

John Deere Classic

Tuesday, June 8, 2021

TPC Deere Run

Silvis, Illinois, USA

Dylan Frittelli

Media Day Press Conference

CLAIR PETERSON: We couldn't have had a better gentleman represent us in my opinion, and like I say, I've been through this since '02, so there's some champions that represent us perfectly, and Dylan is one of those.

You probably all know the background, a 2012 graduate of the University of Texas, made the winning putt in the winning match for the NCAA championship there. I did not know until I checked that he won the Byron Nelson Award as the top academic golfer in the nation with a 3.4 grade point average, so that's pretty cool. Five professional wins, he's worked his way up through the golf rankings from Challenge Tour wins to Asian Tour wins to European Tour wins to a PGA TOUR win.

This year really fun to watch him in the World Match Play make it to the round of 16. That is a World Golf Championship with an unbelievable field.

And most recently if you followed the longest day in golf, yesterday he shot 71-65 in Columbus, Ohio, to -- I'm going to say he's made it to the U.S. Open. I don't know if the final putt has dropped yet, but he sits at 8-under par with the strongest qualifying field, if you looked at who was in that field. I think there might have been 120 players for 16 spots. It was spectacular play.

At this point, again, if we were in the room, I'd turn it over to Dylan for him to reflect on 2019 and how that all felt, but I'd love to hear a little bit about yesterday just to kick things off. I don't know what hotel chain you're sitting in there with the Bobblehead, but thanks so much for joining us, Dylan. We'll turn it over to you.

DYLAN FRITTELLI: Thanks for having me, Clair and Lee and Barry. Yesterday was a long day, you're right. I've played in two of those before. This was my first time in Columbus, and I've heard it's basically like a TOUR event on its own. If they handed out World Ranking points, it would be a pretty strong event.

I was proud of the way I played yesterday. I had a slow start on the Lakes course and then went over to Brookside



and shot 65 with two eagles. It was a pretty magical day, to be honest. I had some crazy shots. I just knuckled down on that second 18 and managed to finish in the last group as the sun was setting. I was the last group to come in.

It was a nice way to end my week here in Columbus and kind of sets me up for the next run-up towards the John Deere Classic. Obviously playing in the U.S. Open, playing in another major is big, and it's a nice way to start a three- or four-tournament stretch heading into the John Deere Classic.

Q. Just in general, can you give us an idea of what it meant when you won the John Deere Classic? How did your life change in real ways after that happened?

DYLAN FRITTELLI: I mean, not to sound cliché or anything, but it basically just gave me a sense of belonging, a sense of, hey, I've made it to the PGA TOUR and now I'm a winner. That sort of solidifies the fact that I'm on TOUR and I can be here long-term.

I think before you get that first win, you're still kind of worried about that 125 number. You're always thinking about do I have a job next year, can I play well enough to keep my card, and that obviously gives a little two-year exemption you don't have to worry about that fact, but it's more so the mental side that calms you down and it just says, hey, you're good enough to win, you've done it, you've gone through the stress and pressure of coming down the stretch. For me that was the major thing.

Yeah, and it's beyond the confidence, it's just a cool thing to tick off. Winning on the PGA TOUR, I don't know how many winners there's been, probably a thousand, less than a thousand players that have done that. It's just a really cool group to be a part of. As you get more wins, more stature, you realize that that was basically the thing that started that domino effect or started that snowball effect.

You've obviously got to get it over the hill once before you can do it twice and three times and do other things in the future. I'm proud to have made that step and especially at a tournament like John Deere Classic.

I had grown up watching it. I knew a bit about it. I didn't really know that much about it until I showed up there, but I



... when all is said, we're done.®

just remember watching it on TV as a kid growing up and going, this is a random tournament in a small part of America and all the other ones are in these big markets and big cities, and it always was sort of this exotic thing to me when I thought of it, and then I heard on TOUR from the guys that they had so much fun and they got to use all these different pieces of machinery before the tournament, and I was like, this is really going to be an interesting scenario.

Then I obviously had a friend of mine knew a family in town so I got to stay with them, so luckily that was a sort of connection to slowly mold me into the community and they could explain exactly how the tournament works and what's going on in that section of the country industry-wise and work-wise and what people are up to.

