

BMW PGA Championship

Tuesday, 6 September, 2022

Virginia Water, Surrey, England

Wentworth Golf Club

Billy Horschel

Press Conference

NEIL AHERN: Delighted to be joined by our BMW PGA Championship defending champion.

Billy, you spoke last year and you've spoken before about how special this tournament is to you. You've watched it as a child and on the television, and you went and won it last year, of course. How nice does it feel to be coming back as the defending champion?

BILLY HORSCHTEL: It's a great feeling. Sound like a broken record but watched this event for many years on TV growing up. It was always the first week we got out of school. Stayed only and watched early in the morning before I went to the golf course and to finally come here in 2019 and experience the event, fell in love with the golf course, which I think I knew was going to happen, seeing the way the course was on TV and watching the Match Play event here as well. And then the crowd support, it was over the moon. Couldn't have asked for anything better.

To finally come back last year, and get the victory, you know, a lot of guys talk about dreaming about winning events, and I'm not one that dreams about winning events. I'm not one that has ever been one of those kids on the putting green, like this putt is to win this event, that's just not me.

But I've envisioned myself winning it, and thought how cool it would be to win this event. To see that come to fruition in a very short amount of time was nice. I've said, the support I've gotten here over the last couple years has been tremendous and I'm so appreciative of it and for it, and that's why I have such an infatuation with the golf course and the tournament and everything that this event stands for.

NEIL AHERN: You attended the London Derby over the weekend, and commiserations, by the way. You seem to have a special affinity with this part of the world; do you have a connection with the fans?

BILLY HORSCHTEL: I do. My stats guy, Mark Horton, is



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English with me and he's been with me for ten years, and Fooch now is my caddie. He's been with me for a couple years.

But Horts has been saying it for many years. He says I'm half-English because I go love it over here. I do lost people. I do love the culture. I grew up, I'm not a history buff but I love history and I've always loved English history and learning about it. And so I just think, you know, just all those things factored in just makes this place so special to me.

And it's funny, Declan Rice was out here with me yesterday walking around and he asked me, said, "Billy, could you ever see yourself buying a place over here?"

And I said, "Actually, Dec, I would like to buy something here in the next five to seven years." The earliest it would be because I could see my kids graduate and go off to university, and my wife and I could come over here and spend two, three, four months out of the year over here. She loves London as well and she loves this area.

I've always loved it over here. I have always gotten along very well with the people. I love their sense of humour very much, and so I think it's sort of been a match made in heaven.

Q. Pleased you love it here so much. I wonder if I can break out with a question about the subject that's troubling all of us, and I know you've spoken about this before; it's the elephant in the room, isn't it, right now. We have had an announcement today about a tournament that will begin in Abu Dhabi on The European Tour in January which will feature kind of a Ryder Cup preview event, tester, event. All sorts of issues arise, like who are they going to pick, who can they pick. But we are not getting a sense of it, from the players at the moment, how the feeling is here on the course this week. And how does it feel to you, someone that's been outspoken of those who have left the PGA Tour to go to LIV, and now we have 17 golfers that have gone to the LIV Tour and come onto a European Tour event, which kind of puts a few noses out of joint, it seems, off the record. But on it, it's difficult to establish. Wonder if you can tell us what it feels like out there.



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BILLY HORSCHER: You know, obviously I said a lot of comments about this, and I addressed this at The Scottish Open.

It's a difficult situation for me because as much as I'm out spoken on the PGA Tour about those guys that left, the PGA Tour and DP World Tour, even with our strategic alliance, the PGA Tour's foundation and its foothold is so much stronger than where the DP World Tour is. I know the PGA Tour is trying to help out in that aspect and make the DP World Tour strong, make it what it used to be maybe in the '80s and the '90s where it was really a true competitor to the PGA Tour.

I am a member of the DP World Tour. But it's nothing like the PGA Tour because I've played only a handful of event. I have played some that aren't the Rolex Series Events. So I've asked a few of the guys here this week, knowing that I had, was going to be asked this question in the media, and there's a mixed feeling out here. There's some guys that hate it; don't think the LIV guys should be here.

There are some guys that are sort of in the middle, and there are some guys that understand and feel that, hey, these guys have helped build the DP World Tour and the European Tour, and been part of Ryder Cups and helped The European Tour be so successful in The Ryder Cup, and they are okay with it.

My stance on this, and I think -- my stance on this is that when those guys were trying to figure out whether they were going to go to the LIV Tour or stay with PGA Tour, DP World Tour, they factored in -- they had to factor in that they knew that World Ranking points were going to maybe not come right away or not come in at all; had to factor in that they knew they were going to be suspended from the PGA Tour and possibly DP World Tour; that they may not be in majors.

