

U.S. Senior Women's Open

Press Conference

Wednesday July 11, 2018

Laura Davies

THE MODERATOR: We're really excited to be here. Thank you for being here. We are joined by Laura Davies, one of the most accomplished female golfers. She has 84 professional wins worldwide, including the 1987 U.S. Women's Open. She was also a past Curtis Cup team member. Talk about what it means to be here this week.

LAURA DAVIES: Well, I think everyone that's come through the gates has seen the course setup, the way the course looks, the way we've been welcomed by the members. The USGA are taking it serious because it's an inaugural event and you just wonder how it's going to be, and it's the real deal, and I think the USGA have done the players proud, and hopefully now we'll do them proud with our performance on the course.

THE MODERATOR: Talk about your experience with the Chicago Golf Club; when was the first time you played here?

LAURA DAVIES: Yesterday morning. Yep, teed off at 7:11, and just loved it. We started on 10, par-3. I airmailed the green, so that was a good start for me and the caddie, but after that, just every hole looks different. There's great bunkering. Wide fairways but you can't stray beyond the borders of the fairways because that long stuff is taking no prisoners. You're going to lose a ball in there probably. But yeah, just love the green complexes. You can hit it close -- you think you've hit it close, then you've got a 40-yard chip. It's a thinking senior women's golf course. You have to really be sharp because you'll make bogeys out of good shots, which is what a great golf course will do to you.

Q. Can you just talk about the state of your game and then what it feels like coming into a major as a favorite?

LAURA DAVIES: Well, yeah. I don't know about favorite. There's some really good players here, obviously some still playing on Tour, other ones that I know work hard on their games still. There's a lot of us that have got a chance to win. Obviously the ones that play regularly on the regular Tour you would think would have an advantage, but all bets are off when you stand on that first tee and you're as nervous as any player out there. So that levels the playing field out a little bit.



As for my form, yeah, it's disappointing actually because after Phoenix, I was injured playing Phoenix, which was actually a good finish, considering my achilles had gone, and then I got a chest infection, so for the next -- I've still got it now really now after three months. I've sort of stalled a little bit, but ball-striking wise I feel it's good. I made the cut last week, but was just 27 behind when all the dust had settled. I shot 4-under, which I wasn't pleased with, but I don't think I would ever have got to 31 in my wildest dreams. Yeah, the form is okay. It could always be better, but that's why we keep playing, because we're always trying to get better.

Q. Did you think that this championship would come to pass, or was there a time when you kind of gave up on it?

LAURA DAVIES: Well, I was never really -- I never really thought about it. I suppose you just assumed it would be there somehow, and then when Mike Davis came to Phoenix about five years ago and we had a meeting and I was there and Nancy was there and Lorie Kane and Inkster and a few of the others, and when he started talking about it, I was thinking, wow, that would be amazing, but that was nearly five years ago. Again, it kind of went off your radar, and then last year or the year before when it was announced, I've been looking forward to it since the day it was announced nearly two years ago. It's something for us -- I know everyone keeps saying it's a long time coming. I'm just glad it's here. I don't care how long it's taken, I'm just glad it's here.

Q. Following on that, what do you think the creation of this event means for women's golf?

LAURA DAVIES: I think it's a chance for us oldies to show that we can still play, and hopefully -- I know we've only got weekend coverage, but hopefully we'll do well enough where next year we can maybe have four rounds of coverage and people will really enjoy it and enjoy watching Pat Bradley with the old magic wand out there again, and hopefully me smashing a few big drives, and people will get into it and really enjoy it. It's up to us now. The USGA have given us the platform, now we've got to prove that we're worthy of this because it's pretty amazing what they've given us.

Q. Did you try to get Foch (Mark Fulcher) to come

back to caddie for you?

LAURA DAVIES: No, he actually sent me a message last night saying good luck this week. He played here as a 17 year old I think in some junior thing years and years ago. He said he kind of remembered it. Yeah, he was wishing me good luck. No, I think this is a nice one for all of your regular caddies to come and be a part of it because they're making everyone so welcome.

Q. Some of the other players have said that this tournament has some added significance for you because a win in this championship could get you into Hall of Fame; could you expand on that a little bit?

LAURA DAVIES: I don't think that's true, personally. I don't think that would count as a major, I don't think. I don't know. I hadn't even thought about that aspect of it, but I very much doubt that would be the case.

Like I said, I know -- I appreciate that some of us have got more chances than others just because of purely the amount of golf we play, but I'm not thinking about winning, I'm thinking about making the cut because it's a harsh cut, 120 to 50, and then see what happens on the weekend, because you can't take -- if you go out there thinking what am I going to say in my speech, you're going to miss the cut because this golf course won't take prisoners. It demands good shots. I know the fairways are wide, but like I said before, it's all about what you do after the drive, and yeah, I'm not thinking apart from getting to the weekend and then hopefully having a chance on the weekend, and that's as far as my thinking has gone.

Q. You're obviously here as a competitor this week. You're not responsible for course setup. But how tricky is it to get that narrow line between the likes of yourself, Juli, regular campaigners on the LPGA? We've got a couple of 79 year olds in the field this week. How does one strike a good and fair balance do you think?

