What will set young people apart going forward will be their imagination, their resilience.

It's become -- right at this moment, the game has become more physical than it's ever been. Well, that's going to change once it gets to saturation point of everybody is a good swinger of the golf club. It's going to revert back to who's got the mental fortitude, the imagination.

If I was working with juniors, I would be fully on -- as much



as I do my YouTube lessons, if I was working with juniors, it would fully be on the mental side of the game and their attitude and their ability to go out there and enjoy it.

Q. Instead of saying you're tied with Miller Barber for the most Open wins, do you think it sounds better to say no one has won more Senior Opens than you?

PADRAIG HARRINGTON: I like it. I like where you're going with that, yeah. I like that.

Hopefully I have a few more chances in me, as well. But I like that. No one has won more Senior Opens than me, which considering the people who would have played it over the years, that is a nice stat to put on my CV. I might have to put that right up at the top.

Q. Could you also discuss what it means -- you've won three of these, but what is it like to win a USGA Open as a major versus the other majors?

PADRAIG HARRINGTON: The thing with this -- this is what I've been trying to -- when I came to Saucon Valley I being my first USGA Senior Open, I was -- I wouldn't say surprised, I was shocked with the golf course that we were presented. I had seen nothing like this since I'd become a senior.

This was this was a 2004 and 2005 full major golf course, exactly replicated, heavy rough. And then I'm looking at a week like this and I'm going, what are they going to do with the pins? This looks tough. Of course the USGA provide a real tournament.

What was interesting this week, they did a mixture because of the style of greens. You did have some nice pins if you were in positions, and they had some really, really tough pins, as well. It really has the feel of a real major. That shocked me originally. I look forward to coming back every year. This is like my -- could I play one like this every week?

You have to be patient. You have to be -- all the traits that I've built my own career on line up at a U.S. Open. I never won one for real, but I always loved playing them because you had to really be -- your mental fortitude was so important during the week of a U.S. Open.

Again, of all our senior events, this is the one that would stand out for asking those mental questions as much as the physical questions.

Q. Also in terms of milestones, first one in 20 years to win back-to-back, what does it mean, especially with this major, because it's on different courses every

year, and maybe how much of a challenge was this one compared to Broadmoor last year?

PADRAIG HARRINGTON: I've done a few back-to-backs in my career, so I'm happy about that, back-to-back Opens back in the day. There is a pressure when you come in as a defending champion. Myself and I'm sure Stewart would have been in the same boat this weekend as he won the first two majors. You tee up the first day like you're leading already, which puts stress -- I was very tentative the first day, very cautious.

I got lucky that I finished strong and made a couple of birdies. If I didn't make those couple of birdies the first day, I probably could have been going out the second day looking at the cut line.

So yeah, you're a bit tentative when you're going in to do it. Once you get through that, maybe you relax -- not relax a little, but you get used to it. You're into tournament week.

But for me, with this event, it's the setup of the golf course. This is a big golf course. It's a big setup. You feel like you're playing a real competitive tournament. You have to be at all times on your game. You've got to be focused, and you've got to be patient. You've got to deal with what you get. There's a lot of stuff that can be thrown up.

I would say I probably got this breaks this week because I did hole putts. I did hole those 10-footers for par that I had to at times, and that makes it a lot easier, maybe a lot more comfortable.

Q. You talked highly of Stewart out on the green during the trophy ceremony. You also talked to us yesterday about how the pressure was on him and it wasn't necessarily on you. How did that help your mindset get off to that fast start today?

PADRAIG HARRINGTON: Yeah, nobody ever wants to give up a shot in the tournament, but maybe being one shot behind -- certainly I slept very well last night. I think not necessarily being one shot behind, but the fact that Stewart was coming in with the two wins already this year, there was a lot of pressure on Stewart. The expectations were on Stewart. I got to be a little bit under the radar.

Maybe dropping that shot on 18 could have actually been a nice thing and put me in the comfort zone that I nearly was going out there with nothing to lose. Yeah, and Stewart obviously had the pressure on him. I'm sure I gained the momentum early on.

You can't beat momentum in this game. If you make a few birdies, you feel good about yourself, you've got something

in the bank. It really does help to have momentum, and I had it, and Stewart and George -- George played very nice golf at times and just really didn't get too many breaks at all out there.

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