

RBC Canadian Open

Thursday, June 6, 2019

Graeme McDowell

Quick Quotes

Q. 65 and you finishing birdie, birdie, Graeme. Happy with your day's work?

GRAEME McDOWELL: Yeah, happy enough with that today. I came into this week really wanting to focus on the way I been driving the ball. Just not really where I need to be.

Coming to a golf course like this where you must hit it in the fairway, it was kind of the test I was looking for. I drove it really well today. Hit a lot of fairways, gave myself a lot of looks.

Actually, my short iron play just wasn't as sharp as I need it to be, so if I can clean that up I feel like I'm doing everything I need to do.

Like you say, always nice to finish birdie, birdie. Hit two nice ones into 17, good two-putt, and nice shot on the last and knocked it in.

I like what I saw out there. I mean, obviously conditions were pretty benign, but you still got to hit the shots.

Q. Some golf courses really lend themselves to the long hitters. They give them a significant advantage. How nice is it to come to a course that doesn't and you're in the equation saying, This is a level playing field; anyone can win here?

GRAEME McDOWELL: For sure. I mean, I feel like the last few months on the PGA TOUR especially there hasn't been a lot of rough. Bethpage was probably the exception to the rule the last few months.

Nice to come to a golf course where you have to hit it in the fairway. Doesn't matter if you're 330 in the rough here. The rough is penal. Playing with Bubba out there today, he missed a few fairways and even he was struggling to kind of get is it close to the flag from there.

Nice to play a golf course like this, premium on accuracy. In a funny way, good warmup for the next week at U.S. Open where we'll have to hit fairways.

And these poana greens are a little slow perhaps, but definitely a decent look again at what we're going to see next week.

Q. A lot of talk about your attempt to qualify for the



Open Championship in your hometown of Portrush; there are qualifying spots available here. Is that in your thinking or just head down and play the tournament?

GRAEME McDOWELL: I've shoved that to the back of my mind. I mean, there is no doubt of course I want to be there at Portrush, but I've got four golf tournaments where I'm going to be trying as hard as I possibly can - here, the U.S. Open, Irish Open, and Scottish Open; and there are spots up for grabs if all four of these.

If I play well enough I'll get there. If I don't play well enough, I don't deserve to be there. So it's all good. Like I say, shove it to the back of my mind. I want to come here and try and compete this weekend and see what happens.

Q. Nicely done out there today. Looked like it was going well for you today.

GRAEME McDOWELL: Yeah, I really hit the ball well off the tee, which you have to do around this Hamilton golf course. It was one of my focuses coming into the week. I really felt like the driver hadn't been behaving itself, and I spent a lot of the early week really working hard on that side of the game, and actually did really well today off the tee.

Funnily enough, my short iron play wasn't very good, which has been one of my strengths coming into this week. I feel like the game of golf is like a wheelbarrow. When you push some good stuff into the barrow something falls out the other side. My short iron play kind of fell out the other side of the wheelbarrow today, but that's an easy thing to sharpen up.

Q. Six birdies today. A lot of players seem to struggle with these greens. How did you find them?

GRAEME McDOWELL: They were on the slow side, no doubt. I think that bit of rain we got yesterday really made the poana flower a little bit. I've always liked poana. Putt pretty well on the west coast.

They were slow for sure. I think interesting playing with a guy like Bubba who's a fantastic fast green putter. He struggled for sure. I made some -- I kind of like slower greens generally, and did okay on them today.

Q. Almost like links speeds for you out there today.

GRAEME McDOWELL: Yeah, I grew up closer to 8 on the Stimp than 12 on the Stimp, so that was okay for me today.

Q. A lot rain yesterday; how did the golf course hold up?

GRAEME McDOWELL: Yeah, pretty good. Playing area is a little softer than what we practiced. I think the place will firm up quickly. I feel like the greens will firm back up pretty fast. I think the fairways will remain pretty soft. The rough is already lush, so the rain kind of gave it that little bit of kick again.

Course is in great shape. Great crowds and atmosphere out there, and hopefully I can go low again tomorrow and set up a fun weekend.

