

BMW PGA Championship

Tuesday, 17 September, 2024

Virginia Water, Surrey, England

Wentworth Golf Club

Ryan Fox

Press Conference

THE MODERATOR: Welcome to the first press conference of the 2024 BMW PGA Championship. Delighted to be joined by defending champion Ryan Fox welcome back. How special is it to be back here given what you achieved last year.

RYAN FOX: Yeah, it's pre saw some to be honest. I've seen my face around a few places, which is cool. It feels like it was yesterday and it also feels like it was about five years ago that it happened. A lot's happened since the win last year. A lot of cool stuff.

But yeah, I've still got great memories of coming down that back nine on Sunday, the shot into 18 and sort of everything was a bit of a whirlwind after that. And yeah, it was just an amazing experience and pretty cool to be back here at defending champion and just dropped my club in the trophy room in there, and gave the trophy back and stuff, which was -- it was a cool experience.

THE MODERATOR: What are some of the main emotions, when you look back on that day last year?

RYAN FOX: I mean looking back on, it obviously a great sense of pride. You know, that was easily my biggest event in golf. You know, bigger than playing my first major, anything like that. Best achievement in golf.

And then, you know, I did it with the family there as well so I got to celebrate with them and when I look back, how I felt during that last round it was calm, which is kind of the opposite of what I would expect to feel in that situation. It's the calmest I've felt coming down a golf tournament in contention, and I wish I could find that place again somehow.

THE MODERATOR: You've not played a load of competitive golf recently. Given that, how nice to be back where you can get back into the swing of things.

RYAN FOX: Yeah, I needed a break. I think I played 25 events, 24 events after the Wyndham Championship and mentally and physically a bit broken and needed that



BMW PGA CHAMPIONSHIP

A Rolex Series Event



break.

Came back last week in Ireland and there was some signs, I struggled with the putter but tee-to-green was actually prejudice solid.

So it's nice to come back to a place with some great vibes after last year and hopefully that kind of kick starts it all for me. I've got a decent run potentially in the States coming up, as well. So hopefully this is the week to find a little bit of form in that respect and I'd love to be in the mix again come Sunday afternoon.

Q. Wondering how you could sum up your year on the PGA Tour on and off the course. Was it what you expected or were there a few surprises?

RYAN FOX: It's definitely been tough. It's probably been a bit more of a grind than I expected. You know, I travel with the family for 20 weeks in a row there. I've been on the road for -- I've been on the road for 30 weeks. By the time I got home after the Wyndham Championship, I've only had four weeks at home total this year. So it was very tough in that regard.

We didn't have base in the U.S. I kind of had not got visa stuff sorted. The competition depth-wise felt a lot stronger than I expected. I think last year when I played there a bit, I played some of the bigger events but was playing really well and kind of went into this year maybe not playing so well, and missed a few cuts not by much. But, you know, felt like I was -- I had to do a lot more to get myself in contention, let alone to make a cut and it took awhile to kind of figure that out.

Just never quite got it going over there. I had some decent weeks without it being spectacular, and you know, kind of hoping something is going to click at some point, you know, this week would be lovely if it did, but I've got a few events over there at the end of the year. Started to feel confident around May, June, July, so hopefully that equates to playing better golf over there.

It's a big change, I'm 37, being a rookie on the PGA TOUR. I had everything sorted over here. I kind of knew what schedule, how that was going to work, what events and all the travel and all that on PGA TOUR was new. Playing

ASAP . . . when all is said, we're done.®
sports

rounds on Tuesday trying to figure out a golf course competing against guys that have competed on it multiple times, the Pro-Ams -- it makes Tuesday more important. They are long practise rounds, as well.

A lot of 5 1/2, six-hour practise rounds and guys going out, playing nine, just take my time and when you're trying to play 18, it's tough in that respect. The depth is there, and if you're not quite on, it's hard to compete and I felt like I was playing catch up a lot of the year in that respect.

All the golf courses I had played over there, I didn't get in all the Signature events this year and didn't get in. It's been a tough year but certainly can take some positives out of it.

Q. You played a lot with Bob in the second half of the year and he had that same ting, getting used to the environment. Do you feel you helped each other, and as the season went on, you found your feet out there?

RYAN FOX: Yeah, I think both of us definitely struggled early on and were not having a whole lot of fun. And it was kind of ironic, the week we both had our best week at that point was Myrtle Beach and we played together the first couple of rounds.

I think Bob said to me going down the first hole, "It's great to play with someone I can have a bit of a chat with and know I can have a bit of a love." Same for me. We knew each other well, both finished in the top 10 and he kicked on pretty strongly from that. He had a bit of a break at home and that kind of refreshed him.

