

Canadian Pacific Women's Open

Wednesday, August 21, 2019

Alena Sharp

Press Conference

THE MODERATOR: Welcome back everyone. We're here with Alena Sharp playing in her 16th Cp Women's Open, with a best finish of fourth in 2016, her 18th event of the 2019 season. Welcome home, Alena. It's always got to be good to be playing in front of home crowds.

ALENA SHARP: It's very nice to be at home this week. Came off like a three-week stretch in Europe and got a week off and recharged the batteries. Got to see my family on Saturday and drove up here. Got some good work in with my coach on Sunday. Just been busy the last few days getting ready for the tournament.

THE MODERATOR: What did you work on with your coach? What are you working on in your game as we come into this week's tournament?

ALENA SHARP: Well, because of the nature of all the events that I played in I hadn't seen him in a while. We kind of just went through our plan, our basics again. It was more of just polishing the shoe, as he says. He just checked out my swing. Went through putting mechanics. It's not like we're changing anything. Just continuing to refine it.

So it's nice. There is no like huge swing change coming into this week. Just it's nice to have this little -- have him to look it over. Now I don't have the doubts and I just keep going forward.

THE MODERATOR: And you're one of 15 Canadians we have in the field this week. It's a great time for Golf Canada and Team Canada. What do you see as the future of golf in Canada, something you've certainly had such a big hand in working on in your time on the LPGA Tour?

ALENA SHARP: It's very nice to see a lot of Canadians playing in the field this week. There are a lot of Canadians doing really on the Symetra Tour. I know that they're working hard to get out here, and I think golf in Canada is on the rise.

Obviously with Brooke leading the way with her win last year it's really put Canada on the map. It's nice to see that the hard work that Golf Canada is putting in in their



programs is coming to light.

THE MODERATOR: Brooke has actually mentioned you a lot this year as someone who has really mentored her. She talked about yesterday in her very first Cp Women's Open playing a practice round with you and that's where the friendship grew. What's the relationship like between you two? Is it a friendship? Is it a mentorship? It's refreshing for us to see that, two players who seem to enjoy each other's company so much.

ALENA SHARP: I think at the beginning it was more of a mentorship, and now it's more of a friendship. I'm not shy to ask her about advice on things about a shot or something. We had a great time playing the team event. It was just really cool. It's blossomed into a nice friendship. The four of us, Sara and Brittany as well. We all get long really well and have a good time together. So it's nice to have that on tour.

THE MODERATOR: Open it up for any questions.

Q. Olympic team coming up. Obviously the friendship with Brooke is going to be an important factor as far as team chemistry, for lack of a better term. What are you looking for there? Obviously you two are going to be the - at this point anyway - basically the Olympic team.

ALENA SHARP: Well, the Olympics is pretty far away, and I am not sitting up here thinking I'm going to be the second one. I want to keep a fire under my butt going to play well.

But I think if I do qualify, it's going to be a better experience than the last time. I think going through it the first time it's like, Whoa, this is weird. It's not like an LPGA event. There are all these other athletes and things around the event.

But I think for both of us being there the first time, we'll take our experiences and help each other out to hopefully both get a medal.

Q. But you're always lighting a fire under your butt, so to speak.

ALENA SHARP: Well, see, the other thing too is like I don't really know -- they haven't announced if golf is going to be on the next, right, 2020?

Q. No, I think they have.

ALENA SHARP: So for me, I'm probably going to be done in 2020. 2024 I'm going to be 42 -- sorry, 43. I think by that time there will be up and comers passing me.

So I'm really looking forward to keep working hard to make that team. It's a big goal for next year, but I've played well this year and moved up in the world ranking, which is something that through hard work and the process of doing the things in my plan with by coach, it's showing in the results. So that's nice to see.

Q. Have you had a chance to look at Michelle Liu from Vancouver, the 12 year old? I remember when you were close to that age yourself. Just think about the experiences she's going to go through and maybe just describe it for us.

