

TOUR Championship

Tuesday, August 23, 2022

Atlanta, Georgia, USA

East Lake Golf Club

Matt Fitzpatrick

Press Conference

MICHAEL BALIKER: We'd like to welcome Matt Fitzpatrick to the media center here at the TOUR Championship. You entered the week 15th in the FedExCup, first TOUR Championship appearance, ten top 10s on the season, including that U.S. Open win. Just first your thoughts on making it to the Playoffs finale here.

MATT FITZPATRICK: Yeah, excited. Like you say, first time here. Heard good things about the golf course.

Yeah, just looking forward to the week and seeing the front nine this morning and looking forward to seeing the back nine tomorrow.

THE MODERATOR: Being able to play half the course today, what were some of the initial takeaways and things that you noticed about this place?

MATT FITZPATRICK: I feel like it's a little bit similar to Memphis. Obviously same grass type. But just the way it looks, it looks tight off the tee, thick rough, and lightning fast greens, which is great.

Yeah, I thought Memphis was the best greens that we played all year, but this is going to give it a good run for its money.

Q. And a T5 in Memphis, so...

MATT FITZPATRICK: Well yeah, hopefully. Positives.

Q. Matthew, what are your thoughts about the handicapped start format, and have you ever played a professional tournament like that before?

MATT FITZPATRICK: No, never played anything like it. I mean, I don't know who's on one shot ahead of me. I don't know who it is. But I feel like the guy that finished sixth and I finished 15th, I think that's right, I'm right in thinking he's only one shot ahead of me I think is probably a little bit unfair, I guess. I feel like he probably should be more.

I don't know, I said last week the same thing. I just think



that the points in these last four -- or the last three, it's just a little bit too much. I gave the example of Collin Morikawa last year going into the Playoffs second or whatever he was, had a phenomenal season, and I actually spoke to him about it last week, and he defended it. He defended it, which I was surprised about. He's got more class than me, I guess.

I'd be fuming if I was him. I just think it's hard to sort of do these extra points in our game. I did have a thought that somehow the Playoffs could be match play somehow where it's a bit more realistic to every other sports Playoffs if that's the way the TOUR want to go.

But yeah, I just think the heavy points for these last three is a little strange.

Q. I think if I asked you your most important shot of the year, the answer is pretty obvious, but what was the most important shot that's not an obvious answer that very few people saw or know about or had some sort of effect to get you rolling, like an underrated important shot of the year?

MATT FITZPATRICK: There's only one tournament I keep thinking about, so I can't think about anything else. Yeah, that's a tough one.

I wouldn't really say -- I would say maybe this year realistically I've had a couple of chances to win, U.S. Open and U.S. PGA, and then maybe one other somewhere. On the whole I wouldn't really say that I've had as many chances to win, so there's nothing really kind of that stands out to me.

Q. Your putter, the grooves are kind of a throwback to the Yes putter that's been available for a long time. What do you like about that groove configuration that we don't really see anymore?

MATT FITZPATRICK: Yeah, they're the same. Bettinardi did a fantastic job of copying that. I liked it for a couple of things. The feel, if I just picked up a regular blade putter out any milling, it feels very fast off that putter. Mine feels a little bit softer.

Not only that, though, for me when I've hit putts with just a regular faced putter I feel like it slides on the face a lot.



Like if I maybe don't quite strike it perfectly, I feel like it slides off in a direction.

With the C-groove that I have, I feel like it helps start it on line much better.

Q. I guess there's nine first-timers here, would have been 10. A goodly number. Does that say anything about the state of the turnover on the TOUR or is there any message there?

MATT FITZPATRICK: Yeah, I guess some of the guys have gone to that other thing over there. There's probably a handful of those guys that might have been here. You don't know. So I guess there's something in that maybe.

Yeah, I was speaking to someone last week about average age of players now has dropped dramatically and guys are winning younger. I think that kind of says it all with like nine first-timers. Obviously everyone is much younger of those first-timers.

Yeah, I think golf is obviously in a decent place on that front.

Q. It's been a very tumultuous season off the golf course; does it feel like things are settling down a little bit or is there still some holding your breath, waiting to see who's going to possibly jump next week?

MATT FITZPATRICK: Yeah, it's not really something I've given much thought about. I'm just trying to -- I've just been trying to play golf. I've tried to stay out of it as much as possible. Going over there has never really interested me from the start. Obviously there's so much talk about who's going, who's not going.

