

# Travelers Championship

Wednesday, June 24, 2020

## Jay Monahan

### Press Conference

THE MODERATOR: We'll go ahead and get started. We'd like to welcome our PGA TOUR Commissioner, Jay Monahan, to our virtual press conference here at the Travelers Championship on Wednesday.

Jay, appreciate you taking the time with us. We've got several media members on the line who are eager to hear from you.

We will open it up to questions, but would first turn it over to you for a brief statement, PGA TOUR update, if you will, from you.

COMMISSIONER JAY MONAHAN: Thank you, Amanda, and thank you to everybody that's on this call. I was eager to have this conversation with you.

So we have been working since March to develop a comprehensive health and safety plan that would be considered a best practice among professional sports leagues.

While we've been thorough in building and implementing a program that mitigates as much risk as possible, we knew it would be impossible to eliminate all risk, as evidenced by the three positive tests this week.

We need to use these developments as a stark reminder for everyone involved as we continue to learn from an operational standpoint. We're making several adjustments to our health and safety plan as noted in the memo sent to players this morning, and we will continuously reinforce to all players, caddies, staff members and support personnel on property at PGA TOUR events to adhere to social distancing and other safety professionals that further minimize risk.

So for this week, as I said, we've had three positive tests: Cameron Champ, PGA TOUR player; Ken Convo, caddie for Graeme McDowell; and Ricky Elliot, caddie for Brooks Koepka.

At the Utah Championship on the Korn Ferry Tour, we have had no positive tests.

I will also note that for positive COVID-19 tests with arrival testing complete today, we've had 2,757 total in market tournament tests over three weeks with seven positives.



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Now just a quick overview of the withdrawals from this week's Travelers Championship field:

Cameron Champ withdrew after testing positive for COVID-19 on Tuesday.

Graeme McDowell withdrew out of an abundance of caution after his caddie, Ken Convo, tested positive for COVID-19.

Brooks Koepka withdrew out of an abundance of caution after his caddie, Ricky Elliot, tested positive for COVID-19.

Webb Simpson withdrew out of an abundance of caution. He has been tested twice and has not tested positive for COVID-19 this week.

And Chase Koepka withdrew out of abundance of caution; neither he nor his caddie, Dan Gimbel, have tested positive for COVID-19.

So that's where we stand as of Wednesday afternoon, and I'm happy to answer any questions you might have.

**Q. One of the obvious questions -- and you just outlined the numbers obviously, the percentage of positives is very low, and I know I did ask you this after -- after -- after Colonial when you came out with nothing. As -- as there's been a slight rise, is there a number that you have in mind that you consider an outbreak, or just a range, in other words, where it becomes a concern. You know, is -- is today a concern or are you still looking at this as a positive; this is such a low number? And is there a number or a range of a number that you would -- you would begin to elevate concern?**  
COMMISSIONER JAY MONAHAN: Well, you're right in that it is a low number, and it's a low number on a percentage basis. But every number hurts.

So I think for us, as we look at where we are now, three weeks in and on the eve of our final round of the Travelers Championship, I think we all need to remind ourselves that we're all learning to live with this virus, and we all need to learn to live with this virus, both as individuals, as family members and certainly within our businesses.

It's pretty clear that this virus isn't going anywhere. And so that's why I go back to the weeks that preceded our return; the amount of work that we spend to develop our health, safety and testing protocols, to be here at this point in time, you know, we are excited to get into the Travelers Championship this week.

I tell you, Mark, and I addressed some of this in a memo to our players, we are just going to continue to refine and get better and better and identify ways where we can further mitigate my risk. That's something I think I said when I was with you guys in Fort Worth, and it's something that we continue to do.

Going back directly to your question, you know, we are playing in two markets today. We've had three positive tests this week. I think everybody should expect that you're going to have more tests as we go forward and we are going to be very sensitive to the specifics of every single test. But going to be spending a ton of time making sure we reinforce the strong protocols we have.

**Q. Quick follow. There was a report out there that Ricky Elliot had actually retested today and it came back negative. Are you aware of that situation, and because that was a positive, is that still considered a risk?**

COMMISSIONER JAY MONAHAN: Ricky and Brooks are not going to be here this week, and I can't get into the specifics of anybody -- any individual test, but I wouldn't -- I don't think any of us should be surprised based on the nature of the virus that someone would test positive and then test negative.

Our medical advisors, our medical experts, you know, have suggested to us that based on the timing and the incubation period, you could have scenarios like that.

So I wouldn't be surprised to hear something like that that had happened, based on what we've learned from our medical advisors.

