

Alfred Dunhill Links Championship

Wednesday, October 2, 2024

St. Andrews, Fife, Scotland

Matt Fitzpatrick

Press Conference

THE MODERATOR: Joined by our defending champion, how special have the last couple days been coming back and reliving it all.

MATT FITZPATRICK: Yeah, it's obviously lovely to be back. The weather's nice, which is always a good start. So yeah, obviously after last year, it was an amazing week. So yeah, it's nice to give another go this year.

THE MODERATOR: You won the team competition with your Mum, as well, who you're teaming up with again this year. How special is that and how excited to give another go this year.

MATT FITZPATRICK: Yeah, that was more important for me to be honest. I said that at start of the week, I was here focus on the team competition and do well and played well myself. That was a nice, added bonus.

THE MODERATOR: How much is your Mum looking forward to this week again? I think so. So far, so good. Yeah, she's been looking forward to it for a while, I think, and obviously now it's here, it's always more exciting.

Q. Obviously nice for you to be back but how would you assess your 2024 in general?

MATT FITZPATRICK: Yeah, really poor. Really poor. Not what I wanted to achieve at all. Not coming into contention once, or probably once, to be fair. Yeah, just not at all what I wanted.

Q. Have you got any thought process why?

MATT FITZPATRICK: Yeah, a couple things. Became a little bit shorter off the tee. Not hitting my irons as well this year. Multiple things. Changed a lot of clubs this year, which is very unusual for me. Changed irons. Changed shafts. Changed woods. Did a little bit of everything. That doesn't help. Technically, had a few issues that we think that we found, or I say found, not solved yet but we found the answer.

ALFRED DUNHILL
LINKS CHAMPIONSHIP

I feel like I've related to Viktor a lot this last month or so. We had a really good conversation traveling to Denver for the second Playoff event. He was talking about how he went and did some 3D work the week of The Open, and obviously I know in his press conferences, he'd been saying, even though I'm here this week playing, I'm not worried about what I shoot because I feel like I know what the issue is now and what we're working on, what we're building towards. That's kind of what I feel like at the minute.

I definitely feel like we're on a better track than we were, so yeah.

Q. Has that been difficult for you, being angry and frustrated at yourself, and also, in some respects, you're quite happy maybe if you have to take a step back to take two forward?

MATT FITZPATRICK: Yeah, it's been the hardest year of my career by a mile, yeah. You know, but -- not even close. It's been the worst. It's been my worst year on the golf course for sure results-wise. It's just obviously something that I've had to deal with. Something I've had to learn about.

I think probably learnt a bit more myself and what's going on, and next stage is how to handle that, really. I feel like it's been such a whirlwind of a season. The Playoffs is was a case of stumbling over the line, get in that Top-50. That was the goal. Yeah, now that I've done that, I've got my wedding coming up in a couple weeks and then after that, it's kind of just trying to focus on next year.

Q. Sounds all a bit pessimistic on your part. Was bringing an umbrella today a part of that, just saying how lovely the weather is, yet you come with an umbrella.

MATT FITZPATRICK: Yeah, you've got to be prepared. We're in Scotland. Never know.

Q. How frustrating was that, sort of the way things panned out and what they were for you last year, did that sort of Saturday and Sunday into Monday, was that one of the most frustrating, two, three days of your life?

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MATT FITZPATRICK: It was a bit odd. Partly just wanted it to be called off because I was leading and it was 36 holes and win that way. But at the same time, once we knew we were playing it was a case of get out there and see what you can do.

So I wouldn't say it was frustrating at all. I think the frustrating thing was just having the unknown. You know, you knew this weather was coming in, how bad was it going to be, nobody knew. The unknown was more the frustrating thing, I would say.

Q. Is there a feeling that this week a little bit of coming together for golf, with 14 LIV players and Jay and Yassir playing too many at Carnoustie, and do you feel Johann Rupert deserves a bit of credit for what he's clearly trying to do, bring everyone together?

MATT FITZPATRICK: Yeah, I don't think they are going to decide the future of golf in five hours around Carnoustie. I know Carnoustie is pretty bloody hard. Not much time for talking.

Yeah, I mean, Johann does an amazing job for the Tour every year, having this tournament, the money he's put into the game. I think all check collect players are very grateful for what he's done for this tournament and for golf in general. I know he does a lot for golf in South Africa, so obviously that's brilliant.

I think in terms of bringing the game together this week, I'm passed the point of caring. I just don't care. Me saying things to the PGA TOUR board, me saying things to the DP World Tour board, it's not going to change, so why am I going to waste my time talking about it.

Q. There was bad blood there at one point. Do you feel that's starting to clear?

MATT FITZPATRICK: Not necessarily. I think there's probably some players in the States, their feelings, I don't think they would be very happy. If I'm probably brutally honest, at the start, I probably was pretty against, and it was not of any interest to me to go and play LIV. But I've always said that I understood why people went. I've got no issues with that. No issues at all.

My issue was always, at the start, anyway, is you've gone over there. Like I don't feel like it's fair for you to try and come back and play, as well. But I would say I've changed on that now. Again, I just don't care. I just want to focus on myself. I think that's what's important, and try and play the best golf I can, and that's -- I don't want to get ten years down the road, obviously, and look back and I'm not going to sit there and think, oh, I wish I'd got more involved in that

LIV and PGA TOUR. It's like, you're wasting your time.

