

Travelers Championship

Monday, June 20, 2016

Andy Bessette

Nathan Grube

Kevin Felice

Dannel Malloy

Mark Rolfing

Bubba Watson

Media Day

(Video shown.)

NATHAN GRUBE: Thank you, everybody, for being here today at our media day for this year's tournament. 41 days and counting, that's on your calendar, but 364 days until the 2017 event. We're back in June in 2017.

I'm going to introduce a few people, and then we're going to get to an interview with Bubba. I often get asked, hey, what's new this year, what's new at the tournament, and I have to say I'm going to go over a handful of things that are new initiatives this year, but you need to understand the backdrop that that's against. If this event didn't have a title who said go out there and do these things, create new opportunities for our partners, let's do something new and different, we wouldn't be able to do any of this, and they treat this tournament every single year like it's the first year of their title sponsorship. We have to make it fresh, exciting, new every single year. They do not sit back and say, okay, that was great last year. Literally we wipe the table and say, all right, how is this year going to be better than last year.

So under that backdrop, we have a lot of new, exciting things this year. One of the first things, thought, I want to say to our founding partners -- we have a slide up here. Andy talked about this this morning, that as the title, that gets us about halfway there to put on a PGA TOUR event, from the purse to the television to everything that it takes, and the companies that you see represented up there, from St. Francis as our presenting to our founding partners, that is really the backbone of what makes this event work. If we didn't have that type of corporate support, if the community didn't buy into the event this way, we just wouldn't be able to do what we're doing.



We did add a founding partner this year, Farmington Bank, with Accenture and Cognizant, Aetna and ConnectiCare, the State of Connecticut, EBMPapst, Farmington Bank like I mentioned, Hartford Healthcare, L&T Infotech, the Alliance, the Metro Hartford Alliance, Mohegan Sun, Purina, Webster and WNS. Never forget that that is the core of the business community that gets behind this event to let us do a lot of things. We're excited about that.

Andy is going to get to a few things. I think that drive from a charity standpoint as far as some ALS initiatives that we're working on this year, different pro-ams that we're running to raise additional money for our partners, a new program this year, our veterans. We launched a military platform a few years ago, the outpost. Many of you have seen it, been to it. It's a great place, camaraderie. It's free food and beverage for active, retired and families and their dependents, and we always had this program where veterans were allowed in there, but many of you know that there is a difference sometimes between veterans and the cards that you receive when you get out of the military versus retired, and there was always kind of an identification challenge, and we didn't -- we weren't really comfortable with some of the benefits that retired and active were getting and were all the veterans getting all the same benefits.

So new partnership this year, we've been working on this for a couple of years, with Bear's Barbecue, and they are sponsoring free admission to the tournament itself for all veterans and their dependents.

And the amount of feedback we've been getting when we announced this program is tremendous. The early sign-ups are four times what they were before leading into the tournament.

We're thrilled to be able to have that and launch that this year on the military appreciation platform.

The golf course, you're going to be able to see this, for the players and for the fans is tremendous. The PGA TOUR and the team here, what they did, it's unbelievable. The golf course looks phenomenal. All the bunkers are redone. They've kind of run their lifecycle. With Travelers extending to 2024, the PGA

TOUR look a look at the golf course and said, okay, are there any areas that need to be upgraded, enhanced. They spent a lot of time talking to the players, the past designers, saying, here's what we want to do; we don't want to change the integrity of the golf course, and it came out tremendous. It is such a good look out there, and I really hope you enjoy it.

But the TOUR was great because they came along beside us and said, if we're going to be out there doing this work, how can we help the tournament; what do you need. And you'll see a lot of work being done in the Fan Zone. That has been just a tremendous asset to us that has grown over the years with our concerts and the kid zones and the rock walls and the mini-golf and the 50 things that your kids can do down there that have nothing to do with the game of golf. That area, they let us grow that. We're going to be able to put a lot more down there. Some viewing areas on 16 for the fans. They moved the cart path to the left side of 18 so we're going to be able to move around the golf course better.

From a fan standpoint, they're going to see it right away, and from a competitive standpoint, the players are going to see what they like, enhanced and amplified. It's going to be a lot of fun.

