

Charles Schwab Challenge

Tuesday, June 9, 2020

Ryan Palmer

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: Ryan Palmer, thanks for joining us here at the Charles Schwab Challenge with this virtual interview. We appreciate you making the time. I noticed the tee times are out now and you're off in the first group with Brian Harmon and Bill Haas, and you have the privilege of hitting the first tee shot, the honor and a privilege of hitting the first tee shot in what is your hometown event but also a very historic event with the return to golf. Can you talk about that a little bit and how meaningful that will be for you on Thursday?

RYAN PALMER: Yeah, no, I got a call Sunday night from Andy Pazder at the TOUR, and he asked me if I would like to hit the first shot on Thursday morning, and it kind of threw me off for a minute, and I said, I'm in the champions category, and he said we'll have to change your category a little bit and change your tee time but you'd be the first off. As a member of Colonial, as a member of the Player Advisory Council, as a veteran player, we thought you'd be perfect to hit the first shot coming back to our return to golf, and I thought what a cool moment and an honor for sure. As a member of Colonial Country Club, a local, yeah, it was a very, very nice gesture, and I was very honored to be asked to do it. I think it's going to be great, and I'm so excited to be the first guy to hit that first shot in our return to golf.

THE MODERATOR: You've played this event 16 times before and had four top-10 finishes. Just for everybody on this call right now, can you kind of explain what it's been like this year living there and leading up to this moment, how different it's been? Have you been on-site much before the event and just experiencing the comparison with what our regular events have been like in the past to this return to golf after COVID?

RYAN PALMER: Yeah, obviously it's been different, as anywhere else has been, but fortunately here in Texas, we've been fortunate enough to be pretty good with everything as far as the COVID goes. I've been playing golf every day since we stopped playing at THE PLAYERS. Colonial has been open to play. The clubhouse has been closed, obviously, but we've been able to walk and play. But Carrolton Golf Club where I practice a lot, too, has been open, so as far as getting to play a lot, I've had access to two courses to play. It's been good for my game, obviously.

But yeah, I've been out here the last few weeks practicing and playing a lot with the guys, the members. We have a big game here at Colonial, and it's been different because normally we're in the process of watching them build the stands and all the stuff that goes into putting this tournament together, building a champions' club, everything about it, and all they've done is the TV towers, and it was funny they started putting ropes up, and we were kind of like why are ropes going up. But we got an understanding of that. But yeah, it's been a different scene for sure leading up to this week, but I know I speak for a lot of players, this is a week everybody has been circled on their calendar and itching to get back out here. It's time to get back to golf. I'm excited for the PGA TOUR, our return to golf, our sponsors, Charles Schwab, the PGA TOUR, our fans. It's going to be an awesome week, and I know The Golf Channel and CBS are going to put on a great show for us.

THE MODERATOR: I want to talk a little bit with you about Pros For a Purpose that you started when the cancellation of THE PLAYERS happened. You immediately jumped on that. That was a very selfless thing that you did to help raise money for tournaments that were immediately canceled. Can you just talk about that just a little bit and I'm sure it was a proud moment to see other players and entities in the golf industry get involved in that. Can you just elaborate a little bit on that?

RYAN PALMER: Yeah, no, it just came down to what can we do to kind of just get involved and help out with everything going on, and Mike Chisum, my manager, we sat down and talked about a lot of it, and we thought of a way to give back to charities where I was planning on playing. I saw a post by Steve Stricker when he was going to donate money to tournaments he was committed to playing, and I thought, what a great gesture; I'd love to do something like that. We started just forming a platform, prosforapurpose.org, just to raise money, and my wife and I donated \$20,000 to it, my foundation matched that, and I just wanted to give back to these tournaments who do so much for us each and every week. They roll the red carpet out for us, the tournament directors, the staff at the golf course, the ladies behind the counter and registers, the cities we go into, the restaurants, the hotels, these organizations that we raise money for each week were

losing money this year. I thought kind of a cool way to say thank-you to these tournaments, to these cities who host us each and every week, and we were so blessed. Meiomi Wines kicked in \$100,000, as well, and we started the Meiomi Putt-off Challenge, and we were able to give back to these money to these tournaments who host us each and every week.

