

Alfred Dunhill Links Championship

Wednesday, September 29, 2021

St. Andrews, Fife, Scotland

Billy Horschel

Press Conference

CLARE BODEL: Welcome to the Alfred Dunhill Links Championship your first time playing here and it's a special one, playing with your dad. Tell us how much you're looking forward to this, this unique event

BILLY HORSCHTEL: Yeah, this is a special opportunity. When we decided to play the Dunhill links, I think in July, I was curious if I could get my dad in to play this event because his birthday is on Friday. He turns 70. I had a surprise trip back him in America with 14 people, and so if I couldn't play here with my dad this week, I'm not sure I would be here because I wanted to do something special for him. So it was great that Johann and his staff allowed me to play with him this week.

St Andrews is such a beautiful place, beautiful golf course. To play Kingsbarns on Monday the first time and seeing it and people raved about it for years, truly was amazing. And I didn't play The Open Championship in 2018 at Carnoustie, so that was the first time seeing it yesterday, and it's a beast of a golf course and I can understand why it's called Car-Nasty now, especially with the conditions that it looks like we're going to be playing in this week. It's going to bare its teeth full force this week.

Q. You showed your game was in good form at Wentworth winning there. How confident are you that you can produce another good performance this week?

BILLY HORSCHTEL: Yes, my game was in good shape a few weeks ago. It's still in pretty good shape. I'm not nearly as sharp as I was in Wentworth. Home for two weeks. Didn't do anything for about, seven, eight days at home. Just spent time relaxing coming off four weeks in a row, four big weeks in a row, and then picked up the clubs middle of last week and started practicing.

So the game is not far off but there may be a few loose shots here and there. And then at the same time with the conditions that it looks like we're going to have, it's going to come down to some bounces and some luck here and there a little bit.

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But I'm still feeling very confident with my game is right now and we'll see what happens, and hopefully I'll have a chance to win this title come Sunday.

Q. Is this, for you, a valuable reconnaissance for next July or is it not really relevant given the different times of year?

BILLY HORSCHTEL: I understand it's September, July, different type of year. But whenever you go to a golf course and you play it, you're always learning new things. You pick up maybe new sight lines, new bounces, new reads on the greens with.

This wind, I don't think we had this wind in 2015 when I played here. So just understanding how this course plays with this wind and if we get some other wind from a different direction, it's valuable information come near. It's always valuable to come to-golf course and play, it even though it may not be condition-wise or same type -- similar year, you can always learning things. So we picked up a few things today out there and hopefully maybe a few more nuggets later this week.

Q. You were saying outside, of course you're chuffed and delighted the States won The Ryder Cup last week but you expressed surprise that Europe didn't play up to expectations.

BILLY HORSCHTEL: The game of golf is fickle. On paper, yes, Americans did have a strong team and did have probably one of the strongest teams they have had in a long time. Europeans had a strong team. Was it their strongest ever? No. I've seen it many years where Americans have been favoured massively and Europe comes and beats us on a regular basis, I think seven of the last nine Ryder Cups or 11 of the last 15 Ryder Cups it was, is what I heard.

I think sometimes it comes down to -- at the end of the day the players have to play well. The captains can do everything: They can do everything behind the scenes, they can get all the stats, all the figures, pair the players up perfectly, but at the end of the day the players have to hit good golf shots and they have to make putts.

When I looked at it, all 12 Americans played really great.

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There wasn't one player that wasn't playing great last week or wasn't on some type of form when they played, and the Europeans were just a little off. Rory was a little off. Lee was a little off. Several of the guys were a little off. Just seeing shots that historically in those competitions, Europeans haven't been making mistakes in a foursome format, and they were making some.

So when it came down to that, you know, I think that's what it comes down to in my opinion. So yeah, it was great to see the Americans win. I didn't want to see another year where we get questioned again about why haven't we won and players don't care. That's the thing that ticks me off. I haven't been part of The Ryder Cup, but the thing that irks me a little bit is when they say that the U.S. players don't care about The Ryder Cup and I think that couldn't be further from the truth. I mean everybody who has played for the last two decades that I've come across cared tremendously about it.

