

Honda Classic

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Palm Beach Gardens, Florida, USA

PGA National Resort

Lee Westwood

Press Conference



MARK WILLIAMS: We'd like to welcome Lee Westwood into the interview room here at the Honda Classic 2021. Lee, you've come off a couple of great performances as we all know, second at the Arnold Palmer Invitational at Bay Hill and second last week at THE PLAYERS Championship at TPC Sawgrass. I guess my first question is when you play difficult courses like that it's pretty physically and mentally draining anytime, but when you're in contention at both events it's got to be doubly so. How do you hold up and maintain that mental and physical discipline to continue on at another tough golf course?

LEE WESTWOOD: Yeah, I'm a little bit tired, I must admit. I feel a little bit drained. My legs are feeling it a little bit. I played Augusta on Monday and Tuesday, as well, so -- I played with my son and we ended up playing 36 holes on Monday, which is not the easiest walk around there, and then 18 holes yesterday morning. So I've played a lot of golf recently.

Yeah, I'll try not to do too much before tomorrow's first round in the afternoon. I'll get a good night's sleep tonight and try and recharge my batteries a little bit, get plenty of carbs and see how we go tomorrow. I suppose I'm not expecting too much this week, but I'm not really -- I don't know what to expect from myself at the moment. I'm obviously coming off two good results and my game feels good. I'm putting well, and you know, if I'm feeling all right tomorrow, there's no reason why I shouldn't play well. I play well around this golf course. I finished fourth here last year, and it's a course that sets up well for me, so I'm looking forward to it.

MARK WILLIAMS: You mentioned finishing fourth here last year. It's one of two top-5s you've had at this tournament. The other one was 2012 when you shot 63. Can you draw on a round like that that will benefit your playing this week?

LEE WESTWOOD: Yeah, very much so. I think you can draw on any good performances you have around any golf courses really. It gives you good feelings, good emotions for a place, and I certainly have that here. I used to live

just across the road at Old Palm so it was a bit of a home game, and I've got a lot of friends in this area that might come out and support, as well.

This is a nice week for me to come play. I'm looking forward to it.

Q. It must have given you so much joy to see Sam enjoying Augusta on Monday. I'm sure he had a big beaming smile on his face the whole way around. The most important question, how many shots were you giving him and who won?

LEE WESTWOOD: Well, he chipped in on 18 yesterday to take the money. We'll not discuss the shots. I will say it's as hard as I've seen Augusta play, even when it's been the week of the Masters. It was cold yesterday morning, 45, 50 degrees. It was playing long, and the greens were like rock. They were really releasing out. It was a tough couple of days to play Augusta.

Yesterday I think he shot 82. I set him a target of 83 and he chipped in on the last for birdie for 82, so he won the money.

Q. He's obviously going to be on your bag for the Masters in a few weeks' time. Does Helen then get first dibs for the Open? Who's on your bag for the Ryder Cup? Do they have to fight it amongst themselves?

LEE WESTWOOD: It's a negotiation process. Helen is doing the PGA Championship and the Open, I think. I'm not sure about the Ryder Cup yet. We'll cross that bridge if I get in the team.

Q. Are you able to watch Cheltenham at all out there?

LEE WESTWOOD: Hopefully Blue Sari has just won that race.

Q. 'Fraid not, no.

LEE WESTWOOD: Oh, well, there goes my accumulator.

Q. Any tips for the Gold Cup or anything?



LEE WESTWOOD: I haven't looked much at the form. I've been away for so long, I've missed all the buildup to it. All the racing around Christmas I've missed out. I really miss actually not going to the races. It's just not the same watching it on TV. Soon they'll let owners in and the more crowds after that, the better.

Q. My question was about Cheltenham, as well. If the circumstances had been different in the world, where would you have been this week?

LEE WESTWOOD: Probably here. Yeah, I didn't have any plans to go to Cheltenham this year.

Q. Was that because of the pandemic, or does it speak to kind of where you are golf-wise these days?

LEE WESTWOOD: Just where I am golf-wise, I think. I joined the PGA TOUR September last year -- well, when I needed to, whenever the signup date was, and I committed myself to play a string of events, and this is a good run of events here. There's exemptions for top 50 in the world into most of them, so it made sense to play a run here.