Q. I'm just curious whenever this started say two weeks ago, what's been the strangest adjustment you've had to make as far as preparing to play this week, as far as the protocols and everything that you've had to get ready for?

RYAN PALMER: The main thing is I told myself for two weeks I was going to stay safe as much as possible, knowing I had my first test I needed to take that we had to send in, knowing I was going to take a test when I got here. That was the main thing is just making sure I was safe. I won't lie to you, I was kind of nervous waiting for the results of both of them, because I don't know if I have it or not. Symptoms are so -- you can't really tell. Those were some interesting moments waiting for those results.

That's the main thing, just paying attention to what I'm doing when I go leave the house as far as the grocery store, when I go practice. Just staying smart and making sure I'm keeping safe so I'm able to get here this week and still play.

That's probably been the number one thing for me, just making sure I'm doing the right things to avoid contracting it.

Q. Kind of along those lines, do you feel a sense of responsibility to make sure that everything goes according to plan from a TOUR perspective?

RYAN PALMER: Yeah, I mean, honestly I think we need this week to go off without a glitch. I mean, we need to make sure this week is great, not only for the world of sports but our TOUR. I think if we come off this week and the fans get a great show and no cases, I think it's going to be a huge success for the TOUR, for our fans, for the sporting world.

We need live golf. America needs it. We need live sports. I think this week is going to be a very special, huge week for the sporting world.

Q. I just wonder, I'm not sure if you're aware about the 8:46 a.m. tee time that's being vacated in honor of the racial injustice and whatnot for George Floyd. What's your reaction to that, if you were aware of that, and how cool do you think that is?

RYAN PALMER: Yeah, I got the email today on the golf course. A text message came through talking about it. I read the memo the TOUR sent to all the players, and I

think it's great. 8:46, everybody on the golf course, the driving range, everywhere will stop and have a moment of silence and say a quick prayer for all those affected through all this. It's been crazy obviously watching what you see on TV, but I think it's great to show our support just for America in general.

It's been a tough few weeks for a lot of people I know. I know I speak -- I watched the episode with Jay Monahan and Harold Varner, which was unbelievable what they talked about, so all I can do is support them and support America coming together, and like I said, everybody just love one another and stay safe.

Q. If I could follow up on golf on a lighter note, what do you expect the vibe to be like this week with no fans? Obviously this is new to all of us and just the prospect of just say you hole out from the fairway for eagle or something and it's going to be crickets out there or even on Sunday somebody sinking a big putt on 18 to win if that's the case, how odd is that going to be to get used to and live through?

RYAN PALMER: Yeah, it'll be different. You would want to hear the roars. A lot of players probably build on roars or making birdies and hearing the crowd, so it's something they've got to get used to. It'll be quiet for sure. I told my son Mason who's 13 that I was going to grab the camera if it's up by the green and pull a Happy Gilmore moment, ask the fans if they loved it and want some more, something like that. I don't know, you may see guys having a little more fun with it. I might just see how many guys wave and kind of catch themselves after doing something. It'll take some getting used to, but I know everybody is ready to play golf, they're ready to get in the grind, and I think you're going to see some great golf.

Q. Just kind of a follow-up to that, is this kind of normal for you just because you play out here? Most of the time you don't see the grandstands and whatnot, right?

RYAN PALMER: Yeah, it'll be different not seeing the fans, obviously. The friends and family that I've always had out here each and every year. But I'm also playing the golf course like I see it all year long. There's no stands. You see the camera towers obviously, but I'm playing a golf course with nobody out here when I'm out here playing for fun during the big game with all the members. There's a few holes that I visually can see that I'm used to seeing. I know some of the holes play differently than normal as far as I think a few of the holes play shorter than what the yardage says sometimes. I'll be able to play the golf course like I'm out here playing for fun with all the guys.

That'll be a nice little edge I've got, I think, but I'm going

to miss having all my friends and family out here for sure this week, but I'm excited to play, and hopefully come Sunday I'll have a chance.

