

Sony Open in Hawaii

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Honolulu, Hawaii, USA

Waialae Country Club

Webb Simpson

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: All right, Webb Simpson joins us here at the Sony Open in Hawai'i making his 15th start at this tournament.

Webb, before we get started talking about the golf, we just came back from the Hawai'ian blessing and the celebration of life of Grayson Murray. I know he was a good friend of yours.

If you can talk a little bit about the ceremony in morning and then your recollections and what you remember about Grayson.

WEBB SIMPSON: Yeah, well, I was made aware of the ceremony maybe a week ago. I thought very fitting that it's here, you know, a year later after he won in dramatic fashion. I can only imagine how hard it must be to lose a child, to even understand what they're going through.

I hope I don't have to ever go through that. But I think, I hope that they could see how celebrated he was this morning. I was really encouraged with how many guys came, players, caddies, PGA TOUR staff, media. I think it was a great outpouring of love for Grayson; really a celebration of his life, celebration of what he did a year ago here.

I'm sure there has been just countless dark days for his parents and his family. I hope this morning his parents were able to feel the love that the TOUR as a family has for Grayson.

I'm really excited that they talked about the foundation that they're starting in his honor. I think it'll definitely bring them some purpose to try to carry on his legacy, carry on his name, and I'm excited to see how us players and the PGA TOUR can support the foundation.

So I miss him a ton. I think, you know, when it happens it's fresh on your mind and you think about it for days and weeks. You don't stop thinking about it.

But as time goes on, you know, life goes on, and then you

have these moments a year after he won where we get to remember just his win, his life, what he meant to so many people.

And so I was thankful to be a part of it. I'm hoping and trusting his parents felt the honor as well.

Q. ... whether it was weeks or months, whenever you thought about Grayson what was the one memory that rose to the top for you?

WEBB SIMPSON: It's hard for me to think of Grayson and not think of when I first met him. You know, he was I want to say eight or nine years old, and our swing coach, Ted Kiegiel, told me, he was like, hey, this kid is really good. Lives 30 minutes away or whatever.

I remember meeting him. He was just classic little eight year old, nine year old golfer. Very good at the game. It was kind of one of these guys where you encounter good young juniors, but it's rare where a guy gets better and better. So I kept watching him and staying in touch.

So I think as it relates to later in life, I think it was well said this morning. Like the fist pump he showed on 18 in that moment summed it up. He was just a passionate guy, and whatever he was doing he was very passionate about it.

I think when I do think of him now, like that memory of him on the 18th green comes to mind very quickly.

And then we had a really special dinner at Pebble Beach I guess would've been a month or so after he won where we just talked about kind of reflected on --

Q. Just the two of you or...

WEBB SIMPSON: Yeah, there was a few of us. Just reflected on his life, where he had come from, the trials he had gone through. And then, you know, winning out here can change your life so quickly, and I don't know how confident he was on winning when he got here Monday, Tuesday that week, but he won and it really set up his year; got him in the Masters.



He was about to get married, and so all this great stuff was happening in his life. So it's hard to remember those and not be like immediately reminded of the sadness of what happened in May. But also don't want to forget those were like real moments of joy and real moments where he experienced some great things in life.

Q. Now here we are your 15th Sony Open. Talk a little bit about this golf course as you kick off the season, Webb.

WEBB SIMPSON: Well, I'm pretty sure, Todd, correct me if I'm wrong, but 2009 I shot 66 first round. It was my first PGA TOUR round with a card. Todd Lewis, pretty sure it was you. We got in the cart together and the headquarters were back behind 13 green, and so I rode out there with you. Pretty sure it was you. And so very fond memories here.

I finished 9th my first Sony Open. Quickly fell in love with the golf course, with the area. You know, I live in Charlotte, North Carolina, so cold this time of year. Always nice to start the year in a warm place, but hard to believe it's been 15 Sony Opens.

It's wild that year after year I'll drive 11 hours for one golf tournament. I think this just shows how much I love the course and how much I love this area.

