

THE PLAYERS Championship

Wednesday, March 8, 2023

Ponte Vedra Beach, Florida, USA

TPC Sawgrass

Patrick Cantlay

Press Conference

THE MODERATOR: We would like to welcome Patrick Cantlay to the interview room here at the 2023 PLAYERS Championship. Patrick is making his sixth start at the event and is coming off top-5 finishes in each of his last two starts. Patrick, if we could just get an opening comment on your return to TPC Sawgrass.

PATRICK CANTLAY: Yeah, coming off two good weeks, which is nice. The game feels good. So I'm excited about getting after it this week.

THE MODERATOR: All right, we'll take some questions out here.

Q. Just your general thoughts on a, not only kind of a point-to-point type of a golf course, one that tries to make you uncomfortable visibly. But is this something you enjoy? And as a second part to that question, if you had to describe it in only one word, what word would you use?

PATRICK CANTLAY: Well I think the golf course, especially if the conditions get how they want, which will be a little firmer than I think last year, it's really important to play from the fairway, this golf course more than most golf courses that we play, which is fun. There's a premium on leaving the golf ball in the right spot, kind of pretty much on every hole. I think it's exciting would be the word I would use, just because the finish can be so volatile.

Q. How would you -- kind of another two-parter -- but how would you compare the finish, especially since we're dealing with a 5, 3, 4 finish here and last week with a one-shot lead, I guess.

PATRICK CANTLAY: I don't think much of the finish last week, to be honest. I think this tournament in general was like a made-for-TV tournament, just with the finish and the excitement that can happen. And with 17 almost anything can happen if the wind's really blowing.

18's one of the hardest golf holes we play all year. And it happens to, they happen to end consecutively like that. So



I think that's what makes it so exciting.

Q. Do you think that these new changes to the PGA TOUR schedule will make some of the LIV guys want to come back to the ecosystem?

PATRICK CANTLAY: I'm not sure these changes really have much, you know, making them want to come back. I'm curious how many would have liked to have left if these changes happened earlier. Probably the same number of guys or a similar number of guys, just with the guaranteed money that they were throwing around. But it's a good question. I'm not sure.

Q. Then what's your take on the no-cut aspect of these new designated events?

PATRICK CANTLAY: Yeah, I think if you're going to have a limited field, a cut when you have, when you're only starting with around 70 guys would be gratuitous. I don't think it would add much to it at all. So if you're going to have the limited fields I think the no cut is the way to go.

Then the other thing I would say is there's been tons of no-cut tournaments on the PGA TOUR since I can remember, since I was growing up. So I don't think it's too big of a change really with the -- if you took all the tournaments as a whole I think maybe you're going from five or six no-cut events to eight or something like that. So I don't think it's really that big of a change.

Q. What are your thoughts on the 17th hole in general and do you remember the way it felt the first time you played it, what the circumstances were, the tension and larger than life and a hole you've seen on TV?

PATRICK CANTLAY: Well I played it as a junior in a junior golf tournament here. I think I was hitting 9- or 8-irons on the green that week. I didn't hit it as far as I do now.

I think the 17th hole can be, it's very weather dependent. If the wind's blowing it's really tough, and if it's not usually you have a good birdie look there.

Q. Do you specifically remember that first shot? Was it that memorable?



PATRICK CANTLAY: I don't.

Q. Is there anything you have to do differently when a course tries to visually deceive you or are numbers good enough and yardage books good enough that you just kind of hit the shot and go about it the same?

PATRICK CANTLAY: Yeah, I think once you've played it a few times and you kind of figure it out it is less of a factor. I think by now most all of us have played the golf course enough times where it might look a certain way, but we know how it plays.

Q. How similar do you feel this course is to Harbour Town?

PATRICK CANTLAY: Not very similar. The conditions are much different. I would say I personally like Harbour Town a lot more and Harbour Town has a lot less tricks than this place.

Q. Have you always had an expectation that you will, on a year-to-year basis play well here, give yourself enough chances to win, given what you do well as a player and what the course kind of presents itself?

PATRICK CANTLAY: Yeah, definitely. I feel like that about most of the venues I come to. That if I'm playing really well, you know, most any golf course should be a good golf course for me. So, yeah.

Q. I was curious about your back and everything. So going back 10 years ago and everything that happened you talked about all the preparation it takes every round that you compete. For one, is that something that you have to do every time you practice too, the three-hour kind of get ready thing? And how is now in 2023 with the technology and stuff to make that process easier?

PATRICK CANTLAY: Yeah, I take a similar warm-up when I'm playing tournament rounds or when I'm at home. It's basically the same every time I go out to play for the most part. It's a little shorter than it was when I was first coming back to play in 2017. But in general it's the same. I wouldn't say technology has really changed it at all. But it has taken awhile to figure out what works for me and just try to optimize it to help me as best as it can.

Q. So that's still evolving then kind of on a year-to-year basis kind of your process with that?

PATRICK CANTLAY: Yeah, always evolving and trying to see if there's any way to make it a little better. If I could cut down the time, I would.

Q. I'm curious if you're a scoreboard watcher. Rory said at Bay Hill that he probably would have played a different shot on 14 if he knew where he stood. Jordan said he never looks at the leaderboard, that it doesn't make a difference on what club he's going to select or how he's going to manage the course. How about you?

