

# RBC Heritage

Tuesday, April 16, 2024

Hilton Head Island, South Carolina, USA

Harbour Town Golf Links

## Matt Fitzpatrick

Press Conference



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THE MODERATOR: We would like to welcome the defending champion of the RBC Heritage Matt Fitzpatrick to the interview room. Let's just start, you just got finished with the opening ceremony and firing off the cannon, what was that experience like compared to your expectations?

MATT FITZPATRICK: Yeah, it was good fun. Something I've seen happen a lot, so being here over the years and seeing it from other players, so, yeah, it was good fun to be part of it this time.

THE MODERATOR: Obviously defending your title this week. Knowing the affinity that you have for this place, having spent a lot of time here, especially as a kid, what are some of those memories that come flooding back specifically to that Sunday here last year?

MATT FITZPATRICK: Yeah, just the shot in the playoff, the final shot to win. That's the first thing that my mind goes back to. Having my fiance' here, my parents here, to sort of see that was just made it extra special for a place that we've been coming for so long. To be a winner of this event is incredible.

THE MODERATOR: Back to this week, coming off a tie for 22nd at Augusta last week, overall state of your game coming back to this tournament.

MATT FITZPATRICK: Yeah, it's okay. I feel like I've played much better since THE PLAYERS. Obviously THE PLAYERS onwards I've had some half decent results, sort of a better trend for myself I feel like in the right direction. My game's there or thereabouts, just think it need a bit of momentum at certain times in the tournament that might spur me on to something a bit greater.

THE MODERATOR: We'll take some questions.

**Q. If I could go backwards before going forward, I've often heard that if you took like a six handicap and had 'em play a U.S. Open course what would they shoot. I would be curious in your opinion what someone would have done on Saturday at Augusta, someone of a**

**single digit handicap, and I'm just trying to get a sense of explaining how you guys do it.**

MATT FITZPATRICK: Saturday wasn't even the hard day.

**Q. I'm trying to discount the wind a little bit. Friday or Saturday, take your pick.**

MATT FITZPATRICK: I'll be honest, I hate those questions, because it's like it could be anything. They're not breaking 90. They're just not. I think the way -- my big thing is every single shot that I felt last week particularly with how strong the wind was, the greens, it's on a knife edge. So a great example for me is 15. The pin's at the back, you've driven it in the fairway, you got a great chance in two. You go for it. Your ball carries two, three yards long on the green, so it bounces on the green, but takes a big bounce, goes long and now you've got 12, 15 yard chip. Now, for us players, we're playing away from the pin. You're not playing, you're not trying to flop it because you can't. You're trying to maybe bounce it short. Us players are kind of trying to just chip it on the green and give ourself a 15-footer for birdie. A six handicapper isn't going to be chipping it better than me or Scottie Scheffler or whoever you want on TOUR. So they're struggling to keep it on the green at that point. So you've gone from potentially making looking like, oh, a par-5 in two, to scrambling for a bogey. So I think that's, that kind of tells you a lot. That's just one hole. Before you know it, there's other holes that can make it add up way more than that very quickly. So, yeah, minimum 90, yeah.

**Q. Because of your history in this area you don't come into these tournaments unless you have confidence to win, but what is your ties to this place and Hilton Head and the fact that you were able to finally win it last year, what does that do for you this year, is there a pressure, is there a looseness, how does that feel?**

MATT FITZPATRICK: No, it feels the same as any other year. For me you got to go off where the current state of your game is. I feel like that's, it's okay, it's not as good as I want it to be, but it's not as bad as I want it to be -- or bad as it could be. So, yeah, there's no pressure for me this week. I'm just going to go out there, enjoy it, there's no cut to even worry about, it's about trying to be probably

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aggressive for four days and try and make as many birdies in and as few bogeys as possible.