**Q. Do you have a position even privately whereby it would not be viable to continue with this or other tournaments on the grounds of reputation, if not health and safety?**

COMMISSIONER JAY MONAHAN: Listen, I think that there is -- that's something Ewan, that you're mindful of every minute of your working life. The brand and safety of our players are -- the safety of our players is our No. 1 concern, and our brand is our greatest asset.

The amount of time, Ewan, that we put into the plan that we developed; the plan we've executed; the

dialogue we're having with our board, our Player Advisory Counsel; the feedback we're getting with our players; everything we are doing we are doing in concert with our membership; and based on our board call on Monday night; based on our Player Advisory Council call on Tuesday night; based on conversations that myself and our team members are having with our players, we feel a great responsibility to inspire people and to be in their living rooms on Saturday and Sunday -- Thursday, Friday, Saturday and Sunday.

We feel like we're on a path that's going to allow us to continue to sustain our return to golf, but rest assured, there won't be many sleepless nights; there usually are. When you're working in a world of uncertainty, these are the things you worry about. But also rest assured that the PGA TOUR will always do the right thing as it relates to our players, our fans, our constituents and make sure we create the safety environment possible.

**Q. It sounds like the memo to the players, you outlined a couple of differences in the protocols. Can you tell us what's different now going forward?**

COMMISSIONER JAY MONAHAN: Yeah, so we, again, and in conversation with our player directors, chair of our PAC, Charley Hoffman and ultimately on our PAC call, we together all agreed that there were a few adjustments we needed to make.

One is when you're part of the charter protocol, you obviously get tested on Saturday; you learn the results on Sunday night; you're on the charter on Monday.

We're going to add additional testing upon arrival in the following week's tournament market so that everybody that's arriving it going to the same testing protocol.

We will move our player instructors inside of our testing bubble, and they will be subject to the same testing protocols.

We will have our fitness trailer on site next week. One of the things that we've identified or we want to eliminate is players going to off-site gyms, having our physio trailers here will help that. All of our players entering those physio trailers will be wearing masks.

We have developed a program, a stipend program, for players on our tours, if they were to test positive during the week or during competition, and to be able to be eligible for those protocols, we've just reconfirmed for our players, you must follow our protocols in order to qualify for the stipend.

So those are four of the things that we've talked about. But I think it really comes back to, Bob, it's like the game itself. You've got to always go back and look at,

you know, work with your instructor.

In our case, look at the manual; if we can properly socially distance, if everybody when they are inside is wearing a mask, and doing all of the things we've outlined from the outset, if we continue to stay true to what we've set, we feel like, again, we are going to be in a position to sustain our return.

**Q. Real quick. If you find that a player or caddie is not following your guidelines like you would like, I understand there is the ability for you to sanction them or fine or whatever it might be. What are we looking at there? What are those possibilities and how would that play out?**

COMMISSIONER JAY MONAHAN: All of us have an extraordinary responsibility to follow those protocols. For any individual that does not, there will be serious repercussions, and I'm not going to get into the specifics of it.

But everybody knows and needs to know that our future, our ability to sustain this business and to impact the communities where we play and to create so many jobs is contingent on our ability to follow those protocols.

So when we have instances where someone hasn't, they will be dealt with, and as I said, the consequences will be significant.

**Q. I'm wondering how the national climate affects your decision-making, even if the TOUR numbers stay somewhat where they are, as you see cases are surging in various states that you're going to be visiting or down the road, how much is too much, just within the United States as a whole, where you say, "We can't sustain our bubble no matter how hard we try"?**

COMMISSIONER JAY MONAHAN: Alan, so we are sitting here in Hartford, Connecticut, and in the weeks that preceded our arrival here, one, as I said throughout every market we go to, we are an invited guest.

As we come back to Hartford in an environment of COVID-19 with all of us dealing with COVID-19, our team had to work with local and state government and health officials to get our health and safety program supported and approved and ultimately to get the permit to be able to play here. We are doing that over the course of our schedule as we go forward.

And I mean, we all have to be looking at what's happening market to market to market. That's what we are doing, connected to both our tournaments, and obviously if based on where we are with I think now 27

states seeing a rise, it's a concern that we'll continue to closely monitor.

But for us, I go back to the fact that we're here, and we're here with the full support of local and state officials and I know that the government -- the governor just a couple hours ago reaffirmed his support and is excited to see us get the Travelers Championship underway.

**Q. Is it safe to say, though, that you're concerned about what's happening nationally?**

COMMISSIONER JAY MONAHAN: Yes. I don't think -- I don't think there's anybody that isn't taking a close look and has some concern.

But I'm also, as I said earlier, I think the reality is that we all have to live -- you know, learn to live in an environment of COVID-19. I'm concerned but I'm also confident in the program and protocols we've put in place, and our ability to be able to sustain the PGA TOUR and give our players opportunities on both of these tours over the course of the year; so long as we continue to be as diligent as we intend to be.