The pin positions is always another one that you're going to see them getting a little more aggressive because they worked on about five of the greens to get more aggressive pin positions, so on Sunday they can put that pin closer to the water, so there should be a little more drama.

But it's going to be a very entertaining time out there, and again, what I said at the beginning, all of that is possible because there is a title sponsor who gives you the ability to go out and make things new and make things different, and we're very, very fortunate to have that leadership.

Andy Bessette is going to come up here. Let me say that you can have a vision, but unless you're willing to put in the work, the vision is never going to happen, and Andy literally puts in the hours in the day that it requires to pull this off, so we're very fortunate to have him at the helm of this event from a tournament standpoint, and I'd like to welcome up EVP and CEO of Travelers, Andy Bessette.

ANDY BESSETTE: Thanks, Nathan. I said earlier this morning at the Alliance breakfast, what a great day to start the day because we had Bubba M&M's, and I ate them all. Not all of them, not in the whole place, and then I get here and we have Bubba cookies for everybody. And I just ate that, too. It's really great. So Bubba sat down with us in the Alliance breakfast, and I

said to him, Bubba, can't talk right now, I'm eating your face. And he said, you what? I said, I'm eating your face. He knows we did the M&M's and I think we gave him 100 pounds of them so he could enjoy them with his family.

But on behalf of Jay Fishman, Alan Schnitzer, our CEO and all the Travelers employees, thanks for being here this morning and for being a part of the Travelers Championship, and thank you for all of your support of it.

As you all know by now, obviously our tournament is August 1-7 this year only, and then next year we go back to that week after the U.S. Open in June. Yay.

But it was actually the right thing to do this year to accommodate the Olympics. It's a tough summer with three majors in seven weeks and one World Golf Championship. It's just a busy, busy summer for the golfers.

Also, you know, with our date, it's interesting because the PGA Championship is in Baltusrol in New Jersey that week, so it's really close to what we're doing here, and a lot of the players will be coming.

We've got a lot of early commitments, and Bubba is one of them. Bubba, thank you for being a part of this this year, and we really appreciate it because we know it kind of overlaps and flips around with the Olympics and the opening ceremonies, but thank you for being here.

And then Zach Johnson is going to be with us, Paul Casey and Louis Oosthuizen, Patrick Reed and Keegan Bradley to name a few, and there's more coming out, but Nathan never lets me say that. I have to always check myself because he kicks me under the table. But it'll be a great field this year again.

We're going to do some special things this year. I think Nathan might have mentioned this, the Memorial Garden. Last year we lost two of our past champions, Billy Casper and Charlie Sifford, but we've lost eight other champions, and so we decided last year to build a Memorial Garden, and with all the changes that the TOUR did to the facility here, they went in and made those changes and actually built the Memorial Garden, and it's mainly finished down there. The placards aren't up yet, but it'll be a great way to celebrate the history of the tournament.

As I think all of you know, the Travelers has been involved with the tournament since 1952, since the first year it came to being, and we became title in 2007. So this Memorial Garden is an important part of Travelers history, as well.

People will say, well, why do you do this tournament, and it's so funny, after 10 years, people still stop me in the street and say, thank you for saving the tournament because it could have been like the Hartford Whalers, and I said, whoa, don't make that analogy.

I said, yeah, it went away for a few months, but with a lot of good help, we became the title in '07, and it fits in really well with our culture at Travelers. In Travelers, we give over \$21 million a year to communities around the country, and we have over 90,000 volunteer hours by our employees.

So it's not just that we give money; our employees are behind it. They're proud employees of Travelers, and they are really excited when it comes to volunteering in the community.

Travelers has over 31,000 employees worldwide, and we've got 13,000 independent insurance agents who distribute our products, some of whom are in the room. We can't do our job without them. And we have operations, and this is actually interesting, in the U.S., Canada, Ireland, UK, and of all places, Brazil, but that doesn't stop us from being, and you've heard me say this before, being a proud hometown company that sponsors our hometown tournament for our hometown charities, and 100 percent of the net proceeds of this tournament, as you know, go all to the organizations that benefit from this.

Over our term, for the last 10 years, we've given over \$10 million to over 500 charities in Connecticut, and last year we had a record \$1.565 million, so it was a terrific year.

