



Open Championship, Royal St. George's, July 15-18, 2021



OPEN PREVIEW

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As the Open prepares to return to Royal St George's, Darren Clarke reflects on his victory there a decade ago and reveals what it takes to win on one of the toughest courses on the rota

Interview **Michael McEwan**

Photos **Supplied**



Q Let's go right back to that week in 2011. You went into the Open in decent form, having not long ended a three-year winless drought. What was your mindset like on the Monday and Tuesday at St George's? Did you have the sense that something big was about to happen?

I have to say that what ultimately happened that week couldn't have been further from my thoughts on Monday and Tuesday! Tee to green, I was very, very good but I wasn't putting well at all - making literally nothing - and, during my practice rounds I was picking up rather than putting. It's not a great place to be in the week of a major! So no, I didn't have a strong feeling about what was about to happen.

Q Obviously, the weather was pretty bad for most of that week. How did you feel about that? Is that something you felt played into your hands?

Growing up in Northern Ireland, I was fairly used to that kind of weather, unfortunately. That week, it was something we all had to accept. You know that some of the guys won't be relishing it. The one thing was that we had moved back to Portrush and I had spent a lot of time practicing in those conditions so, while I wouldn't say it played into my hands, it certainly wasn't a disadvantage for me either.

Q It gets to Saturday night and you've got a one-shot lead. How were you feeling that night? Did you have the feeling that it was "now or never" as far as your major-winning prospects went?

I'd been in good positions in big tournaments before and, as tempting as it is

to start wondering about this and about that, it's the last thing you can allow yourself to do. It does you no good at all. I had to not get carried away with what I had done to that point. There was a long way to go and, particularly with the weather, it was wide open.

Q How did you pass the time that morning before going to the course?

Much like the night before, really. I've always been one for getting up early, so I watched some of the early play, had a bit of breakfast and just tried to pass the time. You would be lying if you said you didn't get nervous in that situation but it's about dealing with it. I'd been calm and collected all week, and very accepting of bad bounces, which hasn't always come naturally to me. I'd spent a lot of time with Bob Rotella and was focusing on the process, rather than the outcome, and that led to that feeling of calmness, I think. The warm-up reflected that, too. That serene feeling took over and that was the story of the day. Well, the week, really.

Q At what point in that final round did you start to think, 'Okay, this is going to be my day'?

I didn't look at a scoreboard until I came off the 16th green. Looking early might have put pressure on. I was calm and collected. The secret is forgetting about it four or so steps after you've moved on. If you dwell on it, you will end up making more mistakes and hitting more bad shots.

Q You got to take the walk up 18 that every golfer dreams of - knowing that a bogey will be good enough to win the Claret Jug. What was that like? What was going through your mind at that time?

I hit a 5-iron into 18 and the flag was middle-back. It never left the post that I had as my target. I hit it pure and, as soon as it came off the club, I knew the tournament was over. That walk was incredible. It was all I ever wanted to do - and, of course, I was trying to work out how many putts I had to win!

Q As I think everybody knows, you enjoyed yourself that night with the mother of all parties... what do you remember of the celebrations?

Not a huge amount, to be completely honest, but it had to be done. These moments don't come along often in your career and sleep wasn't top of the list of priorities! It was brilliant and great to share the moment with family and friends who had been there every step of the way.

Q There's a wonderful video of you returning home to your boys after the win, which is hugely emotional for obvious reasons. How special was it to give them a major victory to enjoy after everything the three of you had been through?

Special is the only word. I'm so proud of them both and to be able to take the trophy home to them with their dad's name on the





trophy was incredible and something that we will always remember. It was very emotional to see what it meant to them, too.

Q Royal St George's is a tough, tough golf course. If a young golfer asked you for advice on how to play it, what would you tell them?

It's an incredible place and I'm looking forward to getting back there for the first time in ten years. You have to play smart, keep the ball in play off the tee and be creative in your shot making because it will ask you a lot of questions. Also, remember that the ground is your friend. In links golf, you want the ball running as soon as possible. It's not a place to be chucking the ball up in the air more than you have to.

Q Finally, your new CBD oil. Tell us about that: how you got involved and, particularly, what benefits you have seen from using CBD.

It's very exciting. I'm looking forward to the launch and seeing what people think. It was great to be approached by some very good people at Sana Lifestyle. They are a licensee of CBD and other plant-based wellness products and we have developed a really good product together. I am initially launching two flavours of premium CBD Oil: Precision Orange and Precision Forest Fruits. CBD is something that, if golfers try it, I believe it will help their game because there are so many benefits. It will help concentration, recovery and even aid your sleep.

For more information on Darren Clarke CBD, log-on to DarrenClarkeCBD.co.uk



CLARKE'S NEW VENTURE: CBD

Darren Clarke CBD, an exclusive partnership between major-winner Darren Clarke and Sana Lifestyle, distributor and licensee of CBD and other plant-based wellness products, is launching a range of premium oils that are "set to raise the bar in the golf CBD market". It provides golfers with a credible, premium product which acts on the body's endocannabinoid system, a network of receptors that interact with various cannabinoids to maintain vital functions and improve sleep quality, reduce pain, lessen anxiety levels, and boost immune system response. On the course, CBD oil helps golfers to sharpen and maintain focus and has been seen to reduce nervousness whilst playing. CBD can also be a vital part of a golfer's post-round wellness routine and has been reported to speed up muscle recovery and relieve joint aches. What sets Darren Clarke CBD apart is the fact that the products are comprehensively tested by third-party regulators and assured to contain 0% THC, meaning that they are safe, non-psychoactive and ready for consumption. It will initially be available to purchase online at DarrenClarkeCBD.co.uk and will also be available in a selection of American Golf stores nationwide.