

Travelers Championship

Tuesday, August 2, 2016

Bubba Watson

Press Conference



TRAVELERS
CHAMPIONSHIP



THE MODERATOR: We'd like to welcome Bubba Watson, defending champion here at the Travelers Championship into the interview room. Bubba, you became the seventh player to win this event multiple times last year in a thrilling win.

Take us through you win here last year and your feelings coming into this year defending and your chances this week.

BUBBA WATSON: Yeah, last year, you know, I was playing great. One guy was playing a lot better on the back nine. Paul Casey was hitting some great shots, making some putts, and we went into a playoff. Thrilling for you maybe, but not for me. I wanted to win it outright. Playoffs are no fun.

But, no, it was good. To win any tournament and win it again, is a big thrill, big honor. Winning the Travelers Championship for myself is very important because of my dad. In 2010 my dad passed away three months after the event, so it's the only win he got to see me.

And it's big for our family. Travelers has been a big supporter of my family and helped over the years. When my dad passed away they were the first people there to help me and support me and see how my mom needed help. Not just on my dad's side, but on my mom's side, how she needed help and I needed help and my family.

So travelers means a lot to me not just because of the golf and because the checks clear, but because of the other stuff, too. It's very important and very well-received in my family what Travelers means to me.

THE MODERATOR: Questions.

Q. Week before the Olympics. Just talk about your decision to still play here and then go to Rio.

BUBBA WATSON: Tournaments ask us all the time to play their events no matter what tour it's on all around the world. You have to prepare for that. Every year it's getting tougher and tougher because of the TOUR schedule.

We start a new season in the same year, so it's a little different. But when they made that call and they gave us that information, that the Olympics were going to happen, I started preparing for it. I don't know about

anybody else, but I started preparing for it.

What an honor and what a thrill to play for your country in the Olympics. Just to be part of the Olympics. Who cares if I finish dead last. Just to be part of the Olympics is a big honor and thrill.

I know the boxes I have been opening the last two weeks for all my gear -- you know, it might not say Oakley on it, but all my gear for the Olympics is nice. Just to have the flag and that emblem on there is a special thing for me.

Going back to scheduling, I was fourth in the world end of last year, so I knew the road ahead and how quick it can change by guys playing, winning tournaments, finishing Top 5 in all these events.

I could fall out of that fourth spot to make the team. I was No. 2, but all there was was four spots on the U.S. team.

So scheduling, I've always planned on trying to give myself the best chance to make the team. With this year, this one week throws the whole year off. I took some time off after the Masters. I was supposed to take Memorial off but threw it in at the last minute trying to give myself a better chance of Ryder Cup and the Olympics.

So I had a schedule and then changed it just trying to make sure I don't leave a tournament out there and not make the team. At the time we don't that anybody is going to back out. I had room to play with, but you don't know that at that time. So I prepared knowing I had the chance to make the Olympics and that extra week on the schedule.

Q. When do you arrive there? Going to other events while you're there?

BUBBA WATSON: I bought my tickets, gosh, month ago, maybe longer. Again, hoping to make the team a month ago. So I bought from I think Monday to Saturday night different events. I think gymnastics is in there; swimming or diving, I can't remember which one. It's based on time. We're thinking during the day we're playing golf, not night, so it's the night events I can go to.

Handball is every single day. I can't remember if I bought handball tickets. Fencing I think I bought. When I say bought, I'm sitting in general public with my manager and friend who is caddying for me, Randall Wells. Going to sit in general public because they can't sit in the athlete part.

Basketball Wednesday night. USA basketball. I can't think -- there was something else. I don't think it was table tennis. Might have been table tennis. Bought 'em a long time ago.

Q. When you plan on leaving?

BUBBA WATSON: Leaving Sunday night from here after this event. Hopefully not going earlier, because that means I'm playing Sunday. So that's the plan. Win another playoff, whatever it is, and that would -- you know, might have to change it to Monday.

Q. Quick follow-up. A lot of guys sort of talked about it was never something they really dreamed about because it was never a possibility with the Olympics. You've always been all in on it. Why I guess is it so important to you?

BUBBA WATSON: Because we're athletes now. Golfers are finally athletes, I guess. No, I mean, I played all sports. I feel like I'm an athlete and I can play any sport you put in front of me.

