

RBC Canadian Open

Press Conference

Wednesday, July 26, 2017

Matt Kuchar



MARK WILLIAMS: We welcome Matt Kuchar here to the RBC Canadian Open. Thanks for joining us. Great tournament last week at The Open Championship. Coming in here No. 17 in the FedExCup. You've moved up there, and also No. 12 now in the official World Golf Rankings and No. 8 in The Presidents Cup.

So there's some good things that came out of a good finish. Just give us your thoughts on last week and then heading into the Canadian Open.

MATT KUCHAR: It's been a very nice stretch of golf for me since Masters week, basically. Tied fourth there and continued some really good play through 16th at the U.S. Open and right there with a chance at the British Open. So it's been good form of late.

Last week was awfully exciting. Playing golf with a chance to win a tournament is a thrill come the weekend, playing late Saturday, late Sunday. Certainly with a chance to win a major championship, gets really exciting. It's a bit bittersweet to be so close and not win the event.

I think there's -- I will definitely try to take as many positives from it as possible, but our goal when we start playing as little kids is to etch our name in those trophies. It's a hard thing to do. I realize playing against the best in the world is a challenging task. But certainly those are the goals and hard when you don't achieve them.

But I think part of what makes us pros out here is the resiliency and kind of keep plugging along. When you get knocked down, you keep moving forward. I don't necessarily feel knocked down but felt like I was dealt a bit of a blow by being that close and then not able to get my hands on the trophy.

But certainly I look forward to the next opportunities.

MARK WILLIAMS: Well, you've had five Top-10s in ten starts here at the RBC Canadian Open, and four of them in the last four years. What do you feel you need to do to get up into that winner's circle this week?

MATT KUCHAR: It's hard to say. Certainly I did kind of all I could last week, and I had one guy out-play me. You never know in the game of golf what you need to do to get in that winner's circle. I feel like I've put the

work in. I feel like I've paid the dues. I feel like I did the right preparation.

I come in this week similarly. I'm on good form, hoping to continue good form. I know golf can be a fleeting game but certainly hope to continue playing well. I've enjoyed coming to Glen Abbey. I've enjoyed learning the course and probably feel like I can manage my way around it pretty well, as judged by the last four years.

But certainly hope to get back into contention again and have late Saturday, Sunday times and see if I can't work my way in that winner's circle.

Q. Mentally how do you sort of refocus yourself after last week and then coming back over here and just kind of realizing, this is a new week and it's time to get back down to business.

MATT KUCHAR: It is one of the great things about the game of golf, and maybe sport in general. It's pretty easy to leave the past the past when Thursday gets here. It's a whole new week. Nobody cares what you did last week. Win, lose, whatever it may be; it's a fresh start.

I certainly remember Ryder Cup at Medinah being a really difficult loss. I think I played two or three weeks after that, and it was great to get back into competition again and to kind of just put Ryder Cup behind and say, you know what, it's time to re-tee it again. I've got to go out and perform.

I think that's helpful. Certainly great to carry any sort of momentum you can, but when we peg the tee in the ground on Thursday, doesn't matter what you did last week. Everybody starts from scratch, from even par, and you've got to make the most of this week that you can.

Q. I know at The Open, you talked, it was a bitter pill to swallow, something to that effect. When did you allow yourself to feel that, you know what, you accomplished a lot; you made legions of fans with the way you handled yourself, grace under pressure. Did you allow yourself at any time in the last 72 hours to sort of give yourself a little bit of a pat on the back for yourself?

MATT KUCHAR: It was hard but I certainly don't feel like I lost it. I had a one-shot lead with five holes to go.

I played the next four holes 2-under par. I felt like I played good quality golf, and Jordan Spieth put on an amazing, probably one of the great closing stretches in major championship history.

When something like that happens, nothing you can do but tip your hat and say, well done. He certainly teased me through 13 holes with a chance at it. It helps when I look back at the situation, the scenario, and go -- certainly I didn't give it away. I didn't lose it. Jordan played incredible. He won it.

It helped, kind of the outpouring of messages I got from folks. I kind of let them slide for the first day or two, and then started doing my best to reply to all of them. They were all awfully nice. All certainly very, very positive. I think that was helpful to go through that process.

Q. Can you just take us through your process, because through 13 holes, I remember watching with my wife and said, "Kuch is going to win this one." Just the way that Jordan went, obviously you're continuing to do your best, and as you said, you played so well down the stretch. But did you ever feel like you were running into a wall? What was your mind process when all that was going on?

MATT KUCHAR: Jordan was playing poor golf through 13 holes. He was not playing well. I thought I was just going to keep plotting along, and once he hit his drive on 13, I was figuring, I was going to end up with a two-shot lead with five to go.

