

U.S. Open Championship 2017

Wednesday, June 14, 2017

Dru Love

Press Conference



BETH MAJOR: Good afternoon, welcome to the 117th U.S. Open Championship at Erin Hills in Wisconsin. We are very pleased to welcome this afternoon Dru Love. Dru is here playing in his first U.S. Open. He shot a 67-69 in sectional qualifying at Hawks Ridge Golf Club in Georgia to finish tied for third. He won a playoff to earn the first alternate spot and was added to the field on Sunday when the exemption categories closed.

Dru, can you talk a little bit about the process of making it to the U.S. Open and coming into this week?

DRU LOVE: Yeah, last week was kind of a bit up-and-down emotionally trying to figure out if I was going to get in or not. I think when the USGA calls and tells you you have a high probability you get a little excited, but at the same time you have to keep in mind that a lot of things have to fall your way. So I just tried to tell myself to prepare as if I was in, and kind of just try to do my best to get prepared for anything that happens. Then Sunday night, I guess, I found out. I had just got done playing and walked out and walked into the registration room to see if they had any news and they were all in there ready for me to register. So it was kind of a fun week. I'm glad to finally know that I'm in, and quit having to worry about that, and just sort of prepare for what comes on Thursday morning.

BETH MAJOR: Since you've arrived at Erin Hills, can you give us some impressions of the course and your preparations since you've actually arrived?

DRU LOVE: Yeah, the course is beautiful. Probably unlike anything I've ever played in the states. It reminds me a lot of a British Open venue. Not as firm as it would be over there, but it's awesome. The Fescue is very long and penalizing, and the fairways are really wide. So it's a very fair test. The Fescue can either give you a terrible lie or you can get a great lie. That's a U.S. Open, you've just got to take what you can get. The greens are perfect. Some of the best greens I've ever putted on. It's going to be a very fair test. Going to challenge a lot of guys and should be fun.

Q. Is this the first time you're playing for a paycheck?

DRU LOVE: It is.

Q. Is this also the first time then you're playing out of a big TOUR bag?

DRU LOVE: Correct. Yeah, I just got my bag on Monday.

Q. What have the adjustments for both been like for you, knowing that you're playing for Monday and knowing that you're playing out of a big TOUR bag?

DRU LOVE: Well, a little bit more excitement. I think I've had a lot of people tell me I'm more geared towards this style of golf. I think I can get a little lackadaisical when something isn't on the line. A little more pressure and more focus is what I need. And playing for a livelihood is just that. Playing out of a big bag is no different other than my dad's back's going to hurt at the end of this week. So it's going to be fun. It's going to be a different experience, and I'm really glad that I'll have my dad carrying it to kind of guide me through this first week of playing for money.

Q. Dru, how are you doing?

DRU LOVE: Great.

Q. Glad you're here. I interviewed your father before. Does that bring any extra pressure to you? I know it's a positive having him on the bag, but does he get cut out of the commissions when you get the check, just on a lighter note, obviously. It's great to have him on the bag, but for me I see undue pressure possibly trying to carry the Davis Love III name into the PGA TOUR?

DRU LOVE: Well, I don't see it like that. That's just dad. He's always been dad, and you turn on the TV and dad's on there, but it's still just dad. He's never pressured me into playing golf. He actually wanted me to play baseball, I think, more than golf, growing up. But he told me -- I was trying to make my decision whether to turn pro or stay amateur for the summer, and he told me, Dru, if you wanted to move to Canada and play hockey, I would be at every game. So no matter what I do, there is no added pressure. He's just out there to carry that bag and try to get me some birdies and see if I can't get in contention on Sunday.

Q. Dru, is there anything specific that your father has helped you with this week in terms of mental preparation or course management-wise?

DRU LOVE: For sure. It's a long golf course, but

there's a lot of holes where you can't necessarily hit driver. You can get up on the tee and it's a 510-yard par-4, not used to seeing that. You think, oh, God, I have to get a short iron in there to make birdie. There are so many different ways to play this course. He just tries to point out different aspects. You can run it off this bunker or you can land it 30 yards short and it will chase up here. There's not a shot or situation that he has not seen in a major. He's played, I don't know, over 100 majors and 23 U.S. Opens, and he's seen every possible shot venue that you can have out here. He's definitely helped me with the course management side.

Then the mental side, he just tries to pound me with the same stuff that Dr. Rotella tells me. Patience, and routine, and staying calm, and not trying to get ahead of yourself, one shot at a time. He reminds me of that. He can tell. He's watched me play enough golf. He can see when I get a little ahead of myself, get a little quick and excited, and he does a good job of calming me down.

Q. Two quick things, where is your pro career going to take you after this? What are your plans? Also, can you recall maybe the first time you would have beaten your dad playing with him and what that was like? If it was memorable, special, or if he was mad or any of that kind of stuff?

