

RBC Canadian Open

Press Conference

Wednesday, July 26, 2017

Andrew Gyba



THE MODERATOR: We are here with Andrew Gyba, superintendent of Glen Abbey Golf Club, as well as Jim Flett, president of the Canadian Golf Superintendents Association and superintendent at Muskoka Lakes Golf and Country Club.

Jim will make a special presentation to Andrew shortly, but before that gets underway, Andrew, I'm sure a lot of these guys have some questions for you.

Q. How different is the golf course right now because of the summer that you haven't had, compared to what we saw last year, because the conditions last year were unbelievable. How different is the course going to play, do you think?

ANDREW GYBA: It's absolutely night and day from this year to last year. Complete opposite end of the spectrum. We are not sopping wet but we are relatively receptive out there. Fairways are lush. Rough is lush. Rough is penal. We're going to be growing at about a third to half an inch a day.

So we top the rough at about three inches on Tuesday, and you can expect to see four- or five-plus inch rough come Sunday inside the ropes. Last year the greens were so firm that guys were having a tough time holding them and obviously they were getting a ton of roll in the fairways. But I think that they are really going it like how the golf course plays.

It will play firm and it will play fast, based on the weather on Thursday, but I think they will really like how it is out there.

Q. The golf course is your baby and they decided, you know, let's build a hockey rink around the par 3, seventh. Your thoughts when they first approached you, what was your thought process? Did you have to loosen up to it?

ANDREW GYBA: Yeah, I was taken aback at first. But you know, what I've gotten to know Brent really well, our tournament director, over the last couple of years and I understand with what he's trying to do with infusing Canadiana into the event and trying to give it its own identity.

I think it's a great idea, especially seeing how much fun the players are having with it through the practice rounds and through the Pro-Ams that have happened already.

Yeah, I'm all for the rink. Let's keep it going. I think it's great.

Q. How much work did you do to the bunkers from this year to last year? And it seems to me when I came in last fall, that you were stockpiling sand in the parking lot. How many of them did you do, how many tons of sand is there in there, and what kind of value are we looking at?

ANDREW GYBA: So I mean, I can talk about what we did as a project as a whole is we went through a complete bunker renovation. So all bunkers were completely excavated and all, any outstanding drainage issues were addressed, and we installed a new Angular Signature Sand, it's called, from Best Sand Company in Ohio. We also did some liners in the bunkers to try to keep them a little cleaner.

I'm thrilled with the new bunkers. I'm hearing positive comments from the players about how they are playing, and yeah, looking forward to having them for a few more years, or many more years.

Q. Can you estimate the cost or tell us even roughly what that would be worth, what the sand would be worth? I'm looking at this in the context of people saying, well, this will be the last year and Glen Abbey will be closed next year.

ANDREW GYBA: What I can tell you about that is that it's the best product on the market, or one of the best products on the market. There are two; it's basically Pepsi and Coke that are out there. We were fully committed to making sure we had the best product in our bunkers.

Q. RBC prides itself on being green and carbon neutral in an event. What do you do from a club level or to a course to make sure the environment is taken care of?

ANDREW GYBA: One of the things that I'm kind of proud of is how we approach our fertility programs. Obviously people have a misconception about how golf courses impact the environment. We try to use different types of nitrogen fertilizers. They are called stabilized products that are formulated in such a way where they don't volume tie into the atmosphere. They don't leach into ground water, and from a superintendent's perspective, the fertilizer stays where

you need it. You're not wasting your money, right.

So it's one of the things we do there. Apart from, you know, trying to be 100 percent with recycling programs and that sort of thing. I think that's one of the biggest things we do on this appropriate. Especially with RBC's initiatives with water, we try to be incredibly responsible with our water.

If you look back to 2016, we had to make a tough decision as to how we presented the golf course to the world and these professional players, and I think what we did last year was the responsible approach. Let's not pretend we weren't in one of the worst droughts we experienced and we weren't just going to start pounding the water to it just to make it green for the cameras. We worried about up the middle and we let the rough go, and I think even though it didn't appear as it typically appears. I think it played incredibly well, firm, fast and consistent last year.

Q. Are conditions like you had last year more challenging than this year, or are they different?

ANDREW GYBA: I get asked that question a lot actually, and they come with different challenges. If I was asked if I would rather be in a drought or a monsoon season, I think I'd rather be in a drought. It's manageable.

So it doesn't appear the way that most people would expect a golf course to appear, but it's easier to keep it consistent, and that's the most important thing for these players is firm, fast, consistent conditions. When you're too wet and especially when you add heat and humidity into the mix with some of our poa greens, there's nothing you can do to stop that grass from dying. So it's much easier to manage a drought than it is uncontrollable rain events.

Q. Glen Abbey is obviously in great condition. How much of a sense of pride does your crew have in putting this course in the condition that it is? Not to take away from any other days of the year when golfers are out here, but this is our showcase.

ANDREW GYBA: Yeah, they are absolutely thrilled. We managed to bring staff back year over year over year. We employ a lot of college students and some kids that maybe should have gone on to their careers one or two years ago, but they want to keep doing another Open; "I want to do another Open."

That's all we talk about. Starting in the fall once the train rolls down the road to the next city, we start talking about the next season. It's all we talk about all winter and all spring long.

Our entire spring is focused on the tournament. Every conversation has something to do with when The Open rolls around, we've got to make sure this is in line because or we've got to make sure this is in check because or we're doing this for when we put the golf course under the demand that we do during the tournament.

So it's what our department revolves around is this tournament, and doing that, helps us through our biggest corporate and biggest member events of the season. It's kind of a nice goal to putt in front of the guys and it's something they take a lot of pride in, especially being our National Championship and the Seoul PGA TOUR event in our nation. It's something to be very proud of.

THE MODERATOR: Speaking of National Championship, I believe you have something for Andrew?

JIM FLETT: Yes, thank you to Golf Canada and the RBC for this opportunity to honor one of our members today. The Canadian Golf Course Superintendents Association has over 100 individuals at the national level across Canada. Our mandate is to support and promote the profession and to provide education and research resources for golf course superintendents.

As an ongoing effort to recognize the role of the superintendent at the golf facility, the CGSA sponsors the national tournament program for members that host these prestigious events. Our members are an essential part of the team that ensures that the golf course provides fair and consistent conditions for competition.

Andrew Gyba is the superintendent here at Glen Abbey where it was voted the most fan-friendly golf course on the PGA TOUR in 2013. Andrew has hosted the RBC Canadian Open four times of the last five years, and has been a CGSA member since 2013 and has over 20 years of experience in the golf industry. It is my pleasure to call upon Andrew to accept the CGSA National Tournament Award in recognition of his efforts in hosting the most prestigious of our national tournaments, the RBC Canadian Open. Congratulations to Andrew and his staff.