Yeah, it's just, it's tough over there to kind of -- everyone does their own thing, and I don't know why that is, per se. But it just feels like it's a bit more lonely over there and I think both of us kind of struggled with that. I travel with my family, so the loneliness off the golf course wasn't there but still I found it quite hard to make friends. I think the European guys kind of banded together a little bit there. It was nice playing a little bit of golf with Bob and it's pretty amazing to see what he's done at the back end of the season. I played with him at the third round of Canada, as well, and we had a good time in the last group it. It was great to see him win there and yeah, hopefully I can emulate some of what he did at the end of the day.

Q. The Presidents Cup, not managing that, are you more determined to get that?

RYAN FOX: Yeah, I don't feel as hard done by it this year as last year. I obviously had a great start with the rankings started for the Presidents Cup and this year has just been a bit hit and miss. When I put myself in positions on the

weekend, I haven't played well. I've not turned those okay weeks into good weeks on the weekend.

I'd love to get in one hopefully in a couple years' time and there's definitely some motivation to get there, and I'll certainly be following pretty intently next week. Hopefully the guys can get it done in Montréal. It will be nice for the internationals to get a win finally.

Q. What club did you end up giving?

RYAN FOX: The sand wedge I hit into 18 last year.

Q. And then secondly, as I'm listening to you talk about being on the PGA TOUR, it seems like if the purses were the same here as they were over there, you'd rather be here?

RYAN FOX: You're not wrong in that respect. I think it's just because I know how everything works over here. I have some really good friends. I've been based in London for eight years until this year. I'm 37, playing as a rookie; I'm in my comfort zone over there and all of the sudden, everything is new and trying to do it with the family and trying to make everything kind of work, I just found really tough this year both on and off the golf course.

I think things will be better going forward now that we've done it for a year and figured out kind of what we need to do better. But as a first-year scenario, if you had given me the option to play here for the same purse, I definitely would have stayed over here.

Q. Did you find a place in the U.S. that you're going to be based?

RYAN FOX: Not yet. But hopefully, I've got a little bit of work to do to keep my card and once I do that, we'll set something up next year probably in Florida. My wife is good friends with some of the other players' wives there. That's the most thing for us is when I'm away she has some friends and support and stuff like that with two young kids so it's not so difficult for her.

Q. Can I ask you about Pro-Ams generally? Because the Pro-Am here is getting bigger and better. Who is the biggest star you've played with?

RYAN FOX: Yeah, so my partner for Dunhill Links for a lot of years was Shane Warne. It's pretty hard to get more famous than Warne in the sporting world at least. My favourite story of playing with Warne -- and the last time I played with him was 2021. He turns up, I was coming 60th or something so we were kind of last off 10 on Sunday and Warne turns up and goes, FF sake, and you could see, his

eyes are glazed over. I see a photo of them playing cricket in the Old Course hotel with a whiskey bottle and tennis ball at 3.30. Warne is bowling to Michael Vaughn, Kevin Peterson is wicket keeping. Darren Gough is at cover. It's a cool photo. But you know at that point, he's having fun and he's probably not going to be any good when he plays, and he turns up and he drives the 10th green, first shot of the day, two putts for birdie and makes eagle. Pars 11 with a shot. Pars 12 with a shot. He stuffs up 13. And then he birdies 14 with a shot.

So we're like 6-under after four, and I think I had six birdies for the day. Warne probably had five by himself plus a bunch of net birdies off 10. He beat all the pros in the group unofficially. He shot 70 and we all shot 1-under I think.

Every time I made a stuff-up, he made a birdie and we shot 56 as a team and lost a count bet because I was -- I finished behind, I think it was Michael Hoey who was in the tournament and they won based on the pro score. But that was a really cool experience out on the golf course with him.

It's a shame he's not here anymore. He was such a great man. He loved golf and he was a really good friend. That's probably my last memory of playing with him, and we had a whole lot of fun. And he crashed. He completely crashed. He got off the ninth green and basically fell asleep in the van on the way back to the clubhouse.

Q. A lot of cricketers playing, and Andy Murray is playing. As a pro, anyone you might want to seek out and see what their swing is like?

RYAN FOX: I wouldn't mind seeing Andy Murray, actually. I saw a post on social media that he's keen to get down to scratch. See how much work he's got to do. Most of the cricketers are generally pretty good.

It's always interesting for them tomorrow. It's an intimidating setting. There's a lot of people out there and it's always kind of funny to see some of those shots off the first tee. There's generally, if you're on the putting green, you hear a lot of shouts of "Fore" off that. So kind of expecting to see a little bit of that tomorrow as well which is good fun.

Q. You say obviously the Presidents Cup remains a bit of a goal for you. Are you concerned, though, that if the American streak of victories continues there may not be a Presidents Cup to play in eventually?

RYAN FOX: Yeah, I mean, I think if it keeps going how it is maybe the current format might need to change. I heard

them say potentially combine it with the Solheim Cup or something like that, like are hopefully it doesn't get to that point and the international -- I feel like last time, the Internationals played pretty good and gave the U.S. a run.

So hopefully going forward, if we can make it at least competitive, get over the line a couple times, then it might get some legs like the Ryder Cup did, what, 30, 40 years ago.