Q. Are you looking to do something similar this year, staying with the same family and kind of --

DYLAN FRITTELLI: Yep. I'll be saying with the Solis family. Jim actually texted me two weeks ago, I think. He just said, You room is ready for you if you want it. So I'll definitely be staying with them.

They've got a simulator. I didn't get to play with the simulator last year, so hopefully you guys don't have too many media commitments for me so I can go back to the house and maybe play a few holes with him.

CLAIR PETERSON: Unfortunately we're not going to be able to do the Big Dig Tuesday night.

DYLAN FRITTELLI: Noooooo! I guess COVID policies would probably preclude that. That's all right, I'll try and plan on getting my family over for 2022. My two nephews will be keen to come over and see that, so we'll plan on that.

CLAIR PETERSON: I can't help but smile when I see that Bobblehead. I think it's one of the better ones we've ever done. Can you talk a little bit about what kind of fun you've had with this? If I remember correctly you've had a few things you've done with it that are kind of fun.

DYLAN FRITTELLI: Yeah, so I initially posted it when you guys showed it to me. I had the picture and I posted that, and I was like, wow, this is the coolest thing. It looked pretty realistic, and then when they came in I was shocked that they're lifelike. They've even got a little watch thing here on my hand and the golf club, and it's all spot-on. I don't think missed any details of that. I checked the back pocket now that I've been staring at it; there's a yardage book in the back pocket, which I obviously had on when I won. Great detail in this thing.

I've recently decided to do a little -- basically a lead-up to the tournament. I'm going to be giving away some Bobbleheads, so my birthday was last week Saturday, and I ran a little contest on my social media. I still have to pick the winner. I've been busy with U.S. Open stuff, so I'm going to go through my social media there and pick a winner and send it out to them along with some of my other sponsors' gifts, but I'll be doing that every week now leading up to the tournament. Hopefully you guys can latch on to that and we can try and spread the word and get people engaged and excited for what's going to happen in 28 days.

Q. Speaking of contests, what you don't know yet is that our champion always plays in the Wednesday pro-am with the noon tee time with the CEO of deer. John May is the new CEO of Deere, and he's agreed to let an employee play in that spot, and he's going to be caddying for that employee, and they've had this contest to -- why should you be the one to play with Dylan Frittelli at noon, and the responses have been fantastic.

They do have a winner but they had so many great responses that they're going to have four other finalists play in the Monday pro-am in a separate group.

DYLAN FRITTELLI: That's awesome.

CLAIR PETERSON: That'll be interesting for you to experience. It should be kind of fun.

DYLAN FRITTELLI: That's cool. I appreciate that, and for such a high ranking official at the company to be that down to earth and willing to do that is pretty cool. I don't think that happens in most scenarios on the PGA TOUR. I think those CEOs and presidents are the ones that are too excited to play golf and they don't really find the humility maybe to share it with others. It's pretty cool of John to do.

CLAIR PETERSON: It's a wonderful gesture for sure, and it speaks to John Deere. That's kind of reflective of John Deere: Hardworking, down to earth, let's get it done.

DYLAN FRITTELLI: Exactly.

CLAIR PETERSON: Barry, I don't know if there are people in the queue that are looking to ask questions.

THE MODERATOR: I'm sure there are here.

CLAIR PETERSON: For everyone out there, we do have, celebrating the 50th anniversary a book that's been completed. Craig DeVrieze, a very talented writer in town

who covered the event for decades with a newspaper here moved on to a collegiate assignment over at one of the local colleges spent over three years talking to I think over 100 people, and it's really a tremendous story of 50 years in a market this side, like you said, Dylan. Most of the PGA TOUR stops are in bigger markets now. Just people in town that refused to give up on the event when it came to times when it was at risk, companies stepping forward, individuals stepping forward. There's actually an image of the news release that was announcing the cancellation of the tournament in the mid-'70s, and somebody said, no, we're not going to do that.

We'll be able to have all of you in the media see it come tournament time. All of our volunteers are getting a copy, all the pro-am people are getting a copy. It's a great read.