He made an amazing up-and-down to save bogey, and so I still end up with a one-shot lead, and he was not on good form at that point. I thought I was definitely the one playing the better golf at that point and was going to keep plotting along. He nearly made a hole-in-one. He hit just a perfect shot on 14. So now we're even. Great, even with four to go. Good place to be. I feel like I'm playing the better golf.

After we hit our second shots, he was clear advantage on 15 but I knew my bunker shot, I was going to have a good shot at birdie. I hit a great bunker shot to three feet and knew that I was going to make that for birdie, and probably be tied with three to go. He makes the putt for eagle and I go, all right, 1-down with three to go. Certainly still in this. Feeling good.

I hit two good shots. Came up just short. He hits a drive in the rough and a shot on the green. Great shot to 25 feet or so and makes the putt. Kind of, shoot, but I'm 2-down, two to go. I'm still in this.

He hits a bad drive on 17. I hit a poor drive on 17, as

well. And we're kind of neck-and-neck there. I hit a good wedge. He hits a great wedge. I make my putt thinking, I'm still in this. And he makes his putt on top of me, and go, yeah, I'm not out totally.

18, you know, he could make bogey. I could make birdie. Still had hopes. When he put it on the green, I find myself with a flyer lie that I knew I didn't have much control over. I thought, chances are slim. With 40 feet, possible to 3-putt and when I found my ball plugged in the bunker, there weren't many chances from there.

But still, held out hope and thought it was doable. I continued playing some good, steady golf. And Jordan, what a show he put on. That was impressive stuff.

Q. You roll in here, one subtle change, not so subtle, Canadiana on the par 3, 7th, the make shift rink. What did you think about that and did you take a few shots on goal today?

MATT KUCHAR: I did not. I don't know much about hockey. I certainly am a fan. I've watched the playoffs. I think they are amazing athletes, and it's an exciting, exciting game. I grew up in Florida and don't know that much in hockey.

I think cool to try to bring in some uniqueness, some different fans, some excitement to the game. Yeah, the Canadian Open draws some great crowds, some great fans. I think it's got great history. They have done a nice job with this tournament for sure.

Q. You've already heading into the British Open been lumped as one of those players to be the best not to have won a major, and you have such success on the weekend but don't quite get it there. That's a complimentary title because you're one of the guys that should be in that discussion, but Sergio found that a challenge to be hung with that title for quite a while, and when he said he didn't care about it, he said it famously in Golf Digest, and then he went on and won next year. How do you feel being lumped in with that group? Is it complimentary?

MATT KUCHAR: Sure, I would have to take it that way. Winning majors is a tough thing. Winning golf tournaments out here as a whole is a tough thing. Hard to peak at the right time. I think all of us get hot at some point in a year, at some point in a career. There are some lucky ones that get hot at the right time, and the great ones kind of stay hot.

So I certainly, when I look back at my career, yeah, it's a missing piece. But awfully pleased with the performances I've had. Pleased with the wins that I've had. I've had seven. I'd like there to be more. I think

there probably should have been more. But I think the wins I've had, I'm certainly proud of some very high-quality play, and being one of those guys, best to not win one, still feel like I've got a good shot. It's not like it hasn't happened yet. I still feel like there's several more chances.

Although I know the clock is ticking. I know you only get so many chances at it. Probably what makes last week tough. You're only given X number of opportunities. One just went by. I hope there are more and I think there will be more chances.

Q. Just on a more humorous note, but the video that goes around where they bleep you out saying, gosh, darn, I see it even at the British Open. What did you make of that? You hold yourself in a certain way in the golf course, which I find quite refreshing. You obviously hold yourself accountable, but you're very careful about your language unlike some of your peers. What did you think when they made the video and bleeped it out when you could potentially be saying other things?

MATT KUCHAR: Yeah, I do, I get mad just like anybody else on the golf course. Golf is frustrating. But I take pride in not being one to curse and swear and slam clubs. It's something that I guess the way I was raised, I could remember being a young kid, having temper tantrums on a golf course. I've learned my lesson.

It took me a couple of times but I learned, best if I make up some other words. If I just say "shoot" or "gosh darnit" or something else that wouldn't get me in trouble. Certainly I feel like the way I was raised, it's earned me a lot of respect out there by not being a guy that's quick to throw a cuss word around.

Q. One of the emotional scenes on 18 was when your kids and wife arrived, surprised you. Your kids looked like they were really disappointed or upset for you, as well. How are they and how were you able to console them?

MATT KUCHAR: That was really, really sweet for them to be there. An amazing gesture for them to be there and support. Was difficult on me to see the kids in tears knowing their dad didn't win. It's an interesting position as a father. When your kids are young, they look up to you like you're Superman. Kind of you're their hero. You're the one to protect them and save them and to do great things. And when it doesn't work out and you aren't the hero holding the trophy, it's saddening, as well. I saw the look in their eyes, and I wanted to be that guy. So I was a little bit broken myself that I wasn't that guy.

