

U.S. Amateur Championship

Thursday, August 20, 2015

Sean Crocker

Press Conference



Q. Sean Crocker with us, winner in 20 holes over Robby Shelton to advance to the quarterfinals of the U.S. Amateur. You're just shaking your head here. Take us through that scenario and why you're feeling that way right now.

SEAN CROCKER: Well, I mean, we both hit really good drives on the second hole, but that shot is not the easiest shot because of how firm it is, and if you get it a little bit by that hole, it just runs away, and I just saw both of us did it. I don't know what happened to my first putt, but it kind of just came off the face super hot and went like 20 feet by. And Robby hit a good putt, it was like three feet. I don't know, I just kind of felt like something had to drop because I hit some really good putts today and they just didn't really go in. Just kind of really tried to control my nerves on that putt and just hit it, and it was tracking the whole way, and for a second I thought it was going to go low, and I guess it had enough speed in the wind, and I kind of forgot what happened after that.

Q. I guess when Robby missed that three-foot putt --

SEAN CROCKER: Yeah, I didn't expect that one little bit. I mean, he played great the whole day. That putt on 18 he made was unbelievable. When I made my putt, I expected to be playing another hole, and then I just kind of -- I was watching it, and I saw him just look up and not reach for the hole, and I saw my caddie just kind of wave me up. I didn't even believe it. I didn't think it was going to happen.

Q. (Inaudible.)

SEAN CROCKER: For tomorrow or for today?

Q. The first few rounds you beat some big names.

SEAN CROCKER: Yeah, the first opponent I kind of thought I could take him down because I had more length than him and I was playing really good. Second guy, I played really well this morning, and he was also shorter than me, so I had that upper hand on him. But when I saw Robby was my second match today, I knew it was going to be a long one and a hard one today because Robby is a great player and he's super high ranked and I've watched him win a bunch of tournaments, and he's got a huge name already. So I was just happy to be out there with him.

Q. When he made that putt on 18 that was 25, 30 feet what did you think?

SEAN CROCKER: Yeah, after I hit my bunker shot, I just kind of felt like at worst I was going to have to give him a two-footer or one-footer and have to make my putt. But he's a great putter, and that thing was not going anywhere else but the hole when he hit it.

Q. What kind of confidence did you pull out of Concession?

SEAN CROCKER: I mean, I got beat twice at Concession in match play and won my first match, but just being out there kind of just makes the nerves a little bit easier because you already had the camera guys running around and all the people all over the place. It settled me down a little bit, like I could tell myself, I've already been in this situation, because if I hadn't, it probably would have been a different story. I probably would have been a little more nervous and hit a little more wayward shots.

Q. So I'm trying to understand this. How much are you involved with Zimbabwe?

SEAN CROCKER: Well, I still have family out there. My sister just graduated from college, and she moved straight back there, so my sister is there, my grandpa is that, and I have dual citizenship now because we're allowed to have it in Zimbabwe, too. I try to play as much as I can under the ZIM flag because not just for me but everyone back there just gets a little more pride and joy when they get to see the flag up higher because Nick Price isn't doing so much anymore, it's Brendon DeJonge, Scott Vincent and me. As much as I can, just playing under the ZIM flag, actually everyone on Facebook, my dad keeps everyone posted and they get really active when they see the flag up high and me playing great.

Q. Are you comfortable with the fact that you're under the U.S. flag this week?

SEAN CROCKER: Yeah, I don't mind at all. But for the most part I'll play under the ZIM flag. We just thought since it was this tournament we'd play under the United States flag.

Q. And again, I don't know because there seems to be some question about some of these things, so are you eligible for Walker Cup?

SEAN CROCKER: Yeah.

Q. You are?

SEAN CROCKER: I think so.

Q. So how much is that -- obviously you know that if you progress through, you have a pretty good chance. I'm assuming that's somewhere in the back of your mind?

SEAN CROCKER: I've never thought about it. I mean, I met Spider for the first time at Western, missed the cut at Western, so we've all just talked -- I was talking to my caddie today, and I was just thinking -- I asked him, I was like, is Robby on the Walker Cup team yet, and he's like, no. They haven't put Robby on the team yet, I'm probably an outside shot. If I can keep on winning, maybe I can get inside or closer to it. But obviously it would be a huge honor to represent. If it doesn't happen, I've still got a couple more years to go.

Q. Your bio says you started playing at 13?

SEAN CROCKER: Yeah.

Q. Were you in the States?

SEAN CROCKER: Yeah.

Q. Five years you've gone from learning how to play golf to round of 8 in the U.S. Amateur?

SEAN CROCKER: Yeah, I played baseball. My goal when I was eight to 12 was to become an MLB player. That was my biggest dream, and then I finished Cooperstown when I was 12 and just gave it up to play golf.