Q. The driver incident at BMW, is that an example of golf not applying a lot of common sense when the driver was clearly cracked. As you reflect, how do you feel about that incident?

MATT FITZPATRICK: I think they are changing the rule. I think they are pretty strong on that; that they want to change that. I think the other thing with it, though, is it's an opinion-based rule, and there's multiple arguments to it because one referee's opinion could differ to another referee's opinion. That almost makes the rule a bit silly.

But I also understand their side, that drivers are being made thinner and thinner nowadays. A driver cracks and you can replace it with a new one that's just as good or whatever, then I understand that manufacturers might make them even thinner and faster. So I understand that, too. Up to look at both sides of it. I think for me, the frustration was, even more so, the situation, that I had a good round going, you never know what could happen. I think the holes I ended up dropping shots on holes. I hit 3-wood off the tee, could have hit driver, saved four shots, finished top 10. Might not have been enough but you never know. I think that was more the frustration than anything; that I feel like I was being treated fairly. But the rule is a complex one and I understand it now, yeah.

Q. Sorry to drag you back, but what would be your ideal scenario at the end of it all? What would be the best thing for golf, maybe the best thing for you?

MATT FITZPATRICK: I had a few conversations with Billy Foster about it, my caddie. We spoke. Personally my idea would be you have basically like a Premier League, championship league, of golf, whether LIV is the Premiere League or PGA TOUR is the Premiere League, whatever it is, and then you can bring everyone together. And there's more of a relegation promotion, there's a few more stories there, you can work your way up. If everyone was together, I feel like that would be more beneficial, anyway.

I can't sit here and say that I know the viewing figures for LIV or PGA TOUR are going up or down. I just don't know. But as a big football fan, there's got to be more stories in the regulation promotion rather than personally what I think there is now. Obviously I know LIV is a closed shop and they have a team aspect, which as a football fan, I love team stuff. Ryder Cup is amazing. All that stuff is great.

So I'm not fully against the team aspect but if it a closed shop there's not too many story lines in there. But at the same time, the PGA TOUR is that, becoming a little bit more like that. What formats are they going to do? Is

there a 70-man field? I don't know. There's people that are smarter than me are involved. I'm very happy that Andy Cohen and SSG are involved in the PGA TOUR now. They know how to run businesses and know what to do and they are smart people. and smarter than me, and I would say smarter than the majority of the PGA TOUR players and golfers.

Q. I asked Billy Horschel about the DP World Tour add-on and quite a few people think it would be the best thing for this tour if the talks fell apart and the PGA TOUR went off and did their thing, and everybody else got together and created something worldwide apart from America?

MATT FITZPATRICK: What did Billy Horschel say to that?

Q. He kind of -- on the fence. I think he's in favour, basically.

MATT FITZPATRICK: Being brutally honest, yeah, I don't disagree. I personally think that should have happened before. I don't think the Tour should have gone with the PGA TOUR.

I was pretty livid, to be honest, at Wentworth when I found out that there was a handful of PGA TOUR players coming to play Wentworth, and at that point in time, not every person who kept their card last year got in the field, which I think is a disgrace. That's the Flagship Event.

There's no invites given to European Tour players at THE PLAYERS Championship. So why are we dishing them out for Wentworth?

Q. There was three I think.

MATT FITZPATRICK: Yeah. So I thought that was absolutely absurd that that even went through.

Now I'm sat here as now mainly a PGA TOUR nowadays, which people probably say, well, you don't come back and play anyway. Yeah, I understand that. But I think the way of looking at it is, there's not really been left with any option. If you want to achieve the things that you want to achieve in the game, you've got to play against the best players. You have to play where the best World Ranking points are, and unfortunately with that, the money follows that. So obviously everyone is going to go down that route but if you want to be the best player you're going to be, that's the way you're going to go.

Q. If the scenario I just described came to pass, where would you play your golf?

MATT FITZPATRICK: Well, that's a great question because personally I do love living in the States but I genuinely do -- being on holiday when I was younger, I've always liked being over there. My fiancée is now from there. So I like being in the States. That's going to be a tough decision for me. I'd have to sit and think about it because there's so many events I love to play that people know. I love playing this, the Swiss, The Italian Open. There's a bunch of events I love playing particularly compared to playing some of the PGA TOUR events we play.

However, I love my life over in the States, and what's going to be easiest for my family.

Q. It's not just about golf, is it?

MATT FITZPATRICK: No, I don't think it is a decision like that. I understand that Rory really likes it, being in the U.K. Is that something that makes it easier for him to play on a world tour? May be. But the Americans, they are probably going to be sat in America playing golf and that's also fine.

I think the game of golf is very individual, and you've got to be selfish. If you want to be the best you can, you've got to be selfish, and I think the thing that always makes me laugh is, you know, the best players do what is best for them, and I don't feel like -- I feel like sometimes they get unnecessary heat for it when actual little they do what they think is best for them and what makes their life easier and what makes their life better and what they can achieve more, and that's, for me, is what's important.

THE MODERATOR: Thanks for your time and best of luck to you and your Mum this week.

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