

# BMW Championship

Tuesday, August 16, 2022

Wilmington, Delaware, USA

Wilmington Country Club

## Matt Fitzpatrick

### Press Conference



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CHAMPIONSHIP

MARK WILLIAMS: Welcome back, Matt Fitzpatrick. We just made a great announcement here about new venues for the BMW Championship moving to Caves Valley in 2025 and Bellerive in 2026. Coming back to this week at Wilmington, I wanted to ask you, have you had any experience here, and if not, what do you know about this golf course? Have you done any research coming into the BMW Championship this week?

MATT FITZPATRICK: No, no, I don't really know anything. I just kind of looked at the yardage book last night. Billy walked the golf course yesterday. Gave me a little bit of feedback.

But yeah, on the whole, I don't really know anything. Yeah, looking forward to seeing it this morning.

MARK WILLIAMS: You're coming in off a nice performance last week, T-5 at the Memphis event, the first Playoffs event. You've had a great season winning the U.S. Open, but you've also had ten top 10s, which currently is the most of the season, tied with J.T. What is it about this season that's the difference-maker for you from previous seasons?

MATT FITZPATRICK: I think we just spent a lot of time in the off-season making quite a few changes. Changed obviously my grip for my chipping. That's been a huge change that's paid off. And then also just my approach play. I'd say basically made a swing change with my approach play, and that's just meant that my irons have been much more consistent. Allowed me to hit it closer. Less poor shots, and yeah, taking advantage of it.

**Q. This is old news, going to talk about the golf course right now apparently. Your speed has had a lot of focus in the last couple years, and made me wonder, what inspired you to go after that, and what kind of level of fitness did you focus on from Boys, Northwestern, all the way through? I'm sure you always kept fit, but did you take it to a different level, and what got you thinking that way?**

MATT FITZPATRICK: The speed thing, I've known it for a long time; that I needed to -- it was always something we were trying to improve on. How we went about it, we never really had a clear plan as we have done now.

So it was never -- it was kind of getting better just because I was maturing and get stronger just generally, but it wasn't improving fast.

This year, I feel like something clicked and it improved really fast. I've been working on using the Stack since the end of 2020. It's been there or thereabouts. I had an off-period in the summer last year, and coincidentally my driving, literally, went down. Not only hit it shorter again, but my performance, I wasn't hitting it straight, either. Got back on it, started hitting it better, and that was great.

In terms of the gym stuff, I hired my trainer, Matt Roberts, I think the first season we worked together was 2018. And since then the big thing I've felt whilst training with him is I felt more athletic, just generically strong, rather than -- we don't really do golf-specific stuff. It's just about being strong and being able to be strong enough to cope with the speed that you're going through.

And so we built a really good foundation, if you like, in the off-season last year all the way through to January. I had the whole of January off. It gave me four really good weeks to make some progress and get stronger and basically, like I say, built the foundation for the rest of the season.

**Q. Going back to when you were an amateur, what was the priority on overall fitness?**

MATT FITZPATRICK: It was in the background. It was there. But the important thing was always hitting it straight and hitting good shots and making the putts, and that was the priority over fitness; that still is.

The way I look at it now, it's just important to be strong and to avoid injury and to be able to cope with the demands you need. Billy was telling me yesterday this place is a bit of a slog to walk, it's quite hilly. It's things like that. Last week was pretty short and flat by all accounts. It's great to be robust all year round, basically, and be able to manage that.

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MARK WILLIAMS: You mentioned Billy a couple of times already. What sort of impact has he had on your game and your career since you've had him as your caddie.

MATT FITZPATRICK: He's been great. His experience on the bag has been invaluable. The experiences that he's had with other players over the years and then what he's brought to my game, I feel like he's made everything more simple. I've worked with people before where we kind of like are in between clubs, whereas Billy is just like, yeah, it's a 7-iron; go.

I think that's been the big thing is just having the clarity and the commitment, and I think that's been a big thing.

**Q. How does your thought process change, if at all, when you're in the Playoffs, knowing each week might be your last if you don't qualify for the following week?**

MATT FITZPATRICK: Fortunately this year, I've been guaranteed in from the start. That was quite nice compared to last year, yeah, and the year before.

