

U.S. WOMEN'S MID-AMATEUR CHAMPIONSHIP

October 8, 2015

Lauren Greenlief

Choudrant, Louisiana

Q. USGA champion. You're the youngest champion in this event by three months and a day. How does that feel?

LAUREN GREENLIEF: It feels incredible. This championship was really my kind of end goal for my entire summer of competitive golf.

To get through two rounds of stroke play and win six matches is just an unbelievable feeling, and it really hasn't sunk in yet.

Q. So this is the top event you had circled on the your calendar, you would say?

LAUREN GREENLIEF: Yeah, beginning of the summer I said, This is my first year of eligibility for the mid-am, and did all I could to prepare for this tournament.

Q. Good thing it's a fall championship and not a summer one or you would've been out of luck.

LAUREN GREENLIEF: I would have had to wait until next year.

Q. Early on putting seemed was key, like you would expect on greens like these. Felt like you had a chance to go up pretty big early. Missed a couple putts to go maybe 3-up through four holes. Couple missed inside five feet to keep her around. Kind of feeling you won it with a long putt.

LAUREN GREENLIEF: Yeah, I made a really good putt on the 5th hole for birdie, and then missed two short ones that I just tugged slightly to the left and missed a little on the left edge that kind of let her back in the match.

That kind of puts a little more pressure on the flat stick the rest of the round because you really want to get it close. Standing over 17 I had a pretty good feel for the line and hit it right where I wanted to and it broke about six inches and went right in.

Q. Was it right to left or left to right?

LAUREN GREENLIEF: It broke about six inches left to right.

Q. What was your distance?

LAUREN GREENLIEF: Somewhere about 35 and 40 feet.

Q. Okay. That's about what I had. Talk about Margaret. I don't know that you knew her coming in. Her ball striking wasn't her best today, but she still battled you all the way to the 17th hole.

LAUREN GREENLIEF: I never played with Margaret. This was the first time we were paired together in the same group, but I've played a lot in kind of adjacent groups with Margaret, and what you hear in the golf community is that she's a great player and really great person and really fun to be around.

I really enjoyed the trip around Squire Creek today. We had great conversation, a couple laughs, and kind of kept it light.

I think she's truly a great competitor, and can definitely roll the putter. She made some really key putts early in the round.

Q. So you set a record for largest margin of victory in the semis yesterday, are today you become the youngest champion by a pretty sizable margin. Good bet your name is going to be in the history books at least for a long time, if not forever. How neat is that?

LAUREN GREENLIEF: It's the coolest feeling ever. I think every golfer, especially every amateur golfer, really dreams of being a USGA champion, because it's really the pinnacle of the amateur golf sport. To get my name etched on the trophy forever is something that I know will be a highlight of my golf career kind of now and forever.

Q. 14, 15 was a key series. 14 you were right of the cart pats off the tee, but you were able to end up making par and having that hole and keeping her from closing in. Then 15 she misses a three-footer. Do you feel like the match kind of swung there a little bit? She had a chance to steal momentum away.

LAUREN GREENLIEF: Yeah, I think it swung. To carry a 1-up lead into 16 versus an all-square is a pretty big advantage given that there are only three holes to go.

I saw the three-footer she had. It was a little slider and definitely pretty quick, so it wasn't an easy putt. I think I just tried to kept momentum going my way after that.

Q. I know yesterday when you won you were excited that you were exempt into the Women's Am. Have you thought about, you know, you get to play in the Women's Am next year as the Mid-Am champ, the way you've played and maybe have a chance at an invite to Curtis Cup practice.

LAUREN GREENLIEF: I haven't thought that far ahead yet. I'm still trying to kind of soak in the moment. But I think being exempt into the USGA events and into this championship for ten years now, and I think into two US-Ams is a pretty big deal, especially balancing the work schedule. To not have to do those one-day qualifiers is huge.

Q. When do you head back to work?

LAUREN GREENLIEF: October 26.

Q. So you took a good block of time off.

LAUREN GREENLIEF: I took about three and a half months. I actually go back to golf work tomorrow. I have a tournament in Richmond, Virginia that tees off at 12:30 tomorrow. It's the Country Club Virginia Invitational. It's a local Richmond-area tournament for Virginians this Friday/ Saturday.