So by factoring that in, they factored in what the financial reward for them needed to be for them to leave these tours to go join that tour. If they didn't or they were told something different from the LIV people, which it's very clear LIV told those guys you will not be suspended from either one of those tours, you will still have access and we have looked at it and we are going to in our lawsuits; it's sort of naïve for those guys to think that that's how it was truly going to happen.

Can maybe those guys aren't smart enough to think on their own and maybe their agents gave them bad information, which I am very aware -- know very -- for a fact, that certain agents just gave certain players bad information, and some of those players took that; they

listened to their agents on that.

But I feel that they signed a contract with LIV and they factored in an understanding that they may not get any of the rewards that they had on the DP World Tour and the PGA Tour, and they put a price number on that; and they said, well, if that's not going to happen, this is what I need to be able to go play LIV and that's the contract they signed with LIV.

It's tough because I talked with Ian Poulter and Lee Westwood yesterday, Bernd Wiesberger, guys that I get along with very well. As I always said, I don't fault them for making that decision. But you made a decision that is going to weaken both tours, and that's a tough way to go about it, because honestly, those guys aren't going to play enough going forward to really help out the PGA Tour, but especially the DP World Tour that needs these guys to play more often.

And so it's a very tough decision. But as I said, I don't -- I think those guys -- and even though Lee Westwood and Ian Poulter have been stalwarts for The European Tour, I don't think those guys really should be here. I honestly don't think that the American guys who haven't supported the PGA Tour should be here. The Abraham Ancer, the Talor Gooch, the Jason Kokraks: You've never played this tournament, you've never supported the DP World Tour. Why are you here? You are here for one reason only and that's to try to get World Ranking points because you don't have it.

It's hypocritical because of what some of these guys have said this week when they said they wanted to play less golf. It's pretty hypocritical to come over here and play outside LIV when your big thing was to spend more time with family and want to play less golf.

So that's my stance on it. I can see where other guys may differ and have a different opinion, but like I said, it's tough; if we were on the PGA Tour, I would be hard-lined as I've always been.

But DP World Tour, it's tough because they are not in the strong -- the strongest standpoint in the sense of financial, and they need to build their tour back up so all of these players out here can reap the financial rewards, and I think that's why the strategic alliance with the PGA Tour is going to be able to do that.

Q. Do you think the players were led down a garden path by their agents who were thinking of money for themselves? What's the story there, do you think?

BILLY HORSCHER: Yeah, I think agents, some of these

agents led these guys down a bad road. And when I say a bad road, they didn't give them the entire information and they didn't play devil's advocate the way they should have. I guarantee if I was in their seat, my agent would have played devil's advocate, or I would have played devil's advocate, or my wife would have played devil's advocate, and so we did play devil's advocate beginning of this year to talk about, what if LIV did get an offer, what if LIV did come to us, what are the pros and cons. And we made a list. There was a lot of cons on that LIV Golf side, and very few on the PGA Tour and DP World Tour. There's a lot more pros on that side.

But I do think these agents, they saw dollar signs and they wanted to cash in on their side of it as well. So I do think some of these agents did, I would say, give them bad information. And some of those -- I know some of those players, a couple of those players sort of regret listening to agents.

Q. Taking on what you're saying, how is this manifesting itself in the locker room? You mentioned before some people hate it, some people are in the middle and some people are obviously signed up to it, but is it quite a sort of tense mood in there at the moment? Are there any -- are you seeing disagreements? Is this the only thing people are talking about? What is it?

BILLY HORSCHTEL: I haven't seen any disagreements personally. Like I said, I get along with Ian and Lee Westwood very well. I have no problem with a little banter back and forth, and we can give it and take it and no one takes it personal. There are some players on that side that do take it personal and you can't have that banter.

You know, I do know for instance in Germany when I played the BMW International Open, obviously Sergio had a kickoff in the locker room and he said certain things in that locker room that actually didn't make it out into the public. Obviously some did but he said some other things. Obviously I'm not going to say what he said because I wasn't in there, so it was secondhand information that I heard. But some of those players in there told me, you know, I was pretty shocked at what Sergio said in that locker room.

But from what I've seen, the guys like me, I'm going to talk to Bernd Wiesberger; I'm going to talk to Ian Poulter; and I'm going to talk to Lee Westwood; and I'm going to talk to G-Mac. Like I'm not going to avoid those guys. I'm happy those guys made a decision. They are making a lot of money right now. I'm happy, if that's what they want to do in their life and on the golf and with their golf, I'm fine with that. And you can see there's other guys that aren't very

pleased with them and that sort of -- just stay away from them, and don't have a conversation with them.

