

# U.S. Amateur Championship

Press Conference

Sunday August 21, 2016

## Curtis Luck

THE MODERATOR: Ladies and gentlemen, please welcome our 2016 U.S. Amateur champion Curtis Luck, the third Australian player to take home this title, joining Walter Travis and Nick Flanagan. It looks pretty nice sitting here, Curtis. Where are you going to put it when you get home.

CURTIS LUCK: In my bedroom for sure, just somewhere I can lay back and look at it. Yeah, I might have some sleepless nights when it comes back, so yeah, it's amazing.

THE MODERATOR: It's been a whirlwind last hour for you; has it started to sink in at all?

CURTIS LUCK: Yeah, it's definitely sinking in now. It's obviously an amazing feeling to be named the U.S. Amateur champion for 2016. It's something I've dreamt of since I was about 16.

**Q. So you were all square going into the second nine but only after you had a great comeback to square the match on 18, get down, but then you reel off eight straight wins. You told Shane Bacon it was, what, salad and turkey that got into you?**

CURTIS LUCK: Yeah, that's what I had for lunch. I had a bad first hole. The 19th out there was pretty rough. I would have been lucky to make that putt for bogey. But my dad, who usually likes being very obvious with his statements out on the golf course said, okay, now we need to play some good golf, and I turned to him, and I went, thanks, Dad, you're spot on. You know what, I started to play some good golf. I'll give him the credit for that. Yeah, thanks, Dad.

THE MODERATOR: We'll start off asking about that eagle on the second hole, the 20th hole. Tell us about that hole.

CURTIS LUCK: Yeah, I hit a good drive up there, perfect position, perfect number into the flag. There's no excuses for not hitting a good golf shot. I just hit it, what, 20 feet, 23 feet from the hole, exactly where I would have liked to place it, and had pretty much a relatively straight putt, a little right-to-lefter down the hill and just rolled it down there.



**Q. Have you ever been involved in match play in anything like that eight-hole stretch where one person wins eight in a row? Have you ever seen anything like that before?**

CURTIS LUCK: No. I walked up the 10th standing next to -- like we were walking, and I was walking talking to Dad as we do out there, and I just -- it just kind of clicked all of a sudden. I thought, hang on, I'm 7 up and I was 1-down through the first hole of the second 18. I turned to dad, and I said, I've just won eight holes in a row, and Dad said, yep, you've got to win a few more in a row, too.

I actually just -- I think I started laughing walking down the fairway because, as you said, I haven't heard of that, and I haven't seen it before. Yeah, what an amazing thing to do whilst you're out in the final of the U.S. Amateur Championship.

**Q. How much does experience play a role in that, and when you have a guy struggling you really want to jump into the opening and keep him down?**

CURTIS LUCK: Yeah, you know, whilst I was out there, he made a few errors, and of course the main thing is not to lose holes, but if he's not in good position, that's when you start thinking, okay, let's win some holes. I won a few through the early part of that second 18, and I think on 7 Brad hit this unbelievable shot, like it was ridiculous out of the rough, how good a shot it was in the circumstance, and it rolled up to about six feet behind the hole, and I was in the middle of the fairway now thinking, okay, I can't let this great run that I've just had come to an end because it could be a big momentum swing, and there's still plenty of golf to be played.

So I got up and hit the shot I was planning on hitting, didn't go for any more than I was originally going to go for, and yeah, just -- I holed this 20-footer up the hill, and unfortunately for Brad, he missed it. But yeah, just that kept, I guess, the roll going. Yeah, I was able to take advantage of a few of his small mistakes.

**Q. Given how close everything was in the morning, were you surprised that suddenly you were able to build up that kind of momentum and kind of push through and obviously pull away this much?**

CURTIS LUCK: Oh, of course. Brad is a great player. I've played with him before two years ago, and he's, as

I said, a great player. It's so rare to be able to do that, especially in match play, which is, as you know, one hole at a time. You win one and things can change so quickly. Yeah, I didn't expect it at all.

**Q. Can you kind of put into words what it means, Oakland Hills has produced such great and legendary champions over the years, Palmer, Nicklaus, Player, and to be on that list of champions now at Oakland Hills, can you explain what that means to you?**

CURTIS LUCK: Oh, so much. Let alone just the U.S. Amateur and the events that the USGA run, obviously has so many amazing champions. Oakland Hills is known as being one of the toughest major venues there is, and it's one that's stood up to time. To be a champion at such a tremendous golf course and a golf course that I had so much fun playing just, yeah, means the world. I'd love to come back and play at some point in the near future because I really do enjoy playing this golf course a lot, and I think it's just amazing.