Q. And your goals for the season?

WEBB SIMPSON: Yeah, so I was actually thinking about those on the airplane. I'm in a unique season I guess, not this particular season, but in my life, just with five kids at home, assisting Keegan for the Ryder Cup. I have a lot of time I want to devote to that. I'm so excited about the Ryder Cup.

I still love the game of golf. Still love to compete. My schedule, I've cut back pretty significantly to be home more and to give myself to other things I'm passionate about.

There is still a desire to play a high level of golf, but last year was kind of a trial run to see how I could do it, what not to do, what to do to stay sharp when I'm playing 12 to 14 events.

So that's been a challenge, but I am ready to go, and we'll see how my game is this week. You know, it's been six, seven weeks since RSM, and so I'm excited. What's nice about having not played a lot lately is it's a golf course I've played so many times. There is a level of comfort here that I can't really muster up if I haven't been here as many years as I have.

Q. How do you approach this season with now only 100 cards out there?

WEBB SIMPSON: Yeah, I mean, I'm pretty sure my eligibility runs one more year, if I remember correctly, but I was always very for these changes. I think there is always downside to these type of changes but I think the upsides were more and going to be more beneficial for the TOUR and for the players moving forward.

So it's definitely more competitive, which I think is a good thing. It's a good thing even for me. There is less opportunities, and I know that the young guys, they're as hungry as ever. I got a few friends who are young and new to the TOUR and you hear them and the way they prep, the way they get ready for the season or tournaments.

I've got more going on in my life, but they still draw me to a higher standard of what it takes to not only remain out here but to play successfully for a while.

Q. You mentioned the season of your life. What is inspiring you right now?

WEBB SIMPSON: What's inspiring me?

Q. Uh-huh.

WEBB SIMPSON: Great question. You know, I'm a believer that God has given me gifts and talents to use and glorify Him with.

One of those is being a husband and one is being a father and one is being a golfer and one is being a friend and one is being good to my sponsors who have supported me.

And so I am really trying to take the idea of doing everything in an excellent way and having that be kind of the fuel for everything I'm doing.

I love the College Golf Fellowship. My wife and I have been part of that ministry for about 12 years. Hosted a conference at our house the weekend before Christmas. We had about 50 college golfers come stay and hang out with us.

And so I feel like I'm entering a season of being able to mentor some guys and help them develop as a pro, as a Christian, maybe as a young father, you know, telling him what we did well, what we didn't do well on the road.

So that kind of stuff is fun for me.

This will be my first time being assistant for a Ryder Cup. Got to do it at Charlotte for Presidents Cup with Davis.

Even working with Keegan and the guys on what that role looks like for me now and trying to help lead a team, you know, in an event like that, it's such of an honor.

So I feel like there are different things yielding these opportunities for me that I'm excited about. And, yes, it takes a little time away from my work and my craft, so that's kind of the part I'm -- that's the new season of trying to figure out how it all works. How I can do a good job in kind of the areas that I'm in right now.

I'm definitely not trying to -- I'm being careful, not taking on too much. I feel like that's the temptation. There is great opportunities everywhere, but between Ryder Cup, the board -- I have one more year on the PGA TOUR policy board -- I have to be careful not to do too much.

Q. What does that do for your fire?

WEBB SIMPSON: I think maybe a couple years ago when I cut back a little and wasn't playing as much or wasn't playing as well, I think at first I was thinking, man, do I really love the game like I used to?

I think after a while I kind of consulted with a mentor of mine, I realized I do love the game. I love competing. When I think about how I feel when I'm at a PGA TOUR event, or Thursday through Sunday inside the ropes, I love it as much as ever. I have a desire to get in contention more than ever.

But having these other things, whether it's family or ministry stuff or Ryder Cup, those things I have a lot of love for, I think sometimes can feel like they're competing in my mind and heart. I think there is a way to do both and a way to still try to compete at a high level.

