

RBC Canadian Open

Press Conference

Tuesday, July 24, 2018

Andrew Gyba



THE MODERATOR: Thank you for joining us here today at the RBC Canadian Open media center. Today we are joined by Andrew Gyba, the superintendent here at Glen Abbey Golf Club. As well we're joined by John McLinden, superintendent of the Ladies Golf Club of Toronto, who is also Ontario Director for the Canadian Golf Course Superintendents Organization. John is going to make a special presentation to edger before we get started. The.

JOHN McLINDEN: Thank you very much, Terry.

First of all, I'd like to send this very special thank you to Golf Canada and RBC for allowing us to come here today to present Andrew, one of our members with a plaque today. We do have 1100 members across Canada supporting the Canadian Golf Superintendents Association, and our mandate is to promote the profession of the golf course superintendent and provide resources for golf course superintendents.

I've always compared the golf course superintendent profession to that of a movie producer or director. We are definitely the behind-the-scenes people that spend months, even years, preparing for tournaments such as the Canadian Open. And all this preparation comes to fruition when you see the golf course, the way that it's presented now. So we're definitely behind-the-scenes people, like we said, and people get to see the finished product the way it is today.

Again, I just wanted to say thank you very much, Andrew, for hosting this tournament. This is your fifth.

ANDREW GYBA: It is, yeah.

JOHN McLINDEN: The Canadian, that's very impressive. Hopefully it's not your last one here at Glen Abbey. We'll never say never. But Andrew has also been a member of the CGSA since 2013, and he has 21 years of experience in the golf industry.

So once again, Andrew, thank you again. It's always a pleasure coming to visit you. Best of luck this week.

ANDREW GYBA: Thank you very much.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you very much, John. We're going to open it up to questions from the media. So let me know if you have any questions.

Q. Andrew, we had a crazy winter here in southern Ontario this year. Wondering how that effects the preparation of the course, especially in view of having such a big tournament in July?

ANDREW GYBA: Yeah, winter was tough, especially with the Poa annua greens. The risk that we ran, and the situation we were actually put in on a couple of our holes, was that it actually warmed up too much in February. So there were points where it was 16° in February, and down in our valley holes and some of our more sheltered holes on 11 and 12, the grass actually woke up and instantly froze again. So we did suffer some damage, some winter damage on those two holes. We made great gains in the spring with recovery. But I think it was a really tough year for golf course superintendents all across the Province, even leading into the spring was very challenging, very cold temperatures through May, 12°. All of a sudden, it's 40 with humidity. There was kind of nothing in between that good growing weather that you really hope for in May.

So it was a push and a scramble this year, but I think we've put a pretty good course out there, all things considered.

Q. What is the ideal scenario?

ANDREW GYBA: I don't know if there is one, is there? Ideally, you'd love to be frozen through the winter and just a gradual warm-up in the spring. What you really want to avoid is the fluctuation in temperatures, the up-and-down. But getting above that, having your soil temperature get above that 10-12° mark in the winter time can be incredibly dangerous, especially with very delicate Poa annua like we have on some of our valley holes.

Q. Could you maybe speak to the set up of the course this year, how it's looking, and if there is anything different. It looked as though the tees on 13 were a little back, but it could have just been the set up for today?

ANDREW GYBA: Yeah, we're set up for practice rounds and Pro-Am today through practice rounds. So all the tees will be pushed back as long as possible. Most of those pro players are going to want to play the golf course as long as possible to prepare for their competitive rounds starting on Thursday. Pin positions

are also currently avoiding tournament locations.

So you see some of the scores coming in through the Pro-Ams and guys are going low. Pins are in the middle of the greens, and we're saving those corners and those humps and those mounds and undulations for competitive rounds, Thursday, Friday, Saturday and Sunday.

What the rules officials with the PGA TOUR decide to do with the golf course is going to be based on weather and how the golf course reacts over the next couple days.