**Q. Kind of a two-parter; do you know Nick Flanagan at all? And there's a lot of great Aussie players right now and in the past; which ones do you look up to and which ones have had kind of a direct impact on your career?**

CURTIS LUCK: No, I don't know Nick Flanagan.

To the second question, people I look up to, it's hard not to go past Jason Day at the moment with the run he's having. I think he's -- I mean, he's obviously a tremendous golfer. He's ridiculous. He's won six events in 13 starts towards the end of last year. That's pretty good. That's almost Tiger-esque. Yeah, definitely looking up to him. But you've also got guys like Adam Scott who won twice earlier this year; a good friend of mine, Brett Rumford, someone I always enjoyed chatting to and having a game with; and for the future, we've got some really good golfers coming out. Min Woo Lee won the U.S. Junior this year. I'm expecting great things from him. He's yet again another ridiculously good golfer with a lot of talent. His sister Minjee, I'm waiting for her name to go on a major championship, because yeah, she's obviously had her fair bit of success, as well.

But there's plenty of golfers. I'm just naming people from WA. Fred Lee, Oliver Goss, there's a number of them. But then you've got guys like Ryan Ruffels, who's from the East Coast, Brett Coletta, Anthony Quayle, Harrison Endycott, Cam Davis. The list goes on. I think Australia is producing a lot of high-quality amateurs at the moment, and I'm sure I guess in the near future there's going to be some more Aussies on a trophy like the U.S. Amateur Championship.

**Q. I think you were 4-under in that eight-hole stretch on the front nine; what was so different about your game the second time you played that stretch of holes as opposed to the morning or any other part during the week?**

CURTIS LUCK: You know what, not a whole lot to be honest. I actually hit quite good all day. I think I hit it a little bit closer, and I was able to take advantage when I did. So that's obviously always going to make a pretty big difference.

But yeah, I actually hit it best today as I had all week. I guess good timing. But yeah, I just was able to take advantage of being in good position, and yeah, hit the putts and shots when I needed to.

**Q. Can you tell us what you hit on 7 and what the yardage was?**

CURTIS LUCK: Yeah, so I had 140 meters, 154 yards into a gale force wind that got pretty strong there, so I just kind of clubbed right up and just chipped a 7 through the wind and skipped one up the green.

**Q. And can you put into perspective just from the 17th green yesterday with Nick having a four-footer to you now being the U.S. Amateur champion, can you put into perspective just the huge shift from just that moment?**

CURTIS LUCK: Yeah, definitely for sure. That's the best thing about match play, especially when there are these close games. Anything can happen. If someone had come up to me walking from the 17th tee to the green and said, we think you're going to win, I would have laughed at them and said, nice one, mate. So that's, I think, a pretty good answer in the fact that to be sitting here now with the trophy just -- it's kind of a surprise to me, really. But I played some good golf, so that's I guess what you get.

**Q. And the fairway bunker shot on 11 yesterday, would you consider that your shot of the week?**

CURTIS LUCK: Yep. That and another. There was actually one in the second round of the stroke play that kind of turned things around. I got off to a really rough start in the bad weather on Tuesday, and I think I was 3-over through -- 4-over through 8, and I chipped in on 9, which was -- that was up there this week. But then on 12, I had made two good pars. On 12 I hit it in the trap off the tee and had about 235 in, and I hit a hybrid out to about three feet and made eagle.

I would almost go to saying that that was the key moment this week for me because that could have potentially made the difference between making the cut and missing the cut, and it was one of those shots that just decided -- and I got on a roll from there and kind of

just finished strong, and you know what, I might not be here, I might not have even made the match play if I hadn't hit that shot.

Yeah, 11 was great, but I think 12 earlier in the week probably was slightly more of importance.

**Q. Can you recall the first time that your dad caddied for you in a tournament? And also just talk about what it means to be able to share this trophy now with him as kind of a direct part of it this week.**

CURTIS LUCK: Yep, I can definitely remember that. So we were playing a junior event in my home state when I was about 11, 12, and I was actually playing with Minjee Lee, and she was already pretty established and pretty good, and I was starting to be playing, and I just remember Minjee holing out on the fourth hole, and I was jumping around more than she was.

