

Wesley Bryan

Press Conference



SHARON SHIN: I'd like to get started. Please welcome our defending champion, Wesley Bryan. Welcome, first of all. You became the first South Carolina native to win this tournament last year. How special was it to have your first PGA Tour win here at Harbour Town?

WESLEY BRYAN: This is the one that I was sitting here last year saying if this is a nonmajor and I had the opportunity to win a TOUR event it would be here. It's a place close to home, the only PGA Tour event in South Carolina. And to be able to win this for my first was obviously really special. But I know another job is to be defending it this year.

Q. What's been the funnest, most exciting -- since you've been the champion what's been the coolest thing that's happened?

WESLEY BRYAN: The coolest thing that's happened since being the champion? Probably just a few weeks ago in March they had Wesley Bryan Day in South Carolina, and that was really cool. And kind of got surprised with -- it's actually a pretty big honor in South Carolina to get the Order of the Palmetto. It's a civilian recognition. And to get that from the state of South Carolina, Governor McMaster, was really special.

Q. Does that fix any speeding tickets?

WESLEY BRYAN: I think it gets you off the hook from one speeding ticket and I haven't cashed that one in yet. But I'm sure it's right around the corner.

Q. Could you talk about how special last week was? What it was like having to wait a whole year to do that?

WESLEY BRYAN: Waiting a whole year was difficult. But I felt like it was one of the coolest moments in my golf career, even though I didn't perform the way I wanted to. Getting the first tee time off and to be able to go over there and watch Mr. Nicklaus and Mr. Player hit the opening tee shot, it just give me chills. And that's a moment I'll remember the rest of my life. And it was kind of surreal to see some legends of the game, and really they transcend more than the sport of golf. They're sports icons. And so to be able to soak in that moment my first Masters experience was really, really special.

Q. Was much of the crowd hanging around to watch you guys tee off right after that?

WESLEY BRYAN: Yeah, the crowds were massive. And the juices were flowing a little bit. And to be able to hit that first fairway was really, really cool. And then to miss the cut was not really cool. So I'm going to be hopefully back there again next year for a little redemption.

Q. What was your preparation like for Masters?

WESLEY BRYAN: I took five weeks off before it. I knew that it was going to be an important stretch of golf coming up when, one, the Masters, but also wanted to be fresh and ready to go for this week, as well. So it was kind of my mid-season break. It was time that I got to figure out a little bit of stuff off the tee. And got the tee ball under control. And now I feel like I'm ready to go.

I'm going to play a lot of golf from now to the end of the year, hopefully make a run at the FedExCup. It's high on my priority list. I worked really hard over the five weeks to get my game back in form. Excited for the rest of the year.

Q. Is a five-week break typical in your schedule planning or is this kind of the first time you've taken one that long?

WESLEY BRYAN: Going back to the Web.com Tour days they had some not so planned long breaks in the beginning of the year, just filling out a schedule and with the international play that we did the first half of the year, there were some long layoffs. And my first Web win came off of five weeks off going into Louisiana. So I knew that -- and it's kind of been a trend in the past. I don't need competitive golf to get sharp or stay sharp. So I'm not one of those guys, like a Patrick Reed that can play seven or eight weeks in a row and get better every single week. I like taking time off. And got to spend a lot of time with my family and stay at home and feel like a normal human being for an extended period of time. So it was refreshing.

But like I said, I'm excited to get back out and tee it up again. I think I've got a pretty good stretch of golf in me here coming up.

Q. When you come back here does this kind of put you back in that winning frame of mind or does it energize you or is there a danger of too much thinking about last year?

WESLEY BRYAN: It really goes back to farther than just last year. I played some junior events on this golf course in the Junior Heritage, and played a lot of recreationally growing up. It's more of a comfort level I have. South Carolina, specifically on this island, I played a lot of junior golf and a lot of recreational golf here. Being familiar with the area, familiar with the golf course, puts me in a good frame of mind. And even though it's only my second year on Tour, I feel like I still have probably logged a few more miles around this place than your average Tour player.

It's one of the golf courses I said at the beginning of last year that I was excited for because of familiarity with the golf course. And, yeah, obviously I'm excited to be back this year as defending champion. And the game is in a good spot. Hopefully come Sunday we'll have a chance to put on another Plaid Jacket.

Q. What part of your game do you feel most confident in right now?

WESLEY BRYAN: The putter always feels pretty good in my hands. So that's the part that I struggled with last week a little bit, which was kind of uncharacteristic. And it's part of my game that I've relied on since I was a kid.

