

2015 US Women's Open Championship

Thursday, July 9
Flash Interview



Marina Alex

MARINA ALEX

Q. Congratulations. Can you tell us what was working out there for you?

MARINA ALEX: I was patient for probably nine holes. I didn't have perfect numbers, but I was able to hit shots, in between numbers, with just hitting soft irons into the greens and kind of utilizing that to get them to stop, and made a couple of good putts there in the middle. I made a really, really nice -- I bogeyed 18, that's a hard hole. I wasn't that frustrated with it. I made the turn, missed a short putt on 1 for birdie. And then I got through I think it was No. 4, I made a really, really nice putt. It had to be 30 feet, breaker, to get me back to 2-under, and it kind of just propelled me through the round. I was hitting it really well, just tee to green was really solid.

Q. Did you think you had this coming in?

MARINA ALEX: I hit pretty good in Arkansas. I was hitting a lot of fairways and a lot of greens. And I was trying to feed off of that for this week. And so far so good.

Q. Tell me a little bit about the course, how did it play out there?

MARINA ALEX: USGA set it up really well today. This morning it was wet, because we had a little rain. And I felt how they set up the holes as far as length and hole locations was really, really good.

Q. To shoot 68 on a course like this, what's that like?

MARINA ALEX: It's just kind of -- it's hard to go into The Open with any expectations, so I was just going out there and seeing -- putting my best game together and this is what I got today and I'm very pleased with it.

Q. Do you think this could be a number that holds up as the afternoon wave goes through?

MARINA ALEX: I have no idea. It's really hard to tell. If the greens still stay receptive, who knows. The fairways may dry out a little bit, maybe the afternoon players may have shorter irons, can happen, but I think that number is definitely out there for the afternoon.

Q. Two weeks ago you had a top 10?

MARINA ALEX: Yeah, a lot of things have fallen together. I've been working on my swing, and I have my caddie, who is absolutely awesome, I love her, she helped me out so much. It's little things here and there piecing it together, and it's kind of showing right now, which is great.

Q. Since you started with Ian, what have been your goals?

MARINA ALEX: I started working with Ian, I took an odd lesson here and there at the end of last year. And I was still kind of working with Joe a little bit, too. And then come Australia, I kind of made the change to work with Ian. We've been working on some fundamental stuff, a little bit of swing plane and club face, just trying to get into a more consistent place. And it's showing now.

Q. Can you talk about the atmosphere?

MARINA ALEX: It's awesome. There are so many people out here, it's great. The crowds are loving it, and they're everywhere. It's not just a particular group or any particular hole. They're scouted out throughout the golf course, and it's wonderful. It really does feel like a major.

Q. You are not from far from here?

MARINA ALEX: A few hours, northern New Jersey. I think it's about two and a half hours from here. I have some family and friends from the club I grew up at. They're down for support, so it's good.

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Press Conference

Marina Alex

MIKE TROSTEL: It's my pleasure to welcome Marina Alex into the media center. Marina shot 34-32, a 66, 4-under par today and currently leads the championship. Marina, excellent round today.

MARINA ALEX: Thank you.

MIKE TROSTEL: You started on the 10th hole. Take me through your card a little bit. You started with birdies on 14 and 15?

MARINA ALEX: Yeah. I'm trying to remember, sorry. Got through the first -- yeah, four holes, and the first two holes out on 10 are not easy. I mean I had 5-woods into both of them. So I was thrilled left with two pars, hit a good shot on par-3, decent shot on the par 5. And then on 15, I hit a great drive and a really good 5-iron, I don't know how far, maybe like five, six feet and made birdie there. And got another birdie after that, and just kind of went -- just got some momentum going. 18 was a little tough. I mean, it's such a hole. It's probably going to be the hardest hole of the day or possibly of the week. Leaving with a bogey was fine. I wasn't upset with it. Bogeys are going to happen. I just kept hitting solid shots into the greens and waiting for my opportunities for the putts to drop.

MIKE TROSTEL: You made a nice birdie on the 4th hole.

MARINA ALEX: I had a little -- I wouldn't say I was hitting poor shots by any means, but my distance to the hole in the middle of that back nine, which was the front nine, was further away than I'd had for the first nine holes that I played. So I was just patient and I actually made a pretty lengthy putt on that hole. It had to be between 20 and 30 feet. And that really gave me some momentum in the right direction, and my ball-striking picked up from there. I birdied 8 -- well, 7 and 8. 7, I hit it close, had to have been no more than two feet. And then 8 was the best hole I played all day. I hit a 5-wood to maybe 18 feet pin-high and made a really curling left-to-right putt. It was the best putt and best shot of the day for me, so that was great.



MIKE TROSTEL: Certainly a great second nine. 13 out of 14 fairways, 17 out of 18 greens, the ball-striking was really going.

MARINA ALEX: Really good.

