

Charles Schwab Challenge

Wednesday, June 10, 2020

Dustin Johnson

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: We will go ahead and get started. First of all, welcome back. I know it's good to be at the 2020 Charles Schwab Challenge, but that said, you're making your first start back there at Colonial since 2014. Obviously some time has gone by. Have you had a chance to get out and see the course? And just your thoughts on being back at Colonial.

DUSTIN JOHNSON: Yeah, it's been a while since I've been here, but I got out and played 12 holes, 13 holes yesterday. Yeah, the course is in good shape. It's exactly how I remember it. But yeah, I mean, obviously I haven't been back here. It just hasn't fit in the schedule, but obviously with everything that's going on, being the first tournament back, it was a perfect time to come back and play here.

THE MODERATOR: We're asking everybody how you've spent the last few months. We've seen a lot of you on TV and so forth, but kind of bring us up on speed on how you've been keeping your mind and game fresh.

DUSTIN JOHNSON: Well, the first six weeks or so, I didn't do a whole lot of golfing. I spent a lot of time with family, Paulina, a lot of time on my boat, did a lot of fishing. But obviously the last few weeks been grinding pretty hard trying to get the game ready to come out here and play at Colonial.

Q. Dustin, if you could just give us an idea of a couple of moments you've experienced since you've been here that remind you that this isn't exactly a normal week, even though we're back to playing golf.

DUSTIN JOHNSON: I mean, the biggest thing is having no fans for me. But besides that, obviously we get our temperature checked when we pull in and asked a few questions about if we've been in contact with people with COVID-19. You know, just obviously the safety precautions that the TOUR has taken, those are obviously a lot different than what we're used to.

But the fans would probably be the biggest thing. But besides that, everything to me seems pretty normal as far as it's a TOUR event, you see you walking around, pretty normal -- actually you're always around.

Q. Sorry about that.

DUSTIN JOHNSON: No, it's okay. I don't mind. I like seeing those great shirts you come out with every day.

Q. Did you do the test before you traveled?

DUSTIN JOHNSON: I did.

Q. Was that awkward at all?

DUSTIN JOHNSON: No. I mean, you just spit in a tube and the doctor watches you and then you seal it up.

Q. Would you rather spit or have something stuck up your nose?

DUSTIN JOHNSON: I don't care, whatever works. It's fine with me. Neither one of them were bad. The spit one took a lot longer than the one going up your nose. Obviously the spit test wasn't as uncomfortable, but the other one was faster, so I think I'd go with the quicker one.

Q. I had a question for you expanding on the fan experience. What do you think it's going to be like -- I know these practice rounds are generally quiet anyway, but the prospect of maybe jarring an eagle chip on sinking the winning putt on 18 and hearing nothing but crickets, what do you think that's going to be like as you kind of look forward to the week?

DUSTIN JOHNSON: I've thought about it a little bit. I think it's going to remind me a lot like junior golf except without the TV cameras following behind you. Yeah, it's just going to have to be something we adjust to. It's going to be different. There's not going to be as much energy, especially out there on a Sunday if you're around the lead coming down the stretch. But you know, it's still a big tournament. You know, we're still playing for the exact same thing we were before, and there is a lot of people watching. I still think you're still going to be nervous, you're still going to get those juices flowing coming -- especially on Sunday coming down the stretch. But yeah, it'll definitely be weird. There won't be any noise out there.

Q. Even though it was just an exhibition, the charity thing that you did obviously at Seminole, was that a little bit of a taste of that to some degree since it was obviously pretty sleepy and quiet around there?

DUSTIN JOHNSON: Yeah, definitely, it was something to -- it helped to play in a match with how it's going to

be out here. It was definitely a good experience. But yeah, it's just something we're going to have to get used to, you know. Just happy to obviously start the season somewhat normal and then hopefully we can get the fans back out here as soon as possible.

Q. Can you just tell us what you missed most while you were gone and maybe something that you didn't think you'd miss but that you noticed you did?

DUSTIN JOHNSON: Just the competition for me. Just being out here, seeing all the guys, that's probably the biggest thing really. But it was really nice to actually be at home and spend a lot of time with the family.

