

PRE-TOURNAMENT INTERVIEW
September 15, 2022

DARREN CLARKE



Q. Darren Clarke, thank you for joining us, defending champion. Walk us through what you remember from last year's tournament and how it looks for this year.

DARREN CLARKE: First and foremost, the golf course is incredible. The fairways are like greens and the greens are as pure as you're going to get. The course superintendent, everybody involved this week has done an amazing job to give us the golf course that we have.

Obviously the memory last year from putting just in front of 18 there and being stubborn enough to keep on trying to do the same shot, but eventually it worked, though. Coming up the last with the pro-am guys today, I'm saying I hit it from there and all that sort of stuff. Good memories.

Q. And then what have you kind of seen this year that may be different or that you've noticed has changed?

DARREN CLARKE: I haven't really noticed anything that's changed, I was too busy looking for my golf ball today. I was hitting it a little bit too often today.

As I said, the course is in wonderful shape and I'm sort of trying to figure out how I managed to shoot the course record here and all that sort of stuff. The course seemed very, very difficult this morning. Hopefully, better during the week.

Q. What do you think about the field, all the returning champions, most of the money leaders?

DARREN CLARKE: Yeah, wonderful, really good field, but deserved I think for the tournament. We get some of the best crowds that we do on any event on the Champions Tour this year here in Sioux Falls. It's brilliant for us. When we got that many people out, the atmosphere gets better and it's a little bit more exciting and all that sort of stuff. So I think it's just a representation of how popular the tournament actually is amongst all the Champions Tour guys. You've got a great list of winners here and I'm sure there's going to be another great winner here this week.

Q. Is that what brings so many guys back?

DARREN CLARKE: Yeah, I think so. The club's very friendly. Minnehaha, they welcome us. The fans welcome us, the atmosphere is great, the golf course as well. There's a few tough holes out there, but coming down the stretch the last few holes you can make birdies

and eagles and all sorts of stuff, so that in itself makes it very exciting as well and that's why the guys all really, really enjoy it.

Coming back here because, A, the crowds are so good, the golf course is so welcoming to us. The atmosphere with the crowds, we get big crowds here, it's one of the best supported ones on the Champions Tour. The crowds are great, they love the golf, seems to be they love having us here.

And the golf course gives you opportunities. You can be a few behind coming down the stretch, you've got birdie opportunities all over the place, which makes the golf course very exciting. I think that's reflected in the field of guys that are here. Got some great names, some legendary names on the Champions Tour that keep coming back to Minnehaha and deservedly so for the Sanford Invitational. It's just a tournament that's very special to everybody, we all really enjoy it.

Q. And you won it last year, you had success here before, tied for the tournament record for low rounds. What about this course kind of suits your eye?

DARREN CLARKE: I don't know. The way I played today in the pro-am you wouldn't have thought that I played any good here before, but the golf course, if you play well, you can give yourself lots of really good looks. You know, the greens are running so pure that if you're on with your irons and getting them into the right areas, you're going to have a chance to go low. The golf course, it's a perfect golf course where if you're on, you can go low; if you're off, you can make bogeys really easy. That's the sign of a great golf course, which is what this one is.

Q. Did you ever try and break your old record?

DARREN CLARKE: In what, drinking beers or on the golf course?

Q. Both.

DARREN CLARKE: Records are always made to be broken. You know, it would be great to go and break the course record here this week, that would be wonderful, but the golf course has got a little bit more teeth to it than that sometimes. It's one of those things, you go out and play well and give yourself opportunities and see what it adds up to at the end of the day.

Q. That second shot you tried multiple times with the putter on the green, looking back and reflecting on that, what do you kind of remember going through your head there and can you find that --

DARREN CLARKE: That's not such a big deal for us because that's more a -- that's like a European links sort of shot where we would play that all the time. That's what we grew up doing, playing off hard, fast links turf and using the putter from somewhere like that is a

percentage. But if you try and pitch it and you nip it a little bit too much, spins back down to the bottom, you don't get enough spin through the back.

So it's something that I've always done my whole career and a lot of Europeans have done that, it just seems a little bit strange because not many Americans, it would be their sort of go-to shot. But it worked out eventually OK. If I'm there again this week, I'll do exactly the same again.