

LIV Golf Chicago

Thursday, 12 September, 2024

Chicago, Illinois, USA

Bolingbrook Golf Club

Crushers GC

Bryson DeChambeau

Paul Casey

Anirban Lahiri

Press Conference

THE MODERATOR: Let's welcome Crushers GC minus one of them. We are joined by Paul Casey, our captain Bryson DeChambeau, and Anirban Lahiri. Unfortunately Charles Howell had to play 18 in the pro-am today so he could not join us.

The seeding order for the Dallas Team Championship will be determined this week with the top three teams receiving byes. Crushers and Legion XIII have already secured their spots. How important is it to have that first-round bye?

PAUL CASEY: I mean, it gives -- I don't know.

BRYSON DeCHAMBEAU: I know. It's important.

PAUL CASEY: I don't know. We ultimately just get ourselves through to Sunday and then play great golf from there. I think we proved the very first year that sometimes -- we called out the Stingers. I say "we" because it was actually Bryson but I'll soften the blow. He called out the Stingers, and I don't want to say backfired, but it is what it is. It shows the volatility of match play.

To me the bye just means one more day to prepare. It means I get to save some energy, but ultimately it's all about playing great golf on Saturday and finishing it off on Sunday.

BRYSON DeCHAMBEAU: Yeah, I think the most important piece for us being No. 1 is having the freedom to choose whoever we want to go against on Saturday. That's a big crucial pick for us, give us a little bit more freedom.

Even though it's no guarantee in match play, it allows us to -- we played the Cleeks last year, and it was still a tough match against Martin and the boys had a tough match, and Paul played well. It was just difficult no matter who you



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play out here. But for the most part it at least gives us a pathway or an angle to hopefully give you an edge, so being No. 1 is key for us, crucial for us. We think we've played some of the best golf this year, so we feel like we want to be in that No. 1 spot going into next week.

PAUL CASEY: There's pride, I think, finishing No. 1 in the regular season.

Q. Baan, do you feel any added pressure or confidence heading in as the defending champions to Dallas next week?

ANIRBAN LAHIRI: No, I don't think so. I don't think it matters because once you get down, once you go and it's Saturday morning, whoever you're playing against, it's just about getting down to business and playing golf at that point of time.

Honestly, once you get to Sunday, then there's a different kind of pressure, and it's not -- it's got nothing to do with being defending champions. Every score counts. Your score counts. Your team is counting on you.

I think the pressure of performing for your team way outweighs any of the history behind it, and the pressure of just wanting to do well for your team is a lot more than anything else.

I think none of us are thinking about what happened last year or what we should or shouldn't do. We just want to get the point for our team on Saturday and we want to make sure we contribute to a winning cause on Sunday. Nothing else really matters.

Q. I know it could be any amount of teams that you guys have the opportunity to match up against on Saturday but are there teams you're hoping to go against on Saturday for that first matchup?

BRYSON DeCHAMBEAU: No.

Q. There's a lot at stake this week at LIV Golf Chicago for a lot of players. Some are facing relegation, even some captains facing relegation for the first time in LIV Golf history and some have the opportunity to secure their spot in the lock zone, as well, and having that

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security and safety for next year. All three of you are in the lock zone and the Crushers have secured their first-round bye. Does this week feel less stressful and intense for you?

BRYSON DeCHAMBEAU: I think we're still trying to compete to win the team aspect of it, and the individual aspects of each one of us want to do our absolute best.

At least from my perspective, I think we all come into each and every week trying to do our best, no matter what the stakes or situation is. We all want to win. We're all competitive. We all love being on that podium.

Q. Have you noticed a different vibe, though, around some of your colleagues this week?

BRYSON DeCHAMBEAU: I've personally seen it, yeah. It's definitely different, which is good. It means something. That's the more important piece. This means something for a lot of people this week, and it means a lot for us still, but for others it's their life. It's do or die.