Q. Clair, that was a very difficult decision that you and John Deere had to make last year, postponing the 50th anniversary for all the right reasons. You talked about the book, you talked about Dylan getting to defend his championship now. How does it feel to be somewhat back in business in this new normal?

CLAIR PETERSON: Oh, it's fantastic. There's a real energy in town as we approach this year's event. There was a real sadness last year not having the tournament, but as you mentioned, it was the right decision. It was for all the right reasons.

John Deere especially has been vigilant about protecting its employees, making sure that everyone has a safe environment to work in. When it came to May of 2020 and we had to make a decision one way or the other, the only alternative was to have the event with no fans, and no one felt like that matched up with what people here in town wanted to have happen, layered over the fact that you had a year ago some pretty serious health concerns that weren't totally mitigated yet.

It was the right thing to do in 2020. We missed it. As Lee mentioned, we still did \$12.2 million with the other part of our business. We do a charity mission and an athletic event, so even without the athletic event we had a pretty successful charity year.

But this year it's great to be back.

Q. Question for you on defending and the timing. First of all, go back to last year; you had COVID just a couple weeks later than where we are now. Would you have been able to defend last year, and what has it been like having the defense spread out for two years? Has it changed your mentality toward this event, made it any more exciting to come back to defend? What's

that been like?

DYLAN FRITTELLI: First part of the question, I would have logistically been able to play the tournament because the one that replaced last year's event was in Columbus actually, where I am now, and yeah, I made it back on the Wednesday, so I wouldn't have been able to have done any media Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, so along with what Clair said, I think it was the right decision from the sponsors' side, from all things considered, being a 50th event, pushing it forward would have been a decision that I probably not willingly would have taken if I had all the facts in front of me, but I think it was the right decision considering everything.

Then the timing of this year's event, I think yeah, I haven't played so well the first part of this year. I've been up and down and a little lackluster on the greens, but this tournament yesterday, the U.S. Open qualifier, 36-hole tournament was pretty key for me.

I'm hoping to try and use some of that just, I don't know, that experience, that feeling that I had yesterday felt like I was back to my normal golf and played some great golf, so I can have a week off now and prepare for the U.S. Open. That's obviously a really tough challenge, but it's at a place that I've won Junior Worlds before on Torrey Pines South course, and my sports psychologist is in San Diego and I've got a lot of fond memories of Torrey Pines. So I think it's a good lead-up with that tournament and then heading into the next couple events, and then heading on to Illinois for the John Deere Classic four weeks later should be a nice run-up and I should be in some good form. I'm hoping to play each of those weeks in between the U.S. Open and John Deere, so I'm hopefully going to be firing on all cylinders once the tournament comes around.

Q. It's 50 years of golf here in the Quad Cities, and you just mentioned growing up and knowing this tournament and kind of seeing it and watching it but not really knowing it, I don't think, until maybe now. Where did you see it on the PGA TOUR when it comes to what other golfers are talking about, how the Tour, how the players see this event and how it maybe has grown up, not just here in the Quad Cities but on the TOUR, as well?

DYLAN FRITTELLI: Yeah, it's a tricky one for me to try and sum up. There are a few aspects to that question. For me the fact that I look back at my childhood and watching golf that I know what the tournament is. That fact alone speaks to it's either the community engagement, it's either the sort of novelty of the tournament that John Deere integrates so well into the tournament that they have such a strong brand and I remember that brand, or it's the fact



that the tournament has been around for so long and the title sponsor has remained the same.

I think if you add in all those pieces together that's sort of the reason that it stood out in my head. But yeah, just thinking back as a kid, I just -- I mean, I didn't even know what a John Deere tractor was. In South Africa I guess at the time in early or late '90s we didn't have too many of those, but now I know exactly what it is, having watched that tournament through my teens and getting to the States obviously and hearing country songs and hearing people mention it. The brand itself is obviously huge in that sort of aspect for me.

