

PRE-TOURNAMENT INTERVIEW: COLIN MONTGOMERIE
Thursday, April 23, 2015



DAVE SENKO: We would like to welcome Colin Montgomerie, one half of the Montgomerie-Mark O'Meara team. Mark is playing over at Buffalo Ridge this afternoon.

Colin, maybe get us started, talk a little about how you and Mark hooked up. This is your first year that you've played in this event.

COLIN MONTGOMERIE: Yeah. Well, it really came around because of Mark's forthcoming induction into the Hall of Fame, to be honest, and I was talking to him about that and how wonderful it was for him and long overdue in my view for him to be inducted into the Hall of Fame. So we talked about that. And the ceremony being at St. Andrews and how I would attend there, it's only 45 minutes from where I live and I'll be there anyway. Fabulous place to host it anyway. So that's how we got talking. And then this event was mentioned and we said what about hooking up sort of thing. So that was how that all happened, it was through the Hall of Fame really, the fact that it was at St. Andrews and how much that he will enjoy the whole experience, yeah, yeah.

DAVE SENKO: I know obviously you played a lot of team events in Ryder Cup. What are some other ones you've played over the years, a team format?

COLIN MONTGOMERIE: With or against Mark?

DAVE SENKO: Just in general for yourself.

COLIN MONTGOMERIE: Oh, well, there's been many team. My goodness, we started off with the Walker Cup way back at Pine Valley in '85 I started playing really the first team event in America. Then you go on to we have a thing called the Seve Trophy, which was like the Presidents Cup, I suppose. It was every other year, every other Ryder Cup year. That was Great Britain Island against the continent of Europe that I participated in for many years.

Then, of course, the Dunhill Cup before then used to be a team event before it became the Dunhill Links Championship, which is now like your AT&T, we use three courses, St. Andrews, Carnoustie and Kingsbarns. And then you do that and then you represent the Ryder Cup. And then you go on to the Royal Trophy was played in Thailand, which was Europe against Asia. That's now become the Eurasia Cup, I believe. So I captained that and captained the Seve Trophy and the Ryder Cup.

Team participation, as you see, has been prominent within my career. Played a lot of team golf and have enjoyed it. In fact, playing against Mark a couple of times, I believe, in the Ryder Cup, '97 when I first came across Mark in the Ryder Cup. I was with Bernhard

Langer and he was with Tiger Woods, and Seve pulled us out. Oh, great, O'Meara-Woods, they're pretty good, you know? Tiger just won the Masters by a country mile and Mark O'Meara was just about to win it two of his majors the next year, the Masters and the Open. So we lost in the morning, we lost in the four-ball in the morning. It was never really our great strength, Langer and I. We always fancied more foursomes alternate shot, we played a very similar game.

I'll never forget, Seve came up to us on the 11th hole. We were 3-down at the time playing the 11th and it wasn't looking good. In fact, Mark was the strength of that team then. Tiger was not as accurate, and Valderrama is a course you had to be -- it was a bit like Harbour Town, you had to be dead accurate there. So Mark was the strength of that team and it was -- Seve came up to us and said, Do you fancy playing in the afternoon and it looks like you'll play this lot if I put you off first again. I said, I think we'll -- I said to Seve, and Bernhard thought the same thing, I said, We should get them in foursomes play, and we did. They beat us 5-4 in the morning and we beat them 5-4 in the afternoon, so honors equal.

But I look forward to playing with him. I played with him a lot. We played the first two days last week in Atlanta again this year and he's playing extremely well. And his performance at the Masters was superb. Two 68s for a 58-year old is as good as you get, and finished, what, nearly in the top 20. So good on him. He's playing well and we look forward to competing together.

Q. You were the last Ryder Cup opponent for Payne Stewart.

COLIN MONTGOMERIE: I was?

Q. At Brookline. Since we're 30 miles from Payne's hometown this weekend, can you kind of look back on that match in particular, the gesture on the 18th hole?

COLIN MONTGOMERIE: I didn't realize Payne was as close to here. Was he, right? Yeah, nobody could quite believe, you play a match with Payne and the way it ended. And then, what, two months later he's not with us. It's very, very sad.

