

Travelers Championship

Tuesday, June 23, 2020

Paul Casey

Press Conference



TRAVELERS
CHAMPIONSHIP



THE MODERATOR: I'd like to welcome in Paul Casey to our virtual press conference here at the Travelers Championship. You're making your sixth consecutive start at this event, where you have four top-5 finishes. Obviously you seem to love this course. Can we get some comments about your return here and what allows you to play so well at this event.

PAUL CASEY: Yeah, thank you. It's nice to be out. It's my first event in this return to golf. I don't know, ever since I turned up here six years ago, I've always enjoyed this golf course. I think it suits my game beautifully. Obviously the results have shown that. You know, I guess the one element we'll be missing this week, the crowds have always been fantastic, such a well supported event, and it really is for me one of the most enjoyable events we have on TOUR, and Travelers have always done a stellar job in making all the players feel comfortable and putting on a first-class event. With the quality of field this week, I'm looking to kind of continue that run of good form here. I'm very rusty. I've played a lot of golf at home, but it's obviously not tournament golf, but looking forward to getting stuck in this week.

THE MODERATOR: You mentioned it briefly, but you've had a great season, as well, making it to the weekend in all of your seven starts this season, and this is your first tournament back since the cancellation of THE PLAYERS. How have you spent the last couple months, and how is your game feeling.

PAUL CASEY: I've spent it schooling my kids, drinking wine, playing golf, fiddling with cars, riding bikes. I mean, it was -- I think it certainly showed me how much I miss tournament golf. I've got a lot of interesting hobbies, and there's never a lack of things to kind of get stuck into, but it was the longest period I've not been on an airplane in probably 24 years or something, maybe longer. And yeah, just missing the kind of purpose of waking up in the morning, for golf anyway, waking up in the morning and working on my golf game. There was certainly a period that that was very strange, kind of lost that for a bit. But there was never a dull moment. I mean, just with two young kids, trying to school them. Yeah, it's actually probably nice to be out on the road, and I think my wife is glad I'm out of the house now.

Q. I was just curious if you have a swing thought

that you keep going back to over the years, something that always seems to serve you well, something that you kind of know in and out, and it's the thing that jumps to mind.

PAUL CASEY: Narrowing it down to one would be difficult. Yeah, for me, I guess there's always -- there's probably, I guess, two or three is kind of the main thing. My main thing is posture. My posture gets poor, gets sloppy. That's never a good thing. I kind of slump. So just good, athletic posture, if I maintain that, that's the number one key. And then really if I maintain kind of width in my backswing, so for me it's like a feeling of trying to get the shaft of the golf club at the top of the backswing as far away from my neck as possible, so as much width as I can back there, so kind of feeling this big turn, the left shoulder kind of cranking underneath my chin and kind of keeping that shaft as far away from the neck as possible, then I'm able to, from there, cross fingers, most of it should be okay after that. I can just hit -- if I don't do that, if I've got bad posture and I'm narrow, as Peter Kostis my coach likes to say, if I'm narrow at the top, then it's going to be bad. So it's funny, those two things -- there's been a lot of fundamental work in the last three months for me. Yeah, so I've heard that a lot, posture and width.

Q. What is going to be the most challenging thing to getting tournament tough again? It's one thing to play social golf, to play rounds at home, even if it's a money game, but playing on the PGA TOUR and competing is a totally different game. What's going to be the biggest hurdle to get over to make that happen?

PAUL CASEY: Yeah, it is, and I won the money today, by the way. Yeah, it's sort of dialing it up. As you know, if you try too hard, that's no good. But there's a sense of like familiarity when you're playing your home club, you just kind of pick the club, you know what the shot is, you know the consequences, you know what happens if you hit it left or right, and you can be maybe a little blasé. The last two days I've played, I've been kind of found out already that I'm just not quite sharp enough. It's just that sharpness, and it's everything that you do. It's from the decisions that you're making to how you execute the shot. Yeah, it's just eliminating -- for a lot of us what we do is it's just eliminating those errors, and right now there's too many little errors going on, and stuff you can control. It's just the fractions. So it's just turning -- it's ratcheting it up, not so it's too

much, not over-try straight out the gate, but yeah, little -- I don't like the word -- I was going to say blase because I'm not blase, but it's just ratcheting up that intensity.