But then I think it's also what I experienced in the tournament when I was there was the fan engagement and the fact that the whole community comes together. I was surprised when Clair said that, that the PGA TOUR has awarded you guys that the last five years with the best community engagement, that's basically what I said in my post victory interview. I felt like this tournament has the most support. The fact that I stayed with a family in town, there was certainly welcoming and they showed me around and made me feel at home and then on the golf course all the volunteers all the fans, it just felt like sort of a home tournament, even though it's in the middle of Illinois, far away from where my home may be, South Africa or Texas, it just felt like a home event, and I think very few events have that feel.

From that point of view, yeah, I hope I answered your question. There was a second part to the question. Was there anything I missed there?

Q. How do you see the other players on TOUR looking at the John Deere Classic? Is it even mentioned that it's a 50 years thing? Just I guess the perception of other players along with yourself.

DYLAN FRITTELLI: I obviously can't speak for other people. You'd have to ask the other players on TOUR for their opinion, but the overarching theme I get or maybe the thought I had before I came to the John Deere, because I have my own ideas now, so the words that I was getting from other guys was it's almost like -- I would say like a second-level major because of the fact that you get into the Open Championship, because of the fact that it's been a title sponsor for so long, and then because of the -- I know a lot of guys talked about bringing their families there, so basically their wives forced them to go play that tournament because the kids have so much fun. They enjoy going there.

In that sense it's got tons of appeal for the fans, the family, the other people, but then it's also for the players, it's like

hey, this is a notch above a normal tournament because you can get into the Open Championship, and when you look at the list of winners, there have been some amazing players, guys that have gone on to win majors and done really well, or that have won majors and come back and played well and won.

Yeah, that's the best way I can describe it, sort of a second-tier major or a bridge to a major or to a top-level major, a WGC event.

Q. We recently heard LeBron James, and I'm not asking you to comment on this, talked about how being in the NBC bubble was almost like PTSD. When you hear comments like that and you compare it to what the last year has been like for PGA TOUR players like yourself, you're a very empathetic guy, you're a very thoughtful guy, and I just wondering what the last year has been like beyond an inconvenience in terms of your player career? When you enjoy doing something, you want to do more of it. You won this tournament, you were really looking forward to driving back to TPC Deere Run as the defending champion and it didn't happen, but now you get to do it. Is it just a matter of it's postponed and let's get at it? Where is your mind right now?

DYLAN FRITTELLI: I think the first part of your question, the initial startup once we came back from COVID, for me it was a dream because I'm not a super adventurous guy. I don't do the social stuff after tournament rounds, and they told us no restaurants, no going out, and I was like, okay, everybody is going to have to play on my rules now, which is train, go to the course, do that, come home, just chill in the hotel room.

That was really helpful for me. I mean, on a sort of personal social side, I think we were extremely lucky. I was able to get to work back in June last year and play for millions of dollars and do my normal thing. I know a lot of TOUR pros were unhappy and they mentioned, oh, we have three, four months off, I couldn't earn a living, couldn't do all this stuff, and I'm sitting there going, hang on, guys, there are people that are losing their livelihood, they don't have jobs, they don't have backup, they don't have funds saved up.

The fact that I think some top-level sportsmen and people can sit back and say, woe is me and my life is tough, I think they need to get a big dose of perspective and figure out what the rest of the world is going through.

Beyond that, again, I've forgotten the second part of your question.

Q. Returning to TPC Deere Run as defending champion finally.

DYLAN FRITTELLI: Yeah, it's going to be strange because I'm going on two years of memories, obviously only having played one event, one championship. I will have sort of recent memories but not multiple memories like other guys do having played the tournament for five or six years. I think I asked another player before told a story back in '06 how can you remember '06 specifically from that tournament and he was like, it just stands out. If I've played 10 or 15 tournaments over and over again, surely those stories and memories are just going to blend together.

For me it's going to be two years removed, and I think it's going to be almost extra nostalgic because those memories may be a little more faded and maybe just a little less clear.

I think I'm going to be excited, excited to see the Solis family and see them again. Haven't seen them in two years. Yeah, should be a great week. I know you said the Big Dig isn't going to happen, but I'm sure there will still enough engaging events and a pro-am and stuff for me to visit and see all the people that have made those memories so special.

Q. The golf course itself, what are your memories and what suits you for your game?

DYLAN FRITTELLI: Can you guys tell me if it is a Pete Dye design? Is that true or false?