Q. Birdie, birdie finish. Good start; 5-under par.

GRAEME McDOWELL: Yeah, absolutely. Did what you're supposed to do out here, which is put it in play off the tee. Missed the first and second fairways, and then I don't think I missed any fairways after that, which was very solid.

If I could have been a little shorter with my short iron play I think I could have did a little better, but these greens are pretty slow. I think that the rain yesterday made the poana flower a little bit and guys are struggling with the pace. I grew on pretty slow greens and I adapt quite well to this type of speed.

Felt pretty good with the putter today.

Q. And importantly, to keep momentum moving forward, when you miss greens you got up and down today. I thought your scrambling was very good.

GRAEME McDOWELL: Yeah, the rough is very thick around these greens. I pulled a really bad lie. I mean, 9-iron in my hand on 11; miss it in the fringe there; good up and down.

9-iron in my hand again on 14; miss it; horrible lie; made a great putt for par.

That the key to my back really nine was some good scrambling early on and I made some good birdies coming in.

Q. What's the mindset on a week like this when you have the U.S. Open next week, but you also have the opportunity with a potential top 10 to get into Portrush?

GRAEME McDOWELL: The mindset is just focus on what I'm doing here this week. I've been dealing with the Open Championship thing for a few months now. I think I've finally managed to put it to the back of my

mind. I've got four tournaments in the next six weeks, all with qualifying spots: here, the U.S. Open, Irish Open, and Scottish open. If I play well I'll get one of the spots. If I don't play well I don't deserve one of the spots. That's really what it boils down to.

Coming into the Canadian Open this week trying to compete, play well, and really doesn't change with the Open Championship sorted of looming. Obviously one eye on Pebble next week. I think this is a great warmup in many ways. Got to hit some fairways out there, and these poana greens are going to -- I would say they're going to putt similar enough to how Pebble will putt.

Q. How many times have you played Portrush, and what are you hoping to see out of the course setup next week at Pebble?

GRAEME McDOWELL: Portrush probably 500 times in my life, so I know that place pretty well.

Pebble, I'm expecting it to be firm. Looks like dry conditions out there. Hoping it's going to be firm, fast. Make the greens play really, really small. Super disciplined iron play required. Really penal if you miss the greens.

Similar to 2010 really. Doesn't require tons of rough. Firmness really is the protector at Pebble, and then obviously wind and a bit of weather.

Q. So many long, demanding bomber style golf courses on the PGA TOUR. What's it like for you guys, medium hitters, to come into a place like this where there is a little more artistry required?

GRAEME McDOWELL: Yeah, it's nice. I feel like this year on the PGA TOUR I haven't seen enough rough. You know, you see some of the more premier players wanting a setup with less rough; saying, I won't play if the rough is a certain height.

You know, I think it's important that tournaments maintain their integrity. Tournaments that have rough, you know, we all know kind of what the course setup should be. Shouldn't be heavy rough every week, but certain golf courses need to protect them. A golf course here like Hamilton, I mean, I was really happy to see the way the rough was set up here.

It gives a guy like me a chance. It's not really -- certainly not a bomber's track here. You put the it in play off the tee. Gives you a few looks at some birdies, but obviously weather has a lot to do with it. I'm not blaming anyone for the way PGA TOUR has been set up this year. I'm biased as well. I want thick rough. That's what suits my type of game.

Other guys aren't going to like it so tournaments have to protect themselves as well a little bit.

Q. I know you would love to play at Portrush. Can you also as an outsider realize what the Canadian players are going through here at this event?

GRAEME McDOWELL: For sure. It's very difficult. My record in the Irish Open is pretty awful for the simple fact that that little bit of hometown pressure can be a lot. A lot more media attention on you. The fans and spectators want you to do well, and you feel that little bit of extra weight on your shoulders.

It's not something I've dealt with well with over the years. It could be a mixture of pressure and maybe the Guinness tastes too good in Ireland. No, I understand what the boys are going through. I mean, obviously RBC look after them and take care of them and this is their event.

Obviously being a home country event as well, a lot of pressure on the guy's shoulders. And great to see guys like Adam Hadwin playing well today.