DRU LOVE: Well, after this I'm going to try to do some Web.com Mondays, maybe some PGA TOUR Mondays, and just see what I can get in and buy some time until Q-school. Try to get some more experience. I've been hurt a lot in college. So just try to get some reps, whatever I can play in, I'm going to play in.

For the first time with my dad, I was like 19 or 20 and trading birdies back and forth. Got to the last hole, par-5, and I made about a 40-footer for eagle, and he made about a 30-footer for eagle right on top of me. And he turned around and he looked at me and he said what was yours? I said 64. What was yours? 65. He turned around and walked to the cart and left me on the 18th green. Luckily we were playing with some friends and I got a ride back to the clubhouse.

He wasn't mad. He was just joking with me. I'm sure he is one of the most competitive people I've ever met, and there is no chance he's ever going to let me win. And I know when we got done, he was proud of me for finally beating him after 20 years, but he showed his competitiveness. Nobody ever wants to lose, but that was probably a good day for him.

Q. Do you remember where that was?

DRU LOVE: Frederica Golf Club, St. Thomas.

Q. Following up on that, I think your dad joked earlier this week it felt a little weird for him to be on the bag. Does it feel weird for you at all? Can you just overall describe the rapport and experience you guys have?

DRU LOVE: Yeah, so, Saturday when we were pulling up I was a little excited and I started grabbing all of the bags. I grabbed my bag, and I grabbed this and that, and he goes, whoa, whoa, whoa. This is my job this week. So I'm used to getting his stuff out of the car and toting it to the locker room and following him around and doing whatever he needs.

For the first two days it felt weird having him do the things that I'm usually doing for him, you know, handing him a golf ball or cleaning a club. But he's caddied for me before. We've won some tournaments together before, and I know what to expect from him, and he knows what to expect from me. But I definitely think when he's walking down the range to give me golf balls it takes him about 25 minutes because everyone stops and is talking to him. Saying oh, it's the first time we've ever seen your legs and this and that. So it's definitely been weird for him. I've kind of settled in a little bit. Once I was told I was in the tournament, it was kind of geared more towards competition. It's going to be great having him there, and I think we're going to be pretty good.

Q. Dru, what are some of your favorite recollections of the things your dad has done on the golf course and the times that you've been with him, watched him, the tournaments he's won, et cetera?

DRU LOVE: Yeah. Well, when he won the PGA, I was three or four, I guess. So I don't really remember any of that. But I think the one I remember the most would have to be TPC in 2003. I can't remember. There was a cool picture in the bathroom at the new performance center of my dad and the trees left on 16, that famous shot out of the pine straw, and in the background I'm sticking my head out of the crowd looking around the corner to see where it lands. I can definitely remember that one. Just following every shot, every hole all day. I remember running out on to the green after he won. That's kind of my first memories for being there for one of his wins. He won a lot before I could kind of appreciate it.

Of course, his last win at Wyndham, his 21st. Me and my teammates were all sitting around our living room going nuts every putt he made, every birdie he made. He called me right when he was done, and he was asking where he stood. He didn't look at any leaderboard all day. He had no clue where he was. I told him, you need to go to the range now. He said, really? I said, yeah, you've got a 2-shot lead. He had

no clue. He ran to the driving range and was hitting balls. He called me and said, how does it look now? I can't remember who it was at the time. Said he just made eagle on 15. So I can remember relaying all the messages to him and sort of trying to get him ready for the playoff, get in the mindset for it. Luckily it came down to he didn't need the playoff.

That was kind of cool to be able to give my opinion, sort of, at the end of the tournament. Give my advice a little bit. That's the first time I've ever been able to do that for one of his tournaments.

Q. I want to piggyback on your plans and future plans. In your mind, where are you right now in your scheme? And if you're not where you're at or where you're headed, what is holding you back? Is there a certain part of your game that's holding you back?

DRU LOVE: I would say the only thing that's holding me back is my lack of experience. I went to Alabama for five years and played one healthy season of golf. My dad jokes that I'm 23 years old but I'm 19 in golf years. So I just don't have the experience, the reps, you might say. But I think -- I'm trying to think. I've just really got to get out there and play. Whatever I can get in, Canada, Latin America, Web, PGA TOUR, whatever I can play in, I'm going to get my hands on and try to get as much experience as fast as I can, without trying to wear myself out.

So I think the best step for me is to start doing the Web.com Mondays, see what I can get in, and try to do some good there. I think part of my game that holds me back is probably just my mental side sometimes. I have a tendency to get off to bad starts and keep it going, and get off to really hot starts and not able to sort of finish that off. Talked to Dr. Rotella about that a lot, and I feel like I have all the physical tools. I hit it a long way and hit my irons pretty good. I'm really confident with the putter. So I've just got to get experience and deal with it better mentally.

Q. I follow you on social media, and I just want you to let this sink in for a moment. Your first major tournament. You're about to play in the U.S. Open. I know you interact with your friends, but what have they been saying to you? Just spell it out for us the excitement? What's going on inside you right now?

