

Arnold Palmer Invitational

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Bay Hill, Florida, USA

Bay Hill Club and Lodge

Patrick Cantlay

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: We would like to welcome Patrick Cantlay to the interview room here at the Arnold Palmer Invitational presented by Mastercard. Patrick, welcome back. As I just mentioned, this is your second start here at Bay Hill, finishing in a tie for 4th last year. If we could just get an opening comment from you on being back.

PATRICK CANTLAY: Yeah, it's great to be back. I hadn't played it before last year, but now back two years in a row. I played well last year. It's a golf course that's historically particularly difficult, and I think this year will be more of the same. The fairways are hard to hit, and there's a big penalty if you do miss the fairways. The greens look like they can get really firm, especially if there's no rain this week.

THE MODERATOR: Also finished in a tie for 4th in your most recent start on TOUR at the Genesis Invitational. How does your game feel coming into this week?

PATRICK CANTLAY: Yeah, it feels good. I had two weeks off and did some work back in Jupiter. I was in California, or on the West Coast since almost Christmas, so it's nice to have a couple weeks back at home.

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

Q. You mentioned the difficulty of the course. As a change of pace maybe a little bit from some other TOUR stops, do you like that, that it is?

PATRICK CANTLAY: Yeah, I do. I think there's a premium on driving the golf ball in the fairway, and I think you have to play really smart around this place. There's some really tricky hole locations, and if you get out of position it's really important to get the ball to the correct spot if you want to have a chance at scoring. It's definitely one of the harder stops on TOUR, and I really like golf courses that are more on the challenging end.

Q. When you look at the golf rankings and winners thus far this season, a lot of the top hasn't gotten to

the winner's circle. What does that say about the depth on TOUR, and in your case what do you think is the final ingredient that might get you there?

PATRICK CANTLAY: The final, you said what?

Q. To get you to the winner's circle, final ingredient for you. But, first off, just the depth of TOUR based on the rankings and who is winning thus far.

PATRICK CANTLAY: Yeah, I think it's harder to win out here than it ever has. I think guys play more aggressively, and the scores, as you can see, are lower and lower, seemingly every year. I always marvel at the beginning of the year how many under par guys shoot at the Sentry. It's essentially the same golf course, but guys keep shooting lower and lower.

Yeah, I think winning, you got to keep putting yourself in position time after time, and some of those weeks you get the right break at the right time. You hit a couple putts that, instead of going on the lip, they go in. Usually those are the weeks that you win.

Q. Last we saw you had a bit of a tough Sunday and didn't talk afterwards. Came out that you were sick. Can you tell us a little bit about what was going on that day?

PATRICK CANTLAY: Yeah, there was a flu going around in L.A., and I got sick on Friday night, and I just was drained. I just didn't have any energy. But, yeah, even par on the weekend is not going to get it done.

Q. Ever experience that before?

PATRICK CANTLAY: Yeah, I've played many tournaments not feeling my best before. Kind of inopportune timing, but no excuse.

Q. When you think about the legacy of Arnold Palmer, what has been his impact on you and your game, or are there any other PGA legends maybe that have had an impact as you were growing up in the game of golf?



PATRICK CANTLAY: Yeah, definitely. I met Arnold Palmer once at the Palmer Cup in 2011. Obviously, with everything he's done for the game and his history and legacy it was a real treat to meet him.

As far as golfers that really have made an impact, I mean, Fred Couples is a good friend of mine and someone I look up to, and I've spent a decent amount of time with.

Q. Starting on the premise that you don't have a real glaring weakness in any part of your game, was there ever -- I'm assuming that's fairly true -- but was there ever anything, kind of in development years, that you were not very good at, that you had to work to become better at? Was there a weakness as a kid, outside of press conferences?

PATRICK CANTLAY: Yeah, definitely. I would say short game, definitely, like the first year I came back in 2017, chipping, chipping around the greens, rough, or fairway. I think there's a difference to playing golf courses that are easier and softer where I grew up, just a standard country club or a standard golf club, whether I would play tournaments growing up, junior golf or even high school golf, where it didn't demand as much around the greens, both in terms of technique and spin, really, because the greens were soft. So, when I got to the upper end of amateur golf and then the beginning of my professional career, my short game just wasn't as sharp compared to the rest of my game. It was a little technique change, and a lot more practice, and really trying to learn how to spin the golf ball more. Because a lot of the golf courses I grew up on were really traditional, back to front greens, and if you missed it in the right spot you were kind of always chipping uphill on to softer greens. So, you start playing some tournaments in Texas or Florida, that's not really an option. Moving to Florida's been big for that, as far as helping my development, out of necessity.

Q. One other kind of related to that. For someone to be considered a good putter, an elite putter, do they have to start out that way? Do you have to be a good putter as a kid? I'm sure Tiger was a pretty good putter as a kid.

PATRICK CANTLAY: I bet.

Q. Jordan the same way, and what have you. Is it harder, do you think, if you suck at putting, to get better at it, at this level?

PATRICK CANTLAY: I think you've seen guys that have been average or mediocre putters that have turned into really good putters. Justin Rose sticks out. I know he had a number of years where he was lower on the strokes

gained statistic, and he's had now a number of years with a new process that is one of the best putters on TOUR. So, I think you can do it. It's probably rarer than the other way. I'm sure Denny's always been a good putter.

