

The Links Times

Alfred Dunhill Links Championship Daily News

ROUND 3, SATURDAY 2 OCTOBER, 2021



DANNY KEEPS UP THE PRESSURE

Tyrrell Hatton continues to set the pace in search of an unprecedented third Alfred Dunhill Links, but Danny Willett is one of several dangerous rivals in pursuit – and the former Masters champion also shares the lead in the Team Championship

Everything seems to be going according to plan for Tyrrell Hatton, as he chases a record third Alfred Dunhill Links Championship, but the competition is beginning to hot up.

Danny Willett edged a shot nearer with a 69 to Hatton's 70 at Kingsbarns in the second round, but he still remains two behind as the two Englishmen go into today's third round on the Old Course.

Also in the mix are England's Daniel Gavins, who shot an impressive 68 at Carnoustie to be on his own in second place on nine-un-

der-par, while China's Haotong Li is on eight-under-par alongside Willett after a 72 on the Old Course.

On a day of strong winds, scoring was significantly lower and any round under par was worth its weight in gold.

Willett, who won the Team Championship in 2016 playing with Jonathan Smart, who is cad-dying for him here, said: "I feel like we got a nice amount out of that round. It's tough out there. It's nice coming in here, having shot five-under-par in the first round."

He says he is looking forward to St Andrews. "Yes, I love the golf

course. The pins are very similar year-on-year, so fingers crossed. We've got lucky so far, 36 holes, and hopefully another 36 with the wind and no rain."

Hatton agreed it was tough. "I'm happy with how I scored. It was quite easy to make mistakes. Very easy to hit bad shots. I guess I was fortunate at times when I did hit a bad shot, I didn't end up in too much of a dodgy position. I had a couple of three-putts today, but that's easy to do with the wind."

Daniel Gavins, 30, had probably the toughest task of the leaders, having to play Carnoustie in the

challenging wind, but he showed admirable patience. The highlight of his round was an eagle at the 'Spectacles' par five, 14th hole.

It was a doubly successful day for Willett as he and his amateur partner Jimmy Dunne share the lead in the Team Championship with Oliver Fisher and Manish Chopra on 18-under-par.

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BIRTHDAY MEMORIES WILL LAST FOREVER



Billy Horschel Sr. said that spending his 70th birthday playing beautiful Kingsbarns with his son “will be something I remember until the day I die”.

He was presented with a celebratory bottle of champagne from Alfred Dunhill after his second round and added: “This whole week has been such a wonderful experience and I will have so many happy memories to recall in the years ahead.”

But perhaps the greatest memory is yet to come, with the Horschels’ third round scheduled for the Old Course, and with their Team Championship score on 13-under par – putting them close to the top 20 who will qualify for Sunday – there might yet be two weekend rounds at the Home of Golf to round off the birthday celebrations.

US Tour player Billy Horschel, the recent winner of the BMW PGA Championship at Wentworth, wanted to treat his father this week and Horschel Sr. said: “I can’t thank Dunhill enough for giving me the invite, and I will always remember my tee shot today to the par-three 13th by the ocean, even though I then missed the putt!”

“To be honest I had a bit of a rough day on the course, but it was very tricky in the wind and the most important thing is that I am here, I am with my son and we are playing three truly great courses. I am so looking forward to tomorrow. I played ten holes in practice earlier this week and, despite not really having my best swing at the moment after surgery in April, I’m hopeful of playing a bit better.”

ONE MINUTE'S SILENCE

On Saturday, 2 October, at 1.15pm, the 20th Anniversary Alfred Dunhill Links Championship will hold one minute of silence on all three courses, when play will be stopped, in memory of friends and families in Scotland and around the world who have been affected by the Covid-19 pandemic. In our thoughts will be those who have lost their lives, families who have lost loved ones and those whose lives have been changed forever. We also pay tribute to the many thousands of health care workers who have made so many personal sacrifices.

FISHER STILL HOOKED ON OLD COURSE

Ross Fisher returns today to the scene of one of the most memorable days of his career – a course-record 61 at the Old Course.

That came in the final round of the 2017 Alfred Dunhill Links Championship and earned Fisher the runners-up spot and a place in the history of the Home of Golf.

