

**August 8, 2008**



**Oakland Hills Country Club ~ Bloomfield Township, Mich.**

Hole #	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	Out	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	Out	Total
Yardage	435	529	198	446	490	387	449	491	257	<b>3,682</b>	462	423	593	191	501	401	406	238	498	<b>3,713</b>	<b>7,395</b>
Par	4	5	3	4	4	4	4	4	3	<b>35</b>	4	4	5	3	4	4	4	3	4	<b>35</b>	<b>70</b>
Score																					

**AN INTERVIEW WITH:**

**BEN CURTIS**

KELLY ELBIN: We welcome 2003 British Open Champion, Ben Curtis. Ben is in with the low championship score to date and is currently tied in the clubhouse lead at even par 140.

Ben, congratulations, all 3s and 4s on that card today. Must have been a pretty special round.

BEN CURTIS: Yeah, it was a lot of fun today compared to yesterday and the last eight holes where I really struggled with putting. But today I had the speed down a little bit better.

Just I think the big thing is I only hit seven fairways, but it seemed like a lot more than that because if I did miss the fairway, I was in the first cut or in the bunker on 4, where it was a fairly easy shot. So I think that was the key.

And then obviously the putting was better with no 3-putts.

KELLY ELBIN: Ben also hit 13 greens in regulation today.

Ben, if you can go through your birdies and bogeys, please.

BEN CURTIS: Okay. No. 2, I hit in the green in two and 2-putted from 30 feet and made a 10-footer for birdie. So it wasn't the greatest feeling to start the day, but made that coming back.

Bogeyed the next hole No. 3, the right bunker and didn't get it up-and-down.

No. 8, hit a 3-iron in there to I would say 30 feet right up the hill, so pretty straightforward putt. But made that one.

10, hit a 9-iron to, let's say, ten feet and made that.

12, got lucky there. I hit it 30 yards right of the fairway but I was where everybody is walking and was in the hardpan and was able to advance it and hit a 3-iron to the front bunker and got that up-and-down.

Just made some pars coming in.

**Q. There's been a lot of talk about the groove changes that are coming next year, and I've noticed an awful lot of players, including yourself today, have hit a lot of greens from coming out of the rough. If my numbers are right, you hit seven fairways but 13 greens, so that means you had to hit at least six coming out of the rough. What impact on that do you think the groove changes are going to have next year, and do you think that's a good thing for professional golf going forward?**

BEN CURTIS: Well, I mean, it's hard to say, because every green that I hit was out of the semi-rough, so I don't think that you'll see too much of a difference there, coming out with the new grooves. Out of the thicker stuff -- it's too thick this week where it really matters.

I think all of the best players in the world that are good from the rough are real tall and they

get a nice, steep angle. Vijay, Ernie, Tiger is phenomenal at it but he's not as tall; all of these other guys, Phil, they are 6-3,6-4 guy and create a much better angle and contact on the golf ball. I think that's where these guys are so good at it.

Out here if you get it in the rough and you have a chance to hit the green, it's more luck than it is skill.

**Q. Do you find yourself thinking more clearly when you're at a major? How else do you explain the fact that you seem to kind of consistently do this? You have three Top-10s at the British including the last one, and now this.**

BEN CURTIS: Well, I try to gear my game for these. Obviously I haven't had success at Augusta, but the U.S. Open, British Open and this one, I feel suit my game quite well.

I think I'm a fairly straight driver of the golf ball, and they get the fairways firm and fast, so I'm not an extremely long hitter, so I'm able to get the ball out there a pretty good distance, even with those long holes. 14, it's 500 yards and I had 130 yards to the hole. So I mean, you get the fairways this firm, the ball just runs forever.

I don't know what it is. I think I just try to get my game ready for these majors and obviously I like to see, if you miss a fairway by a couple of yards that you can at least advance it to the green. But I just like tough conditions.

If you did a stat over the last five years, who made the most pars, I probably have one of the Top-10 averages on TOUR, but my birdie average is roughly, you know, it's towards the end of the pack. (Chuckling).

