

BMW International Open 2014



Press Information
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BMW International Open: "I am very grateful to BMW for these opportunities".

Interview with BMW Golfsport Ambassador Maximilian Kieffer.

Cologne. Maximilian Kieffer was born and bred in the Rhineland region of Germany and is currently in his second season on the European Tour. Last year, the 23-year-old enjoyed an impressive debut. The 2014 BMW International Open at Gut Lärchenhof is a home event for him. In an interview, the BMW Golfsport Ambassador discusses his anticipation ahead of the tournament, his goals for the season, his round with Rory McIlroy, and the secret to his success.

Max, you line up at the BMW International Open as a pro for the second time this year. What do you expect from your first "home event" in the Rhineland?

Maximilian Kieffer: "I obviously hope for great support from my fans here in the region. I was born in Bergisch-Gladbach and now live in Düsseldorf, so I am a born-and-bred Rhineland. I am really pleased to be able to take my place as a pro at the BMW International Open in my home region for the first time."

Does the fact that you are playing at home put you under any additional pressure?

Kieffer: "I put pressure on myself to perform well at every tournament, but that pressure is obviously even greater at the only tournament on German soil, simply because it is so important to me. With the fans behind me, I am sure I can find a few extra per cent out on the course."

How well do you know the course at Gut Lärchenhof – and does this Jack Nicklaus design suit your game?

Kieffer: "I have practiced there relatively frequently, but the tournament set-up is obviously different. I have often shot low rounds there when it has just been for fun. I hope that the course is relatively hard and dry during the tournament week, as my knowledge of the course will be even more of an advantage then."

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What are the main challenges out on the course, and will you prepare specially for them – such as with different tactics?

Kieffer: “When the rough is long, the course asks questions of every aspect of the game. With that in mind, it will definitely be a complete player at the top of the leaderboard come the end of the week.”

What are your goals for this year’s BMW International Open?

Kieffer: “Ideally I would find myself in a position to challenge for the win come Sunday.”

Last year, as a rookie, you wasted no time in achieving your goal for the season – to secure your Tour card – and narrowly missed out on your first European Tour title at the Open de España in Valencia in April. What are your goals for this season?

Kieffer: “Top 60 in the Race to Dubai and to be in contention at the odd tournament.”

You could give yourself the best possible birthday present – you will be 24 on 25th June...

Kieffer: “My first win at the only professional tournament in Germany – and in my backyard – that would obviously be awesome! But I am not focussing on that, but on playing my best golf and putting on a show for the spectators.”

As well as the BMW International Open, you have also played at the BMW PGA Championship and the BMW Masters – something of a BMW European Tour triple. You have played alongside people like Rory McIlroy and Pádraig Harrington – some of the biggest names in the sport. Were you able to learn anything from them?

Kieffer: “Absolutely! I am very grateful to BMW for these opportunities. It is fantastic for a young player like me to be able to test themselves against the best players in the world at such big tournaments. These are amazing experiences, and I can obviously learn from players like Rory and Paddy. I noticed that the guys have more variety to their games and are more consistent on and around the greens. However, you also have to make sure that you concentrate on your own game.”

Many European Tour players also play on the PGA TOUR. Is that also one of your main goals?

Kieffer: “I would first like to establish myself as one of the best players in Europe, then we’ll see what happens. But it would obviously be a dream to tee off at the FedExCup Playoffs, including the BMW Championship. That is why I practice hard to get the very best out of myself.”

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Another big dream must be to play in the Ryder Cup, which is taking place again this year. The top players from Europe and the USA will meet in Gleneagles, Scotland, in September. When do you think we might see you playing for the European team?

Kieffer: "That is hard to say, so my answer is very pragmatic: I will represent Europe in the Ryder Cup when I qualify for the team or the captain offers me a wildcard."

You are a "Düsseldorf boy". What is so special about the rivalry between the two Rhine cities of Cologne and Düsseldorf?

Kieffer: "What rivalry? Düsseldorf is obviously the better, nicer city (laughs). Our old town is legendary, the whole world knows the Toten Hosen, and – unlike in Cologne – we don't need a man dressed as a virgin for our carnival prince and princess. And as far as golf is concerned? I feel sorry for the people of Cologne, but all of Germany's top golfers come from Düsseldorf. Seriously though, I enjoy going to Cologne, as I have a lot of friends there."

You have already touched on the fact that Kieffer, Kaymer and Siem – the top three golfers in Germany at present – all come from the Rhineland region. Is there something in the air? Is it perhaps down to the carnival tradition? Or do you have another explanation for the performance of the Rhineland golfers?

Kieffer: "I would not like to offer any bold theories. I think this idea that the whole area is a strong golfing region can really be traced back to the individual strengths of Martin, Marcel and me. At the same time, however, you have to say that we have a lot of good trainers in North Rhine-Westphalia, and the strength of depth among the juniors provides additional motivation and drive."

You drive a BMW M3 at the moment. Is it fun to drive?

Kieffer: "More than that. The M3 is simply a superb car. It sits superbly on the road, can fit all my golf stuff in it, and has always been my dream car ever since I was a boy. It probably doesn't get any better than this. I am pleased every time I come home from a tournament."

Let's talk football: there appears to have been some irritation among the football fans in the clubhouse that you have switched allegiances ...

Kieffer: "I have always been a Leverkusen fan, ever since I was a child. It is not always easy, but I remain loyal to my club! As a sports fan, however, I really enjoy watching Dortmund! They just have a cool stadium, great fans, and play superb football! Also, I played golf with Nobby (Norbert Dickel, stadium announcer) and Owo (Patrick Owomoyela) a few times last year. They then took me to the stadium in return."

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This summer, the World Cup is taking place in Brazil. Who do you think will be world champions?

Kieffer: "I am hoping for a Germany v Brazil final – and that Germany wins! While we're on the subject, can I perhaps make a request ...?"

Of course ...

Kieffer: "I would like a tee time for Thursday's opening round of the BMW International Open that allows me to watch the German team take on Jürgen Klinsmann's USA. Kick-off is at 18:00 our time. But whatever happens, I am already really looking forward to the BMW International Open here in my backyard."

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