Q. What was Collin's -- what did he say defending the --

MATT FITZPATRICK: He just said, that's the Playoffs. Like all the other sports. I just don't think it's right.

Golf is just so different to the other sports. That's why I think looking at match play would probably be more of an answer because you've got a team that makes the Playoffs in last place or whatever and you don't think they're going to go anywhere, and then they end up going all the way.

And then you could have a guy say in 90th gets all the way to the final. I don't know how you would do it, but it was just a --

Q. Just to follow up on the question, we talk a lot about the macro events. Is there much chatter

amongst the players or when you're here you're just kind of focused on the golf?

MATT FITZPATRICK: What do you mean?

Q. Just who's going, who's staying, the future of the TOUR, all that stuff?

MATT FITZPATRICK: I mean, there's always sort of rumors going around the locker room and stuff, but other than the obvious one that everyone probably already knows, there's really not many others that have been mentioned -- not mentioned to me anyway, so I really couldn't put a guess on who will be jumping ship. Yeah, I wouldn't say it's really been a thing for me anyway.

Q. Have you given much thought to what the landscape of pro golf will look like two or three years from now?

MATT FITZPATRICK: No, to be honest, I haven't. For me, with everything that's happened this year, I'm just trying to take it a week at a time, and yeah, just get to the end of the year and reassess my goals and everything.

Yeah, look, maybe it's a bit selfish, but it's an individual sport.

Q. It's been a wild season on and off the course, and it's going to come to an end here this weekend at East Lake. How would you describe this season?

MATT FITZPATRICK: For myself or just in general?

Q. Either way.

MATT FITZPATRICK: It's been good. The four majors were exciting. Obviously happy to win one of those. But yeah, I think it's been an exciting season. You've seen a lot of young guys come out and play well. Obviously seeing Tom Kim win the other week. The majors were great.

Yeah, I think it's been a good season on the golf course.

Q. No one is really talking about that, though. You could list a long list of pretty cool things that just seem to be set aside. Is that good for golf or bad for golf because the other stuff is putting it on the front page?

MATT FITZPATRICK: Yeah, no, I think it's a shame. I definitely think it's a shame. Yeah, it's just a tough position at the minute, I think, isn't it, with everything that's going on. Yeah, it's a tough one to find an answer to, I guess.

Q. Where did you find Sasho MacKenzie and kind of his work?

MATT FITZPATRICK: I think my coach kind of knew of him through someone else, so I think that's how we ended up working together.

Q. (Indiscernible.)

MATT FITZPATRICK: No, no, not like that. I wouldn't trust that.

Q. How much do you credit Bryson for giving you the motivation to try this, try what you've done?

MATT FITZPATRICK: I mean, I'm not trying to be nasty to him. Like I'm fine, we've got a good relationship, but I've been trying to hit it longer for ages, but just not going about it like how he went about it originally. Mine was just more of a slow burn, and his probably happened a bit faster.

Obviously with COVID and having that big time off, it was obviously a great advantage for him to sort of put all the muscle on and change whatever he wanted to change. But I would say mine has been more of a slow burn for sure.

Q. How many calories a day are you eating?

MATT FITZPATRICK: No idea. I'm not on the Bryson diet, though.

Q. Given the prize at stake and the end of the year and a very elite field, did it feel at all different or special when you drove up and saw East Lake for the first time, or was it just a place you hadn't seen before?

MATT FITZPATRICK: Yeah, for me, to be honest, it was just another place that I have not seen before. I've obviously heard. I've watched this tournament on TV, heard that the golf course is great. Was looking forward to playing the golf course. Played the front nine this morning. Thought it was really good.

For me, it's just another tournament that I want to go out there and try and win. It's more that than, oh, this is what's at stake, because I'm seven shots back, obviously four rounds to go, it's doable, more than doable. But yeah, just trying to be realistic at the same time.

Q. What were you doing watching it on TV, and if you were watching, what did you think every time they started going on the dry board and doing all the points?

MATT FITZPATRICK: I must have been really bored one evening, I guess, because I hate watching golf.

No, I think the two that I watched, Rory in '16 and obviously Tiger in '18, obviously Rory just because he's like my -- I remember my first Ryder Cup and it was the week before and we were in the bar already there and a few of us watching and stuff, so that was cool.

Then Tiger, his was obviously a real special moment.

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