KELLY ELBIN: For the record, this is Ben's sixth PGA Championship and his best finish was a tie for 34th in 2005.

**Q. You mentioned you did your birdies and bogeys, and said, "I just parred a few coming in." They were pretty good pars, though, three straight up-and-downs in the end. Can you talk about keeping it together in those situations today where maybe you didn't yesterday, and also, can you tell us how long those putts were?**

BEN CURTIS: Yeah, 16, I was only a couple of feet. 17 and 18 were both about the same length, I would say, between four or six feet. It was more chipping. Yesterday I didn't have the speed of the greens and I kept -- I didn't leave myself too terribly difficult first putts, but enough where I've been struggling with the speed that I just hit it a couple feet too hard and it just catches

a little ridge and runs six feet by par; and today, where I just made those.

You've just got to stay patient out there. You know you're not going to make bogeys. If you can get around today where you can take advantage -- like 12, for example, I could very easily have been behind a tree and had to chip it out sideways, but I was lucky enough to advance it towards the green.

**Q. Can you talk a little about Birkdale and maybe how that prepared you to play well here?**

BEN CURTIS: That didn't prepare you to play well here. (Laughing).

**Q. Or maybe it jump started just a couple of good weeks at majors for you; even though you said you prepared for them, is there any correlation?**

BEN CURTIS: No. Between here and the British, it's totally different. Even with the wind blowing 15 to 20, it's like nothing compared to what we played in over there.

You know, if it blew 40 miles an hour here we would be sitting in the clubhouse because it would be unplayable; the ball would just run off the green.

Yeah, obviously since the British -- I struggled. I believe I had ten 3-putts that week, as well, and so I drove it extremely well there like I have been the last couple of days and just got -- after my start at the British, I played extremely well. After being 5-over after two holes, I was just glad to be playing on the weekend.

I think maybe that had more to do with it than anything. And coming here, I think just struggling with the putter and I'm just trying to get to where I feel comfortable over it. I haven't felt comfortable over it for two weeks; I played Canada and struggled there. Hit the ball good.

Coming in here, I'm just trying to get a good pace on my stroke and feel comfortable over it. Today was much better than the last few days.

KELLY ELBIN: Ben tied for 7th at the British Open at Royal Birkdale.

**Q. There have been a couple of players over the last couple of days who have had some interesting things to say in describing the course conditions. I think Lee Westwood said that they are "sucking the fun out of major championships." You shoot 67 today. Do you wonder at all or do you understand what guys are complaining about?**

BEN CURTIS: Oh, yeah. I hit a few shots yesterday, you know, where I was standing in the first cut and couldn't -- within a hundred yards of the green, and I'm trying to figure out if I can even get it to the green or not.

So I understand where players come from. You just have to accept it. You don't have to like it. There's nothing against that. You've just got to accept for what they are and try hard on every shot and try to, you know, hit every shot to the best of your ability and see what happens. I think you've just got to avoid those big numbers. Like yesterday, I lost my head a little bit, and 6-over the last eight holes, it was all mental. It wasn't necessarily how I played. It was, you know, tee-to-green, I was fine. It was just all those 3-putts.

**Q. How do you regroup after those eight holes yesterday to kind of get primed to come in and play well today?**

BEN CURTIS: Sleep. You wake up and every day's different. You see guys that are playing really good and they wake up the next morning and it's all of a sudden another ballgame.

You could have the best three months of your life and you're still playing well and you wake up and something just doesn't feel right. That's the way golf is. I went home and saw the kids, they were up a little bit, and that made if he feel better and we had a good laugh and just come out here and play.

**Q. Did anything click in terms of the putting? You said you were struggling with the putting in particular.**

BEN CURTIS: Well, I think it was a little bit ball position and a little bit with the stroke. So I was working on it a little bit afterwards yesterday when I got done and just kind of had an idea of what I was going to try to do today and it seemed to work a little better. It's still not great but it's definitely better than what it has been.