Q. So you had a chance to maybe extend your lead a little bit more middle part of the match. Missed couple of short putts. Was that nerves? You talked about the tough greens. Was it anything more than that?

LAUREN GREENLIEF: I would say maybe it was a little bit of nerves. Standing over a four-footer out here when the greens are rolling 13s, just trying to get that break just right. The first one I tugged a little bit left and the second one I thought it was going to break a little left to right. I put it left edge and it just kind of hung there.

Q. This championship is unique in the field. There is a lot of camaraderie among the players. They're working women who have real lives to go back to. How many new friends did you make this week, and how special an experience was that?

LAUREN GREENLIEF: It was a great experience, and like I said earlier, kind of been counting down for a couple years now to when I could play in this tournament. I've met a number of the ladies out here in golf tournaments around the country and they've really become my friends.

To be able to join them at this championship has really been a true honor and something I've been excited about. Really looking forward to next year.

Q. Talk about Squire Creek. Where does it rank among the courses you've played in your life? Hardest? Most fun? Most challenging? Best? Just your thoughts.

LAUREN GREENLIEF: Definitely in the top 5 courses I've played in my career. What I really like about it and what makes it a true championship course is you get the ball off the tee, but then you're standing over an 80-yard shot and really have to think about it and hit that shot perfectly or it's not going to be on the green.

Even playing in a number of US-Ams on some pretty tough tracts, I've never really played a place where I'm worried about hitting a green from 80 yards.

Q. Yesterday's semifinals and today's round you really didn't mishit a lot of shots. Where does that rank among the best two days of golf you've ever played?

LAUREN GREENLIEF: Yesterday was one of the best tournament rounds that I've played probably my entire career. I've had a couple that have been pretty low this year as well.

But I really -- you got it right. I didn't mishit many shots. Mishit a couple but tried to keep it in play and tried to roll some putts in. But I've played consistent golf all week kind from practice round day one all the way through.

I felt like I had a really consistent ball striking week, and that really helped me out here.

Q. You just emerged from the two- to three-year gap when you're finished with college but you're not yet eligible for the women's Mid-Amateur. Tell us about how someone in that age group stays sharp at the national level. Is that a challenge?

LAUREN GREENLIEF: It's a challenge. I kind of call it golf limbo. What I found is my experience, is I've competed in Ams in between and top tournaments kind of just being a weekend golfer and it's tough to say tournament-ready, but there aren't many people kind of in that bracket.

A lot of the my friends from college decided to make it their career or took a break from golf. So it's a little abnormal to kind of stick around and keep trying to play.

I think one thing that really drove me to keep playing, my country club, International Country Club, I have a group of 20 guys who are all under 5 handicap. We play every Friday, Saturday, Sunday and sometimes Wednesday.

We play a little team game where it really teaches you to make birdies. So I think playing in those events helped kind of keep me sharp, even though I wasn't competing in, say, 15 tournaments a year.

Q. Do you plan on trying to encourage your teammates or friends who have played and left the game? Hey, look what I can do at the national level. You should get back into it.

LAUREN GREENLIEF: Yeah, I think it would be great to have more younger players continue on in the game and see some more familiar faces out here. A lot of my teammates in Virginia are now just starting to many come back out. We had a couple out here this week.

I think the U.S. 4-Ball is a really great venue for that as well because it gives you a chance to play team golf again versus just at the individual level.

Q. Ultimately what are the goals in the game? Is this the pinnacle for you or do you have loftier goals competitively?

LAUREN GREENLIEF: I think I want to be a lifelong amateur golfer. I love competing. I love competing in USGA championships. With all the exemptions I'll get to my 10th championship next year since this is No. 8, and just to see how many more kind of players' badges you can rack up and how many more events I can play in.

It's kind of the big amateur golf dream. I would like to win a Virginia Amateur. That's on my list of things to do still.

Q. What do your parents do? You said they couldn't make it out here. They following online?

LAUREN GREENLIEF: They're following online. My dad is an attorney, and my mom is a retired attorney. Just couldn't get out here this week because of work.

Talked to them every night, and I'm sure they'll be there late tonight to pick me up at the airport.

Q. Reagan or Dulles?

LAUREN GREENLIEF: Probably Dulles.