

# Valspar Championship

Sunday, March 22, 2026

Palm Harbor, Florida, USA

Innisbrook Resort (Copperhead)

## Matt Fitzpatrick

### Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: We would like to welcome the winner of the 2026 Valspar Championship Matt Fitzpatrick to the interview room. Matt, congratulations. Incredible round today. Talk us through your emotions down its stretch and that big birdie putt on 18.

MATT FITZPATRICK: Yeah, it felt a little frustrated out there. Felt like the front nine I played pretty solid. I've actually not looked at my stats yet which is normally what I do. But I feel like I played pretty solid. Sort of a continuation of the week of the back nine I felt like it was just, it was like really close to being good, but I was just almost on the wrong side of it every time. Just a couple of shots only just into the rough. I wouldn't say there was major wides, they were just in the rough every time. They made it easy for the short game shots because I felt like I could just kind of bumble it out of rough down towards the flag.

But then hit a fantastic shot on 17, and a really nice shot on 18 as well. Obviously to make the putt on 18 was special.

THE MODERATOR: After last week and being so close, how special is it to get win number three here?

MATT FITZPATRICK: Definitely. Yeah, definitely. I felt like last week I played so well, right until the end. To lose the way I did, it's always disappointing, always feels like it takes a little out of you when you spend four days of your life battling to try and get that top spot, and to lose it right at the death is always difficult to take. So this week was important to get back on the horse and try and push myself to continue playing well.

THE MODERATOR: We'll open it up to questions.

**Q. You've finished second quite a bit in your life, I'm sure. Did that one take a little bit longer than usual to get over or was it onward immediately?**

MATT FITZPATRICK: Yeah, it was frustrating. It was a weird feeling because I feel like it was one of those I didn't really feel like I did much wrong coming down the stretch. I

hit a lot of really good shots on that back nine. I played way better on the back nine last Sunday than I did on the back nine this Sunday, for example.

I think didn't hit a bad shot last week on 15. Made a bogey or whatever. At 14 made a bogey. Even on my last hit the drive was all right, like I wouldn't say that it was horrendous or miles off line, just pushed it a little bit given the angle that you have to take with driver, how narrow it was playing with the wind the way it was. Cam hit an unbelievable shot, one of the best he's ever hit he said. I think, because of that, obviously there's more frustration when you don't feel like you've done a lot wrong; and you feel, you don't feel like you've lost it, you feel like obviously someone's come and taken it away from you. So there was definitely more frustration on that part, yeah.

To turn up this week was something that, you know, I felt like I was playing well, so I think in previous times when I've had good finishes particularly in Europe it's almost been easy for me to not switch off -- switch off isn't the right word, but it's like, right, I had a good finish, I can kind of coast a little bit this week. I made sure that this week I wasn't going to do that. I knew that I was playing well and it was like let's just keep pushing and give ourselves the best chance we can.

**Q. That was some fist pump on 18. Where does that fist pump rate in terms of your career. Was there a statement in that fist pump?**

MATT FITZPATRICK: (Laughing). No, no, no. It's all personal. Yeah all fist pumps are personal, apart from September last year. That wasn't, that was a little bit more outward, shall we say. Yeah, I mean any Ryder Cup fist pump is the best fist pump for sure because you've got everyone else on your team and it feels like they mean a little bit more and it's a little bit more excitement, in a way, because of the format and everything. But, yeah, I think it's just, it felt like the same on the Sunday last year at DP World. I made a 6-footer to sort of take the lead, knowing that Rory had a chance to obviously match that. But it was more like a celebration of yeah of I played well, I've earned the right to be in that position. Kind of a release of that, that, yeah, I've done it under the pressure.



**Q. You mentioned Dubai last year, where you won the DP World Tour Championship. This is your third win on the PGA TOUR and you put yourself in contention of course last week. What is it about your game you feel that has given you this opportunity to win?**

MATT FITZPATRICK: There's a big difference in my approach play. My irons are just so much better. Just better control, better distance control, better accuracy left-to-right. Hitting the shape that I want to hit. Me and Mark Blackburn had a great session last Thursday afternoon after the round, a really, really good session that felt like really, really helped me. It's made a big difference over the last seven rounds of golf I've played. I hit my irons really well. I know going into today I think I was first in approach play for the first three rounds. I don't know where I ended up finishing, but that's a big difference from where I've come from in the past. I always felt like short game's been good enough, felt like my driving's always been good enough and putting's been good enough. So approach play always felt like it was the missing link. So far this year it's been really good and last year it was really good as well. So just about continuing that and keep improving as much as I can and giving myself more opportunities.