Anyway, so first of all, they got lost, my parents, on the way down there, so I rocked up to my tee time very late with only like 20 minutes, 25 minutes to spare. Dad felt so bad that he went and bought me some balls to use for the day. We went out, and the day got called off two or three separate times because of bad weather, and I had the highest score I think I've ever had to this day.

It was a great day. It was sensational. I enjoyed it a lot, and I walked off the golf course in tears.

But you know what, to share this experience with him here this week, I'm thankful that I wasn't crying on the last hole today. But I know he was close, and he held it in pretty good. Yeah, it's just unbelievable sharing it with my family.

**Q. What about your impressions of the course itself and maybe the most challenging aspects of it?**

CURTIS LUCK: It's very long for how narrow it is. You don't get away with hitting average tee shots here. That's probably the biggest thing that stuck in my mind this week was every time I got to the range, the most important thing I think I was thinking of whilst being out there was, okay, let's start hitting some drivers and let's hit them good, because as I said, you don't get away with hitting it poor off the tee here. You know it's penal when you actually are calling for it to go in bunkers rather than the rough. The bunkers here are really good, and the ball sits up quite nicely. There's some deep ones, but the rough is I think more penal.

Yeah, the green complexes are very tough, as well, very slopey, very undulating. If you get on the wrong side of holes, sometimes you can't even two-putt

regardless of how good a shot you hit.

Yeah, it's a tremendously designed golf course. It's an absolute pleasure to play. And yeah, it requires good golf, that's for sure.

**Q. What was it about the course that suited your game so well this week?**

CURTIS LUCK: I like to be able to shape the ball, and with the tree line being quite limited and wide here, it gave me the opportunity to see shots because sometimes I stand on tee boxes, and although I want to hit a shot, there might be a tree in the way. To be able to stand up on nearly every tee box, and yeah, there's some draw holes where you need to hit draws, but you've still got the option here. You can still hit the fade if you're comfortable or you're feeling better with that way.

I think off the tee, it's -- actually off the tee into the greens, it requires creativity, and that suits me because I like to use my imagination when playing golf.

**Q. You seemed very placid out there, didn't get rattled too easily. I'm curious if you feel nerves, and if so, did you feel more today or at the WA Open when you were playing in the pro event?**

CURTIS LUCK: You know what, I think I handled myself really well today and at the WA Open, in fact, and I think that's why I closed them out quite well. I didn't feel a whole lot of nerves. Yeah, when Brad made a couple of pars and I made a couple mistakes there on that 10th and 11th, yeah, I got a little bit anxious and probably a little bit angry. But you know what, at the end of the day, I took a deep breath, took my time getting to the 12th tee, and was fine by the time I got to the tee box.

I'd say I was pretty much on a level par. Probably was a little bit more nervous on the tee at the WA Open in the final round, holding a three-shot lead, having a bad past with the same event the year before. I kind of didn't finish it off when I was in the lead. And also being in the 18 holes. 36 holes is a lot of golf. There's a lot of time to make up mistakes, especially in match play. Yeah, I would say I handled myself really well out there.

**Q. I think you said on TV that you're going to hold off plans on potentially turning pro now. What are your intentions as an amateur to further your career now?**

CURTIS LUCK: Yeah, so we've still got some big events coming up for the rest of the year like Asian Amateur and the Eisenhower Cup, which is the World Amateur, so I'm really excited to be able to say I'm going to play that this year. It's definitely put a halt to

what I was thinking most likely what I was going to do was turn pro after Asian Amateur in October. That's kind of where I was at, and I'd entered tour schools thinking, yep, that's what's going to happen, knowing that there was a slim chance of something like this happening. I still don't believe it, but it did. I'm super happy to say that I'm going to be an amateur for another however long, eight or nine months, get to play some unbelievable golf tournaments within those months, and I guess get even more experience for when I do turn pro.

**Q. Just being the third Australian to win this tournament, what sort of pride do you take in that?**

CURTIS LUCK: It's insane, obviously, being the 116th year this year. There's three Aussies, that's not a whole lot, so I think that's pretty amazing to be one of those three, and I only hope that some more Aussies can get their name on the trophy because it's a great event with great players. Yeah, I just think that the Australian culture within golf at the moment is sensational, and I think there's no way that there won't be more down the line.