Q. Have you noticed anything, Baan?

ANIRBAN LAHIRI: It's always like that. You get to the end of the season -- it's not just this week, I think you could feel it in Greenbrier, too. As the events start counting down, you're like, I've got three more events, I've got two more events. This is the last opportunity for a lot of guys. Hopefully you're seeing slightly more challenging situations.

But again, that's the beauty of pro golf. You need to have that, and it exists. That tells you just how competitive it is. It tells you just how you have to work your butt off to essentially make sure that you're relevant and you're making a difference and you're around. It's not that easy.

Q. Paul, what does that say about the integrity of the competition of this league with the DZ, with the drop zone and relegation given that there are some really big names out here that are at risk for relegation and we're following through with it?

PAUL CASEY: I mean, with the short season that we have compared to traditional tour golf that the three of us have experienced through the last couple of decades, those things can happen. 13 regular season events and nowhere to hide. The same world-class field every single week, this is what's going to happen. Maybe people didn't realize that the first season or two. We always were very aware of it.

I think now it's being talked about as only a good thing.

Unlike these two, I try and avoid those -- I'm a guy who's lost four cards through the years on tours, and it's hard, man. I try to kind of stay away from a lot of it because you don't necessarily want to be around guys who are really stressed out.

It's going to be a difficult road for a lot of guys who do get -- because of that churn, what do they do next. They'll want to fight their way back out here, and there's an opportunity to do that, and I love that.

From another side of it, it's also exciting to see who's going to replace them. It's bittersweet in a lot of ways.

Q. Last year in Chicago we played at a different course but you guys had a sweep with both the individual win and the team win. Is there something about Chicago and do you guys feel confident heading into this week?

BRYSON DeCHAMBEAU: I've always liked the Midwest. I think the type of golf suits my game pretty well. Rich Harvest Farms felt pretty solid. I feel really bad for Baan on that.

But again, it's a part of the competition out here. It's a part of the golf. You're going to win some, you're going to lose some. I think we just play well in these types of conditions, and we're just consistent. We continue to give ourselves chances throughout the year, and I feel like our games are all in a pretty solid place from what I've seen and what I feel.

From my perspective, I think we're going to give it a great chance this week, and we're always going to give it our best, there's no doubt about that.

Q. This week we're playing on a public course, and this course was actually ranked the No. 1 public course in Illinois. How cool is it for fans to actually come and play a course that the tour pros play?

BRYSON DeCHAMBEAU: Yeah, I think that's huge. It's giving a great perspective to this community that we're here to support it, and they have the opportunity to experience what the pros played, what us pros played. I think that's important for people to understand. We're not just going to the most exclusive places in the world. We're going to places that are accessible, as well, which I think is fun and it makes it feel more inclusive, and I think that's what we're about here at LIV.

Q. Bryson, the par-4 15th, is drivable. What is the plan?

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ANIRBAN LAHIRI: He lays up every time.

BRYSON DeCHAMBEAU: It's going to be a wedge off the tee. (Laughter.)

Q. When you guys won here last year it was a springboard into the team championship. This year you won twice early but not since March. How important is it to show some good form going into Dallas?

BRYSON DeCHAMBEAU: Yeah, I think it's incredibly important. It gives us some confidence for next week. Next week is a good ball-striking test. All around, it's a championship-style golf course, so I think having our games looking fresh and ready to go into next week is important.

I feel like I'm in a good place. I see the other teammates being in a good place. Let's just go play the best golf we possibly can and hopefully get some good momentum for next week.

Q. Baan, how gratifying was it to maintain the team lead with -- Legion has won four times this year, you guys have won twice, but yet you're still ahead of them in the standings, just from a consistency standpoint?

ANIRBAN LAHIRI: Yeah, I think, like you said in the end there, the consistency has been a hallmark on not just this season, last season, even 2022. For as long as the four of us have been together on a team, we've been consistent.

But I think it's fair to say that all four of us feel like we haven't won enough this year. We should have won at least a couple more. Personally for me, I definitely want to get on another team podium and challenge for another individual title this week.