**Q. Is there a way for you to quantify and to describe to us how taxing the Masters week is. You talked about how difficult the conditions were when you saw it and everything and you guys come here and it's a little bit more relaxed. Can you quantify how, at the end of that week, how tired you guys truly are?**

MATT FITZPATRICK: Yeah, definitely. More mental than physical. Physically, Augusta is very hilly, but I think the biggest thing for me is if you think of any hole on the PGA TOUR or any golf course on the PGA TOUR, take this as a great week, in my opinion. You've probably got two, three, four breather holes that I would call them, where you kind of get on there and you're like, okay, I can take a bit of a breather here, it's not too difficult. With Augusta there just isn't one. You can hit a shot and make a bogey in a split second without even trying. Half the time I feel like you're scrambling for a bogey rather than just an easy bogey at times. For me, I think that's the biggest thing is that every single hole you got to be switched on, you got to be thinking about where you're hitting it. That is what I learned from the very first time I went to Augusta is that you got to plot your way around, you can't short side yourself, you can't miss in the wrong spots. That's what makes it different from everywhere else because where they put the pins and how the golf course is set up sort of forces that play on you to be more positional than a standard PGA TOUR event might be four, five right of the, from the right with a pin you can go pretty much at it, because it's only a bit of light rough or an easy bunker. Whereas, there's no gimmies at Augusta, in my opinion.

**Q. Could you compare Augusta National last week to your victory at the Country Club in the U.S. Open, the degree of difficulty?**

MATT FITZPATRICK: They're just very different. They're very, very different. The golf course setup is kind of polar opposite in a way. The Country Club was staggered rough, so you got fairway, you got three yard of semi rough, five yards of a little bit thicker rough, and then outside of that is deep stuff. With Augusta it's basically just fairway and trees, so it's a very, very different setup. Obviously the weather sort of was different as well those first two days last week was extremely windy and we had one day of wind at the U.S. Open but it wasn't as bad as those first two days. So, yeah, just very different, hard to compare though, really.

**Q. This tournament always has that rap of being after the Masters, everybody can kind of take a breath and maybe relax a little bit more, but with this becoming a**

**Signature Event do you think the vibe and what this tournament is like is going to change?**

MATT FITZPATRICK: Probably, yeah. I think it's probably easier in a 70-man field with no cut to kind of get up for it again, in my opinion. Certainly that's the way I feel. I feel like when it has a cut it's kind of a little bit more relaxed and you're like, well, tough week last week, kind of come in here, I mean particularly depending upon how you played the previous week as well. I think if you played poorly it's probably easy to get up for a week with a cut, where if you played well it's like, well, I had a good week last week I'm playing pretty nicely I'm kind of just going towing with the flow. Whereas, I think when it's 70-man, no cut, it's easy to kind of continue that momentum that you may have picked up from Augusta to push on and keep going. You got four days, that's plenty of time to make up any ground on any scores, so for me I think it's probably, I think people might be more up for it now. Like you say, it's more of a Signature Event now.

**Q. From the times you visited here in your youth what was the one thing you most wanted to show your fiance' when you first took her here?**

MATT FITZPATRICK: I mean, there's loads of things, really, but probably Salty Dog Cafe is probably a good one. Ice cream over there is always good. Yeah, just wandering around the harbor where the light house is and looking in the shops. Just general stuff. Driving around. It's just such a nice quiet island, so it's great.

**Q. What flavor ice cream?**

MATT FITZPATRICK: Oh, I can't remember. Depend what's on.

**Q. On those same lines, was it different coming back after being here a kid and now being the champion walking back to Hilton Head outside of golf what was it like driving down 278 and coming here and appreciating Hilton Head in a different way maybe this time?**

MATT FITZPATRICK: I mean, it still feels the same, it's just like a nice bonus of being last year's champion. I think for me I've just been looking forward to coming back and obviously sort of looking around it feels like it's the same every year for me and that's what makes it such an exciting week. We know what we're getting, as a family we love being here. I think that's what makes it so special.

**Q. Wondering working with Phil Kenyon, he's obviously grabbed more and more players here as he's found success with a bunch of you guys. I find it when**



**I look at him on the green he's bouncing from player to player often throughout these days. Just as a player that gets to work with him, what do you see from him in terms of his work ethic and his ability to kind of jump from player to player and continue to do his work?**

MATT FITZPATRICK: Yeah, he's the best putting coach in the world in my opinion. Obviously I'm biased, I've worked with him since I was 15. But like you say, everything about it there with his work ethic and everything that he's done for himself, his training aid business, his own line coaching, his coaching of the players that he teaches on TOUR, he's very forward thinking, he's very proactive, he's very good at what he does. For me, I think the good thing -- well I think one of the biggest things is I know for a fact that a certain player was being asked by another coach recently to see if he could have a look at his putting and Phil just, he just didn't care because he knew that Phil was doing the best job and he knew what he was doing and he's not like, doesn't feel threatened or anything like that. I think that's what makes him such a good coach. He believes in what he does and he works hard to be as good as he can. I think that's why I've always had so much faith in him over the years to help me improve.