Q. No, D.A. Weibring.

DYLAN FRITTELLI: So for some reason TPC courses I really enjoy. A lot of them are designed by Pete Dye and I thought for a moment that could be the reason, but I was going through the course in my head and I couldn't see any of his design features.

I just think the fact that it's sort of a birdie-fest gets me out of my comfort zone. I'm typically a player that knuckles down and plays well in tough, windy, long rough conditions, and when I got there I looked and I said, okay, I'm just going to have to do something that I don't normally do, and that's make 25, 26 birdies in a week and just get over my mental approach of oh, I only do well in tough conditions.

I think from that point of view it gets me out of my comfort zone, and the specific design, I don't think there's anything there that favors anyone per se, if I think of the previous champions, Spieth is a wonderful putter, Steve Stricker is a wonderful putter, Dylan Frittelli is predominantly not a

wonderful putter. I think in that sense it can also focus me and force me to putt well and double down on the fact that I am a good putter and I can do it and I can win this tournament again.

THE MODERATOR: Since you won in 2019, are there elements of your game that you've worked on to improve? You've got the two-year exemption and it kind of gives you a little bit of breathing room to work on things. I was wondering if there was anything you have focused on.

DYLAN FRITTELLI: Yeah, I'm definitely working on my putting right now. The last few months have been pretty terrible, just to be blunt. I worked on it last year a lot, and my putting got really good for a spell there towards the end of last year, and I just need to figure out how to get back to that, and once I do, I mean, my ball-striking is top 30, top 40 on TOUR. I'm definitely not concerned about that end. But yeah, once the putting comes around I'm going to be competing in tournaments for sure.

THE MODERATOR: Are you working with any particular teacher on the putting?

DYLAN FRITTELLI: No, Chuck Cook is my coach. I trust him. I know most people tell me, oh, you need to see a specific putting coach, and that's what everyone is doing these days, but I'm going to stick to my guns and keep working with him.

I may seek out some opinions from other players and possibly coaches and just maybe quiz them and see if there's anything glaringly obvious, but I know my technique is sound. I think it's more so a fact of getting the mind right, maybe my eyes, as well, reading the greens and figuring out those two aspects more than changing everything and trying to figure out a new coach.

Q. Does the TPC Deere Run present enough of a challenge for you? How does the TPC Deere Run measure up to other PGA TOUR golf courses?

DYLAN FRITTELLI: Yeah, the challenge for me is obviously in the competitors, the guys that show up and the other players who basically try and win.

I think the course specifically, I drove it really well last year, so I didn't see much of the rough. I can picture just green, lush sections of grass on the right and left side of most of those holes. I think I did well to avoid the rough last year, but if you don't hit it in the fairway around there, you're not going to be able to control the ball into the greens and it's going to be tough to make birdies.

In that sense if you can hit it in the fairway, I think it makes

the course extremely scorable and you can make a lot of birdies.

I don't know what your weather is going to be like the next month, but obviously if we get some dry conditions and the course can firm up, that'll make it a lot tougher. Once the greens get firmer, then we definitely find it harder to hit it close to those hole locations and make those birdie putts. But if you get your normal sort of thundershowers and rainy weather that I think you do in the Midwest, it's probably going to be a softer setup in a month's time.

Q. You mentioned that your life really hasn't changed a whole lot in the last year with COVID situation. You stick to your routine. What's it been like for you to have the fans back on the course? Did you even maybe like it better without the fans, or has that kind of reenergized the PGA TOUR a little bit and your perspective on that?

DYLAN FRITTELLI: It's an interesting question. Initially when it came out I was like, this is great not having fans because my logistics side is just easier; I can come in the course, drive straight in the main gate, I don't have to wait for fans crossing and going under bridges and with all the concessions. So in that sense when we started out I was like, this is cool, we can just play quickly and go home and not worry about things.

Then after three, four, five months it was just like, this is becoming monotonous and really boring and there's not much to like amp yourself up and a lot of players spoke about that, too, like we're finding it tough to amp ourselves up and play well.