ALENA SHARP: I did see her on Monday on the range swinging, working -- actually it was Sunday evening -- working on her game. I think she went out and played nine holes. I saw Christina Kim posted something that she got to play with Christina Kim. I just couldn't imagine playing this tournament as a 12 years old. Got to be a lot to take in. I hope she enjoys it and has nice playing partners and they take care of her out there.

THE MODERATOR: She was in here yesterday and she was such a breath of fresh air.

Q. Two questions for you. One, you just mentioned in your opening statement about the team events. That was the first year of the team event, the Dow Great Lakes Bay one. You and Brooke together finished I think fifth in that one, 61 in the final round. What was that like? That's kind of a newer event on the LPGA Tour. What did you think of it? Obviously you did well so you've got to think well of it.

ALENA SHARP: I enjoyed it because it's nice to do something different. The alternate shot was nervy. It was the first day, too. Funny story about that. We were talking about who is going to hit what and Brooke is like, You hit on the evens. I'm like, Okay, sure.

Then I didn't realize that we're teeing off No. 10. So I'm on the range and I'm like, What hole are we starting on? Sara is like, 10. I'm like, Oh, God. I got a little nervous. I have to hit the first shot.

But I focused in and hit it down the fairway. Then we were a little nervous starting and then once we made our first birdie it was like, boom, we just made a bunch and shot 5-under the first day.

The alternate shot is obviously the harder part and we

did really well with it, so it was nice. It was a nice change. Obviously the Olympics you don't do that. It's like individual play. So it was nice to be on -- don't let your teammate down.

Q. Second question for you, and you kind of touched on it in your opening statements. Last year was a bit of a down year for you I think in terms of overall performances. This year we got to back to where we know Alena Sharp should be. What's been the difference this season compared to last season?

ALENA SHARP: Honestly, I was just struggling with my golf swing at the beginning of the year. I changed coaches. I started working with Brett Saunders in June. I saw him that winter for my putting and I just needed to break away from who I was working with and started working with him.

I think over time when a coach has a plan for you, it just starts to click. The first few months I was hitting the ball well but I wasn't putting well, funny enough. I worked really hard on the putting. The last part of the year the reason why I retained my card was because I started putting well.

I think I just carried my good results from probably the Canadian Open last year through Evian. Evian was later in the year, and then started the year off really well with a top 10.

So I think I just needed time to work through the things that I was supposed to be working on, and it's just paid off. Yeah.

Q. Just going back briefly about the Olympics and then you talking about playing in the team event with Brooke and how much fun that was, I'm wondering if there was any discussion among the women who were in the Olympics about the format, the fact that there was no team component to it, and if any discussion has picked up since that team event that maybe you would like to see the Olympic format change. Maybe your thoughts in general.

ALENA SHARP: Yeah, I think it would make it a little bit more exciting even if there was a mixed team like the PanAm Games has done. Unfortunately they're not doing that. It's just individual.

Yeah, I think that having an individual and a team format would be nice. They do it for other sports, so it would be nice if they looked into that. I don't know if they will. Kind of makes it more of a team sport, which a lot of Olympic sports are like that.

Q. Seconds question for you. How has your

comfort level playing at home in this tournament evolved throughout your career?

ALENA SHARP: Good question. Beginning of my career I always was so nervous. I just wanted to go play well so badly. It's like when you try and force something it never really works out very well.

The last few years after the Olympics I had my best finish at Pritiss (phonetic) and played decent last year. I just realized that everybody is here and they're cheering for you and they recognize you, but they're proud of you. You don't have to make them proud. They're already proud.

So just taking that energy in and playing golf and really trying to enjoy it. I think just over the years as a player you learn to do that. I've finally come that way, and I look forward to doing that this week. If you see me stressing out there, just remind me what I just said. (Laughter.)

THE MODERATOR: We'll take care of you. No problem. Anything further for Alena? Well thank you so much for coming in. Enjoy your week at Magna.

ALENA SHARP: Thanks.