

Travelers Championship

Tuesday, June 23, 2020

Bubba Watson

Press Conference



TRAVELERS
CHAMPIONSHIP



THE MODERATOR: We'd like to welcome three-time Travelers Championship winner Bubba Watson into our virtual interview room. Bubba, if we can get some opening comments from you about being at one of your favorite places on the PGA TOUR.

BUBBA WATSON: Yeah, I've been saying this is like my second home. It's crazy to think it's been 10 years when I won here. My first win ever was here, my dad passing away, just all the memories that it brings up, great memories, sad memories, whatever you want to call it, but for my family this is a big week. This is a fun week just getting to remember back. I remember back now 10 years, not only my dad but also he got to watch me play great at a tournament and win. It's a big deal to come back up here and to always be part of the Travelers event.

THE MODERATOR: The Travelers Championship is known for their community support. What are you expecting this week without fans?

BUBBA WATSON: You know, the beautiful thing here is it's kind of like last week. Same thing we've seen both weeks, actually, where the homes, people will come out and be on their balconies, be on their porches and supporting us, and knowing that we're entertainers and we're entertaining on TV but we're also -- the local community will feel us, know that we're here and see that we're here. We're trying to give somebody a show so they can smile at their TVs and get to do something different. Live sports is what we're all about, and hopefully we can put some smiles on some faces around the world.

Q. For the success you've had in golf, 13 wins and two majors, et cetera, and you play a game that few others do, my point is are you surprised at all that someone hasn't tried to copy what you do in terms of the way you shape it and play and things like that?

BUBBA WATSON: You know, I don't know -- they don't want to get inside my head, so I don't think they want to copy that. But I think it's one of those things, I think we do. If you look at it from a technical standpoint, I don't know anything about that, but like when you think about like J.B. Holmes, Camilo Villegas, Rickie Fowler, they might have swing coaches, but if you look they're all unique, and I think about Jack Nicklaus or Arnold Palmer, Gary Player, Lee Trevino, Greg Norman, Tiger

Woods, Nick Faldo, all these great players have different swings, different ideas and different thoughts. We're all trying to do the same thing, just score. I do think people take bits and pieces. I take bits and pieces from everybody's golf games, and somehow I try to take the good ones but sometimes I take the bad stuff.

Q. What's one thing that you think you've taken from someone's game or tried to copy?

BUBBA WATSON: Oh, man, I would have to say Brooks Koepka when he hits it fore right, I've been taking the fore right lately. I don't know, just bits and pieces. I remember watching Tiger Woods in '97; I didn't play a cut, and watching Tiger Woods in '97, on the camera angle it looks like his club being right-handed, it looks like his club goes out, but it's actually square, but on the camera on TV, the optics look a little different, and so I started doing that and started hitting a cut shot, so when I turned pro, getting the right equipment from Ping and then also the swing thought, looking at his club face when it came back, that's how I started cutting the ball. I never cut the ball in my life until I turned pro and started thinking about what Tiger did.

Q. Obviously this is an amazing place for you, three-time champion, the home of your first PGA TOUR victory. You and your family really do support the charitable initiatives here. How big is that feel-good factor when you touch down in Hartford?

BUBBA WATSON: Oh, it's absolutely amazing. You think about the support of the community, the support of a company like Travelers, support of just a beautiful area of our country. It's a fun place to come. It's a fun golf course. No matter what your skill set is, this golf course doesn't limit itself to one winner. It's all kind of different golf games. So it's fun coming here and challenging yourself.

But when I think about the droves of people that are normally around 18, it creates its own stadium there. It's really remarkable. So it'll be sad, but at the same time it'll be great getting out here and letting people watch us play their golf course.

Q. Another highlight and one of the most grueling shots that you would hit during the week is the 15-and-a-half hole, and that tiny umbrella that you

have to try and hit, and talking of charity, the closest to the pin, Travelers will donate \$10,000 to a charity of their choice. How do you feel about that shot?

BUBBA WATSON: I have not hit the umbrella yet. My caddie has hit it a couple times, but I've never been able to hit it. So I'm looking forward to that day. If I ever win closest to the pin, I'm going to match what they donate. That's what I'm going to do. But I haven't been able to come close yet, so hopefully I can do it one day.

THE MODERATOR: Can we get your comments on the PGA TOUR and Travelers Championship with the healthcare worker caddie bib program, which is a really neat effort to showcase the front line healthcare workers, if we can get some comments on that, please.

BUBBA WATSON: Yes, for sure. You know, anytime you have a front line worker, whatever that industry is, whatever they're doing, if it's a nurse, doctor, policeman, fireman, ambulance driver, it doesn't matter. Whatever it is, they're the heroes. They're the people that we're loving at this moment. We're praying for them at this moment, and to put them on the bib -- take my name away. Nobody cares about me. They're the actual heroes. It's an honor and a privilege to be a part of it and associate with that, and hopefully when they watch on TV and they're golf fans, they see their name, they know they're appreciated and they know that they mean so much to us, not just to us golfers but around the world they mean so much.

Q. Do you care who you play with?

BUBBA WATSON: Do I?

Q. Yeah, when the sheet comes out on Tuesday or whenever, does it matter to you?

BUBBA WATSON: Do you want me to answer that PC or do you want me to answer that truthfully?

