

# Arnold Palmer Invitational

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Bay Hill, Florida, USA

Bay Hill Club and Lodge

## David Ford

### Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: All right. We would like to welcome David Ford to the interview room here at the Arnold Palmer Invitational presented by Mastercard. David's competing this week on the Palmer Cup exemption, and making his third career PGA TOUR start. So, if we could just get an opening comment from you on the excitement of teeing it up this week at Bay Hill.

DAVID FORD: Yeah, I'm thrilled to be here. Very grateful for the opportunity. It's been a special week so far, even though the tournament hasn't started. It's just been really fun to hang with some of the guys, to see some old friends like Nick Dunlap, and just to play a great golf course. It's been fun so far.

THE MODERATOR: As I mentioned, this is your third start, played last year in the Barbasol Championship and the RSM Classic. What did you learn from those two starts, getting those under your belt, that you can take to this week?

DAVID FORD: Yeah, I think the biggest thing with playing PGA TOUR events for me as an amateur is just being comfortable. I feel like my game is ready to compete. My preparation for those events was solid. I think more than anything it's just being comfortable. I remember starting out at Barbasol and RSM, I was super nervous on the first tee, and super nervous even in the practice round yesterday. I think just being comfortable is the main thing, and I've had a few reps being nervous this week so far in my practice round, so it's been good to get a little bit more comfortable throughout the week.

THE MODERATOR: You mentioned Nick Dunlap. Is there any other players, or Nick maybe, even though he's only a couple starts in, any advice that those guys have given you, or maybe the North Carolina legend, Davis Love?

DAVID FORD: Yeah, I think the biggest thing that Dunlap said to me, I kind of understood it more coming from him, was that -- I asked him how the PGA TOUR was so far, and he said the biggest difference is just getting comfortable. It's not about his game. I mean, we all know

that he can win on the PGA TOUR, and we know how good he is, but it's just about being comfortable and understanding that his life has changed a lot.

So, I think for me, kind of as I touched on earlier, it's really important just to be comfortable. I would say that's the biggest piece of advice that's been helpful. It's not really about the golf game that's lacking, it's just the comfort level sometimes.

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

#### **Q. Playing with Scottie Scheffler yesterday, what was the biggest takeaway or best piece of advice?**

DAVID FORD: I think, physically, he was amazing. Like just ball striking was incredible. He hit an amazing 6-iron on 17 that my caddie said it went into orbit, it was so high. Physically, it was awesome.

Then, I think the biggest thing that I noticed was how loose him and Sam kept it in the practice round. They weren't going out there grinding, trying to fix their golf swing or anything, they were just going out there to have fun and learn the course. That's a big thing that I think I've done well in amateur golf, but then in my last two PGA TOUR events I kind of got caught up more in the physical side of it and trying to make sure everything's perfect. So, I think just having fun with it was something I saw in them and something that I definitely took away from that round.

#### **Q. How comfortable do you feel right now?**

DAVID FORD: Really comfortable after today. I think yesterday I played solid in the practice round and was hitting it great. Got a little tired towards the end. Yeah, I think, after a good day of work today, I got about two and a half hours out on the range, chipping green, and putting green. Then, just seeing some of the guys. Justin Thomas said hi to me earlier, which was great. Seeing Scottie in the locker room, seeing Dunlap a little bit, just being comfortable with the environment more has been great for me, and I feel really comfortable, a lot more comfortable than I did at Barbasol and RSM.



**Q. What would you say the scouting report on your game is? What are the strengths, what are some things that you feel like you still need to work on to get to this level?**

DAVID FORD: I feel like it's still changing as I'm still learning who I am as a player. I think in the past, even in junior golf and freshman year of college, I didn't really have a complete game. I just hit it really good, I hit it straight, hit it great with the irons, and then played well when I made putts. I feel like since I've been at UNC for a little while the coach, Andrew DiBitetto, has spoke some life into my short game, been able to improve there, and then gained a little distance off the tee. So, I think the biggest strength right now is how well I can score it when I don't have my best stuff, and having a shot I can rely on with every club in the bag, even when things aren't going well.

**Q. Viktor was just in here and talked about how much confidence he got from making the cut here as an amateur. I'm just wondering your goal for the week, would it be making the cut, would it be more than that, what's your expectations?**

DAVID FORD: Yeah, I had that conversation with my parents a few months ago. They had some talk about making the cut or missing the cut. I don't think anyone's ever made a bunch of cuts trying to just make cuts. I think they make a lot of cuts trying to win golf tournaments. I think my goal for the week is the same as it is any event, I show up and I prepare the best I can for every week, and learn the golf course, get comfortable with the environment, and then try to win a golf tournament. I'll see where the chips fall Sunday, but I'm trying to have fun and win golf tournaments.

**Q. Your playing with Webb, you have his former caddie on the bag. How much does that help with comfort?**

DAVID FORD: Yeah, it helps a ton. I think once I saw that pairing, my caddie and I were thrilled about it. Just for the comfort level and just how well we know each other. We all four had dinner Monday night. So, it's great just to have somebody that I know. If I'm playing slow he can tell me in a way that's loving, and it won't hurt my feelings at all. He can say, D-Ford, like, pick up the pace a little bit, and I'll be totally fine with it. But, yeah, we'll be rooting each other on and it's just, it's exciting to know that we're paired together.

**Q. With maybe a year and a half left in college and PGA TOUR University as a carrot with a PGA TOUR card available, how do you envision spending the next 18 months, let's say, if you do stay for four years, to**

**get ready for this level?**

DAVID FORD: Yeah, I think it's changing still. I think this week will play a big part in my summer schedule. Right now it's just focused on winning a national championship. Then, as far as summer schedule goes, I'm still unsure at what I'm doing. I think a good week here would remind me that it's really important to get comfortable on the PGA TOUR and get my game ready. So playing more PGA TOUR events over the summer would be fun, if the opportunities present themselves, but I think it depends on this week. Overall, just continue to grow as a player. My coach, Andrew DiBitetto, has my best interests in mind, on and off the golf course, and the more I talk with him and meet with him and really see, he can see more of my game, and I see where his head's at, then it gives me more confidence going forward. So, I think just stay in my lane and continue to play golf wherever I feel like that is.

**Q. What's the biggest improvement in your game since you got into college golf?**

DAVID FORD: I would say two things: The biggest thing physically is definitely short game. I didn't have any shots freshman year of college. It was like I had a stab shot when it was into the grain, and then I had like another stab shot that with not as big of a divot if it was down grain. So, I was a very one-sided player around the greens. But I feel like just being at UNC -- Dylan Menante is a teammate of mine, he's a great chipper. My brother is a great chipper. Having great players around me that have great short games has really helped me.

On the mental side, I think understanding my game better, so, when I have a bad round, it's usually completely mental. Because there are things that I can do in my golf game that I know I can do better, but when I manage those things well, and when I really, I guess, take the time to understand my misses and understand where my game is at in the week, then I've definitely grown in that area, and it really helps me score better on those days when I don't have my best stuff.

**Q. What's something good, what's something maybe bad about having your brother at UNC now?**

DAVID FORD: The best part is definitely having somebody to talk to who understands pretty much everything I'm thinking. I could send him a picture on text and he would understand exactly what it means.

I think the bad thing is knowing that both of us will have bad rounds, and it's hard to see the other one struggle. I think when he struggles on the golf course, and when I see him get so caught up in his score, then it hurts me more



than just seeing any of my other teammates struggle. So, that's probably the bad thing about having him there is knowing that I'm really close to see all of it. But that could be taken as a positive as well, just with being there for him and understanding how to coach him.

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

DAVID FORD: Thank you.

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