**Q. People have said he's very malleable to whatever person he's working with and kind of treating each person differently. How has that manifested with you in particular?**

MATT FITZPATRICK: Like I say, I've been with him for a long time, but I think that's the sign of any good coach. There's no such thing as everyone swings the one single way. Again, as you say, I think that's why he is such a good coach because he can do that with all the different players. I have a different tendency to Max Homa, or Max Homa has a different tendency to Tommy Fleetwood. It's all very different. I think the fact that he has that knowledge and he can do that and switch around, okay, I'm seeing Tommy Fleetwood at 9:00 and Matt Fitzpatrick at 10:00, I need to remember what we're doing. I think that's impressive and that's what makes him so successful.

**Q. Wondering what your impressions are of what Scottie Scheffler's been doing these past months maybe even years and does it feel like the gap between him and others is widening or what?**

MATT FITZPATRICK: Yeah, I mean he's just been annoying everyone for the last three months, hasn't he? (Smiling) Yeah, he's unbelievable. I can't say enough about him, really of how highly I regard him, how highly I rate him as a golfer and a person. I don't know Scottie super well off the golf course but certainly comes across

really grounded. I think that's made it easier for everyone to root for him. I think that's a great sign in a person. Obviously, when he's so successful as well, it's even extra impressive. So, yeah, I definitely I watched the last four, five holes of his finish last week and the shots he hit were unbelievable. No disrespect to a regular PGA TOUR event, but the way he was playing kind of just didn't faze him and it was as if he was playing with his pals at home. I think that's the difference of where he's at compared to a lot of other guys at the minute. He's basically got the ball on a string. When you can do that, it's pretty impressive.

**Q. What's your outlook on the Olympics? I feel like you might have been reasonably close to the squad in 2021. Were you and is it something you look forward to?**

MATT FITZPATRICK: Yeah, I was. I think 2020, whenever it was, I think I was close. With it being COVID and a lot of testing, I wasn't really that interested. It wasn't -- I didn't kind of want to see it in that light. This year however I feel is different. It's on my schedule to play. I think it's one of those depending obviously in the future it might be a case of I only do it once and go enjoy it, see how it is. But, yeah, my plan is to play if I make the team. Kind of just go from there. It's not something that I targeted on my calendar to, that I'm desperate to be there and play and play well, but, you know, obviously if the opportunity arises it's something that I'll go do.

**Q. Secondly, I don't know how much you're paying attention to the future of golf outside the ropes, but do you have any hope or wish for how everything comes together as it relates to the European Tour?**

MATT FITZPATRICK: Well isn't Rory going to LIV? (Smiling) That's what I read last night anyway. Who else is going?

**Q. You know you've achieved something in life when you become part of the rumors.**

MATT FITZPATRICK: There's been no rumors about me. Yeah, I mean, I don't know. For me, I want to stay out of it. I don't really have any interest. I want to play tournaments like obviously the RBC Heritage, I want to play THE PLAYERS Championship, I want to go and play BMW Wentworth. That's what's important to me, that's what I want to go do and that's what I'll continue to do. But in terms of how it's going to get sorted, I have no idea. I think you've got obviously the Player Advisory Board kind of doing their thing, giving their opinions. You've got Jay and the board kind of doing their thing. The only real positive sort of take I had was from speaking to Andy Cohen from the SSG Group and I felt like he made things a lot more

clear to me and I felt a bit more positive and comfortable about the future with that partnership. So that's kind of the only thing that I've really gone off that I've, you know, felt good about. I just don't want to get involved in it. I'm not smart enough to get involved in it for one. Two, I just think that what am I going to do? What's my opinion going to matter anyway, so there's no point.