Q. Truthfully.

BUBBA WATSON: Yes, it matters tremendously. There's guys that are a shot, maybe a two-shot penalty when you see their name on that sheet. Maybe that's what they say about me, too, so I guess it works both ways. I like to have fun and be energetic. You know, when you see a certain name, you know you can joke around, you know you can have fun and kind of get away from the stress and not talking and just walking down the fairway.

You know, yeah, I look forward to seeing who the pairings are and sometimes I start praying early trying to get a good one.

Q. If you go back to -- I'm trying to think when your rookie year was, '06, around there --

BUBBA WATSON: '06.

Q. And you were kind of in a lower category, was it a big deal to you when you got to play on the weekend with a big name? And then when you won Travelers for your first and got into that winner's category, was it fun for you to see when you'd get maybe a Mickelson or kind of a high-profile player?

BUBBA WATSON: Oh, for sure. Playing with Mickelson, all I wanted to do was outdrive him, just to make him know that I'm here. And then Tiger Woods, you're trying to learn from. And then when you think about some of the veterans, when you think about Steve Stricker, how nice he was and how respected he is, then you think about Fred Couples. I just want to learn to walk like him, just stroll around the fairways like him. So yeah, there's different things.

Like I said before last time you asked me a question is you take little bits and pieces from people and learn from that and try to deal with situations the way they do, and obviously as a rookie, everything was new to me. I was scared to death. I still am scared to death, and I've been out here for a while now. So you try to learn quickly in that rookie season or second season.

Q. I just have two questions, one of which was Ryder Cup related. There's a report out that it looks like they may postpone it until 2021. I know you're as passionate about the Ryder Cup as anybody, and certainly the fans are such a big part of it. I'm curious, if that does come to fruition, do you feel like that's the right move because of the potential lack of fans?

BUBBA WATSON: Yeah, the Ryder Cup means so much to me. It was the last event my dad watched me compete in in 2010. Nine days after that, he passed away. So for me, it means so much to me being a part of the team as a vice captain, being a part as a player. That's why Ryder Cup means so much to me and my family.

On the aspect of fans, I was joking with Rory about if there's no fans maybe we have a chance to win. So yes, I think for the game of golf and the spirit of that competition, which is supposed to be a friendly spirited competition, you want fans there. You want them to experience it. We're playing for that little trophy, right. That's all we're playing for. And so yes, I would hope that fans will be there.

If they postpone it, that gives me a better chance of making the team, but at the same time I think for the spirit of the game, either way they roll with it, it'll be worth it, but for fans' sake, yes, I wish they would postpone it to get some fans there.

Q. With regard to Bryson and kind of what he's been doing bulking up and hulking up, we had some fun with Rory last week, he was taken aback about how Bryson was a number of yards past him and whatnot. What's been your impression about what he's done to himself, and obviously he's been knocking on the door the last two weeks, too.

BUBBA WATSON: You know, the first thing I think about is his technique on the golf swing is different, but when you think about Tiger, it seemed like Tiger was bigger at one point, Rory was bigger as one point, Brooks is still trying to get bigger, and so when you think about that, I think for injury's sake, the way they swing the golf club they've tried to dial it back a little bit, get more physically fit, more cardio, but Bryson is going the opposite direction. I think with Bryson's technique and his swing, I think he's not really focused or worried about the injuries as much, which we'll see. We'll see how long that can last.

You know, as we get older, we start swinging a little slower and a little smoother, so we'll see how it goes, but right now he's proving to everybody that science, his brain knows what he's doing, and it's going in the right way.

Q. As a guy that's won here before, compared to the last two golf courses that you guys have played, which have been pretty tight and some doglegs and whatnot, does this golf course lend itself to maybe some bigger hitters and maybe fit into what Bryson is trying to do a little bit more this week do you think?

BUBBA WATSON: Oh, for sure. A bigger hitter is always going to have an advantage on a certain kind of golf course, and this golf course lends itself that way. It doesn't mean it happens all the time. This golf course, good putters, smart play will lend it. If I can hit my driver in a certain place on certain holes, it gives me a better chance for birdie. It doesn't have to be in the fairway, it just gives me a better chance because of the angles.

Bryson, he's going to take a notice of that and he's going to look at that and try to hit the driver in the right spots. Same with all of us; same with Brooks, same with Rory. It comes down to hitting that driver in the right spot.

Q. You're heading into the third week of this with no spectators and all the protocols. I'm wondering is any of this starting to feel normal, or are you settling into a new routine?

BUBBA WATSON: Yeah, it's starting to -- we're starting to get used to it. We understand what we're going through and what we're trying to do to create content for the live audience watching the TV. You know, for me

it's almost like we're playing practice rounds with high level of competition. Again, I haven't been around the leaders on Sunday, but you know, maybe it'll feel a lot different if I'm in that category the last four groups or last three groups. But right now, yeah, we're getting used to the protocols, what we have to do and what we're going to do.

But obviously the energy is not there. I guess Webb had energy. He made five birdies in the last seven holes. But the energy that we're used to is not there, so it might not have the same zing on TV I guess you would say. But it's still some high level of competition. I think it's worked out pretty nice.

THE MODERATOR: Bubba, we appreciate your time. Good luck this week as you go for win No. 4 at the Travelers Championship.