

A LOVE AFFAIR:

Written by TMAC GOLF
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The 150th Open Championship in St. Andrews may not be on the minds of many just yet, but the world's #1 player is keeping tabs on what he can expect when he arrives. "I know it's playing fast already, I talked to some of the guys over there," he said. "They're actually thinking about slowing it down a little bit because it actually is getting too fast as of now. But you never know, though, Scotland could get some rain," he added with a smile.

Woods is passionate about links golf and St. Andrews in particular, which is a topic he doesn't shy away from. "Well, as far as winning at St. Andrews, it's the greatest golf course in the world for me because I've always enjoyed it. I played there as an amateur. That was my first introduction to links golf was Carnoustie, Scottish Open the week before, and St. Andrews," he began. "It doesn't get any better than that as your introduction to links golf. I fell in love with it the first time I ever played it because I played it on a very interesting day. I played it when the tide changed right when I was at the turn, so I played all 18 holes into the wind. Absolutely fell in love with the golf course," he said. "As far as getting to St. Andrews, I'm really looking forward to that."

Woods said the variations the course can present are the reason he enjoys it as much as he does. "I've played there in the Dunhill Cup when it's been freezing, couldn't change the cups because the ground was frozen, hitting a sand wedge in the first hole, landed it on the front edge and it went over the green because the ground was frozen, wouldn't stop," he recalled.

His first time on the Old Course was a little deceiving, he said. "I thought it would be a little bit more narrow than it is. Getting on that first hole and seeing how wide it is, how wide every fairway is, but then again, once you start playing you realize it's not that wide. To get the angles you need to have into these flags, it narrows up very quickly. And then you add wind and where you need to put the golf ball to give yourself chance of getting the ball close, it gets really narrow. You can hit every fairway there and still never have a shot at a flag. And I think that's a pretty neat feeling. We've all played under different conditions there, and it's still a great golf course. It's one of the reasons why I love it so much."

It won't be long before Woods returns to the cradle of golf, a place and time will tell whether the love he feels for the hallowed ground is reciprocated.