

DARREN CLARKE PRESS CONFERENCE

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We are now joined by 2021 champion Darren Clarke at the Sanford International. You're making your eighth appearance here. Just to start, how great is the be back here at Minnehaha Country Club?

Yes, brilliant. Obviously, any time that you win a tournament somewhere, you have fond memories of the golf course, but from day one, when I first started coming here, I just took an immediate affinity to the golf course. The course is brilliant. It's always in sensational condition and this year's exactly the same again. It gives you plenty of opportunities to make birdies, but it also doesn't take too much to make a mess of things and the greens are really quick, really firm. So, scoring is going to be a little bit tough, especially if the wind picks up. So, it's a perfect challenge in great condition.

This is your 18th start of the 2025 season. One win, currently number 10 in the Charles Schwab Cup standings, just how do you feel about your game?

Yeah, pretty good. I've had a few chances, a few other chances to win, haven't quite been able to do it. Been playing nicely, but just making one or two silly mistakes at the wrong time and that's cost me at the end of the week. So, I need to be a little bit sharper and try and get myself back in the mix again a good few times before the end of the year.

Darren, how much does the gallery here make it more fun?

Oh, it's brilliant. We got brilliant crowds here this week, this is one of our most well attended tournaments of the year, I think. The people here in Sioux Falls come out and they really enjoy it. And you know, it's a great atmosphere and very fortunate to have Clarke's Corner just right there in that tent coming up the last as well. It's nice, but any time we get big crowds, it always makes it a little bit better. We've all grown up playing in front of big crowds, so when we get them, and especially here, as supportive and stuff as they are and how much they enjoy it, it's even better.

You have great memories from here too.

Yes, yes I do. I do indeed, yeah. So, you know, it was easy, a little bit easier to get up to the front of the green, but yeah, up and down that hill a few times trying to pull up and all sorts of stuff. But yeah, I got great memories from coming here. I always have a good time when I come here.

I would have hit the Texas wedge there too.

Well, you know, people have asked me about that before, but in Ireland, that's, you know, when you play links, that's what we do of tight stuff going up, so it's nothing new. You know, in America, it's a little bit different. But at home it is nothing different to what we're normally do on a links course, so a couple of times it went right and a couple of times it went wrong, but I managed to lift the trophy at the end of it, so it was okay.

When you look at the field, are there other guys you have your eye on, the ones you're going to be competing with?

Everybody. You got Ernie here, Ernie Els. Thomas Bjorn just won last week. You know, there's so many guys here that are right up ahead of me in the money list. So, I think we've got a really, really good, strong field here this week. Thankfully, [Steve Stricker's] not here, so he's recovering from surgery, doing well, I believe which is great news. But Strick likes this course more than anybody, he does, he plays it way too well here all the time. So, with that being said, with him not being here, we still have got a great field here this week.

What is it about this course with Steve here?

I think, you know, Strick, he would readily admit one of the strengths of his game is his wedge play and his putting. And I hear if you keep it on the fairway, you're going to have a lot of wedges into holes where you need to be very precise with your distance control and that's where he excels, that's where he's so good. And you know, as pure as the greens are, it's no surprise that he holds a lot of putts as well. So this course is right up the street. You've got a few longer, more difficult holes out there, but you've also got a few chances if you do hit it in the fairway. And just play it right out of the stretch. That being said, you still need to play it really well to actually do what he's achieved here. So, he'll be missed this week, maybe a bit from the fans and all that sort of stuff. But for the players, we just want him to get better quickly.

You talked about that you grew up playing links golf. This is so dramatically different than that. And yet, it feels like this is the kind of course that sets up perfectly for the Champions Tour.

We're going to have a little bit of breeze as well, so, you know, you've got a little bit of this, you've got a little bit of up and down and what have you, you've got to fit it into some fairways because your reward for hitting it in the fairway means you can control it going into the greens and the greens are very firm. If you start missing fairways this week, good luck, you're not going to have much chance. You have to be going into these greens from the fairways, otherwise you're going to really struggle to hold the greens. There is that little bit of "linksy" feel to it that you really got to keep it on the fairway. You know, whilst it's more

through the air, the fairways are firm enough, they can still knock it down a little bit, and chase the ball out there.

You mentioned Thomas Bjorn earlier this year, you teamed up with him in Madison for a win. Last week, he got his first win. Can you talk about his first win in an individual event?

Yeah, Thomas was very excited. We were both very excited when we won in Madison. And we'd come off there and Thomas turned to me and says, "you know, that's my first win in America." I never realized that at all. And you know, he's been playing really well week in and week out. You take a look at his results recently, he seems to be up there every week and he had a few other chances that he didn't quite manage to take, but he obviously did last week. So, it's great to see him win another time this year, you know, he's one of those guys who's been my partner for a long time as well, we've played a lot of golf together and it's great to see him out here playing so well also.