I can be average in all sports, and average is pretty good. I'm not talking about like just average, I'm talking about getting good at 'em.

I wanted to play baseball. I wanted to be a Yankees pitcher. My dad wanted me to be like Don Mattingly. So when it came to Olympics, I dreamed of what sport could I do it in. I started watching Payne Stewart. At 12 years old, Payne Stewart was my guy. Paul Azinger. Those are the two guys that I watched all the time.

So then I wanted to play golf. Then it wasn't about Olympics anymore, it was about Masters and all these other tournaments, Travelers Championship. They weren't there yet, but it was about the other events.

So I went away from dreaming about the Olympics. Even before the Olympics was in I was always dreamed about what other sports could I make the Olympics in it. Because how cool and what a privilege it is to represent your country.

Luckily for us we have Presidents Cup and Ryder Cup so we're representing our country. But at the same time, we've heard other athletes say we're representing our country every moment, not just one.

Q. You mentioned the Ryder Cup. Thoughts about getting on the team? Obviously next week John Deere will be going on and points will be awarded.

BUBBA WATSON: Yeah, my thoughts are play good here. I looked at my team. My team is -- we talked about playing Wyndham. Normally I don't play Wyndham to get ready for the playoffs. But, you know, we looked at trying to maybe play there if I don't play as well as I want to here just so I can get more points.

I don't want to go off a pick. I'll take a pick all day long, but it's better to set yourself on that team than rely on a pick.

I figure a gold medal will help, though. Even though it doesn't count, it'll still count.

Q. Bubba, you played this morning. Can you talk about your opinion of the renovations they did on the course?

BUBBA WATSON: I only played the back nine and it was raining. Dedication. I have dedication.

The viewing areas I thought were amazing. That's the first thing you notice when you get on 10. Looking down 10, it's totally different. It's still a demanding golf hole, but now the beauty of it now shines even more. You can see all the way down to the green. Those trees aren't in the way. That big tree is still there in the fairway, but the viewing area of that hole now from a fan's perspective or a golfer's perspective, it's so much more appealing.

The green is different, the complex. I'm just going off the look. Second shot it's very demanding because of the new green or green contour with the fall-off on the right there.

The bunkering on the 11, again, it's all about appeal. They tried to renovate for looks. I don't know if you would call it modernization, but it looks newer, fresher. Big hitters in the right wind conditions can still go over on 12, but makes it wider for the shorter hitters.

Then they widened the fairway just a little bit, just enough for visual, on 13, 14 no really change. Just make the bunker prettier.

Didn't notice anything on 15. Looked like they took out a bunker really that nobody got into.

16 they already did something to it.

17, not much change. Pretty up the bunker.

Then 18 was a big change. I thought 18 was the biggest change on the back, where the highest rough on the course was on the right over that bunker, which

they're trying to get you to go over so you don't go in the left bunker.

That left bunker downwind, you might be able to get over it, but you're not trying to. You're trying to hit it down the fairway. So that's the toughest one. Visually looks tougher and obviously going to play tougher because the fairway is narrower.

I mean, it's visual of the golf course. I don't see anything that's -- normally you see a redesign and it's bad and good all at the same time.

Q. You said Randall...

BUBBA WATSON: Randall Wells.

Q. Background? Long-time friend?

BUBBA WATSON: Yeah, he caddied for me before. Played college golf at the University of West Florida. I like it call him my money man. We have two businesses together. Let's say it that way. He's the one that controls everything, looks all the contracts, deals.

I just play golf. I'm the pretty face. He's the numbers guy; I'm the pretty face. Let's just call it that way.

But he played college golf and knows golf and he caddied for me a few times.

Q. (No microphone.)

BUBBA WATSON: Obviously it's different, but we're good friends. When I'm back in Pensacola -- moved back to Pensacola three months ago -- we play golf all the time. That's when we have our business meetings, when we play golf. So we play golf; he shoots in the low '70s. He's been around my game -- he was 13 and I was 12 when we met. He's been around my game; he knows my game. Comes out at tournaments still.

I mean, it's the same. It's nothing different. He knows to just clean the clubs and just carry the bag. And he's good with numbers. At least off the course he is.