So it was nice to see the success they had last week.

Q. Do you see it as the start of a ten-year domination or is that a little wishful?

BILLY HORSCHTEL: I think everyone is a little wishful on that. I'm not saying it's not going to happen, but in 2016, we won at Hazeltine and everyone thought we solved the plan, we figured it out. We put this task together after the 2014 Ryder Cup; we've done everything and we figured out how to win The Ryder Cup, and then we go over to France and get our butts kicked.

Yes, the thing we do have in our advantage compared to the Europeans I think at this point right now is we do have a good young group of core players for the U.S. that are going to more than likely play a lot more Ryder Cups over the next ten, 15 years, where the Europeans are in a transition mode with Westwood and Poulter probably playing their last Ryder Cups. You've still got Sergio García and I would expect Justin Rose to be on another Ryder Cup Team but they are in their early 40s. They are in the transition of who is going to take those reigns and run with it. Obviously Jon Rahm has proven he can do that, and he's going to be a stalwart on the European Ryder Cup for many years.

Yes, the way it looks on paper, it looks like it could be a thing of dominance for next few years. But as I just said, things on paper don't always equal to winning Ryder Cups. But like I said, it's going to be sort of a wait-and-see what happens.

Q. Just on a similar subject, the results in The Ryder Cup flip flop side-to-side as you said, but from your

knowledge of this group of American players and your own experience of team events, Walker Cup, does the American college system give a benefit to American in team play?

BILLY HORSCHTEL: I don't think so. The college system has always been there and it hasn't benefitted us in the past. I any what you do have with this team, this team reminds me or the players on this team reminds me of what we had on our Walker Cup Team where seven out of ten of us were really close-knit players. We played in a lot of the amateur events together. We played a lot of the college events together. We always hung out together.

So in this team that we just had, you've got Jordan Spieth, Justin Thomas, Xander Schauffele, Patrick Cantlay, Scottie Scheffler, Daniel Berger, they all hang out and they all see each other in Jupiter. They all are friends and have that knowledge of each other and that camaraderie.

When you come together for one week, it's a little easier to come together and pull for each other and get on that same page and the passion that they showed was unbelievable. I think that was a big benefit and help to the team playing well. I think you just saw it come across that way. Like I said, the college system helps maybe a little but it's not as much as -- I mean, if it was helping, I think we would have done better in The Ryder Cup the last few years.

Q. Obviously you're currently on the heels of Collin Morikawa in The Race to Dubai. How high does that rank on your priorities for the rest of the calendar year and what would it mean should you get over the line?

BILLY HORSCHTEL: So at the beginning of this year, Race to Dubai, I'll be honest, wasn't one of those goals. But after playing well in the WGC events and playing decent in the majors, it became one of those goals being -- after I was top five in Race to Dubai going to Wentworth, knowing if I had a good week, I would jump up. It became one of those goals to win The Race to Dubai. Now I've got five or six events left, this one and then Dubai and a few events on the PGA TOUR.

But if there's a goal -- there's two goals that I have now for the rest of this year, and one of them is to win The Race to Dubai and that's the big one for me. Fooch, my caddie, before Wentworth said he wanted me to be top 20 in the world by the end of the year. I'm 18th in the world now, he told me, so now he's moved the finishing line and he wants to see if we can get to the top 10 in the world by end of the year. That's another goal.

But the obvious goal for me, the big goal for me is to win

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The Race to Dubai, be the first mesh to do that. That's a special thing to do as it was, as I found out being the first American to win a Rolex Series Event and being the second American to win at Wentworth, the BMW PGA.

It's been a nice few weeks to accomplish some of those things that may not have been goals, but you find out that you're in elite company, a rare air with some people, and so hopefully I can play well this week and then obviously it's going to come down to that week in Dubai who plays the best out of some of those guys at the top, depends on who wins The Race to Dubai.

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