I think that's what motivates us week in, week out. We've all threatened to win this year, but I don't think we've had an individual win, and we'd like to change that going into Dallas, as well. That's what keeps us focused.

PAUL CASEY: I will say shout-out to John Catlin for standing in for Chucky throughout the season. He played amazing golf, and I'd love to see him out here next season.

But we lost that -- Chucky is such a -- obviously he's one fourth of our team, but he's more than that. He's a little bit like the glue on our team, and not having him for a few weeks, I guess we lost a little bit of mojo in a certain respect.

We've got him back, so I think the fact that we haven't won since early in the season is not necessarily -- we're not looking at it any other way other than we're back at full strength. Chucky is not here, but it's fair to say he's fit and healthy and keen. So I'd say look for us to be very, very dangerous the next two weeks.

Q. You guys talked about the format change next week where captains don't have to play the other captains. You've kept the same lineup in the match play the first two years. Will you contemplate any changes --

PAUL CASEY: No comment.

BRYSON DeCHAMBEAU: It's top secret. It's confidential.

PAUL CASEY: Bryson talks to us, but what Bryson -- we're not going to talk about strategy. We'll wait and see and you'll know on Saturday.

Q. Bryson, later today you're playing with NINJA. He's got 19 million Twitch followers. I don't think you've been active on that platform for a few years. Is that a channel that you might look to expand in as you grow your brand at all?

BRYSON DeCHAMBEAU: I mean, one day. I've got a lot on my plate right now. I'm focused on doing the best I can with what I have now, and playing with NINJA today is going to be awesome. I'm super stoked. I've never met him. Always wanted to meet him. I've watched a lot of his streams and he's hilarious. Hopefully he's a pretty good golfer. We'll see how his swing is. But I think he plays golf quite frequently. I don't know, we'll see, but hopefully we can create some good content pieces out of it, and hopefully channel a younger audience a little bit.

Q. You hit 203 today. What's your high?

BRYSON DeCHAMBEAU: That was yesterday. My high for 46-inch driver is I think 210, 211 ball speed. That was when I was full bore going at it as crazy as I could two, three years ago. I will not be doing that.

But I've been feeling a little slow lately, so trying to just get some of that speed back. I just don't want to let the speed go too far down --

PAUL CASEY: I'll show you slow. You don't know what slow is.

BRYSON DeCHAMBEAU: Point being I thoroughly enjoy it. It's fun going after it and hitting it hard once in a while and getting the feeling of speed through impact again.

Sometimes it actually helps me line up the club face a lot easier, helps me turn the club face over and get comfortable with where my face angle is through impact. It's a bit of both. I've used it to my advantage. Some people use it and it messes their golf swing up. For me, when I speed train, it actually lines my golf swing up a little bit sometimes. I use it for that and just to feel a little bit faster.

Q. How much have you reduced your chase for distance?

BRYSON DeCHAMBEAU: I mean, I don't chase for distance anymore really. I just try to maintain what I'm at. If I'm at 190 to 195 ball speed on the golf course like I was earlier, in the majors this year, that's where I want to be. If technology gets to a place where it proves that we can get to 200, 205 with the driver going dead straight, then yeah. I'll try to make a bit of a push for that as long as it doesn't mess up my golf game. I'm not here to change my golf game whatsoever anymore. I want to do as best I can in LIV and win as many majors as possible.

Q. Bryson, you've got an interesting match coming up in December as was announced --

BRYSON DeCHAMBEAU: The Showdown, yeah.

Q. Can you take us back to how that idea germinates? Is there one person who's pushing it forward?

BRYSON DeCHAMBEAU: Look, I think all of us know we want to get this game back in good standing. We want to bring this game back to a place where I would say everyone has the opportunity to see the greatest play a lot more than four times a year.

I think it's a great opportunity to showcase how we evolve that over the course of time. The details are not very fully flushed out yet, but we're working on those currently, and we'll get back when we have more details for you all.

