

PRE-TOURNAMENT INTERVIEW: COLIN MONTGOMERIE
Tuesday, June 9, 2015



PHIL STAMBAUGH: We welcome World Golf Hall of Fame member Colin Montgomerie into the media center here at the Constellation SENIOR PLAYERS. Colin, coming off a major victory at the Senior PGA Championship, your second in that event.

COLIN MONTGOMERIE: Yes.

PHIL STAMBAUGH: Just a few thoughts. You had a little bit of a break here but you're back now for a good stretch. Just reflect back on the win and talk about coming to play here at Boston.

COLIN MONTGOMERIE: Yeah. Well, thank you, delighted to be here. Reflecting back on the Senior PGA Championship, I mean, to come back as defending champion and defend means a lot to me. A few times in Europe but never obviously done it in America and it means a lot to me, especially around a course of that difficulty and that severity. There's a double bogey potential on every corner. So I was very glad to get out of there alive really and safe for the victory. It's nice to have congratulations from the guys on the range and the caddies and what have you through here so that was super to do that.

To come here obviously with confidence knowing having won, you feel, well, you could do it again. So I'm very confident we played nine holes this morning and I like the golf course, a very severe test again. The greens especially will be very challenging this week and I look forward to it. Obviously the guys out there are all great players, that's why we're here, and the competition is as tough as it's ever been out here, yeah, and getting tougher.

PHIL STAMBAUGH: We noticed you got a new logo on your shirt, your relationship with the University of Texas MD Anderson Cancer Center. Do you want to talk about that a little bit?

COLIN MONTGOMERIE: Indeed, yes, and delighted to be associated with such a fantastic group of people, some people that have the same passion as me to rid the world of cancer. We lost our mother, what, 28 years ago now through lung cancer and anything that I can do to support and to promote and to help their cause, I feel very strongly about. So that's great to have an affiliation now with them and I will do everything on tour to rid the world of cancer, and they really feel that it's possible. And the research that's been going on and the monies that are generated for research are fantastic there and the job they do is superb. I'm honored to have that affiliation with them.

Q. Monty, how are you? Nice to have you back.

COLIN MONTGOMERIE: Well, I'm extremely well. It's the first time I've been back in Boston since 1999.

Q. We know what happened then.

COLIN MONTGOMERIE: We know what happened then, we lost. So I'm here to try and avenge. We'll see what happens. But it's nice to be back here. It's a great city, Boston, and everyone that speaks of Boston at home has a great affiliation with Britain. You know, when you think about what happened many, many hundreds of years ago, we're very close. So it's great, love to be here.

Q. What's the story with your driver?

COLIN MONTGOMERIE: It's okay, it's fine. Found the head, which is handy.

PHIL STAMBAUGH: You had a veteran caddie.

COLIN MONTGOMERIE: Yeah, I had a veteran caddie. Nowadays you can take the head off the driver, you know how you can take it off, and I didn't realize he had done that so I thought it wasn't in the bag but it actually was. He was ahead of the game.

Q. So he took it off for --

COLIN MONTGOMERIE: Transport. I leave my bag here, I leave my golf bag here. I don't take my golf bag back to Scotland when I travel. I was home for two weeks, so I don't -- I don't need to practice at home. I take two weeks off and come back here. So I don't take my golf bag home with me, so I leave it here. So he thought he would play the game and take my head cover off, head of the club off.

Q. Is there a message in that that you actually carry your putter around with you and not your driver?

COLIN MONTGOMERIE: No, I don't. This is very irregular, just happens to be a new one. I change my putter with the weather. I change my putter. When I won there at French Lick, I had three different putters for the four days. I don't keep putters that long but this one seems -- actually I had a couple putts and this seems okay, so it's with me for now.

Q. You actually putted with three different putters at French Lick or you had three?

COLIN MONTGOMERIE: No, no, I took three different putters onto the course. The one I used on the weekend lasted, but the ones I changed on Thursday, Friday and Saturday. And when I won last year at Harbor Shores, I actually used four different putters. So I've used seven different putters in eight rounds, yeah. I just, I change with the weather, yeah.

