

Valspar Championship

Tuesday, March 19, 2024

Palm Harbor, Florida, USA

Innisbrook Resort (Copperhead)

Taylor Moore

Press Conference

THE MODERATOR: We would like to welcome our defending champion Taylor Moore to the interview room here at the Valspar Championship. We're going to just start off with some opening comments on what it's like to be back where you captured your first PGA TOUR title.

TAYLOR MOORE: Yeah, it's awesome to be back. I came back for the first time about a month ago for media day, so it was nice to be back on property and reliving all those feels. Definitely excited for this week to get back out there and play again obviously at the place that I got my first win at, so stoked to get back out there.

THE MODERATOR: Came back for media day, were there any specific memories from that final round 67?

TAYLOR MOORE: Yeah, I drove the course with Gary Koch actually, they had a pro-am going on, so we went over to 16, 17, 18 and kind of relived the last little bit. It was fun to kind of talk to him about it, visit those feelings and memories again, for sure.

THE MODERATOR: Coming off PLAYERS last week, a solid stretch where you made all your cuts, talk about how you're feeling after last week at THE PLAYERS.

TAYLOR MOORE: My game's feeling good. I made all my cuts so far this year and I think I'm trying not to be too frustrated, because I haven't had like a great week yet where I put four rounds together. But at the same time I know each individual area of my game's in a good spot and really just looking forward to putting four rounds together and just keep building on each and every week as I'm in another three- or four-week stretch here now.

THE MODERATOR: What did this win last year do to kind of propel your season, having a good week at Memphis and then going all the way to TOUR Championship?

TAYLOR MOORE: I think I talked about it that week, it just gave me some confidence, knowing that I knew I could compete out here and be in contention on Sunday, but until you actually hoist that trophy and get it done, I guess you



never really know. So it gave me that affirmation that I could do it out here on Sundays on the back nine when I am in contention.

THE MODERATOR: Throw it out to questions.

Q. (No Microphone.)

TAYLOR MOORE: That's a great point. I think for me it was, I knew I was in the majors the rest of the year basically, but I knew I needed to finish well to get into everything this year. Obviously with how our schedule is now too getting into those Signature Events and elevated stuff was definitely a priority. Obviously a win takes care of a lot of that. Yeah, getting to the East Lake for the first time as well setting up my schedule for this year was massive, but I think once the win kind of wore off after that stretch you were talking about, I just wanted to keep getting better each and every week, and that's what me and my team talk about every week is, how can I keep getting better and how can I evaluate where I'm at and put one foot in front of the other and just take it week by week.

Q. Did you stay here after media day and go to Augusta?

TAYLOR MOORE: I knocked that out on the way to Bay Hill. So, yeah, I went to Augusta Friday and Saturday before Bay Hill. Went and scoped it out with a local caddie and, yeah, it was the first time I was able to do that and plan ahead, so it was a lot of fun, so I tried to take advantage of it. We had a good couple days there and caught some good weather on Saturday. It's obviously different than tournament week when everybody's out there, so it's kind of cool to feel like we had the place to ourselves a little bit and put in some time.

Q. Was it hard to almost enjoy that because it was after such a whirlwind of winning here and getting in?

TAYLOR MOORE: To a degree. I definitely enjoyed it, first time at Augusta was amazing, I had a blast. But I get what you're saying too, for sure. It was a little bit of a whirlwind, and I think it was a good learning experience though. I think I might have gotten there a little bit too early



just out of excitement, and then by the time Friday rolls around it's like, man, I've been here for what feels like should be Sunday at this point. So definitely learned from that, just trying to figure out how I want to orient my schedule moving forward in weeks like that.

Q. What do you think you'll do or not do at Augusta this year that you did last year?

TAYLOR MOORE: Yeah, for sure, one thing I'm going to avoid that tournament shop. That thing is madness there. Everybody is trying to get the gnome and hoodies and all kinds of stuff. That thing is crazy. I think my goal is just to treat majors and elevated events like a normal work week. So I want to go into Monday of that week, go through my normal routine, go through my proper prep, and get myself ready to be in the best position to have a chance to compete on the weekend.

Q. Did you keep receipts from last year on how much money you spent?

TAYLOR MOORE: Oh, my God, my fiance' is over here. She probably has a better idea than me. I think we spent quite a bit. Which, first time there, I think, you know, you got to take care of your friends and family, for sure, but we spent quite a bit in that shop.

