

Webb Simpson

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: I'd like to welcome in the RBC Ambassador Webb Simpson into the virtual press conference. Thank you for joining us. You're making your 11th start here at the event. Can we get some comments about your return to Harbour Town Golf Links?

WEBB SIMPSON: Yeah, this is one of my favorite golf courses of the year. I feel like it's a little bit thrown back in time with the way the golf course is. It's really a shot maker's golf course. I love that about it. It's always in great shape.

Obviously, being an RBC ambassador, it's extra special to be here. I know it was -- we didn't know if it was going to happen back in April, but I'm so glad they rescheduled. It's nice to be here in June. In April, we got a chance for some cold mornings, but after today, I think it warms up for the week.

Great week all around -- golf, family. My family's here, so that's always fun. This is one of those weeks that I love coming to.

THE MODERATOR: And you competed last week at the Charles Schwab Challenge. What was that process like and the return to golf?

WEBB SIMPSON: Yeah, I thought the TOUR did a really, really good job and all the local volunteers, staff at Colonial for making it as pretty seamless as possible for us. There was a lot that went into it, I'm well aware. A lot of moving parts, a lot of new stuff that we had to kind of go through.

I didn't think it could have gone any better. Obviously, I would have liked to have played better. The golf course was great. I think for me I thought I would be ready, and I think that first round, it was just a slow start to me, kind of getting used to everything with no fans. I feel like I draw a lot of momentum from the crowd. I know everybody deals with that differently.

So it's something to get used to, but glad to kind of have the first week behind me and kind of getting back on track this week, I hope.

THE MODERATOR: We'll open it up for questions.

Q. Webb, I was going to hit you up with a couple.

What did you experience last week that will help you go forward this week?

WEBB SIMPSON: Steve, I think -- you know, I'm just a creature of habit, as probably a lot of these guys are. I have my schedule normally, and I kind of have it down to the minute, when I'm going to meet Paul and how we're going to practice and play and all that. All that was disrupted, because it had to be. We're not able to go in the clubhouse until our test results come back, and there's so many new things that I don't think I was prepared for mentally maybe.

Having experienced it now, I kind of know like I've got to be a little more patient, where I can go, where I can't go. No workout trailer, so I'm doing that at home. Yeah, so all those new things, I think, I know what to expect now this week. I'm assuming it will go very similarly in terms of the layout and the schedule and all that. Yeah, I think it will definitely help.

Q. And the other one, would you consider putting on 40 pounds to gain 20 miles per hour ball speed? And just your thoughts on what this thing that Bryson is doing could lead the TOUR to.

WEBB SIMPSON: Yeah, I would definitely do that. I would probably put on 75 pounds to add 20 miles an hour ball speed. It's really impressive. I remember he spoke to the press after Vegas last year, after Shriners, and said he was going to experience change and he was going to get stronger and increase his ball speed. We show up at Hero World Challenge, and he was already bigger and hitting it further.

Sure enough, COVID comes, and he's got a lot more time to devote to getting bigger. I put my hands on his shoulders last week, just because he looks like a different person. But it's really impressive to be able to change your body that fast and put on that -- you know, that much weight and still not have it affect your game in a negative way. It was a positive. I mean, he was tearing apart Colonial in terms of distance and still hitting it really straight. So a lot of props to Bryson for being able to do that and letting his body handle it.

Q. Would you consider doing it?

WEBB SIMPSON: I've definitely set out the last couple of years of trying to get stronger and trying to add ball speed, and I have. I've added three or four miles an hour of ball speed, certainly not at the rate Bryson's

going. But our games are different. I have to rely on shot making, distance control, more than Bryson. He was already long before he did all this. I've never really been long.

So I've got to go about it, I think, in a more methodical way than he's doing. Yeah, it definitely makes me think it's possible. We'll see. He thinks he can get stronger. So time will tell.

Q. Just curious, given how -- I mean, everyone sees last week as a great success. Do you think there is any chance of either the TOUR or players or anyone involved falling in the trap of complacency?

WEBB SIMPSON: I definitely think so. I think we're -- they have strict protocols while we're on site, but off site it's kind of up to us to be smart. I think we're seeing, with numbers spiking in various states, that people took this very seriously the first couple months, and I think the spike is probably because people are relaxing.

So I think you make a great point that -- you know for me -- and I think I'm speaking for all the players -- if I miss a week, it's detrimental to my FedExCup number, it's detrimental to my contracts. There's a lot riding on just us being eligible to play. I get nervous when I get the test result on my phone. When I have a notification and I'm opening the document up, I'm nervous because I know, if I get positive, I can't play for a couple weeks, and that's a big deal at this point in the season.

I'm trying to be as careful as I can be, and with no positives last week, which is amazing, I don't know how long that will keep up. Hopefully, it will keep up. Guys need to make sure they're not doing anything dumb.

Q. What did you do last week outside of playing golf and stuff like that?

WEBB SIMPSON: So like a normal week, I'm going out to dinner. I may go to a gym, a local gym. I didn't do that. I tried to stay out of the public as much as possible. Another player came to my house one night. I stayed in a rental house, and another player came to my house one night for dinner, but we ate outside. We never had a conversation inside really.

It's lonely, for sure, if you're by yourself, but it's kind of what you have to do to make sure you can stay on the golf course. My family's at home, and Dowd and the kids, they're having to kind of quarantine still really strictly because I come home in between weeks, or they're with me this week, so they're having to do it as well.

Q. Good morning, Webb. You talked about not having fans last week. Gary Woodland actually mentioned that his drives are going shorter, that it kind of had a physical impact on him, that the adrenaline wasn't there. Did you experience the same thing?