Q. That's quite extraordinary and unusual. What is your theory?

COLIN MONTGOMERIE: I don't know. I've -- you know, I don't know why it should be. I

just have different feelings on different days on how I feel on the putting green. I don't have any robotic thoughts about golf at all or any taut thoughts. I just go out and it's the way I feel in the morning. If that feeling's different, well, I'll change my putter, yeah, yeah.

Q. Colin, what has it been about this tour and maybe specifically the majors on this tour that's been so good for you and your game?

COLIN MONTGOMERIE: Yeah, good question. I love the competition out here. I think the competition is just right up my street. I've found my level of competition where the last five years on the European Tour and also on the PGA TOUR, 45 to 50 I was sort of treading water really. I wasn't as competitive as I was. The young guys are hitting the ball 60 yards past me and it becomes -- you know, it's hard work to compete. The level of competition here, I feel it is more even, and the lack of length that I had on the PGA TOUR and the European Tour doesn't exist now. I'm sort of average length now, which is great. Knowing that if I do play well out here, if I do have a good week, a good three days or good four days, I have an opportunity of doing well. On the PGA TOUR, European Tour, at that stage if I was doing well, I would have a 20th or 30th sort of thing. Here I can actually, if it really goes well, I could win and that's happened a few times. So I found the level of competition, the level of ability, the level of competition is just right where I like it to be that if I don't play well, I won't win, and if I do play well, I have a chance. That's the perfect scenario really, yeah, yeah.

Q. The relationship that you had with the major championships before you game a Champions Tour player, what did you take from those experiences that you've brought now to this tour and the success that you've had in the majors here?

COLIN MONTGOMERIE: Yeah, I think the five runner-ups that I had in majors on the regular tour, I think you learn from those more than you probably do if you had won them. I think you learn from defeat more than you do from winning and I certainly learnt over the years to be more patient. And over four days it's a long time, four days, 28 miles walking, seven a day, it's a lot. I think I was too impatient before and I'm learning to be patient, especially in the four-round events, and it's proving positive.

Q. I was just wondering if, having played golf all over the world, does New England have an identity for golf, a consistent way of describing golf in New England and does Belmont fit that description?

COLIN MONTGOMERIE: Well, we're playing a Donald Ross course and, you know, a great Scot that came over here and designed some of your great golf courses. It has by that stage, the New England states have a definition with him, you know, and with some great designers that came over from Europe and from Scotland, so yes in that way.

I love your northeastern seaboard courses from just south of here, New York, New Jersey, your Pine Valleys, your Merions, your Winged Foots, Oak Hills, Baltusrols, these great, great courses that you have in this northeast seaboard. And this not being a major championship

venue on the regular tour, but you'll be surprised here the scoring here will not be low. Playing nine holes this morning, I played the back nine and I found it -- I think the scoring will be quite high. I think to get close to the pins will be difficult. The greens are very fast, very firm and I think it will be difficult to get close to the pins. Even if you do, you've still got to hole out, so I think this will be a true major test, yeah, yeah.

Q. Monty, what do you remember from '99 other than that Europe lost and I know you had a lot of interplay with the fans?

COLIN MONTGOMERIE: Oh, yes, the one memory and the very sad one in many ways was that my singles match was against the late Payne Stewart and to think that he died two months later with tragic. That's the memory that I always take from 1999. Win, lose or draw, the Ryder Cup meant nothing when I received a phone call in November there, you know. Very, very, very sad. So that's the unfortunate memory that I take from the '99 Ryder Cup was that and, you know, very sad.

But a great celebration of golf really was had in '99 for your American team to come down from a 10-6 deficit for the first time ever to win, I think the Ryder Cup became a bigger and better event because of it. The next one was bigger and better and we had a good run of success, but '99 was one that we felt got away. But America really won it on that last day, so it was a great victory for yourselves. But the main, the main memory was a very sad one.