**Q. I know you've been reluctant to list a tipping point over the last couple of months, and even so far today, but is there a point when you get to enough positive cases within the bubble where you say, "Hey, look, we need to curtail this, we need to shut it down," and if so, is there a specific number, or how do you determine that?**

COMMISSIONER JAY MONAHAN: I think that we -- Jason, on that front, where I go back to where we are right now, and the system that we have in place, and there are all kinds of scenarios that could play out.

We feel like we've tried to contemplate all of those scenarios in creating the program and the protocols that we have such that if you are going to have positive cases, there can -- they are contained or they are containable, and we are going to avoid that scenario.

But if you start to -- I mean, there certainly are scenarios where if you had a significant number of positive tests, or you could play scenarios where that would come into play and you'd have to be thinking along those lines.

But for us, we're confident with the plan we have and we are very hopeful that we are not going to be in that position.

**Q. I know that you've been very serious and everybody on your team has been very serious about dealing with this. Do you feel like everyone that's been inside the bubble the last 2 1/2 weeks**

**are as serious as you are?**

COMMISSIONER JAY MONAHAN: Alex, I think that this has been a big adjustment for everybody and I think everybody's intentions have been very, very, and everybody has taken their responsibility seriously. I don't question that at all.

I think when you get into the environment of the tournament with no spectators here, with very few people here, with people that are around you having tested negative, I think over the first couple weeks, we've seen some instances where, let's say we've gotten a little bit lax or away from protocol.

Full disclosure: I've done it myself, and I think that's the kind of tightening that we need to do in order to make sure we continue to be in a good position to move forward.

Given the number of people, the number of players and caddies that we have, you know, it's hard to generalize where we are. There are some conversations we've had to tighten things up, but I feel really good about the level of commitment and support.

I'll tell you, we were -- I mentioned our policy board call and our PAC call on Tuesday night, and you know, our four player directors and Charley Hoffman penned a letter to our players, I thought very -- in a really direct and powerful way, just talking about both the opportunity we have and the responsibility we have, and I think we are all -- like the game itself. The rules of the game, the values of the game, I think it's being applied to the way we are handling our testing program. And that's the standard we're going to hold ourselves to.

**Q. Just to follow up. In about three weeks for the first time since this all happened, the Memorial is going to have fans, even though it will be a reduction from what they would normally have. Are you still comfortable having 8,000-plus fans at a golf tournament knowing what you know now about COVID?**

COMMISSIONER JAY MONAHAN: Alex, I will tell you that our team working closely with Dan Sullivan and the Memorial Tournament have been -- Dan has done an outstanding job architecting and developing a plan that is, you know, very thoughtful in the way that we would introduce fans to that venue; so thoughtful that it's been supported by local and state officials.

We're confident in that plan, but like every tournament going forward, we're continuing to look at what we're learning now and start to think forward of how we are going to plan for all the subsequent events.

But we are looking forward to reintroducing fans at the Memorial tournament, but rest assured, we are only going to do it if we think it's a health -- a healthy and safe environment for our players, our caddies, our staff, and also for those fans that would be attending, and we think we've considered all those factors.

**Q. Two quick questions. First, are you awaiting any more test results this afternoon that could potentially impact the field of this event?**

COMMISSIONER JAY MONAHAN: We are not awaiting any additional test results.

**Q. Secondly in conversations with health officials or experts, what does this look like exponentially, you know, X number of days or weeks from now for the TOUR in testimony of what the statistical data tells you; in other words, where, you know, within the last six days, there have been a handful of positive tests, be it caddies, players or people within their quote, unquote, bubble. I'm curious how you look at it two, three, four weeks down the road from now?**

COMMISSIONER JAY MONAHAN: We tend to look at it day-to-day before we get into several weeks down the road, because while we've completed our testing protocol so far this week, obviously we have other measures that our players, caddies and staff will take between now and the end of play on Sunday. That's something that we will continue to be focused on executing.

And then as it relates to going forward, I think it's important that you understand and that we convey that our team, myself, we are spending a lot of time talking about where we are.

You know, when you go through the contact tracing and when you think about individuals that tested positive, and you think about the environment, you know, what are some of the additional things we can do to mitigate risk, and you've heard me say that probably too many times.

But that has been our focus, because if we focus on that, we feel like we put ourselves in a position where we can have a controllable number of -- we can have a controlled environment or a controlled number of cases or positive cases going forward.

We can't wait for the number. We have to be proactive in doing everything we can to keep that positive number as small as possible, and that really is just about executing our health and safety program.

