

TOUR Championship

Tuesday, August 27, 2024

Atlanta, Georgia, USA

East Lake Golf Club

Andrew Green

Chad Parker

Press Conference



Q. Now that you're here and there are players on it, what are your thoughts?

ANDREW GREEN: I'm super excited. Obviously it's a brand new experience for the players, so there's going to be a little bit of trying to figure it out, but I couldn't be more thrilled with the product. I think it's very thoughtful.

So there might be some verbiage about par, but I think it's more that players have to pick a shot and execute, and I think for the TOUR Championship, for East Lake, and for the history of this place, that was something that we really needed. 4 is kind of bomb away down the middle and more throwing darts.

Q. Is there some anxiety?

ANDREW GREEN: Oh, there's absolutely anxiety, for sure. But I think it just comes with the territory. You don't know what you have until you tee it up. The golf course has matured amazingly since June 15th when the last piece of sod went down. But at the same time it's going to need to mature to see the full effect.

We're already talking about probably not playing the back tee on 15 because that green is just too firm for that length of golf shot. I'm perfectly at peace with that. It makes complete sense. I would rather showcase great golf than set up the golf course in some way that it's not quite going to work, if that makes sense.

Q. The greens are new greens; they're going to be significantly firmer than they will be in the future, regardless of conditions?

ANDREW GREEN: Absolutely. Yeah, the greens are probably as firm as they'll ever be, but that's also okay. Firmness -- we've seen golf played at this level with firm greens. It maximizes the players' intention. Augusta this year played really different because of how firm the greens were. So I think you'll see something similar here.

Q. What's the backstory behind the 1949 photos?

ANDREW GREEN: So I don't remember exactly which government website I found that photo, but it was somewhere in the government websites. It was either USGS or the USGA, but they're kind of a shared group of digital imagery of that time.

I've said before, typically we would want something in the '30s or maybe late '20s, but because the resolution in '49 was so crystal clear, you can Zoom in and start to see shadows and edges, and we paired that with a set of photos we had right before George Cobb did his work, before the Ryder Cup, and now we've painted a complete picture of how things sat on the ground.

So you'll just see little hints. A good example would be the first green used to sit right on the boundary, right on the road. We would never put it right on the road again. Its shift created the two levels that mimic the two different greens that were at totally different elevations originally.

So just a way to kind of use it as a part of the story, try to hold as much of the original intent as we can, but obviously things have changed.

Q. Have you heard from the TV partners as to how this is going to show up on TV different from the past?

ANDREW GREEN: Yeah, I think I remember NBC's first visit back in June. First thing they said when they got out of the car was "the bunkers look cool." It was in the morning and the sun, the way it was hitting the bunker faces, was completely different than it used to be, and that was literally the first response that we got.

So yeah, I think the definition of it really adds a different dimension to what the viewers are going to see and what the golfers see.

I think the presentation of the golf course is very unique. People might compare it to maybe something else I've done or whatever, but I really think it's solely East Lake, and a lot of that is because that original photo had so many different and special things for this golf course.

Q. When you start moving earth and it's all ripped up,

... when all is said, we're done.®



are you tinkering at that point?

ANDREW GREEN: Yeah, it's a lot easier to study distances and angles and all of that when you're sitting at, in my case, at my computer. I have multiple monitors up and I can have different imagery plus measuring devices and everything as I'm drawing. So the plan was drawn with a lot of intention.

But when we got on the ground obviously we had to make sure everything fit. A good example of that would be the bunkers down the right side of 3, trying to make sure they stack where they feel like they're a little closer together than they truly are. We massaged on that.

Then all the greens we had kind of a big idea of what they were going to be, and then I personally worked on each one of them to get it the way you wanted.

Q. What was the biggest challenge you faced over the past 12 months?

ANDREW GREEN: Time. We only had a certain amount of time. I think something that the East Lake team should be really put on a huge pedestal is that they were here last year, and the maintenance team was preparing the golf course for this championship last year, and the day after this was done, we were trying to kill grass and start construction.