PATRICK CANTLAY: Yeah, I like looking at the leaderboard. I wouldn't say I'm overly concerned, but I definitely like to see where I am and what's going on.

Q. Eyes are a little bit bad, I'm seeing a Delta on your shirt. Was that there last week?

PATRICK CANTLAY: No, this is the first week.

Q. You've started with a blank bag as we all know and added DeWalt and now Delta. Has that process of sponsorship, if you will, been any kind of a -- what have you learned from it? I was going to ask if it's been a distraction but I don't get a sense much distracts you, except these questions.

PATRICK CANTLAY: No, I have a really great team and so they have worked really diligently for the last few months to make all that happen. I'm really pleased to be announcing that partnership with Delta this week. Ed Bastian is a friend of mine and so it's been really great getting to know him and I'm excited to start that partnership with Delta.

Q. Do you get instant Platinum?

PATRICK CANTLAY: (Laughing.)

Q. Do you envision signing with a company or do you like being a free agent and staying that way for awhile?

PATRICK CANTLAY: Not something I've given too much thought to. I've tested a little bit of equipment this West Coast. In general I like being able to play the equipment that I feel like gives me the best chance to compete. So, yeah, I haven't minded being a free agent so far.

Q. Is there any changes that you feel good about that that's allowed you to make?

PATRICK CANTLAY: You know, I tried a bunch of stuff and I'm really comfortable with what I'm playing right now. I changed some shafts this year and kind of experimented on the West Coast. It's been -- I finally feel like I got my setup figured out at Riviera. So Riviera and Bay Hill were the same setup. So it's allowed me to swing the golf club a

little better once I got that figured out.

Q. I'm going to get the years wrong, but if you go back to when you decided to turn pro, and your path to where you wanted to get compared with the path that would be if you came out of UCLA this year, which one's better for you? Which one would you have liked more, do you think?

PATRICK CANTLAY: Sorry, I'm not sure I understand.

Q. When you turned pro to get to the TOUR, to get to where you wanted to be. What you had to do to get there in terms of what was available to you, which would you have liked, that which you went through or that you would face if you were to turn pro now?

PATRICK CANTLAY: You mean with all the...

Q. Changes.

PATRICK CANTLAY: The changes. Yeah, I think it would be good for it to be easier for the best players to get out on TOUR and see if they can cut it out here faster. How I got out on TOUR when I turned pro seemed how it was at the time, so I guess it seemed reasonable. I didn't question it much.

Q. What did you do? I remember the year it's around 2013 or 2012.

PATRICK CANTLAY: I ended up getting my status through Korn Ferry Tour Finals is ultimately how I got my card. But I ended up getting status through a Monday qualifier into a WEB.COM event in Charlotte. That was how I originally got any type of TOUR status.

Q. And then the Finals and then got your card?

PATRICK CANTLAY: Yeah. I think I got status through a Monday WEB.COM event like in the late summer, like late in the TOUR schedule in 2012. Then I had full WEB.COM status in 2013. And I won Columbia, which was like the second event of the year. Then I was No. 1 in the Money List. You had to be top 25. And I hurt my back like a couple months later. Then I fell all the way to 26 in the last week. And then I got it in the first Korn Ferry Tour Finals event.

Q. Did you play the last event?

PATRICK CANTLAY: I played the last two regular season events trying to get it and missed the cut in both.

Q. What is it about this course that you found to be

particularly tricky the last few years? Three missed cuts in a row.

PATRICK CANTLAY: Well last year I think I got, you know, the weather was brutal, so I didn't play particularly well. I seem to play better here when it was in May. So I think it's really important to drive the golf ball well here. I think in years past I've played a little more on the West Coast and I've come to Florida a little tired. So I feel good this year and I'm excited about it.

Q. This has come up a couple times this week on the changes. You were in that Delaware meeting. Can you talk about what was presented there or what the thoughts were there, what you guys eventually got to and what kind of a process that was.

PATRICK CANTLAY: Yeah, I think the Delaware meeting was really the first time anyone had put any idea formally together and presented it to really any group of TOUR players. Like anything, it evolved quite a bit from there to where I think what it is now is very, very different to what was proposed in Delaware. But I don't think when they proposed in Delaware it was a fully fleshed out, finished product. It was more of a starting point or a radical, what do you guys think about this idea.

Q. How much does your own thoughts and/or beliefs change during that process? Your outlook on things. Did you make any concessions personally of your own way of thinking?

PATRICK CANTLAY: I think any time you're -- you're not really starting with a blank canvas, right. So there's lots of -- it's not as much idealistic as trying to figure out how to work it best within the current system. So I think when that process also has lots of cooks in the kitchen, which inevitably it does, it's not so much as concessions as more just working together and trying to figure out what the best possible system you can reasonably get done.

Q. Are you surprised given the number of cooks that you came up with something that everyone could eat without getting sick?

PATRICK CANTLAY: (Laughing.) I think it's great. I think where we're at is ultimately going to make it stronger for the PGA TOUR and better for fans. So I think the changes are great. The incentive couldn't be any higher for people to play as well as they possibly can. I think that's fantastic.

THE MODERATOR: All right. Patrick, thank you very much for your time and best of luck this week.

PATRICK CANTLAY: All right. Thank you.

 . . . when all is said, we're done.®

