

Canadian Pacific Women's Open

Tuesday, August 21, 2018

Brooke Henderson

Press Conference

THE MODERATOR: All right, ladies and gentlemen, we're here with the lady of the hour, Brooke Henderson, Canada's own Brooke Henderson.

Six LPGA wins, including earlier this year in Hawaii at the 2018 Lotte Championship presented by Hershey. So far in 2018 she has eight top 10 finishes, including a tie for seventh last week at the Indy Women in Tech Championship. This is her seventh CP Women's Open, with a best finish of T12 last year in 2017.

Brooke, it's good to have you back with us. First off, I do want to, on behalf of the LPGA, extend our condolences at the recent passings in your family. We've all been thinking about you and we're very happy to have you back and smiling with us.

BROOKE HENDERSON: Thanks.

THE MODERATOR: Even better, we're glad to have you back in Canada. What does it feel like every year to get to come back and play in front of your home fans?

BROOKE HENDERSON: It's amazing. You know, seventh Canadian Women's Open. That's unreal. Every time it just keeps getting better for me. Better finishes, better, crowds better fans, and it's really amazing.

This is my only real opportunity come home to Canada and play in front of everybody and hopefully give them a good show. Last year in really my hometown, my home golf course, Ottawa Hunt, it was an amazing experience.

Being able to shoot 63, course record, on the Saturday was definitely a highlight of my whole year and almost of my whole career, too. So hopefully this year over the next couple days I can play really well and hopefully give the fans something to cheer about.

THE MODERATOR: Earlier today we had a question for Ariya, what it's like playing with you while you're here and seeing all these crowds. For those of us who will never experience anything like that, what's it like to stand there on the first tee and know that everyone



there is there to watch you and to support you?

BROOKE HENDERSON: Yeah, you know, it's really hard to believe. You know, growing up and watching Canadian Women's Opens as a fan I just really admired everybody there.

To now be in that position on the first tee and look out and see the whole grass covered outside the ropes by people is really cool. I kind of have to pinch myself and wake up a little bit.

But, you know, hopefully I can, like I said, just kind of play my own game, play well, and give them something that they can be excited about. Hopefully put on a good show so that on the weekend I can give it a run on Sunday.

THE MODERATOR: You come in on a streak of I think three straight top 11 finishes, playing well, top 10 last week in Indianapolis. How do you feel now as you head out into Wascana tomorrow?

BROOKE HENDERSON: Yeah, you know, I definitely have had a good summer. It's been a little bit up and down on and off the course, but overall I feel like my game is in a really strong and good position.

You know, being so close in Ohio and then going to the British and having my best finish of T11, moving on to last week, you know, shooting minus nine on Sunday. That was fun. Made a lot of putts, and it was cool to make a lot of birdies and kind of get that feeling back then again.

So coming into here, I'm really looking forward to it I was here two months ago for media day, and to many come back and all the grandstands are up, everything really looks amazing.

I'm really looking forward to it.

THE MODERATOR: Questions.

Q. Compared to other weeks, what does is week like not necessarily when you're playing, but all the other stuff you have to do? Have you learned to accept it? I know lots of players before you have said it really takes a long time to learn how to

handle this week.

BROOKE HENDERSON: Yeah, for sure. I think coming here as a 14 year old I kind of learned that pretty early. Over the last six years I've kind of learned to say no sometimes and really kind of take care of myself and get the proper rest and practice so I can play as best I can and still try to give a lot of attention to the media and fans.

It's really why we play is for them, so just trying to find that balance, which I think I've done really well, especially over the last three or four years. I think coming into this week I'm well rested and feel like my game is in a good spot, so I can definitely give a little more attention off the course as well.

Q. As one of the CP ambassadors, there is a lot of stuff happening for the CP Has Heart. Talk a little bit about some of the charitable stuff that's happening this week?

BROOKE HENDERSON: Absolutely. I'm very proud to be a CP ambassador. The work that they have done for the communities as the tournament has moved across the country is really unbelievable. It's amazing to be a part of, even though I'm a very small part of that. It's a really proud moment for me to see that check at the end of the week and see the money and see the lives they're not only helping to save but help make better.

Ben this week; he's adorable. Xander last week or last year. Getting to know them and kind of their stories and seeing how CP Has Heart has done so much work to continue to help kids like that is really cool.