Obviously when we had some fans come back, that for me was the reminder, like hey, we're in the entertainment business. It was fun to focus on your game and try and play well with no fans there and no people around, but once they came back, it was like, this is why I do it, this is the fun part. It's like seeing people and giving kids high fives.

I sat on the balcony last week at Memorial and I looked out and there were just people milling around everywhere, the 18th green, 10th tee putting green, and I said to someone I was sitting with, I was like, this is awesome to see fans again and get this vibe. I even missed the cut; I wasn't playing on the weekend, but I was having breakfast there on Saturday, and just the vibe that it creates around that, I think it was a good reminder that hey, I think a big reason why I do this is to be around people and to have that feeling.

I think without that, I would probably go crazy having to

play a golf tournament on a golf course with no people watching year in and year out. I think that would absolutely drive us crazy, and most guys wouldn't want to do it if they didn't have that kind of fan engagement.

My routines, yeah, they changed a little bit. Obviously hotels, couldn't go out for dinner and stuff, but now it's back to normal. We can go out and we can do things, and I've recently started dating a girl so I have a reason to go out now. I have a little more impetus to get out in the evenings and have dinner and do some fun things.

Yeah, it's great to have some people back, and I don't know what the tournament cap is for fans this year at John Deere, but I really hope you can get just as many people as two years ago when I won the tournament.

Q. Go back two years; what was the fan engagement like for you here and did you notice it and did you find yourself feeding off of it?

DYLAN FRITTELLI: Yeah, totally. I mean, to be honest, I was actually scared to go out for like lunch or dinner in the town because I felt like I was probably going to get like hounded by local people because it felt like everyone in that area in the probably 20-, 30-mile radius was like, tournament week, this is huge. I just felt like if I went out, I was just going to be mobbed by some kind of paparazzi or something. I know that's a little bit crazy to think of, but I was like, I'm not going to go out to this cool spot. Everyone was telling me, go have lunch, dinner, and I was like, I'm just going to stay at home. Especially when I started doing well and figured people may recognize me.

Hopefully this year I can get out and see more of the town and do some dinners and try and experience the community a bit more.

Q. Usually when we talk to the defending champion, we talk about what it was like a year ago and what they remember and it's amazing how their memory is spot on even a year ago. It's two years ago for you. Do you remember crystal clear? Do you remember all the details of the back nine and coming in and winning? And along with that, what's your approach? I think you mentioned it a little bit, but what's your approach on repeating and defending? Is there a different mindset, all that kind of stuff? Do you remember it really well from two years ago, and what's the approach coming into this one?

DYLAN FRITTELLI: I definitely do remember it. The back nine is going to be seared in my memory. Front nine, final round, I can probably piece together what I did, but that back nine I can tell you every single shot and probably tell



you a little story about each shot, too.

Yeah, and then the other things, I mentioned it earlier, with it being two years I think a lot of my memories will be a little dated or a little hazy, but once I get there I'm sure they'll come flooding back. Thinking about things like oh, where was my physio located; okay, he was downstairs in the locker room. It was really sort of cramped space, lots of guys around, it was a fun place to come in and we were chatting and messing with other guys, and just thinking about random things, how do I get to the driving range and little things like that. If you asked me right away I'd have to think about it, but once I get back there I'm sure all those memories will come flooding back to me.

Specifically on the performance side trying to win and defend, I actually am trying to think -- I think I mentioned this last year, but I don't think I've ever defended a tournament. So my two wins on the Challenge Tour, one I graduated to the European Tour so I wasn't allowed to play the next year, and then the other one I guess I did in Austria -- I may have. That would have been the only one -- no, I didn't go back the next year. I didn't go back. Anyway, so this will be my first major tournament title defense, so I guess it's uncharted territory for me, as well.

The game plan, as I said, would be to try and make as many birdies as I can. It's always 18- to sort of 23-, 24-under that wins that tournament, so you've got to be ready to go deep into the 60s and make as many birdies as you can. So as long as my game is firing and my ball-striking is good, I definitely back myself to do that.

Q. As you go into the U.S. Open, you said you won the Junior Worlds at Torrey Pines. How long ago was that and what do you remember and what are you expecting there?