Q. Since your win last year you haven't had maybe quite the results, the finishes that you'd like. When you have a breakthrough win like that, is there some danger of losing your edge, getting too comfortable with some extra money in the bag and all the perks that come with a victory like that?

WESLEY BRYAN: Not really. I've never played this game for money. I play this game because it's something that we got for enjoy as a family growing up, my dad being a PGA club professional and teaching me the game. It goes way beyond just the dollar signs. You play this game for trophies. Growing up, playing in junior events and amateur events, I loved playing for the trophy and still have that same mentality. Yes, am I more financially free now than I was three years ago? Absolutely. But that hasn't changed my mindset at all when it comes to the game of golf.

Q. What's your strategy when it comes to this golf course, is it different maybe than some other courses you might play on Tour?

WESLEY BRYAN: It is a golf course that you have to have precision iron play and traditionally that's also been kind of the strength of my game, with not hitting the ball very far. Which you don't need around this golf course. But distance control is huge. You have to -- if you just get it on the green you have a pretty good look at birdie for the most part.

And it's also a golf course that's really narrow but you

can miss it in spots that allow you to continue to stay aggressive and score, even if you are in the trees or the rough on some of these holes, you just have to have the correct angle. It is a precision golf course, but there is some leeway for some poor shots and you just have to know which side of the hole is the correct one to miss on and especially around the greens. You can have wedges in your hands and struggle to make pars on a lot of these holes, basically on pin positions. And that's where my comfort level actually on this golf course came. I knew where to miss it. I knew what to do to stay around. Something that William, my caddie, and I talked about. It's one of those golf courses if you shoot 1-under par every nine holes out here you're going to have a chance come Sunday. You don't have to go really low. And that's another attribute of this golf course that I feel like fits my game.

Q. You're not the only South Carolina guy here. You've got Dustin Johnson coming into this field. How excited are you to play with him?

WESLEY BRYAN: Playing with Dustin is going to be a lot of fun. I grew up with him in Columbia, South Carolina, and very familiar with his game. I hear he hits it pretty far. But, yeah, grew up with Austin and Dustin. So that part will be comfortable. And we're going to have a lot of fun. I'm sure there's going to be a little bit of trash talking going on. But at the end of the day we're both Gamecocks, and we'll have South Carolina football to talk about the next couple of days.

Q. Back when you were young teenagers, did you see the kind of talent Dustin had, did you imagine this guy is a can't miss PGA Tour guy, back when you were in high school? And how much fun is it to know, that, hey, we were high school teammates, and we're both where we thought, where we dreamed we'd want to be?

WESLEY BRYAN: Yeah, I mean, there's no doubt that the talent has always been there. He's been more physically gifted than everyone he's played with at every single level starting with junior golf going to college golf and amateur golf, and professional golf he got out here right away. I think he's won every single year he's been on Tour. And that should be no surprise to anybody. He's physically dominant, especially playing the game of golf. So he's one of the those guys that he was a can't miss kid. And I definitely would have put my eggs in that basket.

Q. Along those same lines, perhaps, it's no secret that Dustin's game and this golf course maybe aren't the greatest match in the world. But could Dustin win on this course? Is it just a matter of harnessing the driver, maybe taking it out of the bag?

WESLEY BRYAN: Last time I checked he's the No. 1

golfer in the world. He is the best golfer on the planet. So as long as we're playing the game of golf I think that he's got a good chance of winning anywhere he tees it up. There's a lot of holes he doesn't have to hit his driver. He can hit his 2-iron and be out there with a lot of guys that are hitting drivers. It's an advantage to have that length, especially on this golf course. There's a few holes where you can use it to your advantage, a couple par-5s. I mean just going back through it, like No. 2 is a hole that sets up great for him, if he can just rip a cut and have an 8- or 9-iron in there, where a lot of the guys will have mid-irons and long irons. It's definitely not a golf course that I would say doesn't fit his game because, like I said, if the game of golf is being played, he's the best on the planet. So, yeah, I honestly think he has a good chance.

Q. I was going to dare him later on today to take the driver out of the bag completely, and try to win it without one. Would you do that on the first tee tomorrow if we don't get him to admit to it today, see if you can beat me without it?

WESLEY BRYAN: That would kind of be like telling me to take the putter out of the bag. That's the best weapon he's got. He definitely has to use it. He drives it plenty straight enough, he hits it far, but he hits it plenty straight. So he can still be able to use it a fair number of times out here.

SHARON SHIN: Thank you for your time and good luck this week.