**Q. Along those lines, did you anticipate further changes than what was outlined, just given the**



**nature of all of this?**

COMMISSIONER JAY MONAHAN: The way we operate as a business is we are always seeking improvement and seeking ways that make everything that we do better, and you know, we have said from the outset that this plan that we developed in close concert with our medical experts was a plan that we thought was, you know, that is as safe and responsible as we can probably be.

But yeah, we will probably continue to make adjustments. That's why we are here on site. We are talking to players. We are looking at things with our own eyes. We are talking daily as a team about what we are learning. When we complete our event, we are reconvening our board. We are talking to our PAC.

We are trying to -- we are doing this together. You know, we are all in this together. And so I think I think it if it's -- correctly executed, we think it puts us in a better position. But the changes we made this week we feel are a very good step in addition to what we've already identified.

**Q. I was just curious, Justin Thomas sort of opened the door or suggested the idea today of stricter enforcement around things like social distancing -- curious if you get to a point where you will issue players warnings and penalties for players who are not adhering to these safety protocols.**

COMMISSIONER JAY MONAHAN: You broke up for some of that, Luke, but I think I got gist of your question.

Justin is one of the 16 members of our Player Advisory Council, and I think that we have full support from our Player Advisory Council and our board to make certain we are doing everything we can to enforce the protocols that we have established, and I have every intention of doing exactly that.

**Q. If it's true that Ricky Elliot tested positive and a second test then came back negative, does that raise the question whether the tests themselves, the testing procedure, is good enough?**

COMMISSIONER JAY MONAHAN: No, it doesn't put that into question at all. We've spent a lot of time with our medical advisors and experts, and as I said earlier, testing really is a factor of where you are in the incubation period.

So if that, in fact, were to have happened, that is something that we would be -- we would have expected versus be surprised by.

**Q. We've seen the players fist-pumping, high-**

**fiving, standing next to each other on the tee box.**

**Do you think -- did I break up there?**

COMMISSIONER JAY MONAHAN: Yeah, you did. Sorry. You started with fist-pump.

**Q. We've seen the players fist-pumping high-fiving, standing next to each other on tee boxes; going out to dinner, we hear, as well. Do you feel let down by the players?**

COMMISSIONER JAY MONAHAN: Not at all.

**Q. Back when the PGA TOUR announced the restart, it was acknowledged that the optics of all this was going to be really important. You wanted to set an example and show that sport -- have you felt satisfied with the optics so far that you've seen, and do you feel you're presenting the example that you would want to the rest of sport?**

COMMISSIONER JAY MONAHAN: You know, I think you're never satisfied, but -- and I would say, David, that we're three weeks in. Really, two and a half weeks in, and this has always been about a sustained return.

So I am very comfortable, very pleased, very confident in the health and safety program that we have, even though we've had positive tests. In this world, I think that that's an expected outcome. We've learned a lot. We are continuing to refine, and to the point you're making about a responsibility, anybody that's leading a business, whether you're in sport or any other business, any other industry, it's all about trying to live in this world and be able to sustain your return in a world of COVID-19.

I sincerely feel like we are on the right path in that regard, and you know, there's a tremendous level of attention and intensity to our actions, and it will continue to be so. We never said we were perfect. Some of the things that you've seen, you know, I thought myself -- we just have to keep getting better and better and better as we go forward, but it is not from a lack of attention, a lack of communication or a lack of collaboration we have with the great players that are on the PGA TOUR and Korn Ferry Tour.

**Q. Given the developments over the last five or six days with testing, what keeps you guys from testing every day?**

COMMISSIONER JAY MONAHAN: Well, there's two things. Just the practical side of it is, you know, one of the things that we committed to, Doug, when we committed our testing protocol was to not take away resources from every community where we are moving to and where we are playing. And so there's a finite number of supplies we could get at that point in time.

Secondly, when you go back to our medical advisors,

as we have done, and this is something we continue to talk to them about, and you look at CDC guidelines and you look at the expectation of any businesslike ours that's reopening, testing every other day is a sound and accepted protocol for the environment that we're in.

**Q. And secondly, should the public or anyone be surprised when there's more tests and they come back positive next week?**

COMMISSIONER JAY MONAHAN: No, listen, I think this is the reality of what we're all, you know, we're all living under. For us, we are doing everything we can to make that not be the case.

But I don't think -- I don't think anybody should be surprised. I'm certainly hopeful we won't. But to be able to say that we're going to not have any cases, and to be able to look you in the eye across the television screen orphan and say we're not going to have any cases would be disingenuous because we are all learning as we're going.

But again the team that we have around us that's guiding us is putting us in a position to make us stronger -- take a strong program and make it stronger and stronger.

THE MODERATOR: That concludes today's press conference with the Commissioner. We would like to thank the media on the line and Commissioner Monahan, thank you so much for your time today.

COMMISSIONER JAY MONAHAN: Thank you, everybody.