**Q. I didn't necessarily mean that as a future as it involves LIV, I guess I mean, I think anyway you tend to play a lot of European Tour stuff after East Lake, whether it's Italian and DP World Tour, etcetera. Is that going to stay that way, has it always been that way since you've been over here, would there be anyway to**

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MATT FITZPATRICK: Yeah, I mean obviously the schedule this year, I think it's great from a personal selfish standpoint it's great. Because I can play over here January to August and I don't have to worry about FedExCup after that. Then I can go and concentrate, play the events that I like in Europe, go play over there, and tick that box too. So, for me I really like how it's looking at the minute. In the ideal world I'll be honest, I would like less, I would like to have to play less tournaments over here, not necessarily more tournaments in Europe, just less tournaments as a whole in a general season. But I certainly think it gives you the opportunity at the end of the year to go play, but do I maintain that it's probably, it is a lot harder for European players to do that because it's so, it's such a highly stressful season January to August, by the time you get to the end of the year you might have played to that period you might have played 24. Then to go and play another four or five more in Europe it's like you're playing 29 or 28 and you're like, well, that's a lot, really, for compared to maybe previous years.

**Q. Sorry to belabor this, but do you ever find yourself maybe not playing certain events here in the U.S. trying to pace yourself for the end of the year or are you full focus FedExCup and then see what you got left?**

MATT FITZPATRICK: No, I'm full focus over here, yeah. You want to be in events like this. You want to be here. You want to be part of the Signature Events. You want to be playing the best events, the best fields. There's no doubt about it, the best money. That's what you want to do. There's no hiding that. There's nothing that sort of entices me to go to European play between January to August other than the Scottish Open. I think, obviously, in an ideal world I would love it if the PGA TOUR went and did something a bit more in the summer, maybe June or something, go and play in Italy or Germany or France or wherever. That would be great. I think in the long run then

if it stays like this, then obviously there's going to be, to become a tipping point where do I really want to go and play another four or five in Europe at the end. Year, because this is where I've got to concentrate. Yeah, I don't know how that's going to look.

**Q. Do you remember when you first heard about Ludvig or the first time you played with him, any special memories from that?**

MATT FITZPATRICK: Yeah, I heard a little bit about him from Edoardo Molinari, he texted me a couple days before I was going to play with him in the Canadian Open last year and he said let me know what you think. He played great for two days, he was really, really impressive. I think one thing that I would add to that was the having spoken to kind of I guess it was, I think Peter Hanson's helping, Peter asked me what I thought of his game ante to green was fantastic. Great putter as well. Just his short game needed a little bit of work. Peter said that they were working on that or whatever. I saw him play last week, obviously saw him plenty of shots coming down the stretch there. Again, just looked unfazed. Just a very, very good player. Hits the ball a mile, does all the right things. And again, the biggest thing for me is he's like the nicest kid in the world. You got a lot of college kid that come out and they have kind of got this cockiness to them, and he's just got none of that. So I think that's really refreshing.

**Q. Anything from being around him during the Ryder Cup week that impressed you?**

MATT FITZPATRICK: He was a lot shyer than I thought. Which I think, I don't think is a bad thing at all. He was not quiet, but just very reserved. I don't think that's a bad thing. I think he's probably taking it all in. I remember my first Ryder Cup it was all, it's a lot, it's a lot to take in. Yeah, I think he's obviously on the right track. He's doing everything right. I wouldn't be worried about him, that's for sure.

**Q. I read a report that the ratings for the Masters the television ratings were significantly down. That seems like it's been consistent throughout a few tournaments this year. I wonder if you have any perspective or any opinion about how the ordinary fan is reacting to or feeling about everything that's happened over the last two years or you may be too far above the ordinary fan, but I did want to ask.**

MATT FITZPATRICK: Yeah, I am surprised by that, to be fair. Obviously you've got everyone playing together, like everyone wants, and the viewership's down. But, yeah, it's bizarre. I think, for me, speaking to people at home and stuff, people are fed up with hearing about the money. I



think that's the biggest thing. He's getting paid this, he's getting paid that. Prize funds are moving to this. I can see that that gets very tiring very quickly. Maybe people aren't interested or maybe just people know Scottie Scheffler's just that good and it was just going to be a coasting Sunday where he just cruises in and wins. I don't know. I think my big thing would be the money thing. I think people are probably fed up with that, for sure. But it did surprise me that it was down, given it's the Masters and everyone from both tours are playing with each other.

THE MODERATOR: All right, Matt, thanks for the time.

MATT FITZPATRICK: Thank you.

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