**Q. With no one pushing away and such a log jam at the top, that back nine, did it become a matter of just par being a good score, don't give anything back?**

MATT FITZPATRICK: Yeah, definitely. Definitely in hindsight, definitely that was the case. I think for how I feel like I was swinging it and how I feel like I was playing I felt like that I could have made some birdies on the back nine there. I felt like 10, you get it in the fairway it's a chance. 11's a chance. 12, with that flag today, I thought was a chance. 14's a 5. 15, 16, 17 arguably hold on. And if you get it in the fairway on 18 it's a chance. So I did feel like there was chances out there coming in. I just feel like a couple of shots or most of the shots here and there were like one yard in the rough around the green. So they didn't quite get out, or I didn't quite carry it enough, or pulled it one yard left or whatever. So it did make it easy for me to get up-and-down I felt like because I was only just in the rough and I could kind of, you know, duff and run it, so.

**Q. You talked about frustration today, and yet no bogeys on the card today, and nobody was running away with it. So was it easy to kind of put that frustration aside as it was going on or were you really ready to break free when you sank that birdie at 15?**

MATT FITZPATRICK: No, yeah, there was definitely frustration. Dan was fantastic on that, just been telling me,

just keep doing what I'm doing, keep patience. And I felt that, I knew that I needed to be patient. I felt like with the holes on the back nine, like I say, coming in and playing the back nine well yesterday I felt like there's obviously opportunities. I just feel like that I didn't necessarily quite hit it where I wanted to, I guess on some of those holes. But I feel like the golf course sets up so well when it's like this that you have to hit good golf shots. You have to hit it in the right areas on the green, you have to hit it in the fairway off the tee, and it's demanding.

**Q. Weird as this may seem, there was a stretch from around 5 through 11 where you had three, four, really, really good birdie looks that missed. Did it almost feel like -- I mean, your body language almost looked like you were giving this thing away. How did it feel inside, and how did you come up with the goods on 15 and 18?**

MATT FITZPATRICK: Yeah, I mean I felt like that way too. I just said to someone else asked me a similar question, I said I felt like I missed a few early, obviously. I think, even after 9, I think I looked and I was tied first at 9-under. I was a little taken aback by that. I thought I might be two or so behind. But that helped me to kind of maintain just to keep doing what I was doing, give myself chances. I think probably could have done a bit better on the body language and tried to be a bit more positive, I'm not going to lie. I think outwardly I probably felt like it was getting away from me, but inwardly I didn't necessarily feel like it was getting away from me. Because I felt yesterday nothing really happened on the front nine and then I made three in a row. I felt like that was doable again. So I felt like inwardly that was probably what I was thinking.

**Q. Secondly, if you look back, well, frankly you're about 69, 70 in the world about this time a year ago. Curious, how long ago that feels like.**

MATT FITZPATRICK: Five minutes ago. (Laughing).

Yeah, it was tough this time last year. I missed the cut at THE PLAYERS, played really badly. Had a change in my team on the caddie front. And then didn't make the cut at Valero. And kind of scrambling my way around Augusta. Yeah, it was hard. I didn't really know what was going to happen. It's hard. That's why, you know, I hate the game and I love the game. That's why I always tell people I prefer football as opposed to golf (smiling).

It is a frustrating game, but we keep coming back because for moments like on the last today. But, yeah, it was definitely a tough time and I wasn't obviously happy with my game at that moment in time. But I think I've learned that obviously you can get over that.

**Q. Did good golf feel like a long way away at that point?**

MATT FITZPATRICK: At that point it did, because at that point I guess this time last year, you know, two and a bit years on from, yeah, probably two, two and a half years on from my last win. I've not really had, I think I finished fifth and fifth at the Memorial and PLAYERS, but that was like it for the year. Didn't really do anything special. But that's the way it is, that's the way golf is. Yeah, it's not easy (laughing).