Q. Is it something that's been kicked around between you guys for a while --

BRYSON DeCHAMBEAU: Oh, yeah, remember we always wanted to have a PGA Tour and LIV sort of battle a couple years ago. We always thought that would be pretty cool and whatnot. But I think it's going to develop over the course of time and hopefully give the people what they want.

Q. In terms of meeting NINJA, do you get nervous? Someone of your level of fame meeting people like that?

BRYSON DeCHAMBEAU: I used to. Not anymore for the most part. He's a human being, just like we're all human beings up here. When I played in the 2016 Masters I was nervous meeting Paul Casey, and he proceeded to give me a lot of crap down the 10th fairway along with Johnny Long Socks, his caddie. It just shows that, yes, I got nervous before in the past, and there are people that I do get nervous meeting, and it'll be fun to see who NINJA and how he is and how he golfs and hopefully I can help his game out. For the most part I'm pretty solid nowadays, but in the past I would have been super nervous, yeah.

Q. Paul, can you tell us -- recount your perception of that day.

PAUL CASEY: It's too long a story but I did give Bryson a lot of grief.

ANIRBAN LAHIRI: Paul makes a lot of people nervous, even now.

Q. Do you remember anything specific from that day?

PAUL CASEY: Specifically, I remember everything vividly. We quizzed him. We grilled him, gave him a lot of grief. But I liked Bryson from pretty much the moment I met him, and the first time we played was that -- what year was it? 2016, first two rounds at the Masters. Jordan Spieth was also in the group. Jordan had to intervene because he felt we were actually being too hard on Bryson, grilling him too much. Johnny and I were having fun, kind of playing --

BRYSON DeCHAMBEAU: What was the question down the 10th?

PAUL CASEY: Don't worry about it, it's fine. It was all about have we been to the moon.

But I saw something that was very impressive right from the get-go with obviously the one-length clubs and amazing ball speed, big set of shoulders and a big part and we knew that straight away. Yeah, Bryson have been friends since then.

Q. Superstitions or little things that people do, who in the group is maybe considered the superstitious one, and is there anything any of you guys up there would be willing to share that are little sort of nuances that you find important?

BRYSON DeCHAMBEAU: Is Chucky the superstitious one? I really don't think we're crazy superstitious. We all kind of do our own thing. I can tell you for me, I don't really write my scores down until after nine holes. That's always

a thing I've done since I was a kid. It's more of a routine thing than anything. There are times where if I feel like if I make a couple bogeys in a row or do something I shouldn't be doing or I miss a bad putt, I write the score down, and it kind of is like, all right, I'm done with that. My brain, I remove myself from that and start fresh. It's not really a superstition, more of like a mental clarity, sort of setting a precedent thing.

Real quickly, there's a ball marker that I use; it's a dollar coin and I always flip it over whenever I move marks, move my mark over if it's in the line of somebody. I just move it over and I flip the coin over to tails so that I know I flipped it over because when I was 11, I was playing in a junior tournament, and I moved my coin and I was leading the tournament, and my dad yelled out to me, Bryson, move your coin back, because I didn't move the coin back, and there was a big controversy around that because they were like, it's helping Bryson, does he get a shot penalty or not. I ultimately didn't and I won the tournament by a couple. It wouldn't have mattered; I won by three or something like that.

But ultimately I'll never forget, that was the moment that changed me forever in regards to that, to always flip your coin over whenever you're moving the mark. That's something that's kind of superstitious but not really and it's a dollar coin. I don't really have more than that.

PAUL CASEY: I mark the coin -- I mark my ball with a ten pence piece, so it's the Queen's head, because I haven't seen a King Charles coin yet. But Queen Elizabeth would always be on there, and I'd always put her looking towards the hole. I felt it was disrespectful if I put the Queen's head down. If I get a quarter, I'll put it heads up, or any coin I put it heads up. I always felt it was disrespectful to put it heads down.