This year, just to explain to you, it's a little bit different. It's really a personal focus. About a year ago I think most of you know that Jay Fishman, our chairman at that time, chairman and CEO, was diagnosed with ALS, which is a progressive disorder that affects the function of how your nerves and your muscles work.

I'll never forget the day he was diagnosed. He and I talked, and he said, the doctors told me to lean into this, and so I said, I'm going to do nothing but lean into this, and all of you know Jay know that he leans into everything. That's how he became one of the best chairmen and CEOs of a major corporation in America. So he's leaned into this in a couple of very important ways.

On Friday night, August 5, during tournament week, we're going to have a fundraising dinner for the Bruce Edwards Foundation for ALS research. The evening is going to be hosted by Tom Watson, award-winning sports columnist and author John Feinstein, and Jay

himself. As you all know, and I won't take you through the history, Bruce grew up in Wethersfield, Connecticut, and was a longtime friend and more importantly caddie for Tom Watson until he passed in 2004, and I believe I get it right, I think it was on the first day of the Masters.

John wrote the book "Caddie For Life," and after Bruce's passing, John and Tom founded the Bruce Edwards Foundation in his honor to help find a cure for ALS. So that's going to be a really special night.

And what's really cool, I was telling Bubba this before, I always raise the bar, and Nathan is right; I always say, the status quo is unacceptable, and when I was an Olympic athlete, that was always true. The status quo is always unacceptable. The only way that I got better in sport was to not think that being is good as you are today is good tomorrow, and you have to figure out how to move that needle.

We've tried to make sure that we do that at the Travelers, at the Travelers Championship, as Nathan said, but for the dinner, we had set a goal of 100 tables at \$10,000 a table to raise a million dollars for ALS research through the Bruce Edwards Foundation. To date -- I said to Nathan, and he'll vouch for this, I said, man, if we get to 50 I'm going to be really happy because I think I may have overdone it, and we got to 50, we got to 60, we got to 70, and I'm happy to announce today that we're at 103 tables. So we've raised over a million dollars. We have seven more tables to sell, and once we do that, we will be able to net, because it's a dinner, obviously, so somebody has to pay for the food, so once we get to the net number, once we get to 110 tables, we'll have a net of over a million dollars to the Bruce Edwards Foundation.

We're really excited about that.

The second initiative that I mentioned to you was Hospital For Special Care, and we've got a number of guests with us today, and I'll introduce Dr. Felice in a minute, but the Hospital For Special Care's ALS clinic actually provides care to over 250 Connecticut residents with ALS. As a matter of fact, it's the only ALS-certified treatment center in Connecticut for ALS, and that's really important.

You know, it's interesting, when Jay and Randy, his wife and I went to the hospital and met with John Votto and Carl Ficks and with Dr. Felice, it didn't take us but maybe 10 minutes -- I don't know that you guys knew this, but we were assessing you, obviously. But it took us no more than 10 minutes to know that the Hospital For Special Care is a very special place. It's a lot of special -- it's a very special place for more than just ALS, but we were focused on ALS.

And so at that point, we decided that they would be our designated charity, our primary charity for the 2016 Travelers Championship. So that was really exciting to us, and Nathan has done things with them since with a road race. We've raised over \$40,000, and there's a golf tournament Saturday of the tournament that will raise a substantial amount of money, as well.

So I'm pleased to announce in conjunction with all of this that Jay Fishman has agreed to be one of our honorary co-chairs for the tournament, and Brian Savo, who is a great young man who has ALS who is being treated at the clinic and Hospital For Special Care has agreed to be our other honorary co-chair, so Jay and Brian will be a part of opening and closing ceremonies and interviews, and what's also interesting or fun is that we have a specially designated venue on corporate row for the clinic to be able to have ALS patients from Connecticut come out for the day and enjoy themselves.

I think that's going to be just a terrific week. As a matter of fact, Brian was so excited about being here, he said, Andy, I'm going to be here every day of the tournament. I said, whoa, man, that's like a lot of work. But he's very excited about it. And to have them as our honorary co-chairs will be great.

To tell you more about it, I'm going to introduce Dr. Kevin Felice, who serves as the chief of the department of neuromuscular medicine and director of the neuromuscular center at the Hospital For Special Care, and Dr. Felice is just terrific. The work that he does with his staff is really second to none. It's world class.