MIKE TROSTEL: You missed five consecutive cuts a little bit earlier this year, but then you've been playing better. You had your first top 10 of the year at the last tournament two weeks ago. It seems like your game was really rounding into shape leading into this week.

MARINA ALEX: Yeah, I've been working on some stuff with my coach and it's just hard when you're trying to work on some things and playing to just swing freely and go out there and not worry. And now that I've put some of these changes into play a little more often, I just feel more comfortable and I'm making freer swings and the results are showing from that. So I think this is hopefully a trend in the right direction.

MIKE TROSTEL: You're from Wayne, New Jersey, only about two and a half hours away. Have you been to this area before?

MARINA ALEX: I actually have never played in Lancaster, but my caddie and I came -- we had an off week before the event in New Jersey, and we came and we played this course just to check it out and see what it was like. I mean, the place is spectacular. It's a very traditional northeast style golf course, so it's definitely what I'm used to growing up around here. So I guess that can help me little bit.

Q. What swing changes did you implement and what was the reason for implementing them?

MARINA ALEX: Just a couple of things, not a whole lot. Just a little improvement on my swing plane and trying to improve my club face position to both more neutral positions so that I don't have to totally depend on timing every week. I know timing is obviously a factor in everything, but it makes playing week in and week out a little more consistent.

Q. Who is your instructor?

MARINA ALEX: I worked with Joe Hallett for a couple of years, probably four years, and now I've been working with Ian Triggs for about six, seven months. It's a lot -- it's not just one instructor or one coach. It's

just a process over time to where I am now.

Q. When you were out here, you referenced the practice round you played about a month ago. And you and I spoke and you had referenced the fact that you really liked the traditional layout, something that you were used to?

MARINA ALEX: Yeah.

Q. One of the things you did say to me was I know that when we get here for the championship that the greens are going to be a lot more difficult, a lot faster. Without giving your secrets away, what did you do or what is it that clicked with regard to green speed that allowed you to stay close to the hole?

MARINA ALEX: You know, I think the USGA set it up very fair for us that -- with the way the greens are sloped, and there is a lot of slope to them, that they made the speed manageable for us to putt to where you can hit a putt from 30, 40 feet and you're not going to have ten feet left every time. So they definitely, like I said, I thought it was set up pretty perfect today.

Q. When you first played in your first Women's Open, it was in Saucon. What was that experience for you like then and sort of sitting where you are today?

MARINA ALEX: It's totally different. I was an amateur. I qualified like the last spot on my sectional. I think I was just finishing my first year of college. My game then and now is not even remotely the same. So that was just -- I mean I was a nervous kid pretty much. Now I have been out here my second year, it's just more comfortable and more familiar and I know that it is a major and it is the U.S. Open, but I see the same faces every week. I'm in the same process as I have been for the past two years, so it's just -- it's totally different playing it now than it was then.

Q. Did you sort of get the scope of what that event is and sort of how you fit into it now?

MARINA ALEX: Yeah, I mean, obviously it's a big deal. The crowds out there today were unbelievable. I was kind of surprised to see so many people for the first day. It's awesome. It's everything you would think it would be.

Q. Can you talk about your mindset now that you're the leader in the clubhouse? What do you do the rest of the day? Are you going to watch TV? Do you relax?

MARINA ALEX: I don't watch it. I try not to follow the scores all that much until maybe come the weekend. I don't know, I mean I'm not a frontrunner for this tournament, really. So I'm just going to go out there and have fun tomorrow with my caddie and just keep

doing the things that we've been doing and just see where that puts me. It's really not a lot of expectation.

Q. On No. 15, was your putt from above the hole or below?

MARINA ALEX: No, it was below. I think it was about six or seven feet below the hole.

Q. And you hit a 5-iron in?

MARINA ALEX: Yes.

Q. Did you go below the bunker or did you stay left of the bunker?

MARINA ALEX: Off the tee?

Q. Yes.

MARINA ALEX: No, the tee was I think the furthest back we'll play it for the week. No, I have to take it left of that, I don't have the carry to go over the bunker by any means.

Q. No. 10, you hit a 5-wood into the green?

MARINA ALEX: My first hole today?

Q. Right.

MARINA ALEX: Yes.

Q. Was that two-putt or did you have to chip in?

MARINA ALEX: No, two-putt.

Q. Being a Jersey person, you're used to playing these courses. What are some of the courses you grew up on and have you played any of the courses in South Jersey or Philly?

MARINA ALEX: I grew up playing a course called North Jersey Country Club, it's in Wayne. It's a good golf course, a lot of undulation and slope into the greens and on the greens and thick rough, tree lined, et cetera. And down here I was fortunate enough to play Merion once, but that's not anything like this. I don't think that gave me any advantage, to be honest. And I haven't really played a whole lot in south Philly or in the Pennsylvania area. Saucon, when I was here as an amateur, but that's about it.

MIKE TROSTEL: Marina Alex, 4-under, 66, great start to the championship.

MARINA ALEX: Thanks a lot.