Q. Did you get the gnome?

TAYLOR MOORE: I don't know if we were there early enough to get it. I mean, I heard the lines were insane at whatever time they open up, 6, 7 in the morning. But, no, we skipped the gnomes.

Q. How do you like your parking place here?

TAYLOR MOORE: Pretty cool. They did a great job with it. When I did come for media day a few weeks back it was my first time seeing it and yeah, it's cool. I mean, my dog takes up half of the parking space, so, yeah, she's definitely an emphasis on the parking spot. But, yeah, it's got all my favorite sports teams, professional teams, Cowboys, Stars, Oklahoma Thunder. Growing up in OKC there that was like our first pro major sports team of my lifetime, so, yeah, it's cool. It's awesome. Definitely a treat to have that spot this week.

Q. (No Microphone.)

TAYLOR MOORE: They would argue that? (Laughing).

Q. What is it about this course that's the biggest test and what have you prepared especially for it?

TAYLOR MOORE: Great question. I enjoy places that typically don't require 20-plus under to win. Like this is a challenge. I feel like history, it's 8, 10-, 12-under kind of can get you a win at this place. I would consider it old school just from the aspect of it's not overly long and you really have to think your way around this golf course. So you got to, when you do miss, you got to be fat sides of the greens, got to give yourself some space. Rough's challenging. Greens are typically back to front. So just kind of all the small nuances like that, that I enjoy in prepping and playing a place like this. It can get really firm and fast as well. That's what we see on this Florida stretch. Bay Hill gets super crispy, this place can get firm and fast on the weekend as well. So I think any time it gets like that it's prepping you for the stretch we have coming up as well.

Q. How much more comfortable will you be here this week coming back as a past champion?

TAYLOR MOORE: I think so, yeah. If I can't be comfortable winning at this place and coming back I don't know if I'll ever be comfortable. So I think it's a place, obviously, I like. It's a place I know I can grind out and shoot even par, 1- or 2-under on days that I don't necessarily have it, which is nice. I think it's obviously a place I know how to win at too. I think it's a time too where I'm at a place in my game where I know I can get myself ready to get going on Thursday and get after it again.

Q. There's been a history of repeats here.

TAYLOR MOORE: I heard all about it at media day. I heard all about it (laughing).

Q. Why do you think that is?

TAYLOR MOORE: I don't know if there's necessarily one thing that stands out. I think it's a place where you can just go figure out a way to shoot, 1-, 2-, 3-under a day, and then you're on the back nine on Sunday and you're like pretty close to the lead. So I think it's just one of those places where, if you think properly, if you don't give up shots in certain areas, and you play those last three, four holes even or under par, you're going to typically have decent day out here.

Q. Favorite memory from Sunday last year?

TAYLOR MOORE: Yeah, the one I kind of talked about is the birdie on 16. Just because I drove it in the pine straw through the fairway and then was able to have kind of a gap over there in the trees, and I was able to work a 9-iron to about 25 feet and make that putt -- 25 or 30 feet and made the putt. I would say that one definitely stands out.

I've gone back and watched the coverage a few times on since I won last year, just when I was bored at home in the off-season, and I can't ever find that shot on 16. So if you guys could pull that up somehow, I would love to see that shot from the trees on 16, because I can't find it anywhere. So that's definitely a memory I have that I like to think about.

Q. You've won on different levels, but until you do it for the first time you never know. What do you feel has been the thing that pushed you across the line?

TAYLOR MOORE: I think it's, I was just super comfortable that day. I knew I was a couple shots out when I teed off. I knew if I was kind of lingering there going into the back nine that, as you guys know, out here, anything can happen, and just kind of stayed with it. Hit a great shot on 15, obviously, that led to birdie there. But I think the one thing that does stick out is, I mean, I didn't miss a putt inside of six feet. Normally, when you do something like that, you're going to be pretty close to the lead. So I thought that with those greens and being able to save pars when I needed to, and then obviously convert when I hit quality shots, I thought that definitely led, that was a good recipe to be in contention there on Sunday.

Q. Did you graduate?

TAYLOR MOORE: I did.

Q. When you left Arkansas, what was your first step to pro?

TAYLOR MOORE: I went straight to the Canadian TOUR. PGA TOUR Canada.

