

U.S. Women's Open Championship 2018

Thursday, May 31, 2018

Sarah Smith

Press Conference

THE MODERATOR: Welcome back. We're here with Sarah Jane Smith, currently tied for the lead. Just walk us through your round a bit.

SARAH SMITH: It was a bit of rough start. I holed a couple of maybe like 10, 15 footers for par on the first and second or third. And then kind of turned things around on 11, the eagle there. Then made a couple of nice birdies after that.

Q. You only played nine holes this week here but you walked 18 on Monday. What did you see from the course when you looked at it on Monday?

SARAH SMITH: I really liked it. I think it was a good thing to do. A lot of the difficulties around the greens, and sort of knowing where you can and can't be. I think that helped having that little bit of extra time around the greens on Monday.

Q. I know you talked about it a little bit, but just the turnover there on the back nine. Was it 11 that really sparked your round? I know two birdies and two bogeys on the front nine, and then to play 5-under on the back nine, obviously pretty impressive?

SARAH SMITH: I think it makes a difference. Instead of just cruising around even, 1-over and then to get 2-under kind of gives you a little bit of a comfort, I think.

I knew there was a couple of holes that the pins were in not easier spots but where you could have a good look at birdie.

Q. What about the tee time today, getting a later start? With all the water on the course, I would think it would help a little bit at least?

SARAH SMITH: Definitely. I knew that there had been a lot of talk about whether we'd do preferred lies or not. I only had one shot where it had a little mud on it. Everything was -- either I got really luck there on the flip side -- but the course is incredibly dry. The greens are amazing. They are rolling beautifully. The work that they have done to get it ready is incredible.

Q. I know we have touched on 11. You had an eagle. Walk us through that hole.

SARAH SMITH: I actually hit it in the rough off the tee,



but it was sitting okay. I hit a 4 hybrid to the lay-up area.

Then my coach had me working on a wedge system where it's not necessarily a clock but numbers. It just fit sort of perfect into one of my numbers. So it was nice to see one go in. I've hit the pin a couple of times lately, but I haven't had one go in for years, so it was fun to see one go in.

Q. In this little run of struggles, how do you handle that? What has been your focus?

SARAH SMITH: I haven't handled it that well. It's been a rough month. Obviously putting it in perspective, it's only golf. It hasn't been a lot of fun. I felt like I have been playing okay, haven't been putting well. Making bad decisions and just felt like it's been close and that's been the hard part is not getting a chance to play an extra couple rounds on the week end.

I made a few changes in my putting over the last few weeks. I have seen some better rolls, so it was nice to see them go in today.

Q. Is there something in particular that you were working on that you felt like could get you going?

SARAH SMITH: With my putting, I had been using a fatter grip and putting left hand low. I putted left hand low for four or five years. So I went back to regular grip and conventional. I like to feel my right hand, which I like doing even with left hand low. But it felt like I wasn't releasing the putter very well, so I went back to conventional and it's felt a lot nicer.

Q. Are you still working with Sean Foley?

SARAH SMITH: Still working with Sean, yeah. Early on in that stretch, I went and saw Sean before Phoenix. He gave me something to work on. We kind of sent videos. But I have a tendency to overdo things. I went and had a lesson before Kingsmill and I think we are on a much better track now.

Q. How much has he meant to your game?

SARAH SMITH: He's been amazing. I started working with Sean, I worked with him for about four years, a couple of years before he started with Tiger. And then I just -- he was so busy that I wasn't getting to see him, so I saw a couple of other people.



In that time, he's always been a mentor. He always keep in touch. Sometimes I think he's better for me off the golf course, too. He's basically like a sports psychologist on the side. He's been amazing and I think he's helped Duane and I. My husband caddies for me. Sometimes I think he understands that dynamic where a lot of people would kind of say it's time to get a -- if we are struggling, he tries to help us figure it out. He's been great.

Q. What yardage did you say you had for the eagle?

SARAH SMITH: I had -- what did I have? I work in meters. So I had 79 meters. So it's like a clock system sort of. So it was actually right in between. I have 2 to 2 which is halfway to halfway and then 3 to 2 so it was nice soft little 2 to 2 with a 52. That's a lot of numbers. It's not as confusing as it sounds.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you. Best of luck tomorrow.