Q. I was listening to Colt Knost and Drew Stoltz as I was driving in today, and they were saying that there were 15, 16, 17 different players in this signature event than in the last signature event. So, they were saying it seemed to them like it was giving opportunities to people to get into these events. Whereas, before everyone was so worried about how no one was ever going to be able to get into 'em. Is that the right amount? Do you feel like that was the idea?

PATRICK CANTLAY: I think it was definitely the idea to try to get the best possible field in all these events. So, I think part of that is getting some of the guys that have played well this year. I think the process is doing that. I think if you play well enough, there's no barrier to get in. You know very clearly that, if you play well, one of the best, if you have one of the best West Coasts, you're going to be in the tournament this week. So, yeah, I think it's been good.

Q. Has Fred taught you any cool shots?

PATRICK CANTLAY: Fred? (Laughing). I don't necessarily pick his brain on golf so much, just enjoy hanging with him.

Q. He's a good hang.

PATRICK CANTLAY: He is.

Q. In your role as a board member, and all that's going on behind the scenes, have you directly spoken with anybody from the Public Investment Fund? I mean, would it go to that point where you would be involved in that or does that come from TOUR people to relay those talks?

PATRICK CANTLAY: Yeah, I have not. So, that mainly has been happening between TOUR management, and then it gets relayed back.

Q. Do you have any sense where we are with that at this point?

PATRICK CANTLAY: Not anything to add, other than what's been reported. Just that talks are ongoing.

Q. I don't know if you saw this morning, but LIV Golf gave up its bid for World Ranking points.

PATRICK CANTLAY: Okay.

Q. Given that idea, can you envision a time in the next few years when the best players weren't in the major championships because of that, and if so, is there a fix in your mind that even if they don't get World Ranking points, how do you make sure that the majors have the best fields?

PATRICK CANTLAY: Yeah, I think that's up for the majors to decide their fields. The British Open and the U.S. Open are obviously open events, so there's qualifying into those events. The PGA and the Masters are more invitational style. So, it's really up to each individual tournament to determine the criteria to get into those events, and that's not really on my radar.

Q. Following up on that question, do you think the World Rankings is broken?

PATRICK CANTLAY: I think the World Rankings has a very particular set of criteria, and I don't know if broken is the right word, but I think that there's been so much uncertainty and change in the last couple years that it's inevitable that things need to be updated or things need to be changed. I don't know if we've worked through all the changes necessary, compared to all the changes that have happened in the last couple years.

Q. What's something in the golf world you do think needs to be changed?

PATRICK CANTLAY: (Laughing). That seems like a very leading question.

Q. It's pretty open. Because you don't think the golf ball needs to change.

PATRICK CANTLAY: I don't. I think trying to figure out how to appeal to more people, an appeal to more fans, is probably the biggest change that I would like to see. I think if we can figure out a way to appeal to more people and get more people playing the game, I think when people start playing the game and learn what it's about, that's really an eye opener for people.

I've met a number or I have a number of friends that really didn't play golf growing up, and they have gotten in their late 20s or early 30s and they started playing and they become addicted to the game. Now, they're fans, and now they love playing the game. They're not going and playing football, they're not going and playing basketball, but they love going and playing golf.

I think in this new age where people's attention span is

less, it's rare to do something in person with your friends for four or five hours. I think the more that we can kind of put our phones down and go out and be outside and do something with people that we enjoy, I think that would be better for everyone.

Q. But how many people actually put their phone down? What percentage of society actually puts its phone down?

PATRICK CANTLAY: Actually does?

Q. Yeah.

PATRICK CANTLAY: Not much.

Q. How do you fix that?

PATRICK CANTLAY: I don't have all the answers. (Laughing).

Q. Why not? Couple things. One of the things you were talking about a minute ago, every time we hear about, we got to make the game more appealing, reach out to the fans, etcetera, it seems like some of the answers we get are all related to television, the broadcast. Does it go beyond that? I mean, is that a big part of it, and if it's not, then what are some of the other elements or avenues, I guess, to make it better?

PATRICK CANTLAY: I think that's just one window. Although, probably a window that's pretty big. A lot of people, their biggest connection to golf is viewing it and viewing tournaments. But I do think, like I said earlier, getting more people to play the game. So that's, you know, accessibility. For example, my foundation has a relationship with SCPGA Junior Tour, so just getting more juniors to be able to play the game, and even enjoy tournament golf, I think is huge.

I was fortunate. I grew up, my dad put me in a tournament when I was nine. I didn't really think much of it, it felt the same as playing soccer or playing baseball. I often think that if my parents didn't put me in golf tournaments when I was that age if I would ever make it to where I am now. Probably not. But if you think about how many kids play soccer and just grow up playing soccer or baseball or basketball, the more juniors we can get exposed to golf and maybe enjoying tournament golf, I think that would just be fantastic. Because I think it is a great game, with great values, and like I said, I have friends that tell me all the time, they wish they played younger, because they love it now.

Q. How did you do in that nine-year-old tournament?

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PATRICK CANTLAY: I think I -- it was at Yorba Linda Country Club, and I think I four putted the last. I definitely shot in the 40's. My grandpa said it's not good to four putt.

Q. I thought were you a good putter as a kid?

PATRICK CANTLAY: Well, that took a little time.

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

PATRICK CANTLAY: All right. Thank you.

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