

U.S. Amateur Championship

Wednesday, August 19, 2015

Hunter Stewart

Press Conference



Q. We've got Hunter Stewart, a winner over fellow Walker Cup teammate Lee McCoy in the first round. What was your thought when you saw the match-up?

HUNTER STEWART: I was on the back of the green there on 18 after I got in, and Robby Zauznick (phon) was standing right there, and he goes, you're the 61 seed, and he looks at the sheet, and he goes, you're playing Lee McCoy. I guess we'll have a Walker Cupper in the round of 32. So you know, I mean, it just was a tough kind of deal. You know, one of us had to win, one of us had to lose, and I just kind of got out on top today.

Q. Was it an advantage going out early and being in the playoff? Kind of get your juices running?

HUNTER STEWART: I think the 12-footer I made on my first playoff hole to actually stay alive gave me a lot of confidence. It was the first putt I really saw go in all week. I made a couple 10-footers, but other than that, really nothing. So it was nice to see that putt go in when it really mattered most, and just kind of carried that over into a birdie on the second playoff hole, and I played my best golf of all week today. Just kind of momentum, so I would say yes.

Q. You mentioned you play better as you go on in the week. Same sort of progression going on today with all the birdies you made?

HUNTER STEWART: Yeah, you know, when you're playing Lee McCoy, you just got to kind of have to go for it, and you can't play cautious and you can't just try to par your way around here. He was under par today and played a really nice round, just kind of had some good stuff going there in the middle and was able to carry the momentum over, so yeah.

Q. When you said good stuff in the middle, talk about what happened in that good stretch there?

HUNTER STEWART: Yeah, so I kind of gave away the 5th, and Lee was 2-up, and I didn't really have a whole lot going. I was able to kind of stuff an 8-iron to about four and a half, five feet on 6 after hitting it in the bunker off the tee, and Lee was up there 60, 70 yards away, and I thought he was going to make a birdie because he normally does from there. He actually hit it over the green and I was able to be conceded my four-footer for a birdie after he makes a bogey.

But then the 5-iron I hit on 7 to seven or eight feet was

one of my best swings of the week, and I was able to roll in kind of a curling left to righter and keep momentum, and I hit a pitching wedge in there to about six feet on the 8th after kind of a big drive downwind and was able to keep momentum. But I think it was the 5-wood I hit on the 9th that led to a two-putt par that was really kind of the momentum swinger. I was able to kind of put the pressure on him and he had to hit kind of a tough hybrid shot. He kind of was in between clubs, and after I already was in there with kind of a guaranteed 4 on a really tough hole out here. I think those four kind of put me over the top.

Q. How tough a test is this course for match play?

HUNTER STEWART: Pars are really good. You know, today after Lee was 2-under through 4, I knew pars weren't good, so it was either kind of get birdies going or just go home. You know, I think we kind of bring out some of the best in each other. It's a great test. If you get the ball in the fairway, you can score on some holes, not all of them. The par-3s are difficult. They're going to give you a few. They pushed a couple tees up today to kind of give you some opportunities, and they'll do that just to make it fun and kind of have half pars, if you will. Yeah, it's a very stern test like the USGA always does for all of their championships, and it was kind of reflected by 3-under par for two rounds, and I didn't feel like I played poorly.

Q. How good a test is this leading up to the Walker Cup?

HUNTER STEWART: Oh, it's a great test. I've heard Lytham you'd better drive it straight, and you have to drive it straight here. You've got to be strategic. You can't just fire blindly at things and just think that anything wrong is going to happen. You have to kind of methodically plot your way and be patient. I think you'll see that, but then again, it's not really going to simulate the 50-degree weather, the 20 mile-an-hour gusts and the kind of sideways rain that you might get over there, and the ball is not running out, which is different. I tried to hit some high drivers which week, which I probably will not do ever over there.

Q. Do you feel like any time you're playing golf for seven days there are ebbs and flows, you've got some times when you're not going to hit it good, some times when you're going to hit it good; do you take confidence in the fact that you haven't

had your best stuff and you've been able to advance this far and that things are going to turn at any moment?