But golf is a very, very humbling game, and amazing the lessons you learn. We had a similar situation

Houston, probably three or four years ago. I was right there looking like I was going to win the tournament. I bogey the 18th, end up going in a playoff with Matt Jones and he chips in in a playoff to beat me. So my kids were busted that I didn't win.

We had a flight getting home that got delayed, and we went to a bowling alley and killed some time. I had to tell them, I said, listen, you do your best. You play your best, you try on every shot, and sometimes it goes your way and sometimes it doesn't. You have to learn that these things happen.

They are such great lessons that come from golf. You know, this was one of them. I did my best. I tried my hardest and it didn't work out. Certainly going to keep trying. And so it's hard when you don't come through as Superman, but it's lessons that I think will pay dividends in the long run.

Q. Coming this way after playing in England last week, obviously there's a time change and all that. How do you prepare yourself? How do you prepare your body and your mind to play in a different time zone so quickly after a harrowing week like last week?

MATT KUCHAR: I've not been all that bothered with it, the time changes. I feel like I adapt and I adjust pretty quickly.

Just wherever we're going, I believe that -- I put myself on that clock; believe that it's that time and I try not to worry about where I was last week, what time it was, wherever I was, what time it is at home. I try to not concern myself with whatever time people think I should be on. I try to get straight on whatever time I am.

Coming to an event like this, after being at such a major event as the British Open, I still look forward to come Thursday, we peg it up and it's about competing and trying to be the best out here. Hilton Head would be a similar example after the Masters. Once you get to Hilton Head, you look forward to playing there.

I look forward to being here. I had a neat thing happen yesterday. We were doing an outing for RBC at a local club called Mississauga. I'm up doing a Q&A with a couple of the players and Jack Nicklaus showed up. So I kind of had him as a surprise. He came up and great to hear him talk about the Canadian Open and what high regard he held the Canadian Open. I think in his eyes and the players' eyes back in the day, it was the fifth major.

It has a great list of past champions. It's got great history. And then to hear a guy like Jack talk about the

Canadian Open with such high regard, just continue to inspire guys like myself and younger guys to try to put their name on this championship.

Q. Last year we were asking you about the Olympics because so many people were debating whether or not they were going to go, and you spoke so glowingly about taking the whole experience in. Looking back at it now, how much pride do you take winning the medal? Few people can say they are Olympians and even fewer people can say they won a medal. Where is the medal at home? Did it go on TOUR? Did the kids take it to school for show and tell?

MATT KUCHAR: I am blown away by the power of the Olympics and what showing people a medal means to them. It still surprises me to this day; when I break it out, people freak out over seeing an Olympic medal.

It's one of those things, I certainly as a kid, as an adult, love sport, love the Olympics and just a huge fan. I thought the sport I chose, it wasn't in the cards for me to compete in the Olympics. As it turned out, it was in the cards. I had the good fortune of playing some great golf and earning, winning a Bronze Medal. It's something that I will treasure. It's one of those things that you look forward to passing on to future generations. It's a unique, unique piece that I'm certainly very proud of.

Q. Is it in a case?

MATT KUCHAR: It's funny, it's stuffed in a sock in a backpack. And it comes out quite a lot. So it's like a protective sock. It's gotten tons of nicks and scratches. I think that's kind of what it's supposed to do. It's supposed to be shown often. So it's banged up pretty well, and the sock, I don't know how much it does for protecting it, but a little bit it does.

MARK WILLIAMS: Before we let you go, I mentioned earlier, you moved up to No. 8 in The Presidents Cup, and I know you're a big proponent of team golf, and you've played in The Presidents Cup many times, I think three or four. Just the importance of you making that team again and you're obviously headed in that direction. Every player starts with a goal of winning and getting in the FedExCup finals and getting in the top 30 in the end of the year. The Presidents Cup, how important is it for you to get on to that team?

MATT KUCHAR: I've played on seven Cups now. Once I made the first one, I made 2010 in Wales. What was the name of the Wales course --

MARK WILLIAMS: Celtic Manor.

MATT KUCHAR: Celtic Manor. That was my first team

event. Once you get a taste of a team event, you don't want to miss another one. I'm proud I've made seven straight, and once I made that first one, I didn't want to miss another opportunity. I certainly hope to make it eight straight and many more. Yeah, this is one, I think Liberty National is such a cool spot. I think, what an amazing place to have a team event, to have Steve Stricker be captain, a guy that we all love and admire and want to play for.

So it's certainly high on my list. It looks like an interesting list, a bunch of new blood potentially to be on the team, and I'd love to be a part. I still feel like a kid but I think I'm a little bit more of a veteran out there and kind of to help some of them come along would be great.

MARK WILLIAMS: Terrific. We appreciate your time, and good luck this week at the RBC Canadian Open.