WEBB SIMPSON: A little bit, yeah. When you make a ten-footer for birdie or hit a great shot into par 3 -- I mean, I hit it to a foot on 13, the par 3, and it was silent. So those things do help us. I think making putts and hearing the crowd get excited, that does help.

But at the end of the day, we've played more rounds without fans than with fans, going back to when all of us started playing golf. So the last three months, I've had no fans. So I've tried to kind of approach it that way, that nothing's different except it's a tournament. But it is -- you do think about it out there.

Q. As I just said, you played this 11 times. There's 154 players in the field this week. It's a very tight golf course. Do you imagine that's going to have an impact on pace of play?

WEBB SIMPSON: I think so. Any time our fields are bigger, it seems like it slows play down by 10 or 15 minutes per round per group. Yeah, I think there's going to be some waits at the turn. There's a couple -- 2 and 5 are short par 5s. So I think the front nine will probably play a lot slower than the back nine, but no complaints here. I think we're just happy to tee it up.

Q. A couple questions. First, it is a unique track. For guys playing it the first time, what is the biggest adjustment? Because it is different than most courses you face on TOUR.

WEBB SIMPSON: Yeah, you can't -- like last week, you saw the guys hitting driver on so many of the holes and just hitting it over corners or over bunkers. Here you can't do that. I mean, I mentioned old school earlier. The fairways really do pinch in as we get closer to the green, so guys have to lay back to the wider part of the fairway.

I think guys will be shocked here that you can drive it in the fairway and be blocked out to the green or blocked out to that side of the green where the pin is on. So there's plenty of holes here where we look at the pin sheet before we tee off because we're aiming at the right side of the fairway or left side of the fairway, which I don't know if we have any of those golf courses on the TOUR.

So I think guys will be shocked at how tight it is, and there's out of bounds pretty much every hole, and the greens are really small. I think greens in reg are probably at a yearly low here this week every year just because of the size of the greens.

Q. And then not necessarily this course, but just in general, a lot of guys use ShotLink's data to influence course management, or Mark Broadie's findings have influenced course management. How has either Broadie or ShotLink influenced the way you approach course management over the years, or has it made any changes?

WEBB SIMPSON: Yeah, there's Fawcett golf, I believe it's called. The info we have is great because you can use it however much you want to use it. We'll go through it -- and Paul will go through it before he brings stuff to me, but this week he might go through, say, two or three holes and come to me and say, hey, more birdies were made at this yardage at the hole, 150 yards out versus 160 yards out, even though it pinches in, the fairway.

So we'll look at it. This is my 11th year here, so we've kind of played this golf course very similarly year in and year out for the last four or five years. So not a lot will change. But if I do see something -- you know, like the 11th hole, for example, you hit a 5 wood off the tee, you're hitting into the widest part of the fairway, but you hit driver to a really narrow part, but you've got two or three clubs less into the green. The stats might show there's more birdies made up there.

So we'll look at that and maybe make a change, but for the most part, yeah, I'll stick to kind of what I've done the last few years.

Q. So we got through Colonial without fans, and now as I ask you this as the last player to win a major championship in the great city of San Francisco, can you imagine what that's going to be like without fans at Harding Park?

WEBB SIMPSON: Yeah, I saw that in the news last night, and I told my wife that's going to be so strange being at a Major. It's one thing to play in a regular TOUR event, but a Major with no fans when we're used to tens of thousands every day, yeah, it's going to be strange, especially the lead group.

I told somebody I was playing behind the number 1, 2, and 3 in the world last week, and Rory or Brooks or John would make a putt, and there would be nothing. All of that is something to get used to. Yeah, a Major Championship, especially when Tiger comes out? I don't think Tiger has ever had a hundred people watch him. He's always had thousands. So that's going to be strange.

I respect the decision -- they want us to play very badly, and if it means no fans, then they'll do it. I'm glad they're doing that over canceling the event or moving it.

Q. I don't know if anyone has consulted your opinion on this, but what about the Ryder Cup? A, would you be willing to play without fans or limited fans? And has anyone asked you about it lately?

WEBB SIMPSON: Yeah, I've talked to some of the other potential players and vice captains about it. I talked to Stricker last week, and they're still trying to figure it out, as you guys know. I wouldn't want to play a Ryder Cup with no fans. I feel like fans make the Ryder Cup.

Now, I would go play, obviously. I would be happy to be on the team, but I think they really do. Unlike any other event, fans make the Ryder Cup. I could even see us playing the Masters with no fans, as weird as that would be, but the Ryder Cup is really the 13th player on the team for the home team. And I've heard Europeans say they wouldn't want to play either without fans even though the fans would be on their side. So I think they feel the rub of let's move it to the next year if we have to.

If they had limited fans, I think you could do it, but it still would be different.

Q. You'd only have one side of the course for those limited fans too at Whistling Straits, though. Have you thought about that? There's fairway, and there's Lake Michigan.

WEBB SIMPSON: I know, and do they want to -- what would it be like with just a few thousand a day? It wouldn't be near as loud. And I know there's repercussions if we move it. Quail Hollow is hosting the Presidents Cup next year. That would push back a year. I also know there's a timetable we're talking about. They have to make a decision here probably this week or next week.

So I know they've got a tough decision to make, but, yeah, one-sided golf course with fans, just a few fans, it doesn't seem like the Ryder Cup that we want.

Q. Do you think it would be a problem to just kick Quail back to '22? Have you heard anything?

WEBB SIMPSON: I haven't heard anything, but I don't think so. I think Quail has gotten used to being flexible with having a regular TOUR event, the PGA Championship. I think they could handle it.

THE MODERATOR: That concludes our press conference. Webb, thank you so much for your time.

WEBB SIMPSON: Thank you.