HUNTER STEWART: Right, a whole new tournament started today at 9:45 off No. 1 where it just starts over again. Seeds don't matter. You've just got to go out and win your match. You know, I didn't hit it well on my first 18. I hit it -- and was a short game wizard. My second 18 I striped it and didn't make anything, and today I hit it pretty well, not as good as I did yesterday, and still was my best round. I kind of put some stuff together.

So yeah, you're right. Over the course of this tournament you're not going to have your best stuff the whole -- you've got to kind of have some luck of the draw and you've got to get a match where you're kind of not on your best and the guy doesn't play great. You've got to have a lot going for you to win the Am.

Q. At the Western Am, do you see that as a blip or was there something you saw as wrong there?

HUNTER STEWART: It was just rust. Yeah, it was just planned time off. You know, I took time off after the Northeast. I didn't touch a club for like eight days. I went to the Players and it was just familiar territory and just comfort to a fifth place finish. It was just flukey. I didn't play good at all.

And then I took actually another planned five to six days off after that, didn't touch a club, just knowing that this was coming and the Western would kind of be a tune-up for this, and then the Walker Cup, which you want to kind of peak there. But the plan is to turn pro later this year and do Q-school and hopefully get a few pro starts.

The last day of Q-school is December the 15th, so my normal last day of golf for a calendar year falls in late October after the Tavistock tournament is over, and so to just go full bore all the way through the summer like I always do, I just know that come October 20 whatever and every year I'm ready to put them up for like three weeks, and I can't do that this year. So it was just planned time off, and I just didn't let it be more than it was.

I did some uncharacteristic things and hit a ball in the weeds on a couple holes and just lost some through double bogeys, just hit some really errant short irons. I was just Rusty. I got back to Nashville and went to work. It wasn't always pretty there, but you've just got to kind of trust that you're going to gradually get better and have good routines when you get here and just give it your best. I kind of limped in and gave my best today.

Q. You said you're going to turn pro and then go to

Q-school. Is that kind of the timing or are you going to go to Q-school and see how things work out?

HUNTER STEWART: There are a lot of variables. The plan is to turn pro sometime after the Walker Cup. There's just a lot of stuff in the air still. I'm not going to like name a date or do any of that, but just -- that's kind of been the plan since kind of early summer when I knew that I really wanted to play in the Walker Cup.

Q. How do you feel this North Course suits you? Do you think it suits you? It seems like you're kind of an accurate guy.

HUNTER STEWART: It just suits really good shots all the way around. I don't really think it suits anyone particularly well. You've got to just play really well. It suits maybe a straight driver, straight and long. It's playing long. I mean, I had lots of long to mid-irons into holes. I don't hit it far, but just watching John Rahm out there, he's hitting it 30 yards by where I am, and it's just like, it's way easier from up there.

I would say a long bomber that hits it straight, if there is such a thing.

Q. Would you know many of the guys who will be on the GB&I team?

HUNTER STEWART: I don't know them well. Paul Dunne probably after his performance at the British. I've played one round of golf with him and with the UAB guy some. When I see Paul I say hi, but other than that, I don't really know him. I know Gavin Moynihan kind of, played a round with him when he was at Alabama there for a short stint. But other than that, I just kind of know some of their names and know their finishes and maybe they've been ranked really high. But when you're playing college golf, a lot of -- a couple of the GB&I guys, you don't really see in college. But Ben Taylor, if he's going to be on the team, I don't know if he's a lock, he's probably pretty close, but I know him probably the best of any of those GB&I guys.

Q. (Inaudible.)

HUNTER STEWART: Yeah, so that's my guess is whatever -- I'm probably worse off than anyone else is, but I think a lot of Ben Taylor. He's funny. I like him a lot. He's a good match play player. He beat one of our studs on our team in the NCAA tournament, Mathias Schwab. He thumped him. Mathias is a good match play player, from Austria.