“It’s such a nice thing to say I hold the course record at the Home of Golf,” said Fisher. “I actually had a putt from short of the green but up the slope at 18 for a 59, which fell back, and then I

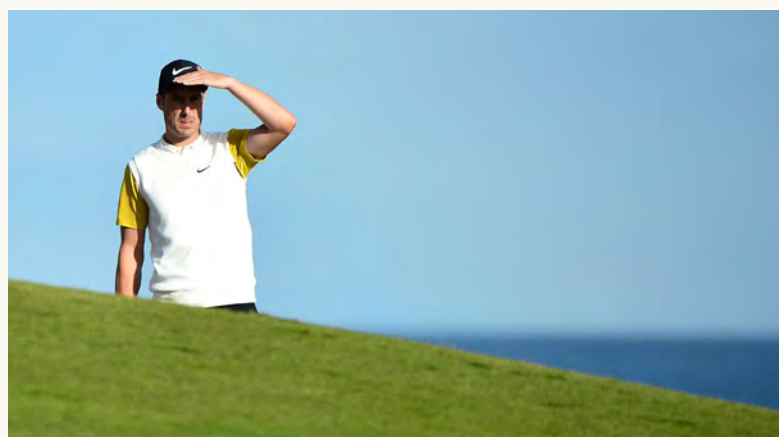
missed a short putt for a 60, but it’s still a special memory.”

Fisher was full of praise for the England Test cricket captain Joe Root, his amateur partner who contributed to an eight-under-par 64 in the Team Championship.

“It was very tricky out there, but

Joe played very well,” said Fisher. “Off a 15-handicap he came in on quite a few holes, including a net eagle at our tenth hole.”

“He drives the ball excellently and with a little bit of work and a few lessons, I reckon he would easily be down in single figures.”





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GAVINS 'HANGING ON' TO STAY CLOSE

The in-form Englishman finished day two in second place after a patient approach, while China's Haotong Li credits a turnaround in his form to a first trip home in two years

Daniel Gavins won his first European Tour event just two months ago and is keen to add another, but as he enters day three of the Alfred Dunhill Links Championship just one shot off the lead on nine-under-par, the Englishman revealed his solid game this week is all down to being patient.

Gavins is a debutant at the Championship and his round of 68 at Carnoustie leaves himself in out-right second place.

"I stayed patient today. I got off to a good start and had quite a few downwind holes. For the back nine I was just hanging on," he said.

"It's really nice. Bob Diamond (former Chief Executive of Barclays) is my partner, so it's been a good laugh so far."

Also in contention on eight-under-par in a tie for third with Danny Willett is a former Team Championship winner, China's Haotong Li.

Currently No.489 in the world rankings, Li has been ranked as high as 32 and believes the key to

his turnaround in form on the links is the fact that he was able to return home and visit friends after two years away.

He said: "I hadn't been back home in two years, and I finally got back. That's the biggest key for me to turn things around. I saw so many old friends and they gave me a lot of positive thoughts as well."

Ryder Cup hero Tommy Fleetwood is another shot further back but says his game was better than the scorecard reflected.

Asked to assess his one-under-par round of 71, Fleetwood said: "I was inspired. So many strong shots but I got the worst out of it. It's windy, so you make mistakes, but I played really well and should have shot better."

Scottish starlet Ewen Ferguson is tied seventh on six-under and thanked his playing partner Brad Simpson, vocalist for The Vamps, for keeping him in tune.

He said: "It was tough to focus and stay concentrated. We have a good vibe and he's always laughing."



SCORES TUMBLE AS HURRICANE LOWRY HITS KINGSBARNES

Shane Lowry is famous for his mastery in windy conditions, so it was no surprise to see the 2019 Open Champion moving up the leaderboard with a superbly-constructed 67 that left him four shots behind Tyrrell Hatton.

Lowry knows all about his reputation, but with several dangerous names in the pack around him, he wasn't about to share his secrets.

"I don't want to give too much away!" he said. "I think I'm just naturally quite good at seeing a shot, seeing a 150-yard 6-iron and seeing what I can and can't do."

