

DP World Tour Championship

Thursday, 10 December, 2020

Dubai, UAE

Jumeirah Golf Estates

Matthew Fitzpatrick

Press Conference



Q. 4-under par 68. Tell us about that from your point of view.

MATTHEW FITZPATRICK: Yeah, it was a good day. A really good day. Felt like I played solid all over. I think I only missed one green. Yeah, really happy to get in with 4-under.

Q. Past champion here in 2016, four top-12s in five starts here. What is it about this golf course that you enjoy?

MATTHEW FITZPATRICK: I have no idea. Yeah, I really don't. It's a strange one. When I got told it was for bombers before I ever came here and I've sort of played really well here. For me the greens are just always fantastic, and yeah, I love putting on greens that are this fast. The slopes, how fast they are downgrain, I much prefer putting on those, just sort of set it on its way and you know it's not going to miss basically.

Q. You've used the same putter since you were a youngster, but the company that make it went out of business. I understand you got a copy made from the company that now own the patent. Tell us about that.

MATTHEW FITZPATRICK: Yeah, so Bettinardi, I did some work with them over the last few years, just managed to just sign with them actually yesterday. They've put in some really hard work for me to try to copy the SC grooves, and yeah, they've done a fantastic job really. They took a few goes because there was a few different things that needed changing, but yeah, the final product is fantastic.

Q. Can you talk about your round out there today? You had a very strong back nine.

MATTHEW FITZPATRICK: Yeah, I felt like I played pretty solid on the front nine, I just never really -- I wouldn't say I really had a scoring club in my hand, and I wouldn't say the pins really allowed me to -- not necessarily be aggressive but get close. They were just tucked, and unless you were going in with like a lob wedge where you could really spin

it, it was difficult to get close.

Yeah, the back nine sort of opened up a bit more, and yeah, just felt like I continued my solid play and rolled in a few putts, as well.

Q. Any particular highlights on the birdie front?

MATTHEW FITZPATRICK: No, just a nice birdie on 16, just drive in between the two bunkers, 9-iron to 10 foot and made it. It was a fairly solid back nine, really. I didn't really hit it too far away, and I didn't necessarily hit it too close. I didn't miss a green and maybe missed a couple of fairways, so it was just an all-around really solid round.

Q. Obviously a strange season it's been for everybody; 61 players I think it is out of the 65 have a chance to win the Race to Dubai this week. How strange is that, and what would it mean for you to possibly be the one to do it?

MATTHEW FITZPATRICK: Yeah, it's obviously very strange. It's very strange. This field is obviously used to a few more players, as well, that obviously aren't here for various reasons this week. But you know, I think it's just been a long year. I think it's one of those that to be able to have a chance to win the Race to Dubai despite everything that's going on is amazing. It's amazing and absolutely I'd be delighted if I could take the opportunity that I have. I feel like I've obviously got off to a good start, but there's still a long way to go, so hopefully just press on and give myself a good chance come Sunday.

Q. When play was cancelled at THE PLAYERS Championship back in March, did you think we'd be still here at all having completed the season?

MATTHEW FITZPATRICK: Yeah, I genuinely did. I thought we would get going again eventually, just obviously it was a matter of time, and at that time we went into full lockdown all over the world pretty much, we were just trying to get our head around what was actually going on really. I thought we would be here, but obviously it has been pushed back a few weeks rather than normal. But no, everyone has done a fantastic job to get us to this position anyway from the European Tour.

Q. Bob MacIntyre just a minute or two ago, he was

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saying he thought the course was more difficult than it was last year, it's much longer and the fairways narrower. Is that right?

MATTHEW FITZPATRICK: Yeah, a hundred per cent right. Me and Billy we talking about it earlier in the week. It's the tightest I've ever seen this golf course. The rough -- don't get me wrong, the rough is not brutally thick, but it's enough to make you think. You're not hitting in the rough and thinking, oh, I can probably sneak this close. You're thinking, all right, let's just get this close; we're out of position so let's just make a par. It's definitely thicker than normal and tighter than normal, and yeah, I think the golf course is in as good a shape as I've ever seen it definitely.

Q. How does it compare, this course, to other courses you've played on the European Tour in terms of difficulty?

MATTHEW FITZPATRICK: It's a good question really. I think it varies year to year. I know it was a little bit tougher out there today, but early on I was looking at the scores and I was really surprised at how -- not high, but normally I feel like in the first round of the DP World you're coming in and you're looking at maybe a 7-under, a few 6's, a few 5's, a few 4's and then it sort of drops off, but obviously this year it's definitely proven to be a bit more difficult. I think there's probably a little bit more breeze than normal, which is quite nice, you can sort of shape things up a little bit. But compared to other golf courses, I don't know, it's difficult. It's obviously a very different style of golf courses, and its defense is probably the speed and slope of the greens, obviously, and if you miss them in the wrong place. Yeah, it's difficult to answer that one.

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