Q. How did you get there?

TAYLOR MOORE: I did Q-School actually there. My senior year of college I went up there as an amateur, we had a couple off weeks and the timing worked out, so I flew to -- gosh, where was that? Somewhere in British Columbia. My dad actually caddied for me for that Q-School, which was fun. Yeah, I went up there and finished top 10 in that Q-School, which got me status when I turned pro.

Q. Finishing second in your first event, what kind of a boost was that?

TAYLOR MOORE: That was definitely reassuring that I could play at the professional level. I think going straight from the National Championship in Oregon and finishing 30th something place, which was an okay event my senior year of college, to finish in solo second my first week out

gave me a confidence boost, for sure. I got comfortable pretty fast out there. I also made like 19,000 Canadian dollars, so I thought I was kind of rich (laughing). I learned fast what it actually was (laughing).

Q. What was the exchange rate?

TAYLOR MOORE: I think it was 13,000 U.S. and then obviously tax, so it didn't quite make it to \$19,000.

Q. You win later, you spend five years trying to make it here, what do you need to keep going and avoid any self doubts?

TAYLOR MOORE: Yeah, I think, yeah, spending four seasons on the Korn Ferry Tour is great prep. Like it really taught me how to be a pro, taught me how to travel, taught me what I needed to do for myself on the road and in my practice. Then, obviously situations out there competing. I was pretty close to getting my TOUR card though my first two years, I finished 37th and 30th on the Korn Ferry Tour and had a couple cracks at it, didn't get it done. Then had an injury in 2019 which kind of, timeframe-wise, stalled out, but it was a great time for me to grow up and learn about myself even more. I don't think I'm ever going to be a guy that gets complacent or gets deterred by anything that happens. I have a pretty good head on my shoulders, I'm a competitor at heart, and so I knew I would always, deep down I feel like I knew I was always going to get out here. Just my journey and my timeframe it took a little bit longer than I would have liked. But I'm out here now and enjoying every bit of it.

Q. (No Microphone.)

TAYLOR MOORE: I was born in San Angelo. We moved to Oklahoma City when I was eight years old. So I spent a few years in San Angelo, don't really remember, we moved from there, grew up in Texarkana actually from 3 to 8 or 9 and then we moved to Oklahoma City after that.

Q. (No Microphone.)

A. Texarkana.

Q. What would defending this title mean?

TAYLOR MOORE: It would be awesome. I think first time having to defend, too. Like, when I did win on the Canadian Tour I didn't get an opportunity. When I won on Korn Ferry Tour my last year out there I didn't get the opportunity to defend. So obviously having that opportunity is amazing and something that I'm going to embrace. Getting my first TOUR win here was awesome, and getting my second here would be even better. So



definitely looking forward to that challenge and that opportunity to get it done this week.

Q. Neil Shipley from Ohio State recently played a practice round at Augusta with you, how did that come about?

TAYLOR MOORE: We had a great time. We played Saturday on the trip I mentioned. I went to scout it a little bit before Bay Hill, so I met Neil there. Obviously I knew the name, I hadn't met him in person. Obviously had a great week at the U.S. Amateur in Denver. He was an awesome kid. We had a good time. God, those college kids are so long, man. He freaking bombs it. I was impressed with his game, impressed with how far he hit it. But he asked some good questions, and he's getting ready for his professional journey coming up, so it was a lot of fun. We had a good day out there.

Q. What could you dial up right now that could turn these good finishes into great finishes?

TAYLOR MOORE: Great question. I think, talking with a couple guys on my team, just scoring. Feel like I'm driving the ball in the fairway now. Trying to tidy up the wedges a little bit, hit 'em closer. Then just some momentum swing kind of stuff too. I think I'm bogeying the occasional par-5 out of play, that kind of stuff right now. Just back-to-back bogey, things like that. It's really zooming in on some small kind of one percent things, but as we all know that stuff definitely matters over the course of 72 holes. So really looking forward to try and tidy up those kind of small things and keep the momentum of rounds going a little bit better.

Q. Are you mostly all with Josh Gregory in your short game?

TAYLOR MOORE: Yeah, Josh is out here every week doing a lot of that stuff. And then as far as swing-wise I still work actually with my coach from Arkansas as well, Coach McMakin there, so, he's busy with the team, but he definitely has a big role in my physical golf swing.

THE MODERATOR: All right. Thank you for the time.

TAYLOR MOORE: Thank you. Appreciate it.

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