Q. Can we expect a lot of birdies from you on 17 with \$5,000 every time donated?

BROOKE HENDERSON: I'm hoping for four and maybe one tomorrow in the Pro-Am. Hopefully that counts. I'm not sure. Hopefully. I think it's a par-5, so I feel like you can definitely make a lot of birdies out there.

Q. Every week is different obviously, but you're coming off a 63 Sunday at Indianapolis. Do you feel your game is peaking right now, or are there still some things you need to work on?

BROOKE HENDERSON: Yeah, definitely feel like it's in a good spot. Feel like my ball-striking is going very well.

My greens in reg stats are very good for the past summer. On Sunday seeing lot of putts roll in was a great feeling for me, and gives me a lot of confidence back in my putter that I've been changing in and out for the last year or so.

Definitely to see those putts go in and make birdies, shot minus nine, and finish strong on Sundays was really important to my confidence and kind of momentum coming into this week.

But like you said, all weeks are different. Hopefully that can lead me into a solid round on Thursday.

Q. As a Canadian, do you feel there is any extra pressure on you since a Canadian hasn't won this tournament since 1973?

BROOKE HENDERSON: Yeah, that's a long time. Yeah, a little bit. I would love to win this tournament. I don't know if that's this year. Hopefully before my career is over.

But it's just such a meaningful event for all Canadians. I think there are 15 in the field this week, and every one of us definitely feel a little bit more pressure playing at home.

It's a lot of fun. To have the crowds on your side, know they're there for you, cheering you on, is a really cool feeling that we get most weeks on the LPGA Tour, but this one, it's really special.

Q. What's it like to come into a town where your picture is on every billboard, on every poster, people are talking about you, bobble head dolls of yourself. What's it like to be that center of attention?

BROOKE HENDERSON: Yeah, it's pretty crazy. It's really, really cool, though. You know, to come here for the first time to Saskatchewan, it's really cool for me to kind of check off the province and Regina.

To see those billboards, I don't know. I kind of blush a little bit, I think; a little embarrassed. It's just unreal. Playing on the LPGA Tour every single week is my dream come true, and then to come here where I'm kind of that center of attention, again, is kind of a highlight.

I think I'll remember these moments like this forever.

Q. How much did you learn about yourself at the CP Open last year at your home club? Slow start, nice finish, nice middle. Does that help you deal with the pressure here? Is there less here because you've gone through what you did last year?

BROOKE HENDERSON: Yeah, you know, in Calgary two years ago finishing T14, I believe, and then last year in Ottawa finishing T12, you know slowly making improvements up.

I think last year was kind of a big breakthrough. I had to birdie the last hole to make the cut, and then I went

on this run on Saturday and gave a solid finish on Sunday as well.

I feel like I'm learning to embrace everything that's going on around me a little bit better, kind of enjoy the fan support a lot more than kind of getting a little bit more tense.

I'm finally kind of enjoying it and just trying to focus on what I can do, and hopefully what I can do is a great score.

Q. Checking off coming to Saskatchewan, is there something you're focusing on for your game specifically for this course just with the different geographical layouts and all that stuff?

BROOKE HENDERSON: Definitely can get really windy around here. Even this morning the wind started to pick up a little bit. There are some long holes. This one right behind me, 5 or 6. They're very long and straight into the wind, so I feel like the longer hitters will definitely have an advantage here. Long and straight is always good.

I feel like that will definitely be beneficial around this course. The greens are pretty firm and fast. I feel like if the wind picks up even more they could firm out. You really have to play smart, place yourself around this golf course, but I think there are a lot of birdie opportunities. You're going to have to stay patient when things don't go quite your way.

Q. Can you just comment on the state and condition of the golf course? I know Saskatchewan had to deal with a harsh winter this year. What facet of your game is going to be the most important for you to have success this week?

BROOKE HENDERSON: Yeah, absolutely coming here from media day to now it's amazing how much hard work has been put into this golf course in making better.

I'm really impressed with the condition of the course right now. The greens are firm and fast, as I said, so I feel like short game is going to be really important.

But with that wind, as I was mentioning, you're going to have to hit it long to even reach some of these par 4s in two. I feel like it's really going to test all abilities and all different parts of your game, but I'm excited for the challenge.

I kind of hope the wind picks up. (Laughter.)

Q. You mentioned that your putting has presented some challenges over the last year. What do you do to try and get on the right side of things? Bring

specialists in? Work with you dad? Can you tell us about how you're able to conquer that?

