

Sony Open in Hawaii

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Honolulu, Hawaii, USA

Waialae Country Club

Webb Simpson

Press Conference



JOHN BUSH: We'd like to welcome Webb Simpson to the interview room here at the Sony Open in Hawai'i. Webb, four starts this season, two top 25s, including the T-8 at Sea Island. Talk about your season up to this point and then your expectations for this week.

WEBB SIMPSON: Yeah, it's been -- 2021 was a frustrating year for me both physically, and you know, golf performance, battling flu, COVID, neck injury, and I feel like that crept into my golf game.

But after the Shriners tournament, I got a lesson from Butch Harmon and Pauli and I and Butch all agreed I needed to get more on top of the golf ball and kind of shallowing out a little bit and we saw some good changes at CJ Cup and it got even better at RSM, I took a month off and really worked on it and RSM was my best ball-striking I had had all year, and it gave me a lot of hope for this season.

Three things I've missed out on the TOUR Championship, Ryder Cup and Tournament of Champions, and those are my favorite events. So I felt like I needed to putt into some extra work into the off-season, and it feels great. It feels great to play a golf course that I love. We get some wind. We get the elements here.

So I feel like my game is in a good spot, and I fully believe my best golf is ahead of me.

JOHN BUSH: I was going to ask you, how you rated last season after coming off a two-win season.

WEBB SIMPSON: Yeah, 2021 was an awesome year all around on the golf course.

It was a letdown year I guess, this past year. And I realize, you know, I had a lot of sympathy for guys who have gone through injury because I had never gone through your and it really messes with you for a while. It hinders your workouts and it hinders your practice. You know, I showed up at the U.S. Open after having the flu for the week, a pretty bad battle of the flu and I just wasn't prepared.

I'm really trying make I'm healthy all year. The neck injury was a fluke accident. But my body is strong and healthy now, so I'm ready.

Q. What happened with the neck?

WEBB SIMPSON: I was hitting balls at Wells Fargo on Tuesday and I was hitting for 45 minutes. Never really had any neck problems in my life.

And I hit my second driver and I felt something strange in the back of my neck. It didn't really hurt but I knew something was weird going on. And I hit another one, the same thing happened. So I quit hitting balls and that night, Tuesday night, it tightened up.

Wednesday morning it was worse. I had limited mobility. Withdrew from the Pro-Am and we tried everything Wednesday and it just kept getting worse. The MRI showed that there was a little bit of bulging but not bad.

And with rehab from my trainer and a few weeks after, I went to PGA as my first start back and I had a little bit of pain but not bad at all. And then after the PGA, it was gone. It hasn't come back.

You know, the injury I had specifically, my trainer said is super common for golfers with how many balls we hit one way. But he's played closer attention to it these last few months to make sure it doesn't come back.

Q. Make you nervous over the past part of the year that it was going to come back?

WEBB SIMPSON: It certainly did.

Q. You were aware of it?

WEBB SIMPSON: I was aware of it, yeah. But I think after the PGA, playing a few tournaments in a row with no pain, I started to think less about it. But yeah, any time I felt like a weird crick or stiffness, it definitely brought back some of those memories.



Again, we've done a lot of work on it to the point where I don't fear it coming back.

Q. Now, we're out in the middle of the ocean, and you were not there last week. Why would you come out to the middle of the ocean for one week?

WEBB SIMPSON: That's a good question. This is really far from Charlotte, it's really far. I realized that when I got off the plane in Phoenix, I'm not even halfway there.

I love it here. I have great memories here. And it is a golf course that if I put top five favorite courses for me and my game, this would be one of them: It's short, it's tight, we have doglegs, we have wind, I love bermuda greens. So it is really far. It's further for me to come here than The Open Championship.

It's a trip worth taking. Charlotte is freezing right now.

Q. Have you been on the course at all?

WEBB SIMPSON: I did. I played nine this morning.

Q. Was it soft?

WEBB SIMPSON: No, surprisingly, we were getting some run.

Q. Were you expecting it to be soft?

WEBB SIMPSON: I heard they had a lot of rain last week and you can see some of the areas where standing water was, it kind of killed the grass. The greens were soft, but the fairways were running.