Q. I know you've talked on a number of occasions of the concession that Payne made on that 18th green.

COLIN MONTGOMERIE: Oh, yes.

Q. Looking back on it, I know I recall him saying something like he didn't want you to miss that putt. What did he say to you when he conceded that putt?

COLIN MONTGOMERIE: He was on the green in three, I was out on the green in two and the Ryder Cup had been won by then. Our match really was a -- wasn't really contested at that stage, it didn't mean anything. It was a meaningless game unfortunately at the end. It's a shame that you battle with someone as good as Payne, the U.S. Open champion at the time, and you battle around with him and we're all square playing the last and it's a shame that it meant nothing. But at the same time, for him to concede the game was very much in the sporting manner that he lived and I'll always remember that. Although I might have been favored to win the hole, it was always something that I'll always remember, that he came out the front bunker and the crowd would go nuts on that fairway. It was quite a scene really to be part of. It was quite a scene. He just said that, right, c'mon, c'mon, we've done enough, and it was the gentleman that he was.

Q. Colin, have you noticed that a lot of the players on the Champions Tour have retained their popularity with the fans and just comment on how it's extended your career and your contemporaries'.

COLIN MONTGOMERIE: Yeah, I think the Champions Tour players are very aware of the fact that sponsors' affiliations and paying guests, the crowd, marshals, volunteers, I think on the Champions Tour they're very much more aware of that fact than they probably are on the PGA TOUR and honor that. And they give more time to those individuals that come and support us, volunteer for us. I found that very much since I've been a member here now nearly two years, that's the thing I've really noticed and a difference and it pays off, it pays off. We have more of an interaction between the volunteers, the crowd, the marshals, the fans out here than possibly the PGA TOUR do, and it's great to see, yeah.

Q. So there's a connection?

COLIN MONTGOMERIE: Oh, very much a connection. Oh, very much. I feel that myself through the Champions Tour that I never felt sometimes on the PGA TOUR or on the European Tour really. This is a super place to be. I was told by a number of players this is the best tour to play on and they were right, it is, yeah.

Q. What kind of assumptions -- did you have any assumptions about the Champions Tour as you were approaching turning 50, and now since you've played here for two-plus years have those assumptions been either confirmed or shot down?

COLIN MONTGOMERIE: The standard of play has surprised me, the standard of play has surprised me. The quality of play and the quality -- and the depth of quality of players has surprised me. The standard out here is very, very high, very good, the standard of golf, and not just by a chosen few. There are 30, 40, 50 guys that are capable of winning every week. The strength and depth of this tour is much more than I first thought coming out here.

That is the one thing, and I was told that you'll be surprised, you'll be surprised at the standard of play. Until you actually compete against it, you don't honestly know that fact, but at the same time it is, it's an extremely high standard of play. A lot of these guys compete on both tours and do it very well. So that's the main, that's the main surprise package of everything here.

Q. Did you come out here assuming to have success and to play well?

COLIN MONTGOMERIE: Not particularly, no, no. I came out here to take on this challenge, this new opportunity really in life where very few sports, if any, do you start again at 50 a new chapter. Not just a new chapter, a new book, for goodness sake. And I didn't really know what to expect because as I said earlier, I was treading water for about four, five years on the European Tour, not really competing the same, so I didn't know what to expect.

But the competitive juices start flowing and the competitive instinct comes out and we're all competitors out here. That's what's driving me forward is the competition more than the game of golf as such. It's more the competition. I found my niche in that way, that competitive area where we all find ourselves, you know. Tom Watson, 65 years old is still

highly competitive. Hale Irwin, he's approaching 70, highly competitive. Tom Kite, 65. I would love to be as competitive as they are at their age and I'm only 51. I had to think there, that was a senior moment. Just 51, just.

PHIL STAMBAUGH: Anything else for Colin? Colin, thank you, good luck this week.

COLIN MONTGOMERIE: Thank you very much.