

BMW Championship

Tuesday, August 15, 2023

Olympia Fields, Illinois, USA

Olympia Fields Country Club

Vince Pellegrino

Paul Fireman

Dan Fireman

Keegan Bradley

Press Conference

THE MODERATOR: Welcome, everybody. We're here to make a special announcement. I'd like to welcome the guests. We have Mr. Vince Pellegrino, the tournament director for the BMW, Mr. Dan and Mr. Paul Fireman, and Keegan Bradley, who is our 2018 BMW Championship winner.

VINCE PELLEGRINO: Good afternoon, everyone. Thank you for being here with us at Olympia Fields Country Club. My name is Vince Pellegrino. I'm the senior vice president of tournaments for the Western Golf Association, the organization that stages the BMW Championship.

We're looking forward to a tremendous week here at Olympia, and as we kick things off, we'd like to make an exciting announcement about the future of this championship. It's my honor to announce that the 2027 BMW Championship will be played at Liberty National Golf Club in Jersey City, New Jersey.

This announcement represents the culmination of years of work between the Western Golf Association and our wonderful partners of BMW, the PGA TOUR and the unmatched venue of Liberty National.

I also want to recognize our partnership in the region with the New Jersey State Golf Association for their support. I'd like to thank Mike McFadden, president of the New Jersey State Golf Association, who is here with us today.

We're thrilled to bring the PGA TOUR and the FedExCup Playoffs back to Liberty National for the BMW Championship's first visit to New Jersey and the New York metropolitan area. Thank you for all your support.

At this point in time I'd like to turn it over to Mr. Paul Fireman.



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PAUL FIREMAN: Thank you. Thanks very much. I've been caddying since I was 10 years old. That's when I started in golf. Pretty ordinary area of the world in Brockton, Massachusetts, blue collar at best. I learned everything about life through my caddying experiences.

Then I eventually went on to play reasonably good golf.

When we built Liberty National, I'd been in a big corporation before that, and when I retired, and now I have Liberty National, my son and I have developed a course that makes me proud, and to have us picked as a future site for both the PGA TOUR, the Western Golf Association and BMW, it brings so much want and significance to me because that's everything I've done in my life and my family is about golf.

We're very proud. We're going to do our best to make the opportunity there one that everybody that plays there will be. We've developed the course over years, and we think it's really a special place. It has incredible views, you'll get to see, and we're proud of the Evans Scholarship program because that's something that hits me right in the heart, that we can work with people that are going to develop new golfers and new possibilities for people getting educated as a result of golf.

I'll turn the rest over to my son Dan, who's done most of the work, and he deserves most of the credit. Dan?

DAN FIREMAN: Well, it's a thrill to be here next to my father, next to Keegan, next to Vince, to be able to finally say that we're hosting the BMW Championship at Liberty. We've hosted some great events over the years. We're proud of what we've done in hosting men's golf as well as hosting most recently the LPGA with the Mizuho Americas Open, and as my father mentioned, we also really care very much about the game of golf, and we care about giving back to the game.

We've done quite a bit around youth golf. I sit on the board of the First Tee. We've had a longstanding relationship with them.

We recently announced a partnership with the American Junior Golf Association where we're supporting the Ace Grant program for the next 12 years, and now we get to

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focus on the Western Golf and Evans Scholars program, which again is an incredible program. It's something that we're proud to be associated with.

We're already identifying children in the Jersey City area and around that we think will be great Evans Scholars for the future that can caddie and learn at Liberty National and learn the game, and it's a way of keeping this game going.

We're proud that Liberty can be a part of these types of events, and we're also equally proud that we can support youth golf as a part of these events, too. We don't just pick these events for the sake of picking them. We're very careful about it.

The fact that we're with the Evans Scholars or the AJGA isn't random. It's really something that we think through.

We're just happy to be here, so thank you.

THE MODERATOR: Keegan, you're not from there but you're close to from there. You're a champion of this tournament. You've played some PGA TOUR events that were previously hosted at Liberty National. Just some comments on the course and returning.

KEEGAN BRADLEY: Well, I loved Liberty National, but I just found out my man is from Brockton, Mass, so now I love it even more (laughter).

Us golfers love playing in the New York area, metropolitan area. Playing golf in the northeast this time of year I think is the best place to play golf in the world, and when you go to Liberty and you're hitting shots and you're aiming at major buildings in Manhattan, it's pretty remarkable.

I personally love going to Liberty because we play in all these cities but we don't actually get to stay in the city and explore the city, but for Liberty we get to stay downtown and we take the ferry over, and every day you drive by the Statue of Liberty and it's just a spectacular -- I think you can put Liberty with Pebble Beach in terms of shocking views when you're on a golf course.