Q. What did you make if you watched any golf -- and if you didn't, you don't have to admit that, of the scoring they put up last week?

WEBB SIMPSON: Well, so my routine in the morning is as I'm making my coffee, and I'm kind of waiting for the water to heat up, I check the scores if I'm not in the tournament that week. I'm checking the scores, haven't had my coffee, I'm half-asleep, I kind of did this with my eyes because I see 11 and 12 and then my coffee process stopped because I had to see all these score cards.

It was crazy. Paul and I have a theory that some weeks on the PGA TOUR, the guys as a whole don't play well, and some weeks, the whole tour plays well. And I think that was an example where most of the guys played unbelievable golf.

Q. I would ask you in relation to being one of the

greatest power hitters of the game, was it at all comforting to see that the leading score last week was Cameron Smith?

WEBB SIMPSON: Very comforting. And my boy, Kevin Kisner, got a Top-10. 8-under on Sunday. Play with him this week.

Yeah, whenever a guy like Cam or Kev has a good week on a course that typically bombers win, it makes me happy, and you know, I'm going to get back there next year. But that was incredible.

It was talked about a lot, but I feel like only those in the golf world really know how good that was. You guys know, players know, caddies know, but I think the typical golf fan, it's probably hard for them to conceive how good 34-under is. It's amazing.

Q. 20 years ago, everyone was making a big stink out of the fact that Joe Durant shot 36 under at Palm Springs. That was five rounds; this is 34 over five.

WEBB SIMPSON: Yeah. And pretty sure Maui is a lot longer of a golf course.

But good for Cam. Any time you win a tournament, it's great, but he took down No. 1 in the world, which Jon is obviously playing unbelievable golf.

Q. If it had been nothing but Rahm and Brooks and Justin, this almost makes it sound like it can be done; you're not living it necessarily just because you don't carry it 450; I exaggerated.

WEBB SIMPSON: Yeah, but my biggest thing with the golf courses has been forced carries. I give people the example of East Lake, it's a very long golf course.

But we have had Jim Furyk win, Bill Haas, probably average length. Snedeker, average length. But you also have bombers win. But the difference is there's no bunkers at 320. I try to avoid all the course where is if you can fly it 310 to carry a bunker, then I'm not going there because I can't fly there and so my fairway is half the width. And I think Maui is a place where for the most part, there's not really forced carries, so shorter guys can win.

Q. Even though you're young by anybody's standard, do you find yourself at any time in your career starting to count years?

WEBB SIMPSON: For sure. I've got five kids, so there's always that thought of wanting to be home as much as possible. So I've scaled back a little bit the last couple of

years, only playing 20 events a year.

But yeah, it seems like the guys in their 40s playing good golf becomes less and less every year. But like I said earlier, I feel like my best golf is ahead of me. I feel like I have such a great team that, you know, I still have plenty of things I want to do in this game. I want to win more majors. I want to be on more teams. It would be a dream to captain a team one day.

But I feel like I'm 36; in my mind, I've got a good ten years left. Stewart Cink is giving me a lot of hope. He's playing some awesome golf, winning golf tournaments in his mid 40s. If I can stay healthy and keep loving golf; I mean, I still love golf, which is a blessing. I think it's easy to burnout. I've burned out many times.

But I think playing less, having a smarter practice schedule at home, getting away from the game more has helped a lot.

Q. I just drew a blank, bear with me -- John? What was the No. 1 killer last year of the big three that you missed? Which one kicked you in the gut more than the others?

WEBB SIMPSON: I would say Atlanta, and I felt it Sunday night at BMW. You know, BMW, I had to have a really great week. I don't know what I had to finish, probably top six and I played really solid that week. I think I finished, I'm guessing, I think I finished somewhere around 15. The game was there.

But I really felt it that night because, made THE TOUR Championship, I think four years in a row, missed it for two years or three years and then made it again for a few years in a row.

After that period of missing it, I made THE TOUR Championship in 2017 and I realized how great it felt to be there after missing it for a few years.

I was definitely more thankful there than I used to be, used to not think about it, it was THE TOUR Championship. That was probably the hardest. I love Atlanta. I love East Lake. My wife used to live there. 30 guys. It's such a good week. That was hard.