But no, that match was in '99, the Brookline, the Brookline, it was an incredible Ryder Cup for a number of reasons, you know? One for the incredible comeback of America from being 10-6 down to win, and also the match that Payne and I had. We were level after 17. We were watching all that was happening ahead of us with Olazabal and Tom Lehman -- Olazabal and Justin Leonard ahead of us. We were talking, it's funny, you know, okay, we're opponents for the day but we're also friends at the same time. I had known Payne for many years before that. As Justin Leonard holed his putt up the green, an incredible stroke, and then everybody went on the green as if America had won. And I'm looking at Payne, he's looking at me and we know the situation. The situation was that it wasn't over yet. We thought, this is a bit odd, you know. And then Olazabal still had an opportunity to half to keep the thing going. When that didn't go in, then okay, it was, then our game was meaningless. We were the last game on the course. So we parred 17, the

two of us, and we went on to the last hole and it was -- America hadn't won the Ryder Cup for a while, so it was a big deal. They hadn't won since '93. The fairway was just a swarm. We both drove off. Payne wasn't concentrating properly, his ball was in the front bunker. I managed to hit the green, the back of the green. Payne came out of the bunker and I was about 30-foot away, he was about 20-foot away. He walked up and picked up my ball. Now, my caddie, I lost my putter, which was fortunate because I couldn't putt anyway. I lost my putter, somebody had taken it from my caddie's bag, my putter, so that was that. So thank God that Payne actually came up and said, look, enough's enough.

Q. They took your putter on the 18th hole?

COLIN MONTGOMERIE: Yeah, it was a swarm. If you know the video of the thing, the whole fairway was completely overrun in many ways and I was out there, and of course I was enemy No. 1. It was quite -- and you look back on your career, you look back on these things and amazing. So Payne did a very chivalrous thing and went over and picked up my ball and said, look, that's enough. It went down as a win to me because he officially conceded and that's how it went down on the match report, but really it was a half, it was a half, half game, and a good game it was. I was 3-up early and then he got it all back again, so it was a great game.

And such a shame, such a loss for the game that we lost one of your great patriots of the game in Payne Stewart. He would have out here competing and he would have been a great addition to any Champions Tour.

I always remember when he won that year in '99 at Pinehurst, the U.S. Open, and he said -- you know, all accolades were given to him about winning that U.S. Open. He said no, no, that was one thing, I'm back on the Ryder Cup team. That's what it meant to him. So to pick up my ball on the last, you can imagine what that was to him. I didn't appreciate he was only 30 miles from here. I didn't appreciate he came from Springfield, Missouri. Okay.

Q. Do you remember what type of putter it was that disappeared?

COLIN MONTGOMERIE: Yes, I used to use a Ping Pal 4, a Ping Pal 4 beryllium. If anyone's got it, it's mine. But yeah, my caddie did well to keep the rest of the clubs, you know? But that was that, amazing, amazing. It was a swarm, everybody was excited. Of course, you know, it was a big deal for America to win, especially being 10-6 down.

Q. Your impression of the course, the location, setup, everything?

COLIN MONTGOMERIE: I mean, I was just interviewed there earlier on and I just -- it's amazing, isn't it, you know? It's amazing. I haven't spent much time in Missouri at all, St. Louis, Missouri, because of -- St. Louis --

Q. Bellerive?

COLIN MONTGOMERIE: Bellerive, wasn't it, Bellerive. We spent four days there, five days there during 911 time when we couldn't drive home. Nothing south, and this is my first time here. It is amazing, isn't it? Everybody says the same the first time, you come up to the range and you think, okay, this is something, this is different. And then the course itself, little par 3 course there is superb and the other course is well is a good golf course, I'll tell you. Difficult golf course, the Buffalo Ridge course.

And it's good on the Champions Tour we can do this sort of thing and invite legends of the game, there's a legends part and a champions part, and the legends part I think is fantastic to have these real legends of the game, Tom Watson, Nicklaus, player to name just a few, fantastic all competing here. And it's great for the spectators to come here and actually watch Gary Player and Jack Nicklaus still play golf. That's the bonus of golf, if they were basketball players or footballers, they're not competing, you can't, but they're still competing. On a par 3 course they can make birdies and, hey, you know, you saw Jack Nicklaus at the Masters hole-in-one, fantastic. So this is just superb, the whole setup. This is different. We're in the church, I've got to watch my language, I've got to watch my language here, we're in the church.

But it's amazing, everything that's done, it's incredible, incredible. I hadn't heard of Bass Pro Shops, to be honest. They haven't come into Britain or England. We don't hunt as much as you guys, we don't have the space. But fantastic, fantastic facility, the whole thing's superb. So this is a real addition to the Champions Tour and something very unique and very special.

Q. You mentioned earlier playing in the Walker Cup at Pine Valley.

COLIN MONTGOMERIE: I did, yeah, honored to do that.