DYLAN FRITTELLI: So it was '07. I went over and played in June. I sent emails out to a bunch of college coaches and got a few sort of lukewarm responses, even though I was the No. 1 amateur and No. 1 junior in South Africa at 17, and Coach Fields at Texas, he said, I'm really interested. He was probably the most interested out of any coach and said, I've got to see you play. I had an exemption having won the South African Boys' tournament to go and play Junior Worlds and flew over there. My mom and my dad came with and basically made a trip of it, and I managed to win.

I knuckled down, did three, four days of good prep. Most guys kind of fly in the day before or maybe two days before, but I did some good preparation, obviously changing sort of nine time zones from South Africa.

The golf course has changed a little bit since then. We've got some new tee boxes. We've got some new green complexes and fairway bunkers, but I'm thinking back to the previous time they played there and Phil Mickelson went out with a 3-wood and no driver and that kind of boggles my mind because I just see this course as an absolute brute off the tee. You've got to be hitting the driver long and straight, and I definitely have that. I've pushed myself into the top 10 driving distance on TOUR, and I think that'll help me big time.

Thinking back to the Junior Worlds when I was basically just hitting driver off every tee we played it just as long as we play it in the Farmers Championship and maybe about as long as the U.S. Open, too. So for me as a 17-year-old to go and play there, I think that experience will be crucial and just the good vibes I had from winning there will hopefully calm me down. I've got my sports psych Jay Brunswick who lives in Mission Valley not too far away. I think that will be a huge asset and hopefully culminate in a good tournament performance on a big stage.

Q. You were in Columbus last weekend and kind of have a unique perspective on the Jon Rahm situation I would imagine.

DYLAN FRITTELLI: Yeah.

Q. Talk a little bit about that, first of all, and what's the mindset on TOUR right now with the pros? Are you still worried about COVID-19? Have you kind of lowered your guard a little bit in regards to it? What's the approach, how you deal with the health situations out there right now?

DYLAN FRITTELLI: Yeah, again, I can't speak for other players on TOUR. You'll have to quiz them and find their mindset. But for me, I'm not too worried. I've been vaccinated a month ago now, so I'm not worried about physically getting it. I know the first time I got it I had mild symptoms and it was three days in a hotel room and I was fine. Physically I know I can combat it, so I'm not worried.

As far as the CDC goes, I can't contract it now at least within the first year of having this vaccine, so I'm not worried about passing it on to anyone, so for me it's pretty much back to normal. I'm not too worried.

The guys on TOUR, there are some guys that have reservations, they may not want to do it. I don't know what those reasons are because from all my research and speaking to my physician, there's no risks involved or hardly any risks involved.

Yeah, I'm surprised that not more guys on TOUR have

done it, but the Jon Rahm issue, I caught a bit of heat on social media for commenting on the Patrick Cantlay win poster the PGA TOUR put out, and I just said, some people I described them as clowns, talking about how Jon Rahm actually won this tournament, and it's simply not true. Patrick Cantlay is the winner of the tournament. End of story.

I think it's quite silly for people to go out there and think you can do something, whether it's play professional golf, play another sport or work in business and not follow the rules. We've signed up to play by the rules, be it the golf course rules - if Jon Rahm picked his ball up, walked over the hole and dropped it next to it and tapped it in, I think a lot of people would be unhappy that he broke a rule.

So the fact that the rule is in place and the protocols are in place, Clair talked about it, the TOUR has done an amazing job over the last year and a bit, it's crazy how we got up and running so quickly. Obviously a few guys have tested positive but no one as far as I can tell has ever passed on COVID within the tournament confines.

The fact that that was the case, the TOUR deserves some kind of medal to be able to do that. Now that they've pushed fans out, we've been able to get fans and there have been no issues with that, I think it's absolutely amazing.

I think the Jon Rahm issue may also push a lot more guys to have the vaccine, because you have the vaccine, you're safe, you're protected; you won't be tested and you then can't run afoul of that rule of testing positive and being automatically taken out of the tournament.