We're happy to have you as our partner in the golf tournament and the Travelers Championship. So just join me in welcoming Dr. Felice.

KEVIN FELICE: Thank you, Andy. It's good to hear that it only took you 10 minutes at that meeting. It only took us two minutes to realize we were in the company of some really great people, Andy, Jay, and it's been a pleasure to meet Nathan, as well.

In addition to getting help from them, it's been a lot of fun for us, as well.

I want to thank them, and I also want to thank our Hospital For Special Care team, Dr. Votto, Lynn Ricci, Carl Ficks, Jason Jakubowski for helping me along the way.

Look, I just want to mention, everyone, ALS is a really devastating disease. I've been caring for ALS patients for 30 years. Each year ALS, although a rare disease, affects 20,000 Americans, and in the state of

Connecticut about 300 people are affected each year, and it's not only the patients, it's their family members, as well.

It's a disease that begins sometimes in the prime of your life. You're doing well, everything is going well, and all of a sudden you develop some weakness, maybe your hand, maybe your foot, maybe you can't walk anymore or maybe you're having difficulty with your speech. It progresses insidiously. You might see multiple doctors along the way. And finally it occurs to the doctor you're seeing, this looks like a neurologic disorder, and that's where we step in and make a diagnosis, exclude other things, and start to focus on the road to getting care because they need a lot of help along the way as you can imagine.

During an ALS patient's journey from initially noticing weakness until they develop respiratory insufficiency and succumb to the disease, unfortunately usually in a three- to five-year period, patients need a lot of help along the way. As Andy mentioned, ALS is a disorder of motor cells or motor neurons in the spinal cord. For the most part it's a sporadic disease, meaning it occurs out of the blue. It can affect anyone. About 10 percent of cases are genetically based but the rest are not. They just occur. They don't affect other family members. And unfortunately at this point we don't fully understand the cause and how to treat what we call sporadic ALS or Lou Gehrig's disease.

In 2007, after being at another facility for many years, we became good friends with the folks at Hospital For Special Care, a nationally-renowned long-term acute care hospital, and it became obvious to us that we needed to provide care at a facility like that, a facility that was attune to taking care of the needs of people with a chronic disease. Since 2007, over these nine years we've created the largest ALS care facility in the state of Connecticut. Of the 300 people that develop ALS each year, we take care of approximately 250 of them, and we've become one of the largest clinics in the Northeast.

Our small hospital for ALS care is as big as Mass General and Columbia University in the scope of our ALS care, so we're really proud of that.

Our center has become certified by both the ALS Association and the Muscular Dystrophy Association, and we're dually certified by MDA because, as you know, they provide help to other neuromuscular diseases, and we're one of only eight centers in the country that have that dual certification, and it's just a testament to our compassion and passion about caring for these patients.

When patients come to our center, we provide

multidisciplinary care for them. In other words, they don't just come and see the doctor for 15 or 20 minutes because that's all the insurance companies allow us to see patients for, follow-up patients. It's crazy. But we spend two to three hours with patients. They see the doctor. They see physical therapists. They see social workers, occupational therapists. They have their breathing function measured. And they see our social worker, and we help to fight some of their battles that they may face with getting home care, with kind of living in the community with ALS, and every time they come in, things are a little bit worse for them, so we have to be geared up and really experienced, and I'm fortunate to work with a great healthcare team in that regard.

In addition, we also sponsor Connecticut's largest ALS research and clinical trials unit. At any one time we're doing three to five different experimental studies in ALS, experimenting with potentially helpful medications to slow the progression of the disease down so it's a very resource intensive program that we run, and when we heard that we were going to be a beneficiary for this event, we are so honored and so thankful, and it's been a true enjoyment to work with Andy Bessette and Nathan Grube, so thank you very much.

NATHAN GRUBE: Thank you, Dr. Felice. We're fortunate this morning to have the Governor with us to say a few words, and I need to say this: That to put on event of this magnitude, the scope of how many different towns and cities that it touches, from traffic to commerce, to have the state at its highest level understand the charitable, economic and even the psychological impact of this event, we are very, very fortunate to have governor Dannel Malloy.

DANNEL P. MALLOY: Thank you. It's great to be with all of you. I will make this very quick. Bubba is ready to go, I think, and I don't want to stand in that way. It's great to have him back. Thank you very much for joining us once again.

