

U.S. Women's Open

Thursday, December 10, 2020

Houston, Texas, USA

Champions Golf Club

Sophia Popov

Press Conference



Q. Sophia Popov, 2-under today. How did the round go?

SOPHIA POPOV: Obviously pretty consistent. I hit a lot of good shots today. I think I scrambled really well. I think here and there, I could have avoided a couple mistakes, but I think overall it was just very solid, and I was making the putts that I had to.

Q. The forecast has some weather coming in tomorrow. What's the strategy?

SOPHIA POPOV: Avoid the weather. No, I don't know. I'll just have to see how the course plays. It might be a lot more wet and playing a lot longer, obviously. I don't know what the wind conditions are going to be like, but you kind of have to play with whatever you get, and I'm just going to have to adapt, and you're going to have to hit good shots anyway.

Q. What is it about you that's made for majors?

SOPHIA POPOV: I don't know. I just think I get pretty excited when I'm out here, especially now when I -- I'm a lot more comfortable. I'm definitely nervous when I'm on the first tee, but it's a different kind of nervous. It's one that I can play with and not one that stops me from playing well. I enjoy that.

Q. I'm trying to think on the timing here, but when they announced that there would be no qualifying this year, I don't think we would have been at Troon at this point. You would have thought that there's no U.S. Open for me this year, wouldn't you?

SOPHIA POPOV: Oh, yeah, definitely not. I wouldn't have been here. I don't think there was anyway for me to qualify. Maybe through Symetra Tour, which I thought I could have a couple good finishes out there. I was within the top 15, I think, on Symetra Tour before I went to the British. That was going to be an option, and that was what I was playing for. But after the British, obviously that changed and made it a little easier.

Q. When do you think you came down off the cloud of winning a major?

SOPHIA POPOV: Am I down yet?

Q. I don't know.

SOPHIA POPOV: No, I'm trying not to come down off of it. I quite like it. It's nice. But yeah, I think it took me a couple weeks, but after that it was like back to reality. Yeah, you've got to go out there, you've got to grind, you've got to practice, you've got to do everything the same way you did before, just now you have a lot more events to play and better events to play.

Q. Kind of along those lines, when you get to Thursday of any week, you start at zero like everybody else. Did it feel like you started at zero the next time you played, and does it --

SOPHIA POPOV: Yeah, I mean, obviously I'm starting at even par like everyone else, and I just think that for me, I think in my head I'm trying to go down instead of avoiding going up. I think that's been like mentally -- it's been a little bit more freeing -- freed me up a little bit to just think about making birdies and how can I make birdies instead of how am I going to avoid bogeys out here.

Q. Was that the case previously, that you were thinking up and not down? I'm lost on the up-down thing, sorry.

SOPHIA POPOV: No, just when I go out there now I'm thinking about making birdies and going under par, whereas previously it was how do I avoid making bogeys and going over par.

Q. Is there a point now where you show up and you feel as though not only do I belong, I can win out here consistently?

SOPHIA POPOV: Definitely. I think the past few weeks have just been -- my game hasn't quite been there and I've still been finishing pretty well. I think that's kind of a nice -- kind of a comforting feeling to go into a major with, just to know, okay, if I tweak a couple things and my ball-striking goes back to where it was just past the British and just



after, then I know I'm going to play well. I think that's kind of -- it's definitely a comforting feeling to have.

Q. When you were an amateur you showed up thinking you should win; are you to the point now where out here you feel like you show up and you should win?

SOPHIA POPOV: It's definitely a similar feeling. It's definitely more like when I teed it up in college and I always felt every week if I play my best then I can win out here, and I think that's more of the feeling that I have now. Even though you're teeing it up with the best players in the world, so you have to sometimes accept that there are girls going to be out there shooting low numbers on days that are not easy. But the feeling that I have is very similar to that college feeling that I used to have.

Q. Do you know what you need to get into Naples next week?

SOPHIA POPOV: I don't, and I don't --

Q. Do you want to?

SOPHIA POPOV: No, I don't, and I'd rather not. Next week is a whole 'nother week, and obviously I want to play myself into it, but it doesn't change really my mindset about how I go into the rest of the week. I just want to finish the best I can, and if it's enough, it's enough, and if not I'm going on vacation.

Q. Probably doesn't change how you look at the year, either, does it?

SOPHIA POPOV: No, not at all. It was a great year for me, and it's something that I would have loved to play CME just because it's Naples, it's my hometown, and every year I've been there watching the girls and watching my friends. I felt like this year I definitely deserved to be there, and I'm still not in. I have to wait another year, or not. Let's see how the next three days go.

Q. Where is vacation?

SOPHIA POPOV: It's also in Naples (laughing). No. I don't have a destination yet. But it might have something to do with snow. That's all I'm going to say.

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