But I think it's a tough one. I just -- for me, the Playoffs, you can play pretty decent, and you can miss out on this week or you can miss out on next week, and you've probably been a little bit hard done to by how you've played rest of the season.

I'm like a little bit uneasy with that. I think like if you've played well all year, you deserve to be, you know, kind of at the top or where you deserve to be. I think the Playoffs can kind of throw that out a little bit, which is a little odd to me.

**Q. Kind of as a follow-up, last year three of the top six guys who finished at the BMW are not here this year. How do you look at the field with some of the best players obviously not here this week and at LIV?**

MATT FITZPATRICK: Yeah, it's still an incredibly fantastic field. The field this week is 70 of the best players in the world.

Yeah, I think only three of them that aren't here, it's not a massive loss in my opinion.

**Q. And the last one on LIV, how much of a distraction is that? I know week-to-week you guys have to answer questions. Do you block it out?**

MATT FITZPATRICK: I'll be honest, I haven't been asked much about it myself personally. It's been fine. I've just seen it in the media and stuff. You just get fed up with talking about it. My personal opinion, it's like, right, let's

just get on with it now. Just want to play golf and concentrate on what you're doing. Yeah, that's purely my take on that.

**Q. I just wanted to quantify, when we come to a new course that we haven't played at all, how easy or not easy is it for you guys as top-level elite golfers to pick it up in the two days that you practice?**

MATT FITZPATRICK: I think it varies. I've played golf courses I've not played before and had good results and likewise around golf courses and had bad ones. So I wouldn't really say -- to me, it goes back to, you know, whether it suits your eye or whether it suits your game.

You know, this golf course is probably going to suit certain people over others this week. I've not played it yet, so I don't know who. But I think for me, the golf courses that I've played blind before and done well around, I look back and there's not really many holes that sort of intimidate me or I feel uncomfortable on.

I think that's a big factor is just how you see the shots on the golf course and how you feel over it as to whether you are going to play well or not.

**Q. I'm on a two-week stretch of being totally unprepared with the questions I'm asking, so bear with me.**

MATT FITZPATRICK: Sounds it.

**Q. Off the top of my head, seems there was a couple years where you were close to TOUR membership and something went wrong and you came up short. Am I correct?**

MATT FITZPATRICK: Yeah, kind of, 2017 and 2018.

**Q. What happened?**

MATT FITZPATRICK: I didn't have Billy on the bag.

**Q. What else happened? Just short on member points?**

MATT FITZPATRICK: Yeah, I think so. I can't remember exactly, but I think for me, it was sort of back then, like my game was obviously very different. I was probably more inconsistent, not as long.

I think just the way that I probably came over, playing with guys thinking, wow, this guy is so much better than me, and then all of a sudden you play more out here and you start feeling more comfortable and you start thinking, well,

okay, I can beat him or I'm a better player than him.

That was a big thing I found in Europe way faster than being over here is just playing with guys and seeing how their games stack up against mine and thinking, well, actually, you know, I feel like I can beat him, and then you get comfortable and have better results and you're not as worried about people around you that might be chasing you and whatever. That's been a big thing.

And also all of a sudden having Billy on the bag has been a big boost, as well, all of his knowledge and everything.

**Q. If you turn the clock back four or five years and the way the new World Ranking is going to be going, do you think it's going to be easier for someone in Europe to come over here --**

MATT FITZPATRICK: (Shaking head no.)

**Q. Not through the ranking, obviously, but through the ten cards that are available from The European Tour points list?**

MATT FITZPATRICK: Yeah, that's going to be the easiest way to get over here.

**Q. You would have been here sooner, I would think?**

MATT FITZPATRICK: Yeah, I would have been. I would have been in 2015, 2016, I should say.

But yeah, I think it's an odd one. I don't -- a lot of people are saying that the points system was biased to European Tour, certain tours. I think it's biased to every tour. There's always events that were probably overweighted.

But I do think that if you look back before COVID, you play an event in Europe; your Wentworth, your Abu Dhabi, your Dubai, DP World, the big events and the big boys came and played.