To all of the sponsors who participate, thank you very much. You all know the numbers, \$1.5 million distributed last year. \$10 million since the Travelers took over the sponsorship of this event have gone to the communities across the state, making a real difference, and Travelers is great. It's just a great company.

But with this new relationship with the hospital and dedicating themselves to ALS, it really is not Travelers, the company, it's Travelers, the family. They are an impressive organization, to care about their own employees, even at the highest levels, and find ways to mark those occasions and those changes in corporate life or personal life.

Finally, what I want to say is Samuel Clemens said of Connecticut that we are the land of steady habits. We are about to be tested. Now steady is -- if the tournament were being played this week it would be appropriate because we're going to have 90-degree heat all week. It would have been matching what we normally do. But we've got to make sure that the fans of this tournament turn out at a different time of year, and we've got to pour it on to make sure that it continues to be the great success that it has been and that the charitable organizations who receive the proceeds will do as well in their work.

Thank you for having me. Travelers, thank you for what you've done for our state and for your family. Take care.

NATHAN GRUBE: Governor, thank you very much. I get to introduce Mark and Bubba here. I want to say a few words here and then we're going to show a video. But I said a few words about this this morning.

Mark Roling, who's going to be interviewing Bubba, has been in the industry for 25 plus years and has a resume, when you look at what he's covered, you know his face, his voice, very well-respected in the industry, but when you look at the last probably year and a half of Mark's life and you get to see he was very public about his battle with cancer, and what I thought was fascinating was the players and other media's response to Mark from a standpoint of support when he got back out on TOUR, how overwhelming it was, them asking, hey, how are you here, how is this going, how is this going, and it was very telling, I think, to show what this man means to the game, what he means to the players, and so we're very fortunate to have him here with us this morning. He's a friend of the event.

And then also Bubba, our two-time champion, is here back with us. It is never a given that your champion will come back for media day or defend your tournament. I'm going to say that.

And from the beginning -- I'm going to tell you a quick story. From the beginning, Bubba has said, absolutely I'm coming back. And when all of a sudden there was rumblings going, I heard many commentators saying, oh, that's unfortunately for Travelers because Bubba is going to be in the Olympics, there's no way he's going to play the week before, and you talk to Bubba and he goes, "I'm coming." Later you talk to him, see him down the road in the fall at the other events when Andy and I are out there recruiting, Bubba, how's your schedule look, and he goes, "Oh, I'm coming," and never wavered once, from the beginning, that he was going to defend and he was going to be in the Olympics as an Olympian. We are very fortunate to

have him do both of those.

I'd like to introduce Mark and Bubba. We're going to show a video first, and then we're going to have Andy come up with a special presentation.

(Video shown.)

NATHAN GRUBE: Bubba, you can start to make your way up, but Andy actually has something for you here.

ANDY BESSETTE: We have to have a little fun, right? I'm a Blue Wahoo! Do you know what that is? That's Bubba's baseball team in Florida, Blue Wahoo water. So we have a gift for you. We have two gifts, actually. One is we always thought it would be kind of cool --

BUBBA WATSON: Anyway, we made the Playoffs yesterday. We won the first half of our season so we're in the Playoffs no matter what.

ANDY BESSETTE: Really? They do that in AA?

BUBBA WATSON: AA has two seasons, first half, second half.

ANDY BESSETTE: I wonder how we did.

BUBBA WATSON: You're a big fan of your AA team.

ANDY BESSETTE: So here is a Hartford Yard Goats hat. We've got two for you in case you like the style, one for Caleb, one for Dakota. You can figure it out. And then of course you have to have Hartford Yard Goats Bubba 1 shirt, just so we can have like competing teams, right? Maybe we can get them to play each other.

BUBBA WATSON: We should. Do a charity event.

ANDY BESSETTE: Thank you for being here and thank you for making time to be a part of this. We have one more thing for you. I know Angie well. I know Bubba, and I know obviously Caleb and Dakota, and we want to give you one more gift because you just built a new home in Pensacola, right?

BUBBA WATSON: Yep.

ANDY BESSETTE: We know you like to spend time together, so we were trying to think of some kind of home game where you guys could enjoy it together yet still remind you of us and what you did here in both '10 and '15, so we've had a custom-made game -- what's this called? Corn dog.

