

Arnold Palmer Invitational

Tuesday, March 2, 2021

Bay Hill, Florida, USA

Bay Hill Club and Lodge

Joie Chitwood III

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: Thank you guys for being here today we would like to welcome Joie Chitwood III, our now API tournament director. Joie, if you can start out by talking a little bit about what makes this week special and how this field stands out versus the other Florida tournaments.

JOIE CHITWOOD III: You know, when you think about signature events in Orlando, you have to put the Arnold Palmer Invitational presented by Mastercard at the top of the list. I think Orlando does a great job when the spotlight shines on itself and here's a great moment in time, we have got 24 of the top 50 world-ranked golf players here, the course is in phenomenal shape.

We had close to 90 exemption requests from players who are not currently qualified. That tells you a little bit about the demand that players have in wanting to participate. And those are tough conversations when you can't give everyone an exemption to play.

But really excited about the week in front of us, probably more excited that we get to kind of lead by example and have customers on-site. I know that through their West Coast Swing only one other venue had fans on-site and you could see the difference when you did have fans on-site at Phoenix and we hope for the same energy and emotion that we'll see when these guys put on a great show here this weekend.

THE MODERATOR: This is your first PGA TOUR event. If you can talk a little bit about how you're entering in and how you're leading the event this week.

JOIE CHITWOOD III: Well it's my first leading the team, but I do have my original ticket stub from the 1992 Nestle Invitational at Bay Hill, so I have been a fan of this event and I have been here before.

But when it comes to sports event and marketing, I might bring a little bit of some experience to the table in terms of some big events, iconic sports properties, but for us it's about making sure that we have a safe plan. We produced about a 58-page safety and operations plan for this event,

specific to what the TOUR needs were, to what Orange County and the Health Department needed. So our goal is to have a world-class golfing event, but make sure we have a safe experience for our fans.

So whether it's masks are mandatory, social distancing, making sure we have all sorts of the hand sanitizing stations, but I will tell you we have some advantage, the weather the most, we have over 7,000 yards of golf course space out there, so our fans can truly be distanced and appropriate.

We have done a really nice job of communicating that to all of our customers. We are parking everyone on-site. So I think it will look the same, but some of the elements within it will be a little bit different. But all in all I think we've got great team here, we have been putting on events for a long time, I think this one's just going to be a little bit different than years past.

THE MODERATOR: We'll open it up for questions.

Q. With this being your first year and the other things going on obviously other than golf, how overall challenging has this been?

JOIE CHITWOOD III: It's a great challenge, but you have to look at it in a way that what you do today is an example for other tournaments behind us. So it's not just this vacuum of being in Orlando and providing a safe experience, we want to make sure we show the other tournaments behind us how well to do it, share examples. I've been on the phone with the folks down at the Honda Classic and some other tournaments, we're all sharing our stories, our examples, things we can do to be better. The PGA TOUR's been unbelievably accommodating in terms of sharing examples from the West Coast. So you got to take all those things in and then build your plan around your event.

Obviously we're a unique property. We are within the Bay Hill neighborhood. So we have got some areas that we need to manage a little bit differently, due to the property being broken up, but again, I feel like we have got a great plan, the team's well -- we have got a lot of volunteers who



have been working here for a lot of years, so we have got great experience on the team and so with, even with the tweaks to our plan, I think everybody's ready for the challenge and we'll do a good job.

Q. Have you gotten feedback already from the golfers on the great conditions of the golf course?

JOIE CHITWOOD III: You know, about six or seven weeks ago the PGA TOUR sends their agronomist in and does a report on our property. It was probably one of the best reports we have seen so far. The weather has been perfect as it relates to getting the course in shape and I've had rave reviews in terms of practice rounds yesterday. The greens are phenomenal, the fairways are great, the rough is knee high. I think it's going to provide a great challenge, but the course is in as good a shape as it's ever been.

Q. (No Microphone.)

JOIE CHITWOOD III: Sure, I've had, I've been a very lucky person where I've got to be around sporting events for most of my life and had a chance to manage two very big racing facilities in my career. And so it's a little bit different, versus hundred thousands of people to what we're dealing with now, but every property's different, the challenges are unique. And so, for us, I'm really excited that we don't have people on property 24/7, camping with us for two weeks in a row.

So things like that are kind of fun for me that we don't have to worry about it.

All kidding aside, when you do have a property this large, you have to have a lot of eyes out there to make sure that we're providing a secure environment, because we are in a neighborhood and our great neighbors love to have parties and enjoy and celebrate, we just need to make sure they stay on their property when they do that.

So again, all different, all unique, but at the end of the day it's about taking care of your customer, providing a great experience, providing these athletes a phenomenal competition opportunity and making sure our corporate partners are enjoying it, whether it's Mastercard, Orlando Health.

So those things are kind of in the mix for any sporting event, we now have COVID and a 25-percent restriction and new guidelines, but again, I think it's consistent for the Orlando market, we have seen that at NBA and at soccer, so I think it's kind of natural. Obviously we hope that the health situation in America gets cleaned up as quick as possible with vaccinations and things like that. It does

though tell you the fragile nature of sports when we do go through a health scare like this and how quickly it can change. Because one year ago today we were the last full PGA TOUR event. Either things were cancelled, restricted, no fans, and one full year later we're at a 25-percent restriction. I think that's pretty telling after 12 months in terms of this unique challenge that this country's been under.

THE MODERATOR: All right we're set. Thank you very much.

JOIE CHITWOOD III: Appreciate it.

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