So I don't think that -- those big events were still getting good players, so I don't think that is a great argument that -- all right, some of them -- I'm not going to name them, but some events that were lower and did have the minimum, okay, there's a couple. But even that, the minimum is not massive enough to make a big jump anyway.

**Q. Did you play any of those, without playing them?**

MATT FITZPATRICK: Played plenty. Played plenty.

**Q. You didn't look at your World Ranking after it?**

MATT FITZPATRICK: I did. I remember having a Top-10 somewhere and not really moving up the World Ranking at all.

**Q. I don't know how much you pay attention to the new system, but can you see a time in the near future where nobody outside the top maybe 75 or beyond is playing -- is not a full member of the U.S. tour?**

MATT FITZPATRICK: Yeah, I mean, you could say that, yeah, for sure. I think for me, the system it's interesting. It's going down more like the strokes gained model. I think that's the only way to do it. I just think, like, you know, part of me thinks that the FedExCup kind of needs to do the same thing in terms of the points that are dished out to the winners. It goes on the strokes gained against the other guys, and you know, you have your baselines and stuff like that.

Because I think you look at the PGA TOUR, you look at the DP World Tour, both of them have events that, you know, maybe don't necessarily have the best fields but they are getting the same amount of points as other big events that do have big players playing.

I think it's always a work-in-progress, and it's obviously taken a long time to kind of re-do this new World Ranking system, and I'm sure it's going to be changing even more over the next few years just to try and tweak it, always make it better.

**Q. Is there any part that's hard to accept that if Sepp won last week, he would have gone to I think two from starting it at around 41 or 42 after this big year that Scottie has had, etc.? Can you accept that okay?**

MATT FITZPATRICK: Yeah, it's funny, my coach literally texted me that exact scenario. He said he can't believe that he's ahead of me.

Yeah, I can accept it because I've had a great season and yeah, my reply was that I won the U.S. Open, so I'm fine. I'm happy. Like that's fine.

But yeah, it is difficult. In my personal opinion, I think I was laughing last year at the scenario that Collin had such a fantastic season, and he finished outside the top 20 or something on the FedEx, and to me that's like unfair.

And then likewise this year, Scottie has won four times, Cam has won three times, and those seven events aren't, like, small events. They are some of the best events in the world, and they are behind Will now.

Not taking it away from Will, but I think it's a bit too much.

In my opinion, those two should be kind of running away with it and it's kind of a two-horse race, and now there's more people in the mix, which I get that's the whole point, the Playoffs, it's exciting.

But as a player, when you've worked hard all season to then not be rewarded for the whole season performance, yeah, it is a tough one.

**Q. So one more, actually, I think it was Cantlay, obviously not last year, I think it was the year before, he went into Atlanta probably two or three in the ranking, threw an absolute stinker over four days and walked out of there 26th place with whatever money that's associated with -- you should talk to him about it, he's not very happy still.**

Is that fair, do you think, based on the way they reset and it's one big tournament at the end; that if you just have your worst week of the year it's costing you a lot of money?

MATT FITZPATRICK: No, I don't think it's fair. I don't think it's fair. But life isn't fair.

No, I think -- I get why it's done, make it more exciting and throw people in the mix a little bit more. But in terms of people who deserve what their performances showed all year long, like you say, there's two or three examples now that haven't been rewarded for their play the whole season.

You did well for not prepping.

MARK WILLIAMS: You might not be able to answer this until you've played the golf course, but knowing that pretty much 99 percent of the field have not played this course in a tournament, and you haven't played it yet, do you feel like it's an advantage coming to a venue where nobody has played? Do you look at that as an advantage from your perspective?

MATT FITZPATRICK: A little bit. I feel like I do my homework more than most. So I definitely feel like that's kind of -- that is a little bit of an advantage, yeah. It's always interesting to see how the holes play, even in practice, how the guys play, what he's hitting, what's he hitting, definitely looking around.

I definitely feel like I do my bit of work more so than most, so definitely feel I've got maybe a bit of an edge here.

MARK WILLIAMS: Matt, thanks for joining us. Appreciate the time you've made for us. Good luck this week.

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