Q. That's a course that --

COLIN MONTGOMERIE: That's one of your four courses, isn't it? You talk about the big four in America, your Cypress Point, Augusta, Seminole and Pine Valley. To play there in the Walker Cup back in '85 was very special. I mean, come there for one and to play four, five practice rounds and then in the tournament itself. I'm often asked, I'm always asked what's the best course, what's the best course you played or you think the best course in the world is. Hands down, that's it, yeah, Pine Valley. People ask me why. It's just perfect in every way, you know? Superb place. I played Scott Verplank in the singles there. He beat me 1-up. He had just come from winning as an amateur, was it the Western Open, Chicago, would that be right? Butler or something? He just won as an amateur, so I pick 'em God. Best amateur in the world and Muggins gets him. I did well to get to the 18th hole I feel. But it was superb, great facility and honor to play there.

Q. How's your game going?

COLIN MONTGOMERIE: Game's fine really. I just want to, you know, feel as if I'm -- finish

in the Top 10. I think we've played five, six events and five Top 10s or something but there's no wins. I would like to get some wins coming up. I'm playing okay, I would just like to finish it off. I'm making a couple mistakes coming in.

We've got majors coming up, which I do prefer, to be honest, because they're four rounds. My game was always based on a four-round tournament. The three-round tournament is more a sprint other than a marathon, you know? Last week for instance I dumped one in the water on the second hole of play there in Atlanta and unfortunately you're behind the eight ball immediately. With only 36 holes played and lying in 70th place, it's not easy. So did well to finish in the Top 10 eventually, but I do prefer the four rounds. You can be more patient, which is more my game. So the majors are coming up, we've got -- they're all quite confined between May and July, there's five majors. In fact, six for me because I'm playing the U.S. Open as well because I happened to win that one so that was great. So I look forward to them all, look forward to them all and seeing if I can do quite well.

Q. Is there some extra motivation that you're going to get to play in another one of the men's majors?

COLIN MONTGOMERIE: Oh, very much so. Chambers Bay there, and I spoke to Robert Trent Jones, Jr., who was over at Augusta recently about the course and the way he had done it and the intricacies of the course and everything. He even said he would come up if I had a practice round beforehand, he would fly in and walk around with me, which that would be fantastic.

But yeah, something different. The first U.S. Open to be played on a course that's built in the last 50 years. Amazing, so this is different. But I look forward to it because it gives me an opportunity to do a little bit better than I would normally if it was a soft 7,500-yard golf course, which is against me now. But because it's a links-style course and it will be faster running in June, that gives me an opportunity to do better than I would normally, yeah.

Q. You mentioned your status referring to the Ryder Cup earlier as public enemy No. 1 over here. At Oaktree last year, you were very widely admired and respected. I think the fans respond warmly to you.

COLIN MONTGOMERIE: I found that since I joined the Champions Tour here, I think that I've embraced the Champions Tour and the fans have embraced me playing the Champions Tour and it's worked very well. All credit to them for accepting me over here to play here, for one, and I'm enjoying it. And I think, great believer if you enjoy something you're quite good at it and I'm enjoying the time here. This is a whole new chapter in my life and yeah, I've done okay, but at the same time, you know, there's a lot more hopefully to go. Yeah, the fans have been super.

As you say, Oak Tree there, Oklahoma, there was a Scottish house on the right, a Scottish owner of the house on the right of the 12th and he was piping me as I passed. I just thought, well, I've got to win now. I'm just glad I got around, it was a hundred

bloody degrees. Just managed to get around, never mind a win. Glad I finished in one piece.

But yeah, you know, I was number what, 2 or 3 in the world at that stage in '97 through '99 and just as Tiger was coming through the ranks. Yeah, by definition I was the top European, so yeah, I was the guy that Americans wanted to beat and I wanted to try my best and try and beat them in the Ryder Cup. It was great battles we had. Every singles game was a great battle, yeah, yeah, I enjoyed it.

Q. Did the fans embracing you on the Senior Tour, did that catch you off guard?

COLIN MONTGOMERIE: Good question. I had heard this was a tour -- a different tour. I heard this was a place where there was no envy, there was no big egos out here, everyone was pleased for everyone else's success, and I think the fans -- the fans go with that, too. I think they're delighted to see the people that they grew up with that can relate to 50-year olds more than they can to a 19-year old coming out of college, you know? So yeah, there's a relation between the two and it works very well, it does. Very well.

Most CEOs of companies by definition aren't CEOs at 20, the CEOs are 50-plus and they've grown up with the likes of the Watsons, the Players, the Palmers and the Nicklauses and that sort of thing. So it's amazing the feel that you have between fans and players. It's something that I wasn't aware of and it's very strong, very strong.