

PRE-TOURNAMENT INTERVIEW
June 19, 2019



DARREN CLARKE

CHRIS RICHARDS: Good afternoon, everyone. I would like to welcome Mr. Darren Clarke to the media center here at the American Family Insurance Championship.

Darren, you played in the pro-am this morning. What are your initial impressions of this golf course?

DARREN CLARKE: Yeah, the course was really, really good. Fantastic condition. We had a little bit of rain this morning as you're aware and the greens slowed down a little bit. I spoke to a few of the guys that played yesterday and the greens were really fast and really firm, so probably played a little bit easier today than it did yesterday. But I really enjoyed the golf course. I had a great team in the pro-am and it was a nice morning out there.

CHRIS RICHARDS: We're in the middle of the season, you're coming off a T-4 in Japan. Do you feel like your game is trending in the right direction?

DARREN CLARKE: I thought that in the past and it's sort of backfired on me a little bit, but no, I feel as if I'm playing quite nicely. And in Japan I played very nicely; especially on the last day I played really nicely. Couldn't quite make a putt when I needed to, but played well. So hopefully this week I'll just continue on with doing that.

CHRIS RICHARDS: And in the first round we've got a fun group, you're playing with Colin and Retief, kind of an international field. What's it going to be like playing with those guys that you've played with for so long, two Hall of Famers?

DARREN CLARKE: Yeah, it's like a European Tour event again playing with those guys. We played so many times in the past. I played with Monty quite a few times this year. I haven't played with Goose for a while, so that will be interesting. It should be good fun.

Q. Darren, just generally how has the transition gone to the Champions Tour? How have you felt about it?

DARREN CLARKE: Yeah, I'm still excited about being out here. I'm playing and trying to compete. I've got to rediscover how to score again, I think that's the big thing. I mean, you can play well, but the days you don't play well, when you don't play that much competitive golf, you lose the knack to turn maybe a 74, 75 into a 70 or 69. The guys do that out here. The other guys, whenever they're not doing that, they're shooting 64, 65. The standard is really, really high. The guys go low.

So, you know, adjusting from usually a four-round tournament to a three-round tournament

has taken a little bit of time as well. Course management changes. You tend to maybe go with things a little bit more than you would in a four-round tournament. So I'm still getting used to it a little bit, but I'm really enjoying my time out here. Really enjoying the golf courses, the tournaments. The guys, catching up with a lot of the guys that I used to play with on the PGA Tour. So all in all, if I could hole a couple more putts, it would be even more fun.

Q. Darren, what have you heard about this tournament from other players and the reputation of this tournament?

DARREN CLARKE: Well, I think the reputation of this tournament is all interlinked with Steve Stricker, and you couldn't meet a nicer guy in our sport. Stricker's been a gentleman for so many years.

You know, I was on tour when he had his good times and then went through the bad time, and then came back to playing well again. He's been through the whole thing. He's been a great ambassador for our sport. The way he does things has always been thoroughly professional and it's the same here with the tournament that he's linked with.

The golf course is wonderful, the practice facilities are second to none, and from what I've seen having just got here, I've only arrived from Ireland yesterday so I'm a little bit jet lagged, but through my weary eyes everything that I've seen today is exactly how you would imagine Steve Stricker would do something, the best he possibly can.

Q. Darren, knowing Steve the way you do, what kind of Ryder Cup captain is he going to make?

DARREN CLARKE: Hopefully, a more successful -- well, hopefully for you guys a more successful one than I was. I think he'll be very good. He's been around that whole thing for so long through Presidents Cup, through being involved behind the scenes with vice captains, et cetera. Same sort of thing that Europe has done, so there's nothing that's going to surprise him.

Obviously with it being here in Wisconsin and Whistling Straits is going to be like a home game for him and I'm sure all the fans will be -- obviously they'll be behind the Americans, but even more so because of Steve. Stricker. I think he'll do a wonderful job, but at the end of the day the captain can only do so much. It's up to the players, whenever they get out there and they hit the shots, it's down to them. But if anybody can inspire them to do that here in Wisconsin, it's Steve Stricker.

Q. Royal Portrush, what kind of Open Championship venue is that going to be, and did you ever meet Max Faulkner?

DARREN CLARKE: No, I did not. Unfortunately, I did not meet Max Faulkner. I know I look that old, but I'm not quite that old. I didn't, but his gold medal is up in a cabinet -- the

gold medal is what you receive when you win The Open Championship along with the Claret Jug, but his gold medal is beside my gold medal and Fred Daly's gold medal in a cabinet there at Royal Portrush, so it's pretty cool.

What sort of Open is it going to be? It's going to be incredible. I've just been at home all last week, played the golf course a couple of times.

Prior to last week I haven't been home since -- home in Portrush since 7th in December last year, so I've missed all of the grandstands, everything that goes along with getting the tournament ready for The Open. To see it and play the golf course with all those stands up, it's totally different from what it normally would look.

But the course is fabulous. They need a little bit of a burst of warm weather, they haven't had that much, so the rough is still thick but not as -- what's the word, not as consistently thick as they would like. But if they got a couple of days of warm weather, that will shoot up really quick.

But the course is going to be fabulous. The guys are going to love it. It's a very fair, tough test of golf, and I know the R&A are very excited about everyone going there, as is the whole town of Portrush is all buzzing, the whole country's buzzing. I think the people that do make it to Portrush are going to have a wonderful experience and really enjoy themselves.

Q. You mentioned the players, the captain can only do so much in a Ryder Cup. Having played Whistling Straits three times, what do you recall of that and maybe the idea of that as a match play type of course?

DARREN CLARKE: Oh, Mr. Kohler's done an incredible job with the golf course there. I mean, you wouldn't think it as new a golf course as it actually is. You've got some incredible shots there that you have to hit. Some of the par 3s, you know, if you're on the tee first and you hit it middle of the green, then that's going to make it a tougher shot for your opponent. If you hit a bad shot and you're on the tee first, then your opponent's going to, you know, bail out and have a reasonably easy shot just to make sure he doesn't mess it up.

But the golf course is a lot of risk-reward and I think having played a few -- as I said, few stroke play events there, majors there, what have you, it's a wonderful golf course, but I think it will be an even better match play golf course because it's risk-reward nearly on every hole. It will be fantastic.

I just hope you get some decent weather at that time of the year as well. You never quite know what it's going to be. I hope for Whistling Straits' sake, for Mr. Kohler's sake, that you do get the weather that you can get.

Q. People around here have probably been to the PGA Championship at Whistling Straits. How will a Ryder Cup be different for those people?

DARREN CLARKE: It will be very different in that you only have four matches on the Friday morning, four matches in the Friday afternoon, four matches Saturday morning, four matches Saturday afternoon, and then you have the singles. So as opposed to having -- positioning yourself and following a group around you, you're not going to have that many matches to see. So that in itself may provide a little bit of a challenge to have so many people following around only four matches.

But in saying that, you know, every one that I've been to and every one I've been involved, everyone has managed to do that very successfully, so it will be somewhat different.

But the Ryder Cup atmosphere, the Ryder Cup for somebody who hasn't been there before, it's unlike anything else. It's not like a major championship, it's not like a regular event. It's almost hairs on the back of your neck standing up on the first tee on a Friday morning. The Ryder Cup is very special and very, very different. So if anybody's got the opportunity to go to it, they're not quite sure whether they should go or not, go. Definitely go.

CHRIS RICHARDS: All right. Thank you very much, good luck this week.

DARREN CLARKE: Thank you.