"Even on the last hole I probably could have hit the green with a 3-wood but I knew the right thing was to knock a 3-iron up close. I

just know where I'm at out there. When I get in the wind, I generally feel comfortable out there."

Lowry left Kingsbarns six-under-par for the Championship after a five-under-par 67.

Denmark's Jeff Winther is a shot better off after he followed up a 66 at Carnoustie with a 71 at Kingsbarns. Winther is one of the more surprising names on the leaderboard - and nobody has been more surprised than him.

"No chance did I see this coming!" he said. "I haven't been playing very well. Yesterday the putter started working again."

"Today was a bit tougher. The greens were a little bit more bumpy here than they were at Carnoustie. This is a little more tricky."





THE NAME'S CONNERY... STEPHANE CONNERY

Stephane Connery carried on a rich family tradition by taking on the Old Course – “truly my father’s favourite place in the world” – and looks forward to seeing the latest adventures of the character who will be forever associated with Sir Sean

From the Old Course with Love – Stephane Connery, stepson of the great Sir Sean, tackled St Andrews in a fashion James Bond would be proud of.

“I tried my best to do the family proud but it was tough conditions out there, very windy,” he said.

“The course really showed its teeth but it’s such a privilege to be here.”

Sir Sean, a keen golfer himself,

can be considered a pioneer in terms of promoting tournaments like the Dunhill. At the height of the Bond phenomenon, he was invited to join one of Bing Crosby’s show business amateur teams against a group of professional golfers in America, which gave him the idea of hosting a Pro-Am tournament in Scotland.

He attracted the likes of comedian Jimmy Tarbuck, footballer Kenny Dalglish and boxer Henry Cooper

to play alongside Connery at Royal Troon.

Sir Sean was a former member of the R&A himself and Stephane told of how fond his father was of St Andrews. The Connery family plan to scatter some of Sean’s ashes at the Home of Golf.

“This was truly my father’s favourite place in the world. He loved coming here,” said Stephane.

“The hope is that we can scatter some of his ashes in the Bahamas,

where he lived for a long time, but also some here at St Andrews. That is the ambition, we’ve asked for permission so hopefully it can happen someday.”

With the latest Bond film, No Time to Die, in cinemas this week, Stephane said it’s on his watch-list.

When asked if he’d seen the film yet, he said: “I wish I had – I’m still to do so. I do hope to see it at some point. It looks excellent and Daniel Craig is a brilliant actor.”

ROOKIE RORY LEARNS FROM PRO MINDSET

Rory Fransen said he was delighted to get the call up to compete as an amateur in this year’s Alfred Dunhill Links Championship. The 22-year-old, who’s currently the second-highest ranked Scot on the World Amateur Golf Rankings and also second on the Scottish Golf Men’s Order of Merit, finished his second round in style with a birdie on the 18th at the Old Course.

“I was absolutely over the moon when I was invited to play in this year’s Dunhill,” said Rory. “It’s such

a great event and a real thrill for me to compete on these three incredible courses alongside established professionals.”

Rory is paired with Ricardo Santos from Portugal. The pair finished the day with a score of -10 in the Team Championship. “The one thing that really stands out is the temperament of these pros on the course,” says the young Scot.

Born in Inverness but now based in Auchterarder in Perthshire, Rory graduated from the University of Missouri in 2020.



Being a defending champion is a thrill for a golfer and Victor Perez, the Frenchman who lives in Dundee, is regarded almost as a local hero in St Andrews. Here he is on the dramatic 15th hole at Kingsbarns in the second round, applauding the tee shot of amateur player Seth Waugh, CEO of the PGA of America.



IT'S ANOTHER DAY IN GOLFING PARADISE

The 12th hole at Kingsbarns is one of the most spectacular par 5s in the world. Clinging to the coast, it's the jewel in the crown of this most beautiful of Links courses.



PADRAIG'S FAMILY FUN

Europe's Ryder Cup captain chose to decompress after Whistling Straits at the event he has won twice, and in the company – for the first time in competition – of elder brother Columb

Brothers Columb and Padraig Harrington are both enjoying the chance to play together in this year's Alfred Dunhill Links Championship, giving Europe's Ryder Cup captain the opportunity to unwind after last week's efforts at Whistling Straits.