DRU LOVE: I don't know how to describe it. You go to bed at 10 o'clock and you set your alarm to wake up to go play a practice round for a major championship. It's not something you can say every day. It's my first one. Hopefully I get to say it more. But I've got a bunch of friends here. I got them all to fly in. My family's here, and I'm just trying to share this as much as I can.

I had my brother-in-law and two of my best friends out there walking nine holes with me today, and just kind of picking their brains about what they see. It's just pure joy is all it is, really. This is my dream. This is my goal is to play professional golf at a high level on the PGA TOUR and major championships, and now I'm here.

I want to get back. I understand I have no status, so this is temporary. I have to enjoy this while it's here, learn as much as I can this week and then go back to the Monday qualifiers next week with the same attitude. Just be just as excited for Monday qualifiers as I am for a U.S. Open. It might be a little difficult. The course might not be as nice, but just try to have the exact same excitement for an 18-hole shootout as you do for a major championship.

Q. Just a very quick follow-up. In a combined role Davis Love III, and to you, he's dad, right?

DRU LOVE: Yep.

Q. What is the best piece of life advice he's ever given you?

DRU LOVE: Honestly? Stay away from girls. He says they're all trouble (laughing).

No, that's a good question. He has so much advice. He passes a ton of things on from his dad, my grandfather, who also played in the U.S. Open. I think he respected him so much, his father, and listened to him so much that he passes on the same things that he told my dad. So you can't just pick one thing. He has so much experience, has done so well on the PGA TOUR and in life. But not things that he tells me but things that I see are more important. Coming home from a tournament and missing the cut, he is the exact same dad as he is if you won by 12. Doesn't matter. Comes home to his family, and it's the community, St. Simons, that's what's the most important to him. Golf is secondary. He's played 750-plus events and only won 21 of them, so if he based himself off golf, he wouldn't be very successful. It's all about other people. It's about cousins and nieces and nephews and brothers. Yeah, he spends more time with his mom when he's home than anybody else.

It's just trying to learn from the things he does rather than the things he says.

Q. Dru, what were the feelings like on sectional qualifying day? Because you didn't actually make it quite that day, but tell me about those feelings and the conversation with your father about, hey, will you caddie for me? And how that went down.

DRU LOVE: Yeah, one of my best friends Clay Bauers was on the bag for me. And I went up there with the

mindset just to have fun. I hadn't been playing much, but the golf I had been playing was really good. I was pretty confident. Got up there and got off to a really hot start and played well in that first round. Saw the leaderboard when I was eating lunch in between. I got a little excited. Kind of let the moment get to me too much and made three bogeys on the first nine holes of my second round and got derailed for a while. At the turn I had to buckle back in. It had been raining and windy and got really frustrated, and I just kind of buckled down. I told myself all I need is a couple birdies here and there. I chipped away at it, and actually on the 18th hole, I chipped in for eagle, short sided to get that first alternate spot or to get in a playoff for it. It's just -- it was a grind for 36 holes in the rain. It's not that much fun. But you're playing to get into the U.S. Open, so it means a lot.

I think I learned more on that first nine holes of that second 18 than I have any other round. I let the moment get to me and I played terrible, I played a really bad nine holes. But I learned from it, and hopefully I can get better at that.

Getting him to caddie, I called him and we had thought there was a chance I might get in. When it got closer to it and saw how guys played in Memphis on Thursday and Friday, we got flights. He asked me who do you want to caddie, and I said, well, obviously you. He told me this is your deal. This is your major. This is your career, don't pick me just because you think that's what I would want. Do whatever you want. If you want your best friend to caddie for you, bring him up here and get him to caddie for you. If you want your brother-in-law or your sister or your mom to caddie for you, get them to caddie for you. So, I mean, people keep asking me why did you get him to caddie? Is it not obvious? He's played 23 U.S. Opens. He's seen every single possible thing you can ever see on a golf course, so that was pretty much a no-brainer for me.

Q. Getting into the U.S. Open, obviously you mentioned your grandfather earlier. Although you didn't know him, you now are the third generation of the Love family to play in this championship. How important and special is it that the U.S. Open is your first major given that history?

DRU LOVE: Yeah, it's very special. Obviously I never got to meet my grandfather, but I've read books and I've read his journals, and I've read all his notes in his teaching books that he jotted down for people he taught. I've heard so many stories from -- there was a guy out there today. I'm walking from one green to the next and some guy grabbed me and told me my grandfather taught him in the Atlanta Country Club back in 1980. You just hear stories like that over and over and over again about how great a guy he was,

and how much of a gentlemen and a father and husband he was. I feel like I know him. It's kind of surreal to be able to be here in a place that he sort of started our family down. You know, playing in majors and teaching golf, and he's responsible for my dad being here, and my dad's responsible for me being here. So he kind of got it all started, and he's paved the road for us to get here.

BETH MAJOR: It is certainly a pleasure to have you with us this week. Dru, we wish you well throughout the week. Thank you for joining us today.