BRYSON DeCHAMBEAU: So you're disrespectful to the eagle on the back.

PAUL CASEY: You can't win.

ANIRBAN LAHIRI: I don't think any of us are overly superstitious I don't think. There's a lot of guys who have a lot of idiosyncrasies. I think for me personally, if I feel like I'm putting really well and I hit two or three really good putts that don't go in, I'll just switch the ball out, like this ball doesn't want to go in the hole. I'll just get another fresh ball in play.

It's just little things like that.

Q. Bryson, we've seen you go from beard to clean shaven. Is there anything in that, like I shave before

something?

PAUL CASEY: I trim my fingernails on Mondays.

BRYSON DeCHAMBEAU: There you go.

PAUL CASEY: I do, because it's like if I mess it up and I cut myself, it doesn't matter. I think Faldo used to do it. But it rings true, and by the time you get to the end of the week they're fine, and then you do it again on Monday.

BRYSON DeCHAMBEAU: It's a weekly thing; I didn't know that. That's pretty interesting.

ANIRBAN LAHIRI: We're all weird.

BRYSON DeCHAMBEAU: Yeah. My facial hair, I get lazy sometimes and I don't do it for a while and then I muster up the energy and courage to do it.

Q. Paul, I was curious given the fact that you've gotten to know Bryson as a teammate now, you're closer the last couple years, how were you watching the U.S. Open? Did you find yourself viewing it differently having a friend and teammate in contention? Also, the guy he beat is someone that you know quite well, too, which maybe was awkward. Either way, in terms of Bryson and getting to that point to win the way he did.

PAUL CASEY: Yeah, look, I'm friends with -- I consider myself friends with both. I don't get to see Rory very much, but -- well, let me preface it by saying I actually don't watch it.

While yeah, I will never reveal maybe who I'm necessarily pulling for when I look at a result, but I don't watch it. I've just -- through the years it's just something I don't really want to --

BRYSON DeCHAMBEAU: Thanks.

PAUL CASEY: No, I knew the result within probably a minute and I was checking it via social media, watching replays and streaming and various other things, but I usually find something to do. I'm usually on the golf course playing or practicing.

That goes back to being a kid. I remember watching Nick Price win the -- I didn't watch it. Nick Price won the Open at Turnberry, and I just didn't want to watch it because I wanted to be there, so I went and practiced and I stood on the putting green at Burr Hill Golf Club just outside London and making putts, thinking I want to be there one day. It's still true today. I'm not there so I don't really want to watch it. That's from a positive angle, if that makes sense.

BRYSON DeCHAMBEAU: That means he cares and wants to do the best for himself and wants to be a competitor. You're a competitor, that's it. I can understand that.

Q. I wonder if you can speak to the process of Bryson getting to actually contending in three of them, winning one of them, from where he was when you guys first started this.

PAUL CASEY: I have no answer for that because there's only one person that knows that answer, and that's the guy next to me.

BRYSON DeCHAMBEAU: I can say that he's helped a lot through -- I remember 2022 Singapore --

PAUL CASEY: We pissed him off so much he walked off the golf course because we made fun of him because he was struggling with his game. So there's a lot of tough love. We've given him a lot of -- everything we've ever done with Bryson comes from a place of love, and we care about him. All three of us, because Chucky is not here, but he's the same. We do it in different ways. Baan probably has a slightly softer method --

BRYSON DeCHAMBEAU: A lot softer.

PAUL CASEY: Chucky is matter-of-fact. Yes, I can be fairly brutal at times. But if I have ever said anything or messaged Bryson or whatever it is, usually it starts with "I'm telling you this because I care about you." We need to discuss something or whatever.

ANIRBAN LAHIRI: We've got good cop, bad cop and medium cop, essentially, in the three of us. He's definitely bad cop.

PAUL CASEY: Singapore you walked off the golf course, didn't you.