**Q. You spoke earlier about liking tough challenges; how would you rate the difficulty of the greens this week, compared with Oakmont at last year's U.S. Open?**

BEN CURTIS: Well, they are two totally different styles. These are a lot smaller and more undulated, more slope in them; whereas Oakmont is more slanted from back to front or front to back.

I think this golf course is much harder tee-to-green than that one was, as well. It's pretty similar overall I would have to say. I think Oakmont's were maybe a little bit quicker. But

these definitely have more -- these have like pin positions -- there's a green here and then there's a green over here and there's a green here. Whereas Oakmont, I mean, they had ten placements on every hole. So here, like 14, there's probably only two on the left and two on the right.

So just gives you an idea. I mean, they are pretty similar in that aspect where it's just extremely difficult. I just think the only difference is Oakmont's were more back-to-front slanted.

**Q. You probably thought you were going to get out of here without fielding a Ryder Cup question, didn't you? Your thoughts on that and what it would mean to you and whether you can even allow yourself to think about it given the fact of what's in front of you.**

BEN CURTIS: I'm not even thinking about it to be honest with you. I mean, it would obviously mean the world to me to play, but I'm not going to live this weekend thinking about it. I've got this tournament to worry about, and two more rounds to worry about before that. I mean, obviously I have to finish pretty high to get in it.

I mean, for me it's just a matter of letting my game do the talking and obviously I'd love to be on it. I think I'd represent the TOUR and America to the best of my ability, but that's not my decision. That's Paul's decision on who he wants to take. I just hope I can play my way on it by winning this weekend. We'll see what happens.

KELLY ELBIN: Ben is currently 20th on the U.S. Ryder Cup points list.

**Q. Leaving wind out of it for a second and just talking about course condition or the course itself, is there such a thing as too hard? Is there a course that could be too hard or unplayable for your taste?**

BEN CURTIS: Well, I don't think that the wind, it can make it easier in some aspects because if you're hitting into the wind you know the ball is going to stop. On some of the longer holes if it's downwind, you're hitting wedges and 9-irons in.

Obviously already there could be courses that are too tough, but obviously not because of what guys are shooting.

**Q. Are you drawing any special inspiration from the Lions this week?**

BEN CURTIS: I've heard a lot of comments this week from anywhere to "he's

wearing a Lions' jersey," so there's no way he can win because of the luck of the Lions.

Hopefully has nothing to do with that and hopefully I can be victorious with this on (Detroit Lions hat and shirt).

**Q. The 2003 British, for lack of a better word, was maybe surprising for some people; how important is it for you to win another major championship? Do you think about it? Does it weigh on you?**

BEN CURTIS: No. I think I've proven that I can play out here. To me that's all that matters. Because if you sit here and think about winning another major, I'll be thinking about it for the rest of my life. I mean, just, you know, I don't have to do that. I don't have to prove it to anybody but myself.

I know I can win another one. It's just a matter of taking care of the opportunities that I'm given, and if I get -- there's weeks that you can play your best and not win and there's weeks where you can kind of just stumble your way in and win. So I mean, you just can't think about it; if I don't win another major, is my career not fulfilled, because it is.

**Q. Can you talk about traditionally, you get a lot of pars, not as many birdies. Is that a function of your game, you said not being as long, or a function of your personality, just how you've learned the game?**

BEN CURTIS: I think it's just streaky. There will be rounds and some tournaments, majors, where you may not make a birdie the first two days or just one birdie. There's some rounds where on TOUR you make one or two birdies but no bogeys, and you shoot a decent round.

So it's hard to say, because there's rounds where you make eight birdies. I think it's just the law of averages; look at Phil, pretty much when he tees up, he's going to make four birdies, he's just got that much talent and that much skill and he hits it a long ways. He's going to hit a few shots that especially on par 5s for him that are almost par 4s most of the time. I don't know if it's just my personality or my game. Probably a reflection of both.

KELLY ELBIN: Ben Curtis, tied for the lead midway through the PGA Championship. Thank you, Ben.

FastScripts by ASAP Sports ...