BROOKE HENDERSON: Yeah, for sure. You know, putting -- short game has always been something I've continued to work on a little bit more than ball striking since. You know, since I was like ten almost ball striking has always been the better part of my game.

But I feel with the putting I've worked with my dad and my sister a lot, and I feel it's in a really good place right now - at least the last few weeks.

Golf is sort of weird, and short game is really weird. You can putt great one day and putt terrible the next. It's all about energy and staying positive and kind of believing that you can make everything. I feel like I'm getting closer to that spot, so I'm excited.

Q. It's been mentally tough for you with what's happened off the course this year. How have you managed to balance that? Doesn't seem like that's affecting your game. Does that just show how mentally tough you are right now?

BROOKE HENDERSON: Yeah, you know, there has definitely been a lot of challenges on and off. It's been a really crazy and weird and kind of tough summer for sure.

But I feel like once I get inside the ropes I can kind of let that go and know that my two grandpas that did pass away, they're always cheering me on and looking on from heaven.

That kind of gives me that a little bit extra boost. Maybe they kick the ball into the fairway or something. I'm not sure. Yeah, feel like I've been able to handle it very well so far. Hopefully I can just continue to finish this year out really strong and then kind of look forward to a well-deserved break after the season is over.

Q. How would you describe Brooke's Brigade? What are they like?

BROOKE HENDERSON: It's awesome. You know, Golf Town started that last summer in Ottawa, and to have all those little kids wearing my name on the back of their shirts and just have their support out there, sea of red, is really cool.

Q. I noticed some adults, too.

BROOKE HENDERSON: Yeah, that's right. Adults and kids.

Q. (Regarding Alena Sharp/Humboldt Strong golf bag.) Does that have some meaning to you?

BROOKE HENDERSON: Yeah, you know, it's amazing. Alena was telling me about it earlier this summer, that they were going to get that bag. I saw it I guess this

morning, and it's really cool. It's such a great idea that Sara and Alena both had. Sara earlier in the year in Hawaii recommended, soon after the accident happened, that all the Canadians in the field wear those green and yellow ribbons.

They have been so supportive, and I think Humboldt has been in our thoughts and prayers throughout the whole year, every Canadian. Just like this week as well. I think we're always thinking about them. I think it was really cool for me to be able to dedicate my win in Hawaii to them, the survivors and those that have passed. I feel like that was a really cool moment for me that I was able to win that week for them.

Q. You're also about the same age as most of them. Probably been on similar bus trips.

BROOKE HENDERSON: Yeah, absolutely. And growing up playing hockey, I know how close the team can get. So many of your close friends, seeing them go through that would've been terrible. It's very tragic, and I'm really sorry that they all had to go through that.

Q. Just one other thing: You've won so many tournaments; you've had so much success. You're just 20 and you won before you were even 18. How did it happen so fast?

BROOKE HENDERSON: Good question. I don't know. You know, I think growing up following my older sister, I was always trying to beat her, be as good as her. She was always a lot taller, a lot stronger, so I tried to hit the ball, outdrive her, which didn't happen for a long time.

But I think that's why I didn't have that unique strength, because I was just trying to use every ounce of my body to get the ball out there. I feel like she really pushed me to be better at a younger age. Then being with Canada's National Team from when I was 14, being able to win a pro event that year to get an invite into this event, it really taught me a lot and kind of gave me that a little bit extra push to continue to work really hard.

I'm not saying it's just because I worked really hard I got here. I had a lot of fortunate breaks and somebody has been looking after me for sure. I'm just really grateful to be in this position, and hopefully I can continue to improve over the next few years.

Q. Obviously the ultimate goal would be to win this tournament this week. The trophy aside, what would a win look like here for you?

BROOKE HENDERSON: It would be amazing. You know, to win at home in Canada is definitely a dream for me, and I feel like this is a realistic dream, a big goal.

I think it'll be very difficult to achieve, but hopefully before my career is over I will hoist that trophy. It's kind of like the sixth major for me on the LPGA Tour. It's very meaningful, very important to me, especially being a CP ambassador and playing here in my home country.

So I'm just excited to tee it up on Thursday. Hopefully get a solid round, get off to a fast start, make the cut, and hopefully make a climb on the weekend.

THE MODERATOR: We wish you nothing but the best. I hope you get to sign a lot of bobble heads this week.

BROOKE HENDERSON: Thank you.