Q. And there's no way to really fake that, is there?

PAUL CASEY: No. I mean, I've played games back in Arizona, we called it the warmer upper, and we had Scotty Harrington and Colt Knost and Chez Reavie and myself and Ricky Barnes and Streelman, and we had these games. We were returning a score. And it's still not the same.

Q. In part will it be a little bit easier because you do know this course so intimately. I don't know if you go to Harbour Town the week after the Masters, but coming back to a venue where you have a lot of familiarity, getting back into it probably would be a little easier I would think.

PAUL CASEY: Yeah, and I love Harbour Town, but my results have not been spectacular around there if you look at my record. My results around here have been good, and what's been interesting playing the last two days around here is I have made errors and I know I wouldn't normally make those errors, and my stroke average around here is good, it's 67-point-something, so I'm now holding myself to that standard that I've had the last five years around here, so the last two days when I've made a couple of mistakes, it instantly shows up. I'm aware of those mistakes. To me that's a good thing.

If there's a place where maybe I play poorly and it would be my first place to play and I make mistakes because of not ratcheting up that intensity and focus, I may not be able to see it quite as clearly as I do this week, if that makes sense.

Q. I've got a Ryder Cup-related question. There's been a report out from the Guardian, what looks like what many of us have expected, that they're going to postpone it for a year. Can you speak to that in terms of whether you think that's a proper decision, figuring there's not going to be fans involved and whatnot? Obviously you've been such a big part of the Ryder Cup over the years.

PAUL CASEY: Yeah, I echo the comments and sentiments of a lot of my fellow Ryder Cuppers in that, first of all, safety is paramount. That's the primary concern. But I want a Ryder Cup with full capacity. I want it with screaming fans, and if that's not doable in this current environment, and obviously we've got travel restrictions in place and we don't know where the virus is going to be in the next couple of months, but I think it's the right decision. I really do.

I saw the headlines, so if that's confirmed by the PGA

of America in the next few days or weeks, whenever it's going to be, I fully support that. Even as a European, knowing how loud that would be for the American teams, that's what I want. We have the utmost respect for the U.S. players and how good they are, the fans, the history of golf in this country. We want to play a Ryder Cup in that environment, in that cauldron, and it's the right thing to do.

I know there's politics involved. There's financial implications and knock-on effect to Presidents Cup and all this kind of stuff, but I fully support that. It also gives me longer to qualify, which is good.

Q. What's your take on what Bryson has done with himself and his physique and the new bulked-up --

PAUL CASEY: Well, I haven't seen him yet, so I haven't seen the new -- whatever it is, 40 pounds. I haven't seen him yet. I mean, kudos. From the ball speed, I mean, it's so difficult to increase club head speed that much. It's kind of exponential, trying to gain -- it's like going faster in a car. To make a car go 180 miles an hour it needs this much horsepower. To make it go 200 miles an hour, you almost need double the horsepower, those calculations, assuming various other variables, and I assume having -- I'm not somebody who's ever gone on that quest like Bryson, as much as Bryson. But have I tried to increase club head speed? Yeah, by a mile an hour here or a mile an hour there, not like he's done, and I know how difficult it is. I mean, hats off. It's crazy how he's been able to do that.

Q. But what's your high-end ball speed would you say? What are your numbers?

PAUL CASEY: Oh, I mean, when I was slightly younger or a lot younger and a bit more flexible, I think the highest I ever got was like 185 or something. I can still hit like 180 maybe. When we were seeing Tiger -- Tiger was getting like 189 or something, or was it club head speed we were looking at? Just a couple years ago he was a 120 something or a 129 or something. It was amazing. And Tony Finau and these guys who can hit mid-120s routinely. To hit 200 is bonkers. And I've played a lot of golf with some long drive guys, like Jamie Sadlowski is a friend, played a lot of golf with him. It's different. When you're alongside a guy who can generate 200-mile-an-hour ball speed, that's different level. If he's able to harness that, which he looks like he's doing -- he played well at Colonial. I actually didn't look at the results other than Webb winning last week, yeah, that's going to be a force to be reckoned with if he can harness that and control it, and it's going to be interesting.

