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VOLVO MASTERS

20 YEARS

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An Interview With:

PADRAIG HARRINGTON

GORDON SIMPSON: Welcome, Padraig. Justin's just paid tribute to your back nine there, saying it would have been a long road back but for that, and how do you feel about these nine holes of golf that kept you right in the tournament?

PADRAIG HARRINGTON: Yeah, obviously I'm very pleased. You know, as any golfer knows, when things have gone against him for a while and they are doing badly, they will always try and save themselves, you know, when there's another nine to play. Or in this case with Ronan saying to me, "There's 63 holes to play after the ninth."

You tell yourself positive things like that and you tell yourself it will turn around, and it doesn't often happen. So it is nice when it does happen in such a short space of time.

I didn't realise, and this is always a potential on this golf course, where the leaders are shooting 3-under par is the best today, but obviously in a round just slightly under par, whatever, there is potential on this course as in the past, 6-, 7-under pars have been shot. I knew the end of the day, the winning score this week is going to be somewhere in single-figure digits. And I knew even if I was 4-over par after today's round that it was possible to come back in 54 holes. I just didn't think I was going to do it all so quickly in nine holes.

GORDON SIMPSON: Five birdies in these conditions coming home is quite special.

PADRAIG HARRINGTON: The only thing is I played very well on the front nine. So it wasn't like I was trying to fix something or it wasn't like I was trying to change something. I felt I played lovely golf all the way through the front nine.

Probably hit a little bit of an aggressive shot on the fifth hole and everything up to that had gone so well and I was feeling good and probably

putt a little bit too much on. But, you know, I hit some lovely shots elsewhere. You know, it was difficult conditions.

You know, 6, I hit 6-iron on the sixth hole and as I was standing over the ball, I definitely could have hit 8-iron. And when I hit 6-iron, it looked like it was drawing to the flag and a gust of wind and came up, went to the front edge of the green and I 3-putted. That's just the nature of playing a golf course with small greens in windy conditions.

You know, it's a difficult test. Especially I hit a good tee shot on 9 and ended up in the heavy rough and hit a good tee shot on 12 and could have gone out-of-bounds. It moved 30 yards left-to-right in the air when I thought I hit it in the middle of the green. So that's the sort of nature.

But I would say throughout the round, looking back now in hindsight, I would say it pretty much evened itself out. I hit some nice shots in the back nine but they went close. You know, if it wasn't your day, I make birdies on 10 and 11 when I really needed them, another day, both of those shots might have gone to ten feet and I might have missed, and all of a sudden I would be bemoaning all the more.

It just was a difficult day with the gusting wind. As I said, it's a tough enough golf course, tricky enough course without throwing in the element of the gusting wind.

Q. It seems as if in the blink of an eye you were six shots behind Justin, and then on the 7th, he hit two good shots into the green there and you get a penalty. What exactly happened there and what were your thoughts at that point?

PADRAIG HARRINGTON: Yeah, I was thinking I was unlucky before I got the penalty. I hit two really nice shots, I took 3-wood off the tee, lovely 4-iron to the middle of the green exactly where I wanted. If the ball kind of releases a couple yards, it's going to release down actually reasonably close to the flag. It sort of finishes on

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the bottom of the slope. If it comes back a couple of feet, I have a reasonable putt; it's nearly uphill putt with not too much break. But when it finishes where it is, I've got like an eight-foot break and I'm going, how unlucky am I; I'm bemoaning my luck.

I grab my putter as I normally do in my routine and I take my practise strokes, and as I'm taking my practise strokes, my ball rolls down the two feet I had wanted it to roll down if the first place. So, you know, from experience, I knew it was a penalty, even though we did call the referee to confirm the whole situation.

And I made a good 2-putt after that, because as I said, it was an uphill, over-the-top, eight-foot break, downhill putt in the wind, and I wasn't thinking very straight when I was hitting it because I was just after getting a penalty. So actually I was quite happy. I actually felt good about bogey in the end there. It did definitely distract me, no question about it.

These things happen. As I said, they seemed to pile up on me for a few holes but they came back on the back nine, a couple of long putts dropped. You know, everything seemed to go smoothly there.

Q. Were you careless when that happened at the 7th?

PADRAIG HARRINGTON: I asked myself if I was careless. Certainly because of my routine of grounding the putter and then taking my practise strokes, I generally am aware of precarious -- when the ball is sitting precariously and could move and then I won't ground my putter.