Well, there's still all of this stuff here we had to get out of the way. Then we grassed the greens on Memorial Day-ish, end of May. We were already building out the structures before we grassed the greens. So the maintenance team here has had 400 plus days of intensity, and they've done an amazing job. But at every step, we knew we had to be ready Thursday. So that was the biggest challenge.

Q. Do you foresee future changes as you get feedback from players?

ANDREW GREEN: So my fallback is Pinehurst. Ross tinkered with that quite a lot. I don't think we're to that point, but I do think we'll learn some stuff. The back tee on 9, the back tee on 15 will not be used this week, and we'll see next year if it's a good fit. If not, that's okay.

For me, it's about providing a canvas and letting the TOUR and the guys who do this week in and week out for these players find the best way to find a test but then also allow them to find success.

Q. When you look at the aerials, you can see a lot of things like the shadows like on 16 and things like that.

How do you decide to contour the greens? That's one thing you can't really know what Donald Ross had in mind. How did you do that?

ANDREW GREEN: There were some places where we did have some hint. 13, the back of 13, I had a great image of that flip in the back, so I knew that back of that green I wanted that strong presence.

No. 2 was that really interesting shape. Trying to find a way to put those two pieces together and not make them feel cold but engaged, there was a little bit of manipulation there, but that was something that we felt was important.

Then really it was just trying to mix them up. For me, I want the greens, no matter where it is, at East Lake or anywhere else, the greens should allow the hole location to determine some of the way the golf hole plays, and if it plays the same way every day, who wants to play that day in and day out?

So providing options where, say, front of 3, back of 3, totally different.

7, there's like four different little levels to it.

15, against the water or back in that middle kind of appendage. Those are the things that I think make the golf course special, unique, and will be more entertaining to watch this week.

Q. What are some of the elements you're most pleased with that turned out, like maybe 16 green and 9 green is very different, too?

ANDREW GREEN: Excited to see No. 8 play as a drivable 4. I think that's a spot where a well-executed shot will find potentially an eagle, which is great.

Man, I'm really happy with all of it. I don't know if there's anything I'm overly stressed about. I'm interested to see how they play 14 and 18. 18 is in their head already. I can tell already. But if you hit it down there, you're going to end up with a lie that you just have to judge. We'll see. It's not the same as it used to be, so there's some differences there.

I watched a little bit of golf being played on 14. I love the way the ball is coming to rest there.

Those were two places where I felt the previous golf course was very artificial and didn't respect the course Bobby Jones and Alexa Stirling played, and those were two places I really felt we needed to do some work.

Q. So 18, the decision not to just bomb it down there, you have a decision to make?

ANDREW GREEN: I'm interested to watch more golf being played there. I think you can hit it down there with a driver, but you'd better be accurate. Maybe hitting a 3-wood and letting it chase might be a smarter play, but only playing it a handful of times, we'll see what the guys end up doing.

Q. Have any of you guys been out there to play, taken a club to this thing?

ANDREW GREEN: I have played it, yes. But not the same tees that we're playing this week. We were texting that night after we played -- I played with a Stewart Cink and a couple other folks, and the golf course, it just played -- it's more fun to play. It's challenging in a different way. The recovery shots are certainly different. Just more memorable. It was kind of a surreal experience to be watching you work and be in mud for 11 months and actually out there playing golf.

The members loved it. The sight lines across the golf course were great. It was a great experience.

Q. Have you run into the sentiment factor? Guys come here and say, we liked East Lake the way it was, and change is sometimes hard.

ANDREW GREEN: Oh, absolutely. That comes with the territory. If you think about any golf course renovation or restoration, you have a group of people that have made memories on their golf course, and overcoming that, playing with your dad, your kids, whatever, there's memories, and that's hard.

But it's still the right thing to do for the future is the right thing to do for the future. So here I'm sure there will be some sentiment of the shots they played before. The greens are way more interesting now than they were previously, and there will be some -- yeah, I'm sure there will be some comments like that. But at some point you have to embrace the integrity of what this place means in order to kind of reset that, remind us to the past and push us to the future. This is what we needed to do.