I'm thrilled. Anytime we get to go to the northeast to play golf on the TOUR, I'm excited. Maybe someday we'll play in New England for the -- maybe.

But I'm thrilled, and I know all the players are going to be excited.

THE MODERATOR: Keegan, I think you played a couple of PGA TOUR events there. One you shot four rounds in the 60s, finished T11, but the one I'm interested in was when you finished T33, I think back in '13. You shot 63 in

one of those rounds. What do you recall from that round and what stood out to you that day?

KEEGAN BRADLEY: Yeah, I've always really loved Liberty. There's such a fine line at Liberty of shooting 61 or 62 or a low score, and then you can start whacking balls in the woods and in the water there, and it's a really tough track. There's some tough tee shots.

Again, it's a very fair course and one that we all love coming to.

I think as an athlete, anytime you get to play golf or play a sport in New York, it just feels a little bigger. It's exciting to have the tournament there.

Q. Dan, was the Mizuho just a one-year thing, the LPGA event?

DAN FIREMAN: No, it's three years.

Q. Is there any intention to keep going or -- you wouldn't possibly have two in one year, would you?

DAN FIREMAN: Yeah, we've had great relationship. This year, as you know, Rose Zhang won, and it was pretty spectacular. I think everyone involved loved the event. We're excited about next year, and we're definitely exploring other options once the three years are over.

Q. Vince, what kind of an opportunity was it to look at the Met when basically there became a vacancy TOUR-wise with them going to Memphis?

VINCE PELLEGRINO: Yeah, I think this is really a perfect marriage of organizations with Liberty National, the Fireman family, BMW, Western Golf Association with our expansion in the east. This is an important market for us and for BMW. It's right in their backyard.

But really we've expanded into Rutgers University. We're sending 10 kids to school there this fall. We want to grow that program.

I think partnering with Liberty National to cultivate more caddies to receive the scholarship in that marketplace was just kind of the thought behind the partnership.

Q. Keegan, obviously it's been a tremendous season for you. It's coming towards the end here. Has you sitting 11th in the FedExCup standings going into this week. Do you have a specific goal in mind? Is there some spot that you'd like to be in at the end of this week? Have you thought about that or just focusing on trying to play well?

KEEGAN BRADLEY: Yeah, the one spot I want to be on is on that Ryder Cup team. Wherever that is on the FedExCup, I'll take it. It's probably going to have to be higher than where I am now.

I'm very proud of the year that I've had this year. Anytime you finish in the top 10 of the year-end FedEx, you've had a great year.

There were years where I didn't know if I'd ever get back to this level of golf, so I'm trying to enjoy every second of it. Coming to the -- making it to the BMW Championship is always such a great thing for us players because we've had a great year, and now you're in a 50-person field. They run such an incredible tournament here, and it's a big deal to get here.

We have so much at stake these next two weeks, whether it's money, whether it's Ryder Cup. There's so much to play for, and that's really exciting.

Q. Obviously I'm sure you've been watching with the Ryder Cup and so many players kind of getting into the picture suddenly in the last couple weeks. Can you share kind of your feelings as to why you think you should be on the team, what kind of do you think separates you from the rest of the guys that are in the mix right now?

KEEGAN BRADLEY: Well, I think about the Ryder Cup every second I'm awake basically. My biggest thing right now is trying not to think about it while I'm playing because it's important to me.

I feel like I could bring some experience to the team. I would personally love to just be on a team with this younger group. All the teams that I've been on, they're all gone. They're all Senior Tour or done playing.

I find that this younger core of guys to be really a cool group because they seem to really pull for each other, and it would be really fun to be a part of that and to feel -- to be on a Ryder Cup team where my 2012 team they're all gone, and this would be a totally different experience, and every match I've ever played, whether it's Ryder Cup or Presidents Cup, I've played with Phil, so it would be interesting to have another partner, see what that's like, and I'd love to play with Zach.

Q. If I could follow on that, since you won the Travelers, obviously you've brought up the Ryder Cup. It's been mentioned a lot. Have you been trying too hard here the last couple weeks, or has that been a part of your thinking and how you've approached

some of these tournaments?

KEEGAN BRADLEY: Yeah, it's the thing that I hate most about golf is the harder you try, the worse you play. You talk about football players or basketball players, and that kid is just tough, he tries harder and he pushes. When your team is down, we're going to put a little more effort in.

In golf, you have to do pretty much the exact opposite. Anytime you get down to this point in the year, whether it's Ryder Cup, Presidents Cup, FedExCup, there's always something to play for. Unless you're No. 1 in the world and you're -- every level of this TOUR, there's another step.