LAURA DAVIES: Well, I think they've done what -- they've given some options with the tees, and I think we'll find that we'll be on most of the short tees tomorrow and then seeing how the scoring is going, maybe adjust a few holes -- I assume that's their thinking behind it because they need some leeway, because like you said, you've got a massive disparity -- not so much in age because I'm nearly 40 years older than some of the girls I play against on Tour now, they're so young. Like I said before, it's the amount of golf that people play now, especially in the women's Tour. The men's Tour has got the Champions Tour, so a lot of those guys in played in Colorado a few weeks ago, they're playing every week anyway, so the disparity is not there.

So we must have been a huge challenge for them, but from what I've seen of the course so far, the par-5s are going to be reachable for pretty much everyone. Maybe 15 is a little bit too long for the short hitters to get across that corner. But I think the main tournament is going to be won and lost on the greens, and everyone -- you watch Pat Bradley putt now, it doesn't look like she's missed a day. So someone like Pat that can move the ball out there, not long distances but very accurate, you just don't know. So I think they've given themselves a chance to make the course very fair, which is what everyone wants.

Q. For the veteran campaigners on the LPGA, how exciting is it for you? We've got this inaugural U.S. Senior Women's Open, we'll have the second of the Senior LPGA Championships later this year, a new lease of life perhaps?

LAURA DAVIES: Well, let's hope so. Let's hope so. That's why it would be great if we can put on a good show on TV on the weekend, because maybe just a few CEOs will see that and think I want a piece of that, seeing these women's tour players, because these ladies are good and they deserve our support, so hopefully the USGA and the LPGA Championship at the end of the year is what we need to get -- if we only got 10 or 12 really good events like this, it would be amazing, and you'd see the standard go up because it's one thing playing on your home course with your mates and another thing trying to score in a championship. That would be so much more beneficial to the ladies that don't get to play week in, week out.

Q. I know that your health didn't help you out following Phoenix, but how much did Phoenix change your mental outlook on your golf game and what you can do?

LAURA DAVIES: Yeah, well, the thing is I got in position after that 63 on Saturday because I just scraped the cut. I think I was in by two and then shot the 63 and was incredibly nervous on Sunday thinking, oh, I'll probably blow it today, and I actually didn't. I didn't surprise myself because I still believe in myself. A lot of people probably gave up on me years ago. I see the shots every day, and I know that if I get it all together, there's some good stuff still there. So Sunday was huge for me. I think I only -- I bogeyed the last to shoot maybe 4-under. Inbee, as usual, didn't make a bogey all day, I think, and cruised away with it, but I was still there at the end, and if I'd have birdied 16 and she'd have bogeyed one of those two holes -- she was two groups behind me or two holes behind me, it might have been a bit closer, so that gave me great heart that I was not just enjoying it but performing pretty well under what is extreme pressure because I hadn't been in that position on the LPGA Tour for a very long time.

Q. And for folks who, as you said, don't have the opportunity to play a lot of competition, what's the most difficult part about getting inside the ropes? What's the hardest part to get sharp again?

LAURA DAVIES: It's just scoring. You know, it's when you miss a green and you're angry with yourself, letting that go and making sure you chip it close or hit a nice long putt and made your easy par and move on. I think when you don't play a lot, because nine times out of ten you'll roll it up to five feet and someone will give it to you. Well, they don't give them this week, so it's that part of it that's much, much more difficult for people -- you just get in a rhythm with scoring and you just make the pars, easy pars, when sometimes if you've not been playing, you don't make the easy par, and that's where the pressure builds and that's where the big numbers come from.

Q. I want to ask about the World Cup. How have you been able to balance your golf with your viewing schedule?

LAURA DAVIES: Well, I listened to the last round on the course. I'd probably get fined for saying this, but I had my phone in my pocket and my earpiece in. I watched the first 22 minutes in the clubhouse and then ran to the first tee, hit my driver down the first, and then put my earpiece in, and as I'm walking five yards off the tee, we scored the first goal. So I would hit a shot and then put the earpiece -- but I'd take the earpiece out between shots while I was hitting, obviously, and then on the fifth tee, just before I hit my drive, my scored the second goal. Laetitia Beck was very good about it. I said, I'm sorry, but I can't miss this for the world, and we won 2-0, and now today I can go and watch it. Sunday is going to be interesting because I don't know what the last tee time is, but England, if they get through today, 10:00 a.m. is the final. I don't know what the USGA thinks about people carrying TVs around with them, but I will have one. (Laughter.)

Q. Laura, next year's site at Pine Needles obviously has a great history with Women's Open championships, I believe having been there three times. Beyond that, would you like to see this championship move to venues that have hosted U.S. Women's Open championships in the past where some of the ladies playing maybe have some history with those golf courses?

LAURA DAVIES: I think it would be nice to play the top golf courses, and so far the two we know about are unbelievably good courses, and if we can continue in that vein, I think it would be great. I think the girls, or the women, deserve it. We deserve the chance to play the very best courses, and obviously going back to the setup, that's up to the USGA to make the great courses not unplayable for us. They've done it this week so far

by the looks of it, and I'm sure they'll do the same at Pine Needles. But yeah, great venues make U.S. Opens, I think. There's a few over the years that you walk off and you're a little bit disappointed that it wasn't the best course for a U.S. Open, but yeah, if they keep in this vein, we're going to be spoiled for the next -- well, I've got another 24 years of this going on JoAnne's schedule, so I'm looking forward to it.