

U.S. Mid-Amateur Championship

Thursday, September 15, 2022

Erin, Wisconsin, USA

Erin Hills

Matthew McClean

Quick Quotes

Q. First thing is two friends making the semifinals; what's that feel like?

MATTHEW McCLEAN: Yeah, it's very good. As I said, I didn't know any the scores on the way around, but he's playing very good, so I sort of would have backed him to win, but these are all very tough matches. That was the idea. We managed to avoid each other on each half of the draw, so if we can win tomorrow morning, then it'll be a pretty good afternoon.

Q. What would it be like to win on a place called Erin Hills?

MATTHEW McCLEAN: Yeah, it's pretty cool. I've sort of spent a good bit of money in the pro shop already, with the Shamrock and all that stuff. No, it would be unbelievable, really. Just generally in America, sort of Irish players and sports people are welcomed very well, so in place that sort of has the namesake, it would be even better.

Q. This is your first USGA championship; what did you expect coming in?

MATTHEW McCLEAN: I wasn't too sure. You don't want to sort of underestimate it, but you don't want to overestimate it. I thought it was probably what it was. Golf in the qualifying was pretty good, pretty low scores, especially around this course.

You know, all the matches are good. The match this afternoon was very tough. I haven't played a U.S. Am, but I've played the Amateur and things like that. It's as good as that.

I think when you get to the latter stages, it's as good as you'll get in amateur golf really.

Q. I know this isn't a pure links course as you may know it over in Europe, but how does it compare, and what features surprise you, if anything?



MATTHEW McCLEAN: I think the only difference is probably how soft it is, but obviously due to the weather. If it was running fast and firm, I think it's pretty much a links, barring the type of grass. Obviously you can't do anything about that being in the middle of the country.

It definitely played like it with the runoffs. The bunkers are very penal. The fairways are probably a bit more generous than links golf, and not as windy, is the main thing really.

Q. In today's match you birdied 11 and 12 and that seemed to put you over the top. Do you think those were the key holes or were there other parts of that match?

MATTHEW McCLEAN: Yeah, I birdied 3 and 4, I think, and with sort of -- he got off to a very good start against me. It didn't look like he was going to do anything wrong. So any birdie I suppose was big. But he hit one into about 10 feet maybe on 12, and then to hit it in to sort of gimme range was big, and then he missed after me.

Then 13, 14 were halves and then we both birdied 15. We were the same distance. We were 10, 12 feet, but that felt like the biggest putt in the match was on 15.

Q. What did you hit into 12 and what was your yardage there?

MATTHEW McCLEAN: I think I had 136, playing 132. I had sort of a nice wedge. I think it pitched maybe six foot short, took one hop and sort of stopped a foot away. It was a pretty tricky putt, as well. It doesn't always happen like that, so the more you try it, eventually they go close.

Q. I ask you this question knowing you guys are a little bit younger than we are. Who were your golfing idols growing up?

MATTHEW McCLEAN: Well, I'm a little bit older than he, but the obvious one is Tiger Woods, obviously. I'm sure everyone says that. He was '96, I think, turned pro, and I was born '93, and I got into golf in sort of the early 2000s where he was just dominating everything. So Tiger Woods, obviously in recent years McIlroy is maybe 10 minutes from where I live, and then Lowry, as well, are the big influences I would say.



Q. He was saying that you're kind of used to the 36-holes-in-a-day match. This week with the weather it feels like as much of a physical and mental test every day. What has that been like to manage?

MATTHEW McCLEAN: Yeah, it feels like we've been here probably two weeks as opposed to a week, so our practice round was on Thursday, and then is today Thursday? So we've been going for eight days, and there's still two days left, so it's going to be a 10-day tournament.

No, it is, it's tough. I've been lucky enough to sort of have a couple caddies on the way around. Haven't planned anything. My girlfriend sort of pushed the bag for a few holes, and that's when I changed. I was 5-over through 8 holes, and she slept in, so that was her fault, 5-over through 8, and then I was 8-under for the rest of the stroke play when she pushed the bag, so I thank her for that.

Then we've been accommodated very well by Dan, who's given us food, sort of kept us -- given us a roof, as well, and he supplied me with a good caddie today, as well, which makes all the difference with 36.

Q. Do you have a traveling party? It's you and Hugh and your girlfriend is here?

MATTHEW McCLEAN: So there's three of us, so me and Hugh were coming over to play the event, and then my girlfriend come over, as well, for two weeks. We're over for three weeks, so we've got a whole day in Chicago after, as well, so something to look forward to after the tournament finishes.

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