BUBBA WATSON: You were an Olympic athlete. Was there drug testing back then? (Laughter.)

ANDY BESSETTE: So we had Corn dog -- this makes no sense. That's something you eat. Corn hole. That makes a lot of sense, okay. So we had it made with the Travelers Championship in 2010 and 2010 Championship, and there's two of them, so you can take it home and you can play it with the kids and with Angie and compete.

BUBBA WATSON: Perfect. Thank you so much.

MARK ROLFING: I was told to send you all Chris's regrets that he couldn't be here today, and he also wanted to remind me that I'm filling in his big shoes today so I'd better do a good job. So in honor of the Boomer, I decided that my first question for Bubba is given all the things that you have accomplished in your career, what does it mean to have had a cookie designed after you today?

BUBBA WATSON: That's when you know you've made it, you know? My dad and my mom, they've always inspired me to just have a cookie after me. They said, all your goals will come to an end when you have a cookie after you. I am opening a candy shop, so maybe we should start doing that. Candy shop opens in a month.

MARK ROLFING: For those of you who were watching last night at about 8:15, Bubba Watson was on the 18th green at Oakmont congratulating Dustin Johnson for his U.S. Open victory, and 10 hours later, here he was in Hartford, Connecticut, downtown at the Marriott talking to all the folks in the community and the media. I just think it is an incredible commitment. It says a lot about Bubba Watson. It says a lot about how important the Travelers Championship is and Travelers as a sponsor in this community. Bubba, I just want to know, how did this love affair start, and why has this tournament become so important to you?

BUBBA WATSON: You know, it started back in 2006 when I didn't like this place. I'm pretty sure it was the same number. I think it was 74-74, missed the cut, said I'll never come back, and then I meet this man named Andy who doesn't know about corn hole, Olympic athlete that he is. And he tells me all about it. He tells me about Travelers. Tells me what Travelers wants to do. I'm like, why are you telling me this? I'm just a beginner on the TOUR, right? He said, no, we want input from everybody, I'm talking everybody, and he wasn't talking about the event. He wasn't talking about how do we get the best players here. He wasn't talking about what the trophy looks like. He wasn't talking about what the course looks like. He was talking about everything else, Travelers behind him. He was talking about how can we make the fans more excited. How can we raise the charity dollars for the

community? How can we make the caddies have more fun? How can we make the players and the families have more fun? That's what he was worried about the most. That's what Travelers was worried about. And then after that a golf tournament is going to break out and there's going to be a winner.

So they came in with a different approach and with a different way of looking at the event. It's an event, and it happened to be a golf event, but he wants everybody to be happy, everybody to be excited, and we want to do good. Every golf tournament is a charity event. We raise a lot of dollars for the local community, and that's all that Travelers was talking about to me.

So I said, you know what, I'm going to give it another shot, even though I'm not very good at it. And then 2010 rolls around and I didn't tell the world yet that my dad had cancer and was going to pass away of cancer, and he survived three more months after that victory, but the love affair was that one moment in time where, as you know, and many of you know, all the diseases out in the world, and especially cancer, a pretty bad one, it's the one light, shining light that we had. I don't know why I chose Connecticut, I don't know why God wanted me to win here, but somehow I won here, my first win. Slowed our life down a little bit. Even though it's chaos winning, it slowed our life down a little bit to get away from the bad disease, a bad moment in our family's time and history to celebrate and think about what this means for our family.

So the love affair was -- it's more about my dad and my family, and then Travelers, what they were preaching to me about the tournament was really not even about the tournament, it was about all the other stuff. So when you add that all up together, it's a no-brainer for me to be in love with this. And then on top of that, the fans, these are the best fans in the world. It's been amazing here. Even before when I didn't like the tournament very much, they treated me with the utmost respect. It's been a fun event for me, and then winning it twice obviously makes it a little bit more fun.

That was my short answer, by the way.

MARK ROLFING: When you won in 2010 you were sort of a self-described near beginner. 2016 you had become one of the absolute top 5 players in the world. How did you get better? How did you, on the golf course, so dramatically change over that period of time as a player?