But it didn't cross my mind. So I asked myself that question, you know, was I just not thinking straight or was I not in the zone or should I have been aware of the potential for this to happen. I don't have the answer to that.

Q. And it's not the first time it's happened to you, is it?

PADRAIG HARRINGTON: I think that happens to every golfer regularly but I don't remember it happening to me before. Hey, if the ball is moving two feet, it wasn't like it rocked over. It was over here somewhere, the ball. No, these things, they happen. You know what, I think every golfer out there in the course of a year will have an instant like that where he grounds something and the ball, or else they worry about it, anyway.

Q. Having grounded the putter, do you then just bring it inside, how much?

PADRAIG HARRINGTON: Yeah, what essentially I do, it's something similar to what a lot of pros are doing now. I line up first and get a feel for the putt before I take my practise strokes. So when I actually put the putter down, if I put the putter down to see how it feels, aim at left lip --

Q. How far away do you move?

PADRAIG HARRINGTON: I don't move my feet at all. I just move the putter, oh, six inches, just so I don't hit it with my practise strokes. Or a little further on the longer putts and on the shorter putts a little less. I kind of trust when I'm taking this sort of stroke (indicating short) but on the long -- I just move inside and take a few putts just for feel. But you know, a lot of players nowadays are putting the putter down to see how it feels before they actually start taking the practise strokes.

Because often what you read and what you feel is slightly different. As I said, I thought about it a while ago and I thought, some day it's going to cost me a shot. You know, but you can't protect yourself from everything on the course. So I'm quite happy with the routine and I'm not going to change it because it's only one instant.

Q. How conscious were you of Justin Rose and the Order of Merit situation?

PADRAIG HARRINGTON: Well, I think he helped me, no question about it. The fact he was 3-under par through eight, nine holes, whatever he was 3-under par through, certainly showed me that it was possible to do it.

If he was 4-over par like I was 4-over par, I think the two of us could have spiraled into oblivion and shot 6- or 7-over par, and said, oh, well, we were unlucky being out last on the greens and in the wind.

But the fact that he was under par sort of said to me, it could be done. He hit some good shots and hit it close and no question, that was very positive affirmation to me that it could be done.

Q. And is then when he had his hole-in-one, did you think like, Hells Bells, this is his day and not mine?

PADRAIG HARRINGTON: I had a hole-in-one in my rookie year in the first round. 7-iron I holed out with, actually to the same pin, and I remember I told him straight up, I said, I

remember, I'm a rookie thinking, Volvo, I might win a car. And there was no car for a hole-in-one on the second hole and I quickly pointed that out to him.

Q. Were you aware he was also under the weather, as well as under par?

PADRAIG HARRINGTON: Yeah, he pointed out on the putting green that he was sick. I was trying to inquire what he actually had and whether we should shake hands. (Laughter)

Q. Bit of an Irish flavour at the top of the leaderboard; do you think the wind is a factor, that you play well in windy conditions?

PADRAIG HARRINGTON: You know, you're the first one -- I saw Graeme had a good score and I saw Paul had a good score and honestly all I'm just looking at is fellow pros. I didn't quite get down to the nationality bit. But I think most of The European Tour professionals are well capable of playing in the wind, and I don't think you could pick out any particular nationalities. Once you're an experienced pro, you know what you're doing out there, or at least you hope you do.

Q. Given the course, was it as difficult today as you've had this year?

PADRAIG HARRINGTON: I don't know. I'm trying to figure if -- obviously it's not a long course. That's the start. It's not -- they did go easy with the pin positions for most of the day. Yeah, it certainly was one of the toughest challenges and I couldn't pinpoint one where I felt that, you know, are harder tests for the year.

But obviously -- well, hang on a second. Oakmont. (Laughter) what am I talking about!

Certainly in the regular -- it's a bit like this. It's getting up there that this is as difficult as playing a major golf course, which I suppose is what you want in the Volvo Masters. You want to set it apart from a regular event and it definitely was a step above a regular event. It wasn't quite as difficult as a major, but certainly a step above a normal test.

Q. When did John Paramor appear behind you in the buggy?

PADRAIG HARRINGTON: 17th. I think he appeared, I don't know, cajoling, working, I'm not quite sure, but he appeared out on 17. Don't know what -- might have been just watching. We weren't quite sure.

GORDON SIMPSON: Padraig, very well played again today. Great back nine and good luck tomorrow.

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