If it keeps going the way it's going and the Internationals get beaten up properly, then yeah there might be some issues going forward but I don't see that for the next ten years or so.

Q. Is there an identity issue? How easy is it to rally behind the identity of Internationals that would accommodate so many things that you're not?

RYAN FOX: I think I think so spread out, right. You've got South Africa, Australia, Asia. It's guys speaking a lot of different languages. I know you get that with the Ryder Cup team a little bit. But I think they all kind of get in behind the DP World Tour in that respect. That's the camaraderie. Whereas I think it's a little bit harder, most of the Internationals play on the PGA TOUR kind of do their own thing. It's kind of hard to find that common ground.

I think by all accounts, Ernie did a great job a couple years ago to start to try to find the identity. Trevor continued that. From my dealings with Mike this year, he's continued that as well.

So I think the Internationals have played a little bit better once they have started to do that. Got their own logo and everything like that. Just all those little things seem to matter a bit, and it gives the guys a little bit extra to play for. It's hard to find that common ground. You can't just go, oh, we want to win because we hate the U.S. or something like that. That doesn't work because most of the guys live in the U.S. full-time and half of them have U.S. wives. That's not something to rally around.

Whereas you can rally around Europe in that sense. It's good they are starting to find something now and hopefully they give them a good run this year. I expect the Canadian crowd will be rowdy. Hopefully they give the U.S. a little bit of their own medicine like the Ryder Cup boys and everyone else seems to get on U.S. soil.

Q. You mentioned prize money earlier and that's something that's obviously vastly increased in the last few years on the LIV Tour and PGA TOUR but last week The Irish Open was held at Royal County Down and had a significantly lower prize purse. Players

 . . . when all is said, we're done.®

played in that event because it was at Royal County Down, is my point. Do you think maybe the value of having quality venues is sort of -- being sort of drowned by this obsession with prize money in that sense?

RYAN FOX: Yeah, a little bit. Obviously the PGA TOUR definitely jumped on the bandwagon there. LIV started it all. I feel like we've done a really good job on the DP World Tour of making it about -- more about the event, the golf course, where it's at.

If you look at what we're -- obviously Royal County Down last week, we're in London this week at Wentworth, an iconic golf course. We've got Spanish Open in Madrid, you've got The French Open in Paris. Even though some of the prize money is not the same as the Signature events, still, the events have managed to keep their identity being National Opens or something like that at iconic cities and at really good golf courses.

It's definitely a worry going forward. I think the narrative in golf lately about being so money driven is probably a little bit frustrating. I don't think the players necessarily think about it as much as what it's in the media or what the public sees. You know, we still want to play and compete. We want to play on good golf courses. We want to contend for tournaments.

But yeah, golf is certainly going that way a little bit lately and hopefully all that talk around the money kind of dies down going forward. Look, it's been -- as a player, it's been great in that sense. The rewards are definitely a little bit better.

But you know, if you go through your run of the field this week, would you rather make a hundred grand or have the trophy and then make nothing at the end of the week? I'm pretty sure everyone would say I want my name on the trophy and I'll take not getting paid. I think that's generally what most of us still play for.

Q. First of all, I'm taken aback a little bit. The media isn't the one necessarily running this thing in regards to the money. The players -- go ahead.

RYAN FOX: It's more what you read. I'm not saying the media is running it at all. It's obviously some players are involved in that. I'm not trying to pick out the media in that sense.

But you know, the first thing you read at the end of a tournament is the prize money payout kind of stuff, and that's -- that is what comes out and that's what has become the narrative in golf. I'm not saying the media caused that

by any stretch. That's what it's become and that's what the public sees more than anything now.

But when you actually talk to a lot of the players, I'm not saying all of the players. There are definitely some that are very money driven but there's still the idea of legacy and playing for trophies and wanting to contend in tournaments, and the money is a nice benefit of that but not the be-all and end-all.

Q. It's interesting because when you were younger, or even now, you see a cricketer or rugby player or soccer player, and you see they are signed with so-and-so, are you not driven to look at exactly how much money they made from that signing?

RYAN FOX: Not at all.

Q. Well, you're an exception to the rule.

RYAN FOX: Well, yeah, that's my -- I think it's probably a little different for us. You look at the U.S.-based sports, especially, it's such a big thing how much Mahomes signs for or whatever and football is over here like that as well. We don't have that in New Zealand. The biggest thing for us, obviously rugby is our national sport.

So to be an All Black, you have to play your professional rugby in New Zealand to be able to play for the All Blacks and that means guys turning down pretty significant contracts playing in France or Japan or England or Ireland. The pull of the All Black jersey is bigger than what the money is.

Yes, they still get paid well but I wouldn't have a clue what any of the All Blacks get paid for a year and I honestly don't care. I just want them to win. I don't know if that answers the question.

THE MODERATOR: Thanks very much for your time. Wish you all the best this week.

FastScripts by ASAP Sports