My dad used to be a scratch golfer. He also used to teach back home in Zimbabwe. He obviously really grabbed the aspects of the basics of everything because he was always by my side and teaching me how to play golf, and I kind of just got lucky and picked it up really fast, I guess. That's kind of why I haven't always been out there, because I've still been learning a lot. I've had to learn fast, and I make stupid mistakes all over the place like these guys would never make in a million years. I just try to keep learning and keep up with these guys.

Q. On Zimbabwe, Mark McNulty took up Irish citizenship a couple years ago because he couldn't get his passport renewed and there were a lot of difficulties for his family there and property being seized. Can you tell us something about your own family, the history there and what happened to them?

SEAN CROCKER: Well, my dad was a professional cricket player back home in Zimbabwe. I don't know how long he played. He was an amazing athlete. He became a farmer, and then when everything got really bad, it was just -- short story, it got unsafe for me and my sister to live there. So we ended up moving to my grandpa's house who still lives there for a couple

months, and then just by the spin of the globe we ended up moving to California, and since then my dad's goal was to get me and my sister through college and a degree, and the rest of Zimbabwe is kind of history, going back there. I know personally myself I'd never move back there because there's not much for me, but my sister loves it there and she's safe, so that's all that matters.

Q. Your grandfather still has the farm there?

SEAN CROCKER: No, the farm got taken away. It got seized by the government in a way -- not really government, but it got seized, and my grandpa is like literally five minutes' walk from the President's house.

Q. How much has golf or how much has your game grown at USC?

SEAN CROCKER: I can't even -- a huge leap. Nobody knew who I was going into my freshman year, and to have a good year and to play some solid golf, I mean, I didn't get a win at all, but to get up there in the top 5 and a couple second places was awesome. I just learned a lot. Having Coach Zambri there and Tyler Goulding out there with me just taught me -- I could always hit the ball, but my mental game wasn't always strong. I'd get angry and I would hit dumb shots all over the place, like trying to flop it off a cement lie when it just wasn't smart there. So they've been able to teach me to say, here's the smart play, don't do this because you take double out of play and maybe even bogey out of play if you hit the smart shot. And big numbers are what kill you. I learned from that.

Q. It's hard to say how much you still need to learn, but I'm assuming you still feel like you need to learn a lot?

SEAN CROCKER: Uh-huh, and playing with Robby, I'm kind of an emotional guy. Robby doesn't get angry at all or even show any emotion. I think his caddie made a bigger fist pump than he did when he drained that putt on 18. That's always going to be inside me, getting energetic or kind of getting angry at myself saying, come on, you can do better than that. That's also kind of the way I learn.

Q. How do you keep from getting deflated going to extra holes when you're up in the match and your opponent does something like that at 18?

SEAN CROCKER: I've just got to keep telling myself it's Robby Shelton I'm playing. I knew he was going to do something out there that's just going to be like, wow. I fought trying to hit it on the par-3, and he hit it to like this, just stone cold. I had to give it to him. I looked at Kyle, I was like, I mean, it's Robby, come on. Like he's that good.

Q. Is it fair to say that this is your biggest day in

golf in your career?

SEAN CROCKER: Yeah. I'm trying to think if there's anything else, but no, this is probably the -- I did pretty well in the Junior, my last year of junior golf. I think I got beat in the semis by Will. But beating Robby today and moving on to tomorrow is probably -- I can write that down as the biggest thing I've done so far.

Q. Just looking at the names that are left in this, do you look at these guys and say, he's going to be a superstar, he's going to be a superstar? Can you pick out some of these guys that you sort of look up to?

SEAN CROCKER: Who won between Bryson and Maverick?

Q. Bryson.

SEAN CROCKER: Bryson won, so you've got Maverick first off, who was Player of the Year. He's going to be something. Bryson and his weird-thinking mind is going to be someone great one day. You've got Jon Rahm who's just unreal, too, just -- I got a chance to play with him in Vegas, which is one of the bigger college tournaments. I think I played two rounds with him, and watching him and I was keeping up with him and being with him through two rounds, he's obviously going to be somebody, and then Robby, again, is going to be somebody. So it's Rahm and Bryson left, right, big names?

Q. Paul Dunne tomorrow.

SEAN CROCKER: Yeah, so Paul, yeah. You've got those three guys. Paul from the British is -- I got a chance to play with Paul at regionals, and that was awesome, too. All those three guys, too, are great people.

Q. And you.

SEAN CROCKER: Hopefully. Let's see if we can hold that trophy, and then we can put that down.