

Zurich Classic of New Orleans

Wednesday, April 20, 2022

Avondale, Louisiana, USA

TPC Louisiana

Jay Haas

Bill Haas

Press Conference



JOHN BUSH: We'll get started. We'd like to welcome Bill and Jay Haas into the interview room here at the Zurich Classic of New Orleans. Jay is making his 799th career start on the PGA TOUR.

Jay, we'll begin with you. Welcome to the Zurich Classic. If we can get some comments on how excited you are to be playing with Bill.

JAY HAAS: Yeah, it's been on our plate for the last couple months. Bill asked me to play, and I tried to discourage him, that he needed a partner that could help him a little bit more, but just being with him out here and being on the same range with him again, looking down the aisles here and just seeing all the great players that we have, so it's something I've been thinking about, certainly nervous about.

Yesterday didn't help me in any way because I didn't play very well. So hopefully I'll get better as the week goes on. It's just fun being here, again being with Bill, getting the adrenaline flowing, and hopefully we can do better than I'm anticipating I'm going to do.

JOHN BUSH: Bill, just talk to us a little bit about how excited you are to tee it up with your dad.

BILL HAAS: Yeah, I thought it was a great opportunity to play together. Pretty special to be able to have your dad play in a PGA TOUR event with you.

Yeah, I don't know, I love him watching me play. Last week he came down and my mom came down and watched me at Hilton Head. I just enjoy him being out there. He listens to me go through my rounds on the phone or in person sometimes. When he's there, he sees what I'm talking about, and he helps me with my game.

So I think it's just a good opportunity to play golf and enjoy it and have fun, but also inside the ropes be competitive and him be able to see what I'm talking about when I say

either I'm struggling or here I hit a good one, what do you see here? I do that anyway.

So to have him inside the ropes on my team, it's just a great opportunity, and it's just a special week. I think something that I'm really looking forward to and I'll remember forever.

JOHN BUSH: Jay, a lot of talk of your 799th start, but at the same time Bill is making his 442nd and still going strong. Can you comment what that means to you as a dad, what it's been like watching his career?

JAY HAAS: To go into the family business is pretty special. He's obviously had a wonderful career up till now and still going strong. To think that I played almost 800 events on the PGA TOUR, it was a different era. I would think that most guys played upwards of 30 events when I first started. That was just what you did. There wasn't a lot of money in it, so you had to continue to play.

Now more of the players seem to play 22, 23 events, and they're exhausted. I understand there's a lot of pressure and everything, but for Bill to have played in 400-plus tournaments is not many guys do that, period. So it's been an unbelievable thrill for me to watch him play, to succeed on the grandest stage. It's not about who you know, it's about what you know and how you perform under the pressure. There's no passing the ball here. There's nobody to block for you and all that stuff.

So whatever's accomplished by an individual is just all on him. I think that I've been able to help him through the years with certain things about his swing and all that, but bottom line, it's the guy holding the club and hitting the shots that matters.

JOHN BUSH: Before questions from the media, Jay, you mentioned it briefly, but the state of both of you guys' games coming into the week. Bill, we'll start with you.

BILL HAAS: Yeah, it feels okay. Just trying to get better each week and just trying to do my best out there. Certainly haven't been the form the last few years as I did for a while. I still believe that each week is going to be the



week that it turns around. This will be the week where I'm steadier for four rounds and that kind of stuff.

It feels pretty good. All I can do is grind it out out there, and that's what I plan to do this week.

JAY HAAS: We haven't played a lot this year yet. I think we've only had five tournaments on the Champions Tour. I played four of the five. I played okay. I tell people that I still see the shot and I still think I can do it, and a lot of times it doesn't come off that way.

This is a pretty good eye opener. I've played with Bill at home a lot, and he's 30, 40, 50 in front of me and it's a steady diet of it. This is one of the longest courses out here. So it's probably not the greatest spot for me to debut, but I wish that we could have played this tournament 15 or 20 years ago. That would have been a little more helpful.

Again, I still feel like I can do it at certain times. With a partner, a great partner, hopefully I can contribute when the time comes and not embarrass myself.

Q. If you could just take us through how you made this ask and how you decided it would be a good thing for you guys to do, and his initial reactions when you came to him.

BILL HAAS: When I asked him? Last couple years I didn't have the status to be able to ask a partner. I always had to be asked. This year knowing I would be in the field, and I just asked the TOUR can my dad play? When they said yes, I just mentioned it to him.

We had kind of talked about it, or maybe I had talked about it with other people, about how I thought it would be cool if he played. Yeah, I just mentioned it. My mom was there, I think, and they're just like, yeah, we'll definitely do it.

It wasn't a planned thing, by any means, of how I was going to approach him. I just said, we should play if you want to play. I knew a couple weeks ago he was in Mississippi or maybe next week you're playing in Houston maybe, so it just worked out on the schedule where it would work for him.

Yeah, it wasn't a big deal, but I was glad he wanted to do it. I think it will be -- I just knew it would be a fun week. So far, so good.

Q. Jay, did you think, is he for real, for a moment? Or were you like, this is awesome, at that very first point?

JAY HAAS: I think my first thought -- again, like I said, I

said, are you sure? I don't want you to waste a week just to play with me. We can play any time. But I played with my Uncle Bob back in the old Disney team tournament. We probably played three or four times down there, and I just loved doing that.