Q. Who will be on your bag this weekend?

LEE WESTWOOD: Sam.

Q. Just talk about that; what is the difference for you when it's Sam as opposed to Helen?

LEE WESTWOOD: Not too much difference. I just like being out there with the both of them. Both keep me relaxed. We have good chats out there. It's good bonding time. Helen picked the last two weeks to caddie. I think she's sick she didn't pick this week now. She was on a run, wasn't she, but she's here, so I'll be able to chat to her at night about stuff that's going on on the golf course. But Sam is enjoying himself and looking forward to this run of tournaments where he's getting to caddie.

Q. You mentioned kind of the grueling stretch you've been in, not just playing golf tournaments but the mental grind of competing to win at the end. What is the challenge for this course now, the third in a row, very difficult course?

LEE WESTWOOD: This is a tough mental test, probably the toughest of the lot, I'd say, and the most mentally challenging part of it, as well, is at the end of it, the Bear Trap. Yeah, I'm feeling a bit jaded, but hopefully pull myself together and get ready for tomorrow.

Q. I couldn't help but notice the last couple of weeks,

final group, it's obviously exciting and there have been some fans back and all. It just seems like you are getting much more love from galleries maybe now than in the past. I don't think you were ever -- I don't think it was a bad thing, I just think you're just seeing it more now. Are you noticing the same, and how much do you appreciate that at this point, the fact that you are so appreciated it seems like over here now?

LEE WESTWOOD: Yeah, it certainly feels like that. I think I've always been fairly popular, but it seems to have gone up a level, and it's just great to have crowds back in and fans back in, get in a few cheers and making birdies for them and playing well for them and bringing some enjoyment to the people that are allowed in.

I struggled when we came out of lockdown playing without crowds, struggled to get the -- I was enthusiastic but it wasn't the same buzz. I've played in front of crowds for 27 or 28 years now, and I found it very difficult. It's great that I feel even more popular now, and it's nice to be playing in front of people.

Q. You've been asked a couple of times and you even said the legs might feel a little heavy after all the golf you've played. Did you consider skipping this week, or what was the determining factor in you deciding to go forward with the plan of playing here?

LEE WESTWOOD: No, I never felt like skipping it or thought about it. I've got a good relationship with Ken Kennerly, tournament director, and he's been kind enough to give me invites in the past. He gave me one for this week but I ended up not needing it through a good finish at Bay Hill. I used to live in this area, so I like to come and support this tournament. It means a lot to the area and Jack and Barbara Nicklaus. Yeah, it's nice to support it. It's one of my favorite tournaments of the year, as well. I really enjoy this golf course. I find it a good challenge. There's a lot of shots out there where you've really got to commit and play the shot. I love the challenge of the Bear Trap. It's always a bit blowy, which I like, as well.

Q. You've touched on it a little bit, and I don't know if "fun" is the word word, but Arnie's course was brutal, you were one bad swing away from double bogey all day long at TPC Sawgrass and now this course is probably the toughest of the lot. I don't know if the right word is "fun," but can you actually have fun playing this golf course in tournament conditions?

LEE WESTWOOD: Yeah, you really can. I don't think you need to be dictated to by how many birdies you make to have fun. I have fun at the U.S. Open. You know, when it's a grind and pars mean a lot, I feel like I enjoy it just as

much as when the winning score is 20-under. I think, yes, definitely possible to have fun around here.

Q. There's a number of other famous three-holes stretches, 16, 17 and 18 at TPC Sawgrass and you've got the Green Mile at Wells Fargo, Snake Pit at the Valspar. How does the Bear Trap compare to those other three-hole stretches in your opinion?

LEE WESTWOOD: I think as tough if not tougher, really. They're at the end of the round of golf, so you're thinking about them all day. It very much depends on which way the wind is blowing, but certainly when it's into off the left on 15, 16 and 17, blowing from that direction, they're beasts of holes, and you've really got to have control of your golf swing and your ball flight. If you walk off with 3, 4, 3 on those three holes, you're delighted.

MARK WILLIAMS: We appreciate the time you've made for us and keep the good play going and good luck this week at the Honda Classic.

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