**Q. Can you talk about what was going through your mind after 17 today, and did you feel like you had to birdie 18?**

MATT FITZPATRICK: No, I just felt like 17 I knew David was behind me. I obviously felt that 17 was a, with the wind it was nice because it was pushing it towards the flag, but it's still a difficult hole. I felt like I hit such a good golf shot in there. But I felt like if I could just give myself a chance at making a putt on 18 that I would still be within a chance of winning, if not a playoff.

17, you know, hurt a little bit because I thought I really fancied the putt. It was a really nice downhill left-to-right, I kind of liked the look of that one in particular. I actually preferred the look of that one than the one on 18. But, yeah, I just felt like if I could just give myself a chance of getting -- if I could just get it in the fairway on 18 I felt like my approach play has been so solid that I would give myself a chance and hopefully take it.

**Q. I don't know if you saw it, but David had the same putt as you on 17 as well.**

MATT FITZPATRICK: Oh, he did. I didn't see that, no. Okay.

**Q. And then last week you had some USA chants coming down the stretch and then this week the crowd seemed really supportive. Does that effect you atmosphere all the environment that you're playing in?**

MATT FITZPATRICK: No, no, it doesn't effect me. This has been like the best week ever, because I had two people offer to pay for my dinner this week. One person did pay for my dinner, and the other person we ended up having a fight at Carvor about it, about who is paying for who's dinner. So, yeah, everyone was awesome. There was a group of four or five kids following me today, like screaming every shot, supporting me every shot, followed me the whole round. Like, I really felt like a lot of support this week. There was the odd shout of a few people,

particularly enjoyed the guy that got taken out on the last. He was shouting something, and someone ran straight over to take him out. Yeah, it's been nothing but support this week, for sure.

**Q. This is your first win on TOUR since Harbour Town in 2023, so have you expected to win sooner, how important is that to you, or is it more just about the process and where you feel like your game is at?**

MATT FITZPATRICK: Yeah, combination. I think from where I was in 2024 and then start of 2025 my game felt like improved quickly sort of from April onwards last year. But I could argue I probably wasn't ready to be in the final groups to compete to win. I came close at the Scottish and The Open Championship last year. But, you know, at the Open Championship in particular, Scottie was pretty unbelievable. I played with him on that Saturday, it was crazy how good he was. But I feel like as the year went on and I got more comfortable with being in those positions and in position that's I've been in in the past, but obviously when you've not been there it obviously goes back to a new feeling almost. I just got more confidence from being in the positions and putting myself under that pressure and performing under that pressure. So I definitely feel like, you know, the start of this year when I was hitting it well I did say to Dan, I fancy us for at least one week this year, that's for sure. So tick that box.

**Q. You had a little bit of a delay there on 11. How frustrating are those and how hard is it to get back in rhythm when you kind of get out of the pace of play like that?**

MATT FITZPATRICK: Yeah, that was really frustrating. It was slow today. I felt like there was a lot of stop/start. Yeah, just, you know, just not ready. When you're not ready to play a golf shot it gets frustrating after awhile. Particularly when you playing well yourself or you're in contention or whatever it is. There's definitely, you know, it definitely knocks you out of your rhythm. Because you hit, you walk to it, you kind of think about it, you hit again, and you go. There in particular that hole then you're around a stretch there that can get a little bit quirky with different shots and stuff, so you have to be on it. It definitely knocked me out of rhythm I felt like for the next two, three holes. I was kind of chasing my tail, because I'm trying to speed up and trying to keep us or get back in position, and at the same time you're obviously trying to win a golf tournament. So it's like at that point in the week it's kind of a hard balance, yeah.

**Q. You're the second player from Northwestern to win here, the other one, also an Englishman, your captain, Luke Donald. He went on and had many other good**

**finishes here. Is there similarities between your game and do you expect to come back here and play well again like he did?**

MATT FITZPATRICK: I would hope so. Yeah, I would hope so. I think, I mean, yeah, I wouldn't say we're too similar in games. I think Luke's wedge, short game, and putting is out of this world, as well as his approach play. I think we're a little bit different, but I would definitely take the career that Luke's had, it's certainly a stellar one.