BUBBA WATSON: Slow learner. I learned it all myself. I taught myself how to play. My dad taught me the basic swing at six years old and I started beating my dad at eight, so he quit talking to me. He wanted me to just experience sports, and he told me -- he gave me

two options. He said, you'd better start working, you'd better be really good at grades, or you'd better be really good at a sport because that's the only way you're going to college, because I'm not paying for your college. So golf was it. Golf was my way of getting out and becoming a man, and I've learned how to play golf. And getting to the TOUR with the bright lights, like the video said, from Bagdad, Florida, no one even knows where that is. From me coming from there to these bright lights with the cameras and people, thousands of people, I didn't know how to deal with it.

I got back in my shell and tried to figure it all out, and then as my dad got sick, it freed me up a little bit more to understand my talent and what I could do if I focused on the right things in life and focusing on golf as just a game; it's not life. It freed me up, and ever since then it's freed me up a little bit more.

You step backwards sometimes and then you go forwards. I'm on this long process that's going the right direction, and it's been a fun ride since 2010.

MARK ROLFING: When I look at some of the other top players, Jason Day, for example, and Rory McIlroy come to mind, there are instructors; there's fitness trainers. They've bulked up in the gym, they're doing all these things to get better. You have done none of that. Are you basically saying -- seriously, are you basically say that you having changed as a person is really what has matured you as a golfer?

BUBBA WATSON: Yes, but there's some extra. I don't know if you all watched the highlights on The Golf Channel last week, but they showed the 2007 Oakmont tournament where I finished fifth in 2007. I was about 210, and right now I'm about 178. Not that I watch my weight. But that's where we're at. So 2008 -- give or take, 2010, I hired a trainer who traveled everywhere I went. He was by my side. Wherever I went, he went. He yelled at me for what I was eating. We went to the gym every day. We went back to where I should be now, and he had other things, and I had kids, so he left and we went a different route and I went a different route, but I still go to the gym, still do different things, but I don't want to bulk up like these other guys are doing. I'm trying to keep my swing the same so I don't want to change my swing over time. I want to be stronger but without showing it, but I wanted to lose a little weight, too.

MARK ROLFING: It's going to be an incredibly busy seven weeks between now and when you're going to try and put your name on that trophy for a third time. How are you going to manage and how have you to this point managed what's going to be an incredibly busy, competitive time for you?

BUBBA WATSON: We took that into consideration about the Olympics just throws the whole schedule off. One week throws the whole schedule off, how they had to do things. And I was fourth in the world for the last two years, so I knew I had a good shot at making the Olympic team, so we had to prepare for that. So leading up to the Masters, just after the Masters, we took a lot of time off. I wasn't supposed to play Memorial, but I added it at the last minute, so that was going to be another time off.

But yeah, I've been preparing on the time, how do I save the energy, get ready for this long stretch. So what I saw it as is this is a new season for me. I had the first part of the season, had a break, and now this is a new season.

Trying to prepare for this, and the no-brainer -- there's so many questions being asked, but the no-brainer was you're defending champion; your dad got to see you win here; what it meant to my family; how good Travelers has been to us; how good Travelers has been to the TOUR; and then from the golf side of it, preparation for the Olympics. I don't know what the preparation is going to be down there because it's a new venue that just was built, so for practice and to knock rust off or whatever it is, I want to come here and try to win and defend my title and then fly to the Olympics.

So it was a no-brainer never to miss this. This was never coming off the schedule. We've always planned on being here. No matter what happened, I was going to be here. So I'm missing opening ceremonies, and then I just found out, because I didn't know the date, but I'm missing closing ceremonies because it's the week after our event, so I'm just going to fly in for the golf tournament and then fly out if I make it to the Olympics.

MARK ROLFING: You've won nine times in your PGA TOUR career, a couple of times at three different places that you seem to have a comfort level, Augusta National being one of them and of course here in Hartford. Why is it there are certain places where you seem to be so much more comfortable both on and off the golf course than others do you think?

BUBBA WATSON: I think it's just the atmosphere, the atmosphere places create. Travelers has created this atmosphere. The fans around here are bought into it. They love the game of golf. They're excited about their sports around here. So I think just the whole atmosphere of this area has been nothing but great for all golfers, and for me especially. When I'm comfortable at a place, I can perform because I'm not in my shadow of hiding from people, and so when I get comfortable I can perform to the best of my abilities.