I talked to Steve Stricker over the years. He did a wonderful job of playing less but still playing at a high level. I've grown a ton of respect for him because he did it for a number of years, and I realize how hard it actually is to play ten or twelve times a year, and he remained I think top 10 or 15 in the world.

So I certainly hadn't played the level I've wanted to play at, but some guys will play and kind of survive for a number of years. I feel like I don't have enough patience, so if I can't turn around my game sooner rather than later, I don't know how long I want to struggle, you know.

Q. You made the point, this is several years ago, you dropped off a bit, you felt like you belonged up here; determined to get back there. Got back to where you thought you should be. Knowing what kind of work goes into it, have you reached an age where it's hard

to put in the work that you know it requires because you've been doing it for so long?

WEBB SIMPSON: I think yes and no. I think the yes is the reality that I'm competing against guys who are married or maybe not married but no kids. They're literally devoting their whole week and life to getting better. I know I don't have that time and ability to do that, so that's a reality.

Also I think I did it for a number of years where I felt like my best season on TOUR was '19/'20. At that point we had all five kids and I was able to make it work.

So there is a part of me that thinks I can still make it work and there is a part of me that I'm wrestling with is this a new normal? Is the game that much harder? So that's kind of the battle between my ears often, is I know I have the ability. I know I have the talent.

I mean, I think somebody said on the air last week, talking about Justin Thomas and his putting. Justin's comments were that talent never leaves someone. I love those thoughts because I know it's in there. I know I still can hit shots and make putts. I just haven't done it in a while for four days.

So I think the belief hasn't left me. It's just kind of like, okay, how much longer before I can string together a good few rounds.

Q. Sorry to add gray hair to you, but how old is your oldest?

WEBB SIMPSON: 13.

Q. Do you think -- when you say if you get our too irritated you might stop, do you think you would go like Hunter Mahan and just go home and be dad, or would you cut back your scheduling and still be out here?

WEBB SIMPSON: That's a good question. I think I played at a very high level for ten years, 11 years, and so that became my normal. I reject the notion that this is my normal now, and so I think every time I consider what would life look like if I didn't play golf, very quickly I think I would miss the game too much.

I don't love traveling, but I love once I'm here, like I love interacting and the guys. I love Thursday through Sunday. Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday feels like prep, feels like work. Thursday through Sunday doesn't feel like work. Even though that is technically my work, it feels like that's what I love. I love the pressure. I love the nerves.

And you know, like I haven't been in big pairings in a while. Big pairings is what I used to -- those butterflies. You're playing against the Rory McIlroys and Scottie Schefflers. I miss that, the buzz of being a top player and making these team events.

But I'm just trying to take it one day, one week at a time. My wife and I always sit down in December and kind of look back throughout the past year and then we plan for the next year.

If I commit to a year on the PGA TOUR I try to be fully in for that year, and so there will be no -- I won't be stepping away from the game this year. Every year can we kind of reevaluate and see how everything is looking from professional life to personal life and all that.

Q. Who are you working with these days to help you get back?

WEBB SIMPSON: Combination of Paul Tesoro still and Joe Mayo. Joe lives this Nashville now; he was in Vegas. Joe is helping me with my golf swing and short game. Pauly is still kind of eyes over everything, consulting. I talk to him all the time.

So he's still helping me. I think the first time I worked with Joe at Quail couple years ago Pauly was there. They got along great, so that's been fun even having them talk and be on the same page.

Q. What's the difference between Joe and Butch?

WEBB SIMPSON: The difference between Joe and Butch? One similarity is they both have great stories. Working with them is really fun. Like it's not like, do this, do this, do this. There is a story in between every shot.

Butch is more old school, is more feel. Hey, why don't you make the club do this on the downswing.

Joe is for sure more numbers driven, but has an unbelievable way of translating that for me. First time he came to work with me in Charlotte he didn't bring a TrackMan and I didn't have mine and he didn't ask for mine. He's a TrackMan maestro, so like I was shocked.

Joe adapted quick to how I needed to receive information. So both are great. Just very different in the way they kind of deliver what they want to tell you.

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