Q. What's the difference in your mind between a restoration and a renovation?

ANDREW GREEN: I try not to get caught up in those words. Use it however you want, I don't care. You guys write about it however you want.

For me, it's trying to respect the integrity of a place and be able to come here and experience it in a one of a kind

format. This golf course is not like any other, and it shouldn't be like any other. That's what's important. Whether you call that a renovation or restoration, whatever.

Q. Chad, what was the last year like for you? You're here watching it all, and there's got to be nerves and -- it's got to be quite an experience to be on the ground.

CHAD PARKER: Well, it was a learning experience for me. Project management basically and making sure that Andrew had what he needed and we weren't holding things up, but also supporting our agronomy team, as Andrew mentioned earlier. Charlie Aubry, our director of agronomy and his team, they have worked their butts off, and they really are the heroes of this.

But for me personally, it was just trying to keep things moving. We knew the deadline. We knew when we had to finish. To have the team in place, I thought, was critical. The decisions being made in a timely manner, not holding people up, and then dealing with the challenges that came along. That's just all part of the normal Tuesday 9:00 a.m. meeting we had every single week for 217 days or whatever it was.

But it was a great experience. I learned a lot from Andrew and Bill, and looking forward to seeing how they play it this week.

Q. How many trees came down?

CHAD PARKER: I have no idea.

Q. I love what you did with 7.

ANDREW GREEN: Yeah, it was an overgrown area. We needed it to make an environmental improvement with the floodplain adjustment, filling in the driving range. We needed that space. We were able to do a stream restoration that was really needed up in that corner, and then opening the amazing vista down 7 and then also the views across the property are really strong.

Q. You did a similar thing at Congressional where you built a new golf course on an existing footprint in some ways. That's a few years older. How has that been received in the long run, and do you expect a similar kind of reaction here from membership, players, everybody?

ANDREW GREEN: Yeah, I think there's always this dynamic of there's memories before and then the new, but I think both properties have shown that they're way more memorable. You know hole from hole. You're not feeling like you're playing the same thing, which is huge.

Then members are having a lot of fun, even if it's challenging. That's like a really nice little spot to be in, where you can go play, you're tested, but you're enjoying yourself. Hey, that's the game of golf.

Q. Is there a certain player you're going to go watch and see how they play this place?

ANDREW GREEN: Well, Viktor and I are kind of close because I'm working at Oklahoma State. I've been talking with him. I actually just talked to him a few minutes ago. So I'll watch him a little bit. But I'll watch all the guys. I'm really interested to see where balls land. You measure something on paper, but it's different when balls are in the air with a little bit of wind and temperature and everything.

Q. Viktor said he was shocked at how different --

ANDREW GREEN: Good. That sounds good to me. I love it. Viktor is great.

Q. I'm curious both of your opinions on how the golf course renovation not only affects the club and the TOUR but the neighborhood and the city.

ANDREW GREEN: Yeah, I think top of mind -- and I've spoken about it before, but the Cousins family, what they have done here, the commitment they've made to East Lake, to this community, that was like No. 1. I'm so excited to hear what Mr. Cousins has to say after Thursday, opening of the coverage. Really excited. So that's huge.

Then understanding that because this place is so important to the community, we need to make sure that we continue it on a great path of success. Even bringing more people here to see it because of how unique it is and how it tells the story of the Bobby Jones, Alexa Stirling, Charlie Yates and all, those are all things we thought were important.

CHAD PARKER: I think any venue you have to constantly make improvements. So if you look at specifically what's happened in Atlanta with Mercedes-Benz and Truist and all the other places, everybody is making investments, so it was time for us to make an investment to address the infrastructure first, which was the aging greens and the bunkers, but this is a once in a generation opportunity to bring someone like Andrew in who had a different vision for us that could carry us forward.

We want to be attractive as a venue. If we're not, we can't attract events like this. So it was important that we had that in mind, not only the golf course but where cart paths were and how do we stage things, and those were all part of the conversation that as we were master planning this

that we took into account, knowing what's coming. The deadline of the clock was ticking, so we used all of those things in informing our decisions.

FastScripts by ASAP Sports