You're always playing for something a little bit more, Ryder Cup or whatever it is, and my job this week is to go out and just play this tournament, and I know what's going to be on my mind. It's just reality.

I'll do my best to stick to my process, but it'll be on my mind. I'll be thinking of it.

But I know a couple good weeks could go a long way.

Q. Has there been a little bit of a slip since you won, in your game at all, or is it just fine line, however you want to describe it?

KEEGAN BRADLEY: I've only played three tournaments since then, so -- I played pretty well last week. Just Memphis has been a tough spot in the schedule for me. It's probably my best finish ever there, which is still not great.

But I'm playing good golf. I'm putting at a pretty high level now.

I just need to go out there -- I love this course. Like I said, I just need to take care of what I can take care of and play some good golf these next two weeks.

Q. Keegan, on this course in particular, are there any areas of your game that are important to hone in on Tuesday and Wednesday for what this course tests in your game?

KEEGAN BRADLEY: Yeah, the golf course is very difficult, and you have to hit fairways out here or you're in big trouble. The rough is really deep, and the greens are super undulating, so if you get out of position, you're going to be in trouble.

Driving the ball and putting is going to be huge around here.



Q. Do you think it favors more a draw or a fade or kind of a mix?

KEEGAN BRADLEY: Yeah, I think most all of the holes are draw holes. There's a lot of holes where there's like a tree right off the tee, and it's a dogleg right. It's something I actually was thinking about today, which is great for me.

But this is a -- there's certain courses that have major championship type feel, like the course, and this is certainly one of them.

Q. Your aunt won a major in Chicago. Do you talk to her about that at all, what it was like winning that major?

KEEGAN BRADLEY: Well, my Aunt Pat is my hero. I grew up idolizing her. She won the U.S. Open here.

It's so fun to have a person in my family that is going through what I'm going through, what it's like to miss two cuts in a row or what it's like to be playing great and not scoring well.

I'm just so -- now that I've been out here, this is my 13th year, to have a better perspective to what she did and how great she was, I respect her career even more now.

Q. On the Ryder Cup, JT mentioned last month that he wasn't going to write a love letter to Zach; he was going to let the results stand on their own. Would you find a desire to kind of stump for yourself, or will you let your results and what you've done and your body of work stand on its own?

KEEGAN BRADLEY: Yeah, I think when you get in this position you've got to play well. I mean, Zach and the captains aren't going to -- they're not going to pick a player based on their pitch to be there. I'm sure that they're working through stats and models of good teammates, good partners.

I feel like I could be a good partner to a lot of guys.

But it's such a cliché and it's so boring, but I have to go out there and just do what I do best and play golf. This is what I do for my life and my job. I've got to be strong out there and try to focus on what's straight ahead of me.

Q. Keegan, we've been talking a lot about Lucas recently, from where he was three months ago. I wonder for your own sake if you can go back to a year ago at this tournament, not being invited to the meeting, knowing what was ahead, could you have seen then being where you are now?

KEEGAN BRADLEY: Yeah, I left this tournament last year on a mission really. I was pissed. Sometimes that's good. It was the best thing to happen to me.

I decided at this tournament around today, around Wednesday, I think, I was like, okay, I knew there were some changes coming, as well, to the TOUR and to the elevated events and all this stuff was coming, and I thought to myself, I've got to give this a really hard push.

I made a lot of changes, and fast forward a year, I'm very proud of where I've gotten. But I got such a big step ahead of me with this Ryder Cup. I would really like to be on a winning Ryder Cup team someday. I'm not there at the end yet because I did leave here with a lot of questions about the rest of my career. I didn't want to just coast into the end. I want to -- I think I've got a good bunch of years left, and it was a nice wake-up call.

Q. To bring this full circle, I'd be curious from the Firemans of all the events at Liberty National, whether early days of the FedExCup, what Dustin did there that one year, everything, what's been your favorite moment there? What's the strongest memory from all the events?

DAN FIREMAN: I mean, there's more than one.

Q. You've got to pick one, though.

DAN FIREMAN: Having the presidents at the Presidents Cup. We had Bush, we had Clinton and Obama, and to have them there next to Finchem and Jay and everyone at opening ceremonies was pretty special.

Then I have to tell you, Rose Zhang winning. That event really took us all by surprise how spectacular it was, how grateful all the players were, and then to have that finish was pretty spectacular.

THE MODERATOR: Gentlemen, we appreciate your time, and thank you for the wonderful announcement. All the best with the tournament in 2027. Ladies and gentlemen, thank you very much.

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