That doesn't mean I'm going to play well every week, but that just means I have a better opportunity of playing well.

MARK ROLFING: It seems like week in and week out on the PGA TOUR, it seems like the concern is the players, television, the sponsors, and somehow fans are fourth down on the list. Do you think one of the reasons why the Travelers Championship has become so successful is that the fans are really high up on their ladder in terms of importance?

BUBBA WATSON: Oh, for sure. I mean, that's like I said, when I first met Andy years ago he was talking about what he wanted to do and how he wanted to do it, and then at the end of it, we're going to play golf, as well.

So when you look at what Travelers has done for the community, what they've tried to create here, this event, I mean, it's an event going on, it's a charity event going on and golf is in the middle of it, and golf helps bring us all together, but yeah, the fans are most important. The new Fan Zone, as I see they're working on it today, they're working on the atmosphere down there and how they're going to approach that again this year. I mean, every year Caleb wants to go down there, and he's already been talking about what are they going to have at the Fan Zone and what concert is there going to be, what are the kids going to be able to do. Is there a bounce house? Is it putt-putt? So there's things that the whole -- even if you're not a golf fan, there's things going on here that bring you to this venue and make it successful, and Travelers has done that, and I think the people around the community have seen that, so they come out here and it's always good weather here, so it's pretty good.

MARK ROLFING: What do you remember most about that win last year?

BUBBA WATSON: The check cleared. (Laughter.)

No, what I remember most is any time you get your hands on a trophy, you've done something well, but what I remember most is, again, it was just free. It was just we were playing good golf, and we were having fun. We were excited about seeing the old guys again, seeing the Travelers team, seeing the people that we see every year, the locker room attendants, the people that help us with food service, the maintenance crew, everybody that we talk to, the volunteers that help us between each hole with the ropes, all these things, and then it made me mad that Paul Casey started birdieing every hole it seemed like on the back nine.

But I thought we were going to have that Kevin Streelman birdied like seven holes or something.

And then I got lucky. Paul, in the playoff I ended up beating him. But it's just exciting, this golf tournament. It's just everything else, coming here as a past champion, they treat you little different. They just treat you with more respect, even though I don't know how they can do more, but they do more, and then winning it for the second time I can't wait to get back here again and just feel the excitement and get pumped up, get the goosebumps from all the cheers that I'm going to have this year, hopefully I'll have this year.

MARK ROLFING: What do you think is the single most important thing to you winning this trophy for the third time?

BUBBA WATSON: How I'm going to win it for the third time?

MARK ROLFING: What is the most important thing for you to win it?

BUBBA WATSON: My driver. I need to have my driver going the right direction, starting in the right area where I want it to start, and that's going to set me up with short irons into these holes, and then every tournament you can just sit here and say putting because putting is going to come down to the last stroke. But my driving gets me in the right areas where I can attack the golf course and play the level that I want to. It can give me a good shot at winning on Sunday.

MARK ROLFING: Are you feeling good about winning this thing again?

BUBBA WATSON: I'm always feeling good about it around here. I get excited. This golf course suits me. Hopefully these changes don't affect me too much. But I had some -- they asked past champions and different players and different people what do they think about the changes, and I put my input in, and I'll be interested to see if my input paid off any.

MARK ROLFING: Ladies and gentlemen, your two-time Travelers champion, defending champion, Bubba Watson.

BUBBA WATSON: Thank you.

NATHAN GRUBE: You're going to get to go out and see this incredible golf course that Bubba loves, and he's taking his bean bags with him. As Bubba mentioned, just a few of the things we did just now, our concert series, our friends at Power Stations help us put that on. Big & Rich, we're going a little country this year, with some Gin Blossoms, as well, so a little '90s rock mix and country. We're always dabbling with that.

But it's going to be a good show on Thursday and Saturday, and it's funny, I still get stopped, people say, who's coming, who's coming, and I tell them the players, and they say, no, no, no, what's bands. So the bands and the concert series has taken on a life of its own, so that's going to be fun.

More player commitments in the next probably seven to ten, 12 days, you're going to see some more players. Anyway, thank you very much. Enjoy the course. Enjoy the day. We appreciate your support.