Q. Regarding the no fans thing, can you maybe give us a couple of examples where the fans have actually had an effect on your golf, one example perhaps where they've been rooting for you and have pulled you through to the win? Another example where you've been up against say Tiger or Phil and you felt the crowd rooting against you?

DUSTIN JOHNSON: Yeah, I mean, for the most part I feel like the fans have always been really good to me. Even playing with Tiger or Phil, I still feel like I get enough fans out there where it doesn't feel too lopsided. But you expect if you're in a group with one of them that probably 90 percent of them are rooting for Tiger or Phil. You know, it's something that you're used to.

But yeah, I don't really have any instances where I feel like I was just totally getting rooted against. But I'm definitely going to -- it's definitely going to be different, like I said, coming down the stretch on a Sunday with the tournament on the line.

Q. Can you give us an actual specific example of when you've actually felt the crowd pull you through and when you felt them rooting for you and that's brought out your best golf?

DUSTIN JOHNSON: Yeah, I mean, I think for me, for most of my wins, just feeling the crowd there for you and rooting you on. It definitely helps coming down the stretch. It's something for me that makes you focus more, and it's sometimes -- especially if you make a bogey or something or do something on a hole coming down the back nine where you might get a little mad, and the crowd is there pulling you on, sometimes they can take your mind off of it.

Q. I was just wondering if you could talk about getting back to competitive golf. It's one thing to play a round with your buddies and things like that, even guys as talented as you guys are, but what's the difference now that you're out there where everything is going to matter, every stroke, every

shot, that you don't get any do-overs or gimmes or anything.

DUSTIN JOHNSON: Yeah, it's definitely going to be different. Obviously we haven't played competitively for, what, three months now, right around there. It's definitely going to be a little -- that first day is going to feel very important. Obviously you can't win the tournament on the first day, but you can put yourself in a good position, so just to get off to a nice solid start and play a good solid round is going to be very important. But just to kind of get that competitive -- the rust -- the competition rust is a lot different when you haven't played. Yeah, for me just getting out there on the first day and getting a good solid round in is going to be very important. But yeah, you cannot simulate tournament golf at home, no matter how hard you try. Yeah, it's going to be -- it's definitely going to be different.

Q. I was wondering if you could talk about the course a little bit more. What do you think the numbers are going to be like this week with such a long layoff, and how do you think the course will play?

DUSTIN JOHNSON: I think the golf course, a lot of it depends on the wind. If it's real windy, the golf course plays very tough. It doesn't look like it's supposed to blow too hard this week. But yeah, I mean, the rough is up pretty good, so you've got to drive it in the fairways. Any time you play a golf course with Bermuda rough, it's really important to hit the fairways. For me that's a big key this week is just driving it in the fairway.

Q. I just wonder, some people are surprised that so many golfers are so keen to get back playing competitive golf. Obviously coronavirus is still a thing, and health and safety is still such a big subject. Why do you think so many of the guys were so keen to get back playing, and what gave you that element of comfort that everything was going to be fine?

DUSTIN JOHNSON: Well, I think that the PGA TOUR has done a great job with putting a lot of things in place to make sure that we stay as safe as possible, and playing golf, being outside, it's pretty easy to social distance and stay away from people. A lot of the guys, we've kind of all been around each other a little bit, especially the ones that live back in Jupiter. We've played a lot of golf together and been around. My brother is my caddie, so I've been around him the whole time, so I'm not worried about anything like that.

But like I said, the TOUR has done a great job with putting a lot of safety measures in place, so I feel about as safe as I can being out here.

Q. You kind of talked about Colonial just a minute

ago, but just for your game, it's not really a course you can overpower. How much of a challenge is it for you? Obviously we all know your length and whatnot, but just to play the course and maybe take what it gives you, so to speak?

DUSTIN JOHNSON: I mean, it's not -- it's one of those golf courses where -- there's a few holes where you can try to maybe take advantage of, but it kind of all depends on the wind and where the flags are because the greens are kind of small when they tuck them in the corners. You want to have full shots in, so you don't want to be hitting little short pitches.

Yeah, so I like the golf course. Like I said, I think if I can drive it in the fairway, no matter what club I'm hitting, driver, 3-wood, 3-iron, whatever it is, if I can play out of the fairway, I'm going to have a lot of success around here.

THE MODERATOR: Dustin, we appreciate your time and have a great week. Welcome back.