Q. Why did you wait until Hartford to play? What kept you from last the few two weeks?

PAUL CASEY: I love Hartford. A little bit of what I said

to David. You want to play a place you play well, and I play well here. But probably the main reason has been the, how do I put it, the fact that my caddie still lives in England, and Johnny would have to quarantine for -- still has to quarantine, according to the CDC guidelines, for two weeks before coming in, we thought we would see how it would pan out, to be honest. That was the main reason for not playing.

You know, as you know, I sit on the PAC, and I think the attention to detail of all of those involved in putting together the plan for how to operate has been phenomenal, and so I feel very, very comfortable in terms of sitting here right now, and it's like I have my mask and everybody is -- well, they always stand that far away from me, certainly more than six feet. But the main thing, Johnny is not here this week, either, so I've got Bill Harke on the bag, who lives in California, who a lot of you guys will know because he's worked for Jonas Blixt and various other people.

So to me, that's still -- I'll say it now first because you're the first person who's asked me, I feel slightly -- for me personally, I feel slightly disadvantaged because I don't have Johnny standing six feet to my side, and that's still a situation which we haven't -- I don't know when Johnny is going to come over because if he's got to quarantine for two weeks coming over, he's got to quarantine for two weeks going home, and I was only going to play one week anyway, so he felt like five weeks to be sort of away from his kind of family and friends was too much. As much as he loves me, he was not willing to do that for me. So we'll see. It's still a fluid situation.

Q. What do you have going forward?

PAUL CASEY: I haven't announced anything yet, but I'm very interested in Workday and Memorial because it would make sense.

Q. The other thing I wanted to ask you kind of in relation to not playing those two, did you watch on TV, and if you did, did you find yourself watching more of the golf or more kind of how they carried on with the whole thing? Do you know what I mean by that?

PAUL CASEY: Yeah. I think initially I watched more of the -- yeah, the interaction and the protocols and what was happening, and yeah, I did watch that. As I said, I mean, I think those of us who sit on the PAC, and I think it extends, I think, all the way through the membership, but certainly those of us who sit on the PAC, I was sitting there watching it because I want this to go as smoothly as possible, so trying to watch it and observe and see, knowing that those guidelines that we've talked about, how that works, is it doable, what are the optics. Yeah, I've watched quite a bit of it.

Q. What did you think?

PAUL CASEY: I think it's been pretty good. It's amazing some of the habits, though. One of the things we've been criticized for as a whole has been the player-caddie handing the clubs backwards and forwards, and I admit, I did it today. It's such a habit. It's such a habit. There are just certain things that I guess habits are difficult to break. A lot of things seemed fairly easy to do, mask wearing and distancing yourself, hand sanitizer and a lot of these things and wiping down flagsticks, it's easy stuff. For some reason, handing a -- it's just like habit, handing clubs backwards and forwards. So I'm not going to criticize anything I've seen to this point because I haven't played. For the whole, though, I think it's been very, very good.

THE MODERATOR: I'm sure you're aware of the PGA TOUR honoring the front line healthcare workers through the caddie bib program. What are your thoughts on that initiative and how important is that to you.

PAUL CASEY: I think it's brilliant, I really do. Those people are always heroes, and they never get enough recognition, so for the TOUR to recognize those who have been putting -- they always put themselves at risk, but even more so right now, I think it's the least we can do as a sport, and I'm very honored to have a name of a front-line worker on the caddie bib next to mine this week. Hopefully like the first two guys, Daniel Berger and Webb Simpson have done, I'd like to -- hopefully I can honor whoever I'm representing this week. I'm representing everybody, but hopefully that name that I'm representing I can play well just for them. Look forward to that.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you for your time, Paul, and great luck this week.