BRYSON DeCHAMBEAU: I was in a different place. But that's the thing. That's what shows you how important this team actually is. People downplay the team aspect a lot, and I can tell you that the reason why I did as well in the majors this year and won Pinehurst was because of my team, the guys pushing me, moving me forward. In the worst times, I'll never forget in Singapore, I just sat down with my guys at lunch, like I have no idea what to do, and we looked at my golf swing and was checking it out and they were helping out and we were going through things, and ultimately it took a little bit more time, but that consistent perseverance by my team to help me out, it just shows how important the team aspect is.

It's for a lot of others out here, too. There's a lot of other guys that have struggled with certain things that their team has come around them and helped them out. Golf is a very individualistic tough sport, mentally especially, so when you get a group of guys out here that you can bolster around and have them come support you in tough times, it just means the world and gives us a fresh perspective that I think continues to move this league and us as individuals forward in a really positive way, of which the likes we don't see very often anywhere else.

Q. Despite having a great season and all of you have done well individually as well as team, how annoying or frustrating is it that you have not got an individual win this year?

ANIRBAN LAHIRI: Extremely.

PAUL CASEY: Agree.

BRYSON DeCHAMBEAU: Yeah, it's disappointing. I think we're all capable every single week, and we have got a great chance to do it. We just unfortunately haven't had the cards fall in the way that we want them.

Q. Bryson, you showed us some pictures of the golf course designing that you are doing right next to your house --

BRYSON DeCHAMBEAU: In my backyard, yeah, okay.

Q. When you come to a golf course, how do you look at it as a player and as someone who studies the game so much? If you come over here, how do you look at this golf course?

BRYSON DeCHAMBEAU: Yeah, it's interesting. So for me, first off I look at it esthetically. I see if it's pleasing to the eye, number one. Number two, if I'm looking at a golf course for how I'm going to play the golf course, it's much different than how others play the golf course and how I would design a golf course. But on the golf course this week, I'm focused on where can I hit it; where are places that are acceptable that allow me to hit it on the green and give myself a good chance for birdie, best case and worst case, and then I go from there. I set parameters for a golf course for me, and I work off of that.

Building a golf course is completely different than that. That's a whole 'nother thing. But for me, I have done some cool things in the backyard that's going to test my game so I can be sharp going into any tournament for years to come. I feel like I've built something that can help test every facet around the greens and allow me to be

comfortable going into the golf course.

That's where translating it over to the golf course I look at the parameters, where can I miss it and trying to tighten those parameters to make sure I don't get too far off the beaten path. I'm not sure if that really answers it, but for the golf course here, it's mainly where can I be in setting parameters for being comfortable in order to hit it onto the green and make birdie as many times as possible.

Q. You guys talked about the team aspect of it and what happened with you in Singapore last year. How difficult was it, the same team aspect of it, when this same event was played last year and Baan lost out to you?

BRYSON DeCHAMBEAU: It's not easy, obviously, and we're all individuals trying to win, but also there's that team aspect that we all care deeply about.

Did I want to win? Sure. Would I have loved to have gone into a playoff? Absolutely. It's one of those Catch 22s for me that's like, it's tough, but knowing that he's playing great golf, he's still continuing to play great golf, he's done some great things this year, and we know Baan hasn't done exactly what he's wanted to do and what he can do, but us being there to support him no matter what in tough times is what the team aspect is all about.

I know Paul can win out here. He should have won already out here this year. We're all -- and Charles obviously had an injury, and he won 2023 the first event.

Again, we all have that capability, and we know it. We all feel for each other. But with the team aspect, we also do appreciate and respect how hard we've all worked to get to a certain place.

Even if an individual doesn't win, we still wrap around him and go, it's all good. We're a team; we're going to continue to move forward, continue to make strides, and continue to play great golf.

That's the way I perceive it as a captain, and I hope I can continue to shell that out to the players in whatever facet it is. Last year was difficult for me even though I had won. It was a Catch 22 for sure.

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