No, I haven't seen anything with my own eyes or been a part of any lively discussions in or around the locker room.

Q. You use the word "banter" but at the same time you're saying they shouldn't be here. When you're having that banter, would you actually say to them: Look, I'm going to go into the media tent and say you guys shouldn't be here and you're hypocrites as well?

BILLY HORSCHTEL: Well, I wouldn't call Lee Westwood and Ian Poulter hypocrites because they never said they wanted to play less.

The guys that have publicly stated they want to play less, those are the hypocrites. I mean, just be clear on that. It's not every one of them. And there are a few of those hypocrites here this week because they wanted to play less, but they are playing another event that's lot a LIV event.

Talked to Ian and Lee yesterday, and at that point, I didn't think I was going to address and say they shouldn't be here. I was still trying to figure that out. As I was talking about, those guys have been stall darts of the DP and European Tour for so long; and Lee especially, because the last couple years over COVID he played events for \$1 million when he could have come over to America and played for more money, and they have been supportive of this tour for so long.

Like I said, I'm in the position that I can be really strong with what I say because, one, I've not been a DP World Tour member for 13 years like I have on the PGA Tour and played X amount of events. I've only been a member for the last four or five years. I've only really come over three, four, five times a year and obviously it's been the bigger events. I have played some of the lesser purse events.

A lot of the information I've taken in -- that's why I've talked to a lot of the other full members that have been here for, you know, ten, 15 years, guys who have been here for five years, so try to get their side of it. I'm just seeing where those players, the majority of the players stand and that's why I said, some of those guys are okay with it. Some of those guys are sort of okay with it but not okay with it and then you've got the hard-line guys that don't believe they should be here.

I'll probably fall in the middle but I'll probably lean towards those guys shouldn't be here. It's one of those, it's just a really tough situation for this tour, like I said, because of the financial situation and where they stand right now

compared to the PGA Tour and trying to get themselves built back up in a place where all 200-plus members of this tour are gaining more financially compared to, like, the PGA Tour.

Q. You've made it clear how much winning this event meant to you. If one of the LIV guys in particular, one of the guys who, chances, as we put it, come over were to prevent you from making a successful defence, how difficult would it be to stomach something like that?

BILLY HORSCHTEL: You know, that's a great one, I thought about that one as well. I've tried to think about much stuff as possible so I don't get stumped and have a response. That one, I just don't know how to respond to it.

Q. I take it you won't be shaking their hands?

BILLY HORSCHTEL: No. No, I'll be shaking their hands. I will shake anyone's hand. I will congratulate them and say "well played." I'm not a sore loser at all. But let's just say, it wouldn't help the situation we're in right now. That's pretty much what I would say off the type of my head and what I've thought about; only thing I would say is it would not be good if it happened. Simple as that.

Q. This is the second time you've come over here and you've spoken openly and honestly about this. When you called the players hypocrites and liars at The Scottish Open, was there any kickback from any of the LIV Golf players?

BILLY HORSCHTEL: No, I don't think -- none of them addressed me. I don't think anyone did. I talked to Ian the day after, and Ian is like, hey, I'm cool. I understand what you're saying. You weren't -- wasn't coming at Ian, calling him a hypocrite, because like I said, he hasn't said anything for me to come back at him on.

Honestly I saw Greg Norman -- actually, Brian Harman texted me something and Greg Norman responded to that in a Q&A session. And Brian just said, "I guess you must be touching the right dials for him to be addressing it."

I've had this conversation with LIV Golf last December at the QBE Shootout, and we had a lively discussion -- not lively in the sense that we had a great little back-and-forth, but no one's come at me.

Like I said, I try to make sure that before I do open my mouth and speak that at least I've thought about this and looked at it from a really great perspective, all perspectives and all sides, and make sure that they can't come back at me with anything I've said.

For the most part, I've been pretty much consistent in everything I've said. I can't changed at all from when I first started talking about this months ago to talking about now. And if they did, you know, if they wanted to have a conversation about what I've said, I'm always open. I'm always open for a conversation.

I don't take things very personal towards me. But if you say things that are attacking to PGA Tour, the DP World Tour that aren't true that you guys aren't telling the truth on, I'm going to defend these tours and that's what I've done from the very beginning.

I'm not the one that has started these conversations. I've only addressed it when a lot of the stuff from the other side is not coming true, and the general public is not getting a great perspective of what is actually happening and they are only seeing what one side is saying and someone else needs to step up; or players on this sidestepping up to say, hey, these are lies, these are not what is actually happening with the PGA Tour and DP World Tour and so forth.

NEIL AHERN: Billy, thank you, as always, for your perspective. Have a great week.

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