Q. I know you played a practice round with Jordan Spieth, you played with him in New Orleans. Obviously he's been in a little bit of a rut, but do you feel like his game is close and playing here may be able to get him back on track and kind of jump start him, so to speak?

RYAN PALMER: Yeah, we've played quite a few rounds this past week, and he's working hard on it. I know he's grinding away, he and Cameron. I mean, it just takes one day, one round, one tournament to all of a sudden, boom, he wins. There's no doubt he's going to win again for sure. But yeah, he's -- this is a course that if he goes out and hits it well -- his short game is so good, his chipping around the greens, his putting. He knows these greens very well, so yeah, if he gets his ball-striking under control, which he's working on, I think he's going to have a chance for sure. We'll see him back up there for sure one day.

Q. To follow up on the practice round, was it you and Franklin versus Ryan and Kramer?

RYAN PALMER: Yeah, Franklin and I took on Jordan and Kramer. Nice little nine-hole match. It's always fun to -- we kind of seem to do that every year at this course. Yeah, a nice little fun match. Franklin and I, we had the little added advantage being members, so we'll take that. We won a little bit, so it was good.

Q. Is it one of those things where it's kind of -- it's nice to kind of get back to maybe something like that that is a little bit like normal, like that's something you would do in any year, not just a post-COVID-19 year?

RYAN PALMER: Yeah, it was nice to get on the range, chatting with some of the guys I haven't seen in three months. Just nice being in the ropes, inside the ropes with James and the guys we played with, their caddies. That sense of normalcy was nice to have today that we haven't had in three months.

I think guys are going to kind of get into normal routines once they get on the golf course. Obviously little things here and there you've got to do prior to getting to the golf course, so it's a new norm for now, but I think all in all, everybody I've talked to and everybody I've seen seems happy, excited, and they're just ready to get back to work.

Q. As a member here, I was wondering if you could address, do you sense a sense of pride among fellow members and an opportunity for the club to be on center stage, and do you view this as a historic moment in any way? It's an odd bit of

history but history nonetheless.

RYAN PALMER: I do. From a history standpoint, yeah, this is going to be a historical week, I think. We've never had to come back from something with the COVID-19 and everything. I think it's really special for Colonial Country Club, for Texas, Charles Schwab to be the first event back. To be a member of this club, amongst the membership here, I play in the big game all the time with James Edmondson, my caddie who's a member, and now I get to be the first one to hit the tee shot Thursday, what an honor for me for sure to be able to do that.

I love this club, love the guys I get to play with every day. We have so much fun, and I'm just blessed and honored that I'm able to be a member here. I've talked with a lot of people around the course and how it looks leading up to this week. I'm excited we're the first, and I think it's going to be a pretty special day come Thursday.

THE MODERATOR: You finished in the top 5 at the Sony Open in Hawai'i earlier this year. I think that might have been your best finish since your victory at Zurich last year with Jon Rahm. Did you have any sort of trepidation about what this period of time that we've laid off might do to your game from a not playing perspective? Did you have any feelings about is that going to affect you in a major way?

RYAN PALMER: Not really. You know, I got home from THE PLAYERS -- I still went out and practiced a little bit, played a little bit. Like I said, I took it as an off-season. Normally you play through the fall and then come November you're kind of done until January, so I kind of looked at it in that regard. Just kind of had an off-season. Didn't really work on clubs, didn't need to work on my equipment, just took the first month and just relaxed and hung out with Jen and the kids. Obviously we had a lot of home schooling we had to do, but I wasn't too worried about the layoff. I played one round at THE PLAYERS, but other than that, I just took it for what it was. It was time for a break, a little longer than we all wanted I know, but I enjoyed my time at home, but in this last month then I really kind of kicked into gear, and I'm excited about getting started. I know everybody else is, too.

Just unprecedented times. We had two off-seasons this year I guess you could say. You know, we'll kick back this week, and it's going to be a grind until we crown a FedExCup champion.

THE MODERATOR: You appreciate you taking the time to answer questions for us, and we look forward to watching you get up on that leaderboard and enjoy a good week.