We're, unfortunately, a little soft right now. We got 31 millimeters of rain on Sunday night or Sunday morning through the afternoon. The golf course is drying down, and it is slowly firming up. But if we get anymore rain tonight, which it sounds like there is a good chance or later in the week before our competitive rounds, it may play a little soft.

So from that point, expect to see it be a little longer, I would guess. It's all their decision, but a little longer. I would expect to see some tougher pin placements out there. But time will tell. Time will tell, so here's hoping for some wind and some sunshine so we can dry this place down and firm it up.

Q. Do you as a superintendent, when you look back on this tournament, whether or not it comes back to Glen Abbey, do you have any specific memories or specific things that stand out to you about this course?

ANDREW GYBA: I'm always ever impressed with how my staff comes together and when we bring volunteer help in, we basically double the size of our crew, so we're up around the 80 mark with grounds crew and staff members on the grounds crew this year. It absolutely blows me away. Everything we ask of them, 4am starts and finishes at 10pm, and finishes at midnight, how enthusiastic and how optimistic, and how happy they are to be out there, and how they come together when people have only known each other for a day or two.

It really becomes a really tight-knit crew for that entire week. So, those are my fondest memories is those stories and some of the things like John alluded to that happened behind the scenes, and some of the scrambles and some of the things that we sneak in there and that sort of thing.

Yeah, those are my fondest memories, just being with the staff, out on the golf course, 4am, mowing greens in the dark, and being out there 10pm, midnight, trying to prepare for the next day.

Q. I guess something that journalists probably don't ask a lot of is what happens after the tournament? In terms of getting back to regular play, or getting the course ready for tournament play?

ANDREW GYBA: Well, you know, we're a busy property, and we're heading right into all our member-guests or invitationals, so we get about a week off to kind of recharge the batteries, and it's straight into our ladies member-guest, then it's right into our men's member-guest, and the week after that right into our club championship.

But the operations crew with Golf Canada does a phenomenal job of facilitating the tear down and making sure there is as little impact to the golf course as possible.

So it actually goes pretty quick. And hopefully we don't get dumped on when we have 50,000 people out here, so that it doesn't bring all the mud up. But recovery, recovery from the event is based on the year. In a wet year it could be more challenging with the spectator traffic, but a lot of that stuff is outside the ropes, right? So it doesn't really effect the golf course.

In a dry year, it's just a dry year, you're just watering, right? Once the tear down is complete, it usually takes about a week or two, and we'll get our ceders out there, a little sod in a few spots, but usually by September to, I'd say second to the third week of September, it's almost as if it never happens.

Q. If you had advice for another superintendent, maybe hosting a tournament next year that's never hosted before, what would you offer up?

ANDREW GYBA: You know what, I've got the cameras on me. I'm thinking if I should say this or not. I had an opportunity to meet John Zimmers, he's the superintendent out at Oakmont. He's a very well-known superintendent. He's a very qualified superintendent. He's hosted U.S. Opens and anyhow, it was 2013, and it was prior to my first event. I got to meet him at a dinner, so I walked up to him and introduced myself and said do you have any advice for a young guy who is scared beyond belief and he's about to host his first PGA TOUR event? He said, "Yeah, don't listen to anybody." He goes, "It's you and your TOUR agronomists." But a lot of people want to give you input, and there can be a lot of unsolicited advice and sales guys coming by and that sort of thing.

So that's something that always stuck with me, and it's always paid off. The tour has incredible support staff that travel around the country that work with you. Outside of the event, they talk with you through the winter, they talk with you in the spring time. You're

talking to them on off tournament years if they know you're coming back to your property. And incredibly experienced staff, and just an absolute wealth of knowledge.

So I just kind of tried to narrow -- so my advice would be just narrow down your focus, who you're talking to, and who you're taking advice from. And everything will be all right. Just trust yourself. Nobody knows your golf course better than you do. So just trust yourself, trust what you know how to do, and everything will be all right.

THE MODERATOR: We'll let you get back out there and get back to work.

ANDREW GYBA: Thank you. Appreciate it.