**Q. You talked about the tee shot here on 18. Did you think at all when you were getting ready to hit that tee shot about what happened last week on 18, with that tee shot, and what was your thought process on 18 here? What was the plan, what was the goal?**

MATT FITZPATRICK: No, I mean, on that tee, I'm not thinking about last week at all, no. I'm just very clear intention of where my line is, clear intention of my swing thoughts, clear intention of what shot is going to come out when I hit the ball, and just to focus on that. I've got my swing thought, I've got my cues that I need to go to; tendencies that might creep on when I'm under pressure and just making sure that I basically do the opposite of those to make sure I'm in a good position to hit the best shot I can, so, yeah.

**Q. If you can talk a little bit about your team, Dan and Phil Kenyon and Mark, everyone, and what are you working on right now.**

MATT FITZPATRICK: Yeah, I'm probably different to most guys, I have quite a big team. But I feel that I'm obviously very biased, I feel like I've got the best team. Everyone, the list would be too long to go through everyone and say how grateful I am for their support, but there's no one in my team that doesn't work as hard as they can to try and help Matt Fitzpatrick get better, in whatever capacity that is. Whether it's off the course, on the golf course, whatever it is. So, yeah, I don't have enough good words to say about the people I work with and how they help me every day to just to be better at golf and everything that comes with that. So, yeah, I can't thank them enough, and I hope they obviously know that too, but they are, yeah, second to none.

**Q. Why did you play this week anyway?**

MATT FITZPATRICK: Just felt the schedule flows really nicely. Three in the Florida Swing -- well three on the West Coast, week off; three here, two weeks off before the Masters, get prepped.

**Q. It's just been up-and-down the last couple years. I**

**think you've done San Antonio.**

MATT FITZPATRICK: I've done San Antonio. I was actually going to do Houston last year but my wrist was bothering me a little bit, so I ended up switching and playing Valero instead. But, yeah, I mean, if I could play all four of the Florida Swing, I would. I love the Cognizant golf course, I think it's a great golf course, it's demanding. Same thing, I love Bay Hill, demanding, great golf course. TPC Sawgrass speaks for itself. This place is fantastic, demanding. I would play a full year Florida Swing.

**Q. There's nothing stopping you actually, but I guess my point is, Bay Hill is such a brute, and PLAYERS is what it is. Was there any concern about three tests in a row with yellow greens?**

MATT FITZPATRICK: Yeah, no, not really, I think because I would rather play golf courses like that. For me I feel like that suits my game, suits my mentality. Just, I prefer that. I hate birdiefests. I don't like playing where it's spinning back five yards and aim and fire. It's not really, it's not something I've enjoyed, probably because I've not been as good at it as other people would probably be a better answer for you, to be fair. But, yeah, I just like the tough tests. I like when it's yellow and firm and you got to control your golf ball and you got to figure out where to hit it and stuff and where your misses are. I think that's what makes it, I enjoy that personally, yeah.

**Q. You mentioned Augusta. How confident are you in your game going out there to try to win a Green Jacket? Are you maybe as confident as you ever have been going into the Masters?**

MATT FITZPATRICK: Yeah, I mean, I'm probably going to win, yeah. (Laughing).

No, no. Yeah, I mean, I'm obviously very confident in my game right now. But what it takes to win a major is very different to what it takes to win on the PGA TOUR, in my opinion. Particularly the Masters, there's extra pressure on the Masters, no matter who you are. You know, it just has that standing above all the other events, as well as the majors, you know.

The stuff that I still want to work on. I'm coming away from this week, obviously I won, delighted with where my game's at, but there's stuff I want to improve. I want to make sure that I'm ready for when I get to Augusta to be ready to play and be ready that Thursday morning. So, yeah, I'm really looking forward to that week. Obviously still two weeks away, so time to prepare and get ready and as well as rest and recover and just be in the best shape as possible, yeah.

 . . . when all is said, we're done.®

THE MODERATOR: All right, Matt, thank you for the time.  
Congratulations.

MATT FITZPATRICK: Thank you.

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