Q. What did you do at RSM? Did you have a chance?

WEBB SIMPSON: Not really. I finished eighth but Taylor was so far ahead all week that I felt like I was playing catch up.

Q. And did you get a phone call from Stricker?

WEBB SIMPSON: I did. He and I talked a couple times. I feel like he and I have a great friendship that goes way back and we played a lot of golf together in 2011, and he was honest with me the whole time, which I appreciated.

It's hard to hear that you're probably not the guy they are picking. But I told my wife that I really appreciated that he at least told me the truth, that way, he didn't offer some, you know, kind of make me feel better kind of soft-sell. It was, this is what we're thinking, it's not definite yet but this is the direction we're leaning, which made me feel actually better because I kind of adjusted my hope a little bit.

Q. What were your hopes when the phone rang? You were talked about, amongst us, anyway.

WEBB SIMPSON: I think I kind of felt this way this year, even though it hurt me to feel this way, like it hurt my chances, but I feel like the game is changing a bit of in the sense that experience in team events and team experience in majors used to be more beneficial, and I don't know why. Maybe young guys are just less afraid.

I don't know exactly what it is, but I feel like the same is in The Ryder Cup. I feel like 20 years ago, might have been the pick because I had played six team events.

But now, like Scottie Scheffler, unbelievable player. And one, he's not afraid. Two, he knows how to perform well in big events. He's already done it in the majors. And so I think, you know, Stricker was after more of, you know, just a different player than me, which is fine.

And you know, I've kind of always been this way. It didn't make me mad. Just made me want to work harder. Like I said I have a dream of being a captain one day of a team, and I know I'm going to have that same situation. Every captain has to deal with telling a couple, two or three guys that they are not on it, that they were close; and get the good phone call of telling the guys that they made it; they are the pick.

But I've got nothing great feelings for Strick.

Q. Of all the rejections you've gotten, does that rank the best?

WEBB SIMPSON: Yes, most definitely. Yeah, for sure.

And that was hard. You asked earlier, what was hard, Ryder Cup, Maui or TOUR Championship. I was like, when I was not in the Masters before I qualified for the Masters, my wife knew that from Thursday to Sunday, like that's all I was doing, sunup to sundown was watching the



Masters, and I didn't know how I would be with Ryder Cup.

We got closer, it was Friday morning and it's all I wanted to do. So I watched for two hours, I needed to practice, but I'd pause it, tell my kids -- like I had the remote and I would go practice for two hours, come back, watch it. I didn't miss a shot.

So the hard part was Sunday, I was so happy we won. And you know, I even got emotional watching it, seeing the guys get emotional. And what an interview Rory gave. Everybody I felt like was giving great interviews. But it was really hard for me like not to be there. Because I've experienced the joy of winning the Presidents Cup three times, but 0-for-3 in Ryder Cups.

Q. Did you miss 2016?

WEBB SIMPSON: I miss 2016. So to see the guys celebrating; it wasn't really jealousy, but just I want to be there so bad. Like I want to experience it with them. Like they are my friends. So that was hard.

But great motivation for me for this year.

Q. I realize Ryder Cup gets a lot more attention than the Presidents Cup, but is there extra pressure on you this year?

WEBB SIMPSON: I believe so.

Q. Within yourself?

WEBB SIMPSON: Yeah, I think so. I love Davis. Got to play for him first time at, I guess it was Medinah, 2012. And it would be a dream come true to make that team because I got to play a Tour event there, a major and I feel great support there.

Question is, do I get to sleep in my own bed or do I have to go downtown 20 minutes away from my house to sleep with my team.

Q. More disappointing with three top five finishes in the last three years here, or do you use that more for a confident-booster coming into this week?

WEBB SIMPSON: A little bit of both. Last year, like you always feel good after you have a good week, even though last year I made a bad mistake, I remember on 4 on Sunday, mental error. And then made par on 18 from the middle of the fairway on the second shot. So I was bummed right after the round.

But, I take that and just remind myself that I've played well

here a few times, know how to play it, and this is like a Sea Island for me. I've had chances, just haven't gotten it done. So I definitely want to get it done.

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