"It's great to be able to play with Padraig, and it's the first time we've played competitively as a team," said elder brother Columb, who works as an accountant, after the Harrington brothers took on Kingsbarns.

"I think he's also enjoying me as a partner – well, for most of the time anyway! We're not playing that well, really, but it doesn't matter because we don't really get many chances to get out on the golf course and play.

"We really appreciate this week,

because everything is so well-organised at this tournament. I've been up here before as a spectator, so now to be able to play in the event is just fantastic."

Meanwhile, at Carnoustie, Ronan Keating was left in awe of both the professionals in his group and the merciless golf course. The singer and presenter may have had nightmares about one hole in particular last night.

"It's been hell!" he joked as he came off the course. "Hogan's Alley broke me. It's the longest par 5 I've ever played in my life. I threw out a driver, 3-wood. I couldn't get close. It's really difficult. Actually, the course for amateurs is not as difficult as it could be. They have been nice to us.

"We're far more forward on the tees than the pros are, so there's

less trouble for us to get into but it's still so challenging.

"But it's such a privilege to be out here playing these golf courses with these guys."



COMMUNITY DELIGHTED BY RETURN OF DUNHILL

Irene Morrison, a long-serving Trustee of the St Andrews Links Trust, is perhaps the perfect person to explain the importance to the local community of the Championship following its absence last year.

Playing in her first Championship alongside Australian professional Travis Smyth, Irene says having the event back on track has been vital for the surrounding area. "Over these 20 years it's something we look forward to hosting – seeing international visitors now coming back into the town means so much after a challenging year," she said.

After her second round at the Old Course, Irene, a retired civil servant, said: "It's important for St Andrews and for our friends at Carnoustie as this tournament showcases our wonderful courses as well as our beautiful coastline."



FROM EVEREST TO THE OLD COURSE

After conquering Everest, mountaineer Dan Wallace set his sights on an expedition to the Home of Golf – and found the first tee at the Alfred Dunhill Links is far more challenging!

Wallace had two unsuccessful attempts due to an avalanche and the devastating 2015 Nepal earthquake before finally reaching the summit of Everest in 2018, taking a pin from Sunningdale with him.

An Alfred Dunhill Links Championship debutant, Wallace com-

pared those first tee nerves to that of scaling the world's highest mountain.

"This is far more frightening! I'm a reasonable golfer but standing over the ball I completely forgot what I was doing. When I was on Everest I knew exactly what I was doing and expected the worst," he said.

"To be able to play with these incredible golfers and the interesting personalities and with it being the 20th anniversary, it's an honour to be here."

PIERS WIN WOULD END IN TWEETS

Television's Piers Morgan revealed he'd treasure victory at the Alfred Dunhill Links Championship more than his beloved Arsenal winning the Premier League.

"I'd rather take the win here," said the Britain's Got Talent judge. And if that's not possible, he'll settle for beating one man in particular.

"If I finish above (Jamie) Redknapp, my eight million Twitter followers will know about it. As Padraig Harrington said to me,

"The trouble with you, Morgan, is that all you need to do is to sink one putt and everyone knows about it!"

Morgan is playing at the Alfred Dunhill Links for the third time, but has noticed a different atmosphere around the 20th Anniversary edition.

He said: "It's an amazing achievement. It feels incredibly special this year. The Dunhill combines the great history of Scotland with the fun and camaraderie of different people coming together for the experience of a lifetime."



LINKS TEST HAS HOEY ON EDGE

Michael Hoey once considered quitting golf altogether before bouncing back and going on to become an Alfred Dunhill Links Championship winner.

The 2011 victor was one off the lead at the start of the second round this year, but found the Swilken Burn on the first hole and had to dig deep once again, on his way to a round of 75.

"There's a long way to go, it's a marathon, but I enjoy it and I love the links," he said.

"There's no extra confidence (from winning here before) because it's golf and you just never know, it's one shot at a time."

Asked which of the courses is his favourite, Hoey said: "Here you have the history, Carnoustie is a truly challenging course and Kingsbarns has the more scenic views."

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