

U.S. Adaptive Open

Sunday, July 7, 2024

Newton, Kansas, USA

Sand Creek Station

Kipp Popert

Press Conference



my whole life.

Q. You said that you look at this week, you try and look at it as just another tournament, but really this week is special. What makes it so special for you?

KIPP POPERT: I think it's special -- that is very true. It's not like any other week. I think what I mean by that is I just want to go out there and try and win. That's what I do every week. This event is special because there's a large variety of disabilities, but also the level of play is so high, and the camaraderie between everyone. We've all used golf at some point in our lives to help us get through operations, help us get through tough times in school or whatever, and I think for that, you're all playing with the competition, but you're also playing with a respect for each other and a sort of sense of belonging, really.

Q. Talking about the camaraderie, I saw that a bunch of you guys, it looks like you rented a house together. You're barbecuing, celebrating a number of birthdays. How did you develop that kind of kinship or bond when all of you come from all over the world?

KIPP POPERT: I'm a pretty chatty person, so I just enjoy making friends, enjoy the relationships I get to build doing this. I think for me, having a house, sharing it is cheaper. It's cheaper than having a hotel, but more so, there's more rooms, there's room for us to do our stretches in the morning, and it's social.

We did it the last three years here, or the two years before. It was great fun. It's just a lot nicer than being in your own hotel room.

Q. We didn't get into the specifics of the differences of the course. Can you talk about -- obviously you played this championship the last two years at Pinehurst No. 6. So far what do you see as the key differences from a competitive and strategic standpoint here versus No. 6?

KIPP POPERT: A lot more drivers off the tee here. It's not overly long, but we were having a discussion, me and my friends out on the course, they were hitting a lot of hybrids and irons, but it's drivers. The pins, they can be tucked, but I think maybe in the first 10 holes or something, I didn't have an approach shot outside 100 yards for most --

THE MODERATOR: Here we are with Kipp, our defending overall men's champion. Welcome back, Kipp. How does it feel to be stepping out on to this course at this championship as the returning champion?

KIPP POPERT: Yeah, it feels amazing. I think to be honest, I just view it as another tournament and another chance to hopefully lift the trophy.

Last year was last year, and I'm just going to try and win it again.

Q. How do you think this course suits your game? Certainly different than what we experienced at Pinehurst last year, but do you think it suits your game a little bit better, differently?

KIPP POPERT: Yeah, statistically I'm a good driver of the golf ball. There's not too many hazards out there. The fairways are quite forgiving, and I'm a very good wedge player, that's my strength, and putting. To be honest, it's a lot of drivers and wedges.

I think the scoring could be pretty good this week.

Q. We were talking about two months ago you won the G4D British Open, so you're currently holding both the British Open and U.S. Adaptive Open championships. How do you maintain a level of calmness knowing that you've got this kind of huge weight of success that you've carried throughout the past year?

KIPP POPERT: To be honest, I think you asked how I feel about coming here as a defending champ. I think when I holed the putt at the G4D Open -- I finished second there in the inaugural one. The moment I won the USGA, the whole year, all I was wanting to do was win the British Open, to have both. I practice every day. I work really hard. A level of calmness, I get to play golf and just smack a golf ball. It's pretty fun, and it's what I've worked towards.

So I just go out there and trust myself, and I just love pressure. I love competing. This is what I've trained for



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obviously the par-3s, so I think it's going to hopefully lend itself to quite low scoring, whereas Pinehurst due to the tightness and the OBs both down sides of the hole -- you have to respect this course, but you have to give it a bit more respect off the tee. I think this is more sort of -- for my game plan this week, be aggressive off the tee, conservative into the greens, try and hit it to 15 feet and try and hole the putts.

Q. Do you feel like that suits your game given your length off the tee?

KIPP POPERT: Yeah, I think so. I'm not the longest out here by any means. I sort of hit it the same distance as my peers really at the elite level. But I'm just a very good wedge player to be honest. I pride myself on that. Having the CP growing up, I hit it further now than I did when my feet were worse. I got to a scratch handicap basically just using my hands and arms, hitting big draws, big fades because I couldn't turn through the ball, so I had to be able to control the ball flight to get the most on a right-to-left wind to catch up with my able-bodied competitors. I feel like because of that I developed a very good wedge game because I had to be really good.

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