Q. When did you guys get out of the bubble, or are you still in it?

DYLAN FRITTELLI: We still have a tournament bubble when we're on-site. We're not supposed to obviously interact with fans. We're not supposed to -- we're trying to mitigate as much mixing as possible, but if you have been vaccinated, there is a lot more leniency with that, so we're not tested anymore, and obviously you're free to do whatever you want to in your own time. We're still advised not to go to restaurants, not to socialize in big groups, but as far as I can tell with the CDC guidelines, it's pretty safe to do so.

Q. Timing is everything. This is your era. Do you have a sense as we begin celebration of the 50th anniversary of the John Deere Classic that this event became a much bigger deal as the years progressed? I'm not really talking about the media or the fan turnout or the sponsorship, but just the idea that some of the

names on the previous winners' list won tournaments, were notables, it was a concurrent event that was run up against majors when it was the Quad City Classic and things like that, and now it's really become something premier with the berth in the Open Championship. How does this size up? I know it's your biggest career win to date, but I'm curious how it sits with you.

DYLAN FRITTELLI: For me personally, it's obviously going to hold a special place for a long time. It's not only for the win. I think it's definitely for that aspect of staying with the Solis family and feeling that engagement in the community. Yeah, as long as it fits in my schedule generally well and there's not like a glaringly obvious I need to rest before a long run-up to Playoffs or anything like that, I think I'll be playing this tournament every year just because of those fond memories and those feelings and just the sort of down-to-earth nature of the tournament. I think a lot of events we go to there's high stress, there's high energy and it's a tough one to play, but it just feels easy to head out there and sort of have a nice relaxing week and a fun golf course.

It's also away from a big city. There's not much hustle and bustle, and that's kind of my view on things. I don't like going to these fancy cities and big lights and doing that whole scene. So I think for me it's a big draw, and I think there are a few other players that appreciate that, too.

Q. Can you tell me, how would you handle having a six-shot lead at the end of a third round of a PGA TOUR event and then suddenly being told like Jon was that in essence you're out of the tournament? How would you handle that? And also have you talked to Jon? Do you know if he's okay?

DYLAN FRITTELLI: I haven't chatted to Jon, no. I don't know anything about that.

It would be tough. Obviously he had some heads up. He knew what was going on. He knew he was being tested. So it is shocking and it is surprising and it does suck, I agree. But PGA TOUR protocols are in place for a certain reason, and unless you revisit those and we want to okay guys with COVID to play in their own group and to play separately and be totally separated from the field, a rule is a rule. Unfortunately once you sign up on TOUR, we sign up to a code of conduct, we sign up to operate under the rules of the PGA TOUR, and sadly for him it went the other way.

I know it's a huge -- that's \$2, \$3 million that he probably missed out on, let alone the World Ranking points from winning something like that. But I think it's a lesson. I

hope other guys on TOUR see it as a lesson. It's something that you should learn from; hey, housekeeping, logistics, let's take care of that stuff, too. You can't just go out there and think, I'm a golfer, I'm just going to play golf 24/7. You've got to have the other things in line too; if he would have had the vaccine, it never would have been an issue because he wouldn't have been tested and he wouldn't have been subject to any of those issues.

I think guys will hopefully take heed of that and take care of stuff.

And it's a good thing, you're protecting other people by getting that vaccine. So yeah, hopefully that's a message to the other guys on TOUR and people at large.

Q. Can you talk about your plan and how you get ready for the Open Championship by playing at John Deere the week before? There were some players who always thought for years maybe until Zach Johnson blew up the theory that you couldn't properly prepare playing at John Deere and sort of getting over to the Open Championship, maybe early in that week of the tournament, how do you prepare? You played really well in 2019 after winning at John Deere. What's your approach to that?

DYLAN FRITTELLI: Yeah, I played great having won that exemption going over there. I think it can go both ways. If you play poorly and then you miss the cut and you're sitting around on a Saturday waiting for the flight on Sunday, that's maybe not the most ideal thing, but if you're playing well, tournament golf is tournament golf. It gets you ready under any situations. I went from hitting high, long tee shots and spinny wedges to playing Portrush, Royal Portrush, which is low, running shots and lots of bump-and-runs, and I managed to adjust right away. But I think that's because my mindset was such that I performed under pressure and I've done really well recently and those good juices just flowed over to the next weekend and I was ready to get into contention and play well.

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