Again, I think like Bill's saying, I loved performing for him because he taught me the game and all that, and showing him how I could do it and everything. We didn't do great. We probably made a couple cuts and missed a couple, but it was -- you know, I wish that tournament would have been, again, when he first came out and I was still playing some PGA TOUR golf.

I kind of, the first week or so, I kind of kept thinking, well, he's going to come to his senses and find Nick Watney or somebody, you know, one of his buddies.

But the more I thought about it, the more I'm loving it. All the guys out here have been great. So many people have said this is unbelievably cool that you're getting to do that.

It seems like I've become Pops out here. I've heard that a bunch. Hey, Pops, good shot and all that stuff. It's been very cool. Very cool.

Q. Obviously, you have a storied career, very successful in golf, and that can make it hard for you to sort of not be hard on yourself and your abilities out there this week, but can you just see it for what this is, an amazing experience with your son? And anything that you do above and beyond will be a bonus.

JAY HAAS: That's the thing I'm struggling with, I believe. Obviously just being out here and teeing it up and hearing our names called tomorrow, hopefully I can hit some good shots and make some birdies and everything, but ultimately this is just -- to be with my son, again, on the grandest stage here, that's what I'm trying to take from it.

Again, I don't want to just show up and go through the motions. The competitive spirit in both of us, and certainly me, I'm going to be hard on myself, but I always am. I always have been. I kick myself all the time hitting bad shots.

But ultimately, my wife's here with me, his mom. She'll be watching him way more than me, I guess, but she's the one who's been a great supporter of this happening and excited about it since Bill asked.

Q. Jay, I want to say it's an increasingly rare treat to cover someone who I watched play growing up, so this is nice. I just wondered if you had any memories of coming here when you were a regular TOUR player,

 . . . when all is said, we're done.®

probably playing at old Lakewood Country Club? Do you remember Monday qualifying here under the old format or when you first came here, anything like that?

JAY HAAS: I don't know if I Monday qualified here. I must have made the cut the week before. But I do remember playing Lakewood and played well there. I liked it there.

I do remember one year that I putted out -- I played the morning on Friday and putted out on 18. I was, I don't know, 4, 5, 6-under or something, I was making the cut comfortably, and I don't think I hit another shot until Tuesday. It started to rain Friday afternoon, and it rained Saturday, Sunday, and most of Monday. Then I think the afternoon guys, to finish on Friday, maybe finished on Monday, and we got to play again on Tuesday. I do remember one year that.

I remember the old clubhouse at Lakewood there was a diagram of the course, and it showed Jack driving it on four par-4s there in one day. Think about that. Four par-4s. I asked Jack about that one time, and he was like, oh, I don't remember doing that. There were a couple you could cut over trees and stuff, but the 8th hole -- maybe 7 or 8, had some cross-bunkers out there. I would hit 4-wood and then a wedge, and he knocked it over that and onto the green.

Anyway, that was pretty cool experience. And then going to English Turn, that was quite a challenge there. And I played with him one year at English Turn. But I haven't been here, gosh, I don't know how long, 25 years. Maybe 20, I guess. Toward the end of my PGA TOUR career, I played English Turn, but I had never played here.

Q. Bill, you mentioned you all wanted to do this. When's the last time you all played in something like this, an exhibition? Have you all played together in any kind of tournament?

BILL HAAS: I guess the CVS. Peter Jacobsen hosted something up in Seattle or up in Oregon. Where was that?

JAY HAAS: Yeah, Portland.

BILL HAAS: The CVS, we played a couple times, Billy Andrade and Brad Faxon's deal up in Rhode Island. So those would be the only two different team like write a score down events that we played. Those have been a while.

We've played a bunch of golf together, you know like on off weeks and stuff like that. Different animal, I guess, when you have to finish the hole out.

Q. And Jay, you mentioned your Uncle Bob. Obviously, you lost him earlier this year.

JAY HAAS: Right.

Q. He's always seemed to be one of the more underrated Masters champions because of what happened with De Vincenzo. Obviously, that had nothing to do with him. Your thoughts on him and his life in golf?

JAY HAAS: When I was young, I didn't really understand it. Didn't really understand what winning the Masters meant to a player back then. He loved that tournament, going there towards the end of his life, wearing the green coat and going to the dinner and all that. It was a very, very special event for him.

We got to play a couple times. My brother Jerry played in it. He made the semifinals of the U.S. Am, so he got in the tournament the next year, and I was in, and Bob played that year. So that was an extremely memorable year in the Masters there.

Jerry made the cut and was going to be Low Am. I think he made a 6 on 16 or something the last day. But it's just -- you know, I think back to the times playing with him kind of full circle now, and he would have enjoyed watching this and giving us advice on how to handle all this.

Q. Jay, is 800 something that you have an interest in, 800 starts?

JAY HAAS: Well, it's kind of a long story, but for years I had 799, and then recently in the last couple years, you can ask for yourself, but all of a sudden I've got 798. Apparently, the first Presidents Cup was played '94, I played on that team, and that counts. All these Presidents Cups and Ryder Cups, I believe count as an event. And back then I want to say the Presidents Cup was opposite another tournament.

So the guys are saying, well, we need to get credit as an event and a cut made and all that stuff. So until maybe '20 or '21, I had 799, and so now I'm back to 798. So I'm not going to get to 800, I can guarantee you that, if that's the case.

Q. We'll give you 800. Just say this is 800.

JAY HAAS: I'll take it.

JOHN BUSH: Jay and Bill, we appreciate your time. Best of luck this week.

