

Travelers Championship

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TPC River Highlands

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Brian Rolapp

Press Conference



TRAVELERS
CHAMPIONSHIP

THE MODERATOR: We are pleased to be joined by the PGA TOUR's new CEO Brian Rolapp this morning. How excited are you for this opportunity?

BRIAN ROLAPP: Look, I'm very excited for this opportunity. I'm very honored and humbled by this opportunity. I'm excited to grow the PGA TOUR. I'm excited about the future of golf. I think the time we spent with the players was a productive discussion. I learned a lot.

I told the players I'm going to talk with all of them, as many as I can in a short amount of time, over 100, that could take me some time, but I'm going to hear what they have to say. I want to understand what they think we do well. I want to understand what they think we can do better.

It was a really productive discussion, and I feel honored to be here.

Q. Brian, when you came into this process, what was the thing that you were most looking forward to to start working on within the PGA TOUR?

BRIAN ROLAPP: Well, I think I'm sort of just getting on the job. We just sort of made it official today.

I think what excited me the most about this opportunity, and I've had the privilege of working at the NFL for 20 years, which I've loved, and have seen a lot and have had a lot of opportunity, but this opportunity stood out. It stood out because I think the game of golf is a global game. It is a game that has a tremendous amount of growth. I think the level of competition and tradition is unparalleled in a lot of ways, and I see a lot of opportunity.

Getting to that opportunity, both from the game itself and commercially, is something that really has drawn me to the TOUR, so I'm excited.

Q. What is the priority in -- one of the big topics of golf the last three years has been the fractured nature and trying to pull it back together?

BRIAN ROLAPP: Yeah, I think everyone is talking about that. My view is I come in with a pretty clean sheet of paper. I also come in knowing that there's a lot to learn. Everything that works in the football world may not work in the golf world. When it comes to that situation particularly, I think the fans have been pretty clear. They want to see the best golfers competing against each other. I think everybody as a golf fan. I agree with that.

When it comes to the situation with LIV, I think that's a complex situation that's probably something I should learn more about before I speak. But I will say my focus is on growing the TOUR, making it better, and really moving on from the position of strength that it has.

Q. From a broader standpoint, is your priority reporting to players or reporting to fans? The fans can want one thing and you have a lot of players that have 180 opinions probably. Who's your responsibility or priority to?

BRIAN ROLAPP: Well, I think it's to both. I think ultimately what has attracted me about this opportunity is that it's unique in sports in that the players own the TOUR. It's their TOUR. They are the shareholders. They are the owners, so I certainly work for them.

Having said that, and we talked a little bit about this in our player meeting, I think they know what's good for fans is also good for the TOUR. Working in the sports business as long as I have, sometimes it's not that complicated. If you think what's best for the fan, it's usually best for everybody involved. So I think we're going to keep that mindset here.

Q. Brian, you mentioned opportunity; where do you see the biggest growth potential for the PGA TOUR, and is it short-term? Is it long-term? Is it both?

BRIAN ROLAPP: Again, I've got to get in there and look at it a little bit, but I think from a macro standpoint, there is short-term and long-term growth. I think, if you look at sports in general, it's clearly some of the most valuable intellectual property in media and sports and anywhere. I



think people love sports. That has not changed.

I think when you look at golf specifically, it is truly a global sport. I think the participation in the game has increased. It's been increasing since COVID significantly. People love the sport and they play the sport. That's unique.

I think that translates to all sorts of opportunity in the long-term. You look at the strength and the television ratings that I see, that people love the PGA TOUR, they love the competition, especially when the best players are in the field. I think those are all strengths to build on.

I think we're going to look at it with a clean sheet of paper, but I think there's opportunity to engage fans better at events. So I think all of that will work together for a lot of growth, I think, both short-term and long-term.

Q. Roger Goodell signed through '27, no imminent signs of slowing down on his end, but your name in the media has been mentioned as being on the short list of potential names to consider as far as the next NFL commissioner. Why was now the right time for you to change leagues and step into this new role at the PGA TOUR?

BRIAN ROLAPP: Well, I loved working at the NFL. I've learned a ton from Roger. He's been my boss for a long time and a mentor for a long time.

I felt for me, again, a lot of people focus on who the next commissioner is. I don't. I focus on the job I have.

I was just really drawn to the opportunity here. Again, I mentioned and I said this to the players, when you're in the seat I've been in for a while, you get to look at a lot of different opportunities, and they don't come up -- unique ones don't come up very often. This one did, and it was a chance to really do something different and help grow a game and a sport that I love.

That's really where my focus is is the PGA TOUR, and I'm really excited about it.

Q. When this kind of leaked last week, there were some people on Twitter pointing out you don't have golf handicap. In your open letter today, you said you love golf and you play golf. If you would give us a little more detail --

BRIAN ROLAPP: Yeah, my golf history -- first of all, my first job in high school I worked at the turn at a country club in Washington, D.C. area, Congressional Country Club. That's where I got gas money. So that's how I was actually introduced to the game, on employee day actually learning

to play golf.

In high school I skipped quite a bit of classes in college playing, and then career and family started, and I took a long time off from the game because my career, my family got in the way in a bit, but I've taken it up in recent years ago.

I have four children. Three of my boys love to play. I really love being out there with them. There's very few times when you get four hours with your kids, and I don't know if they like it because they get lots of questions.

So I play. I probably play maybe five to ten rounds a year. Not as much as I would like to.

I will say you would have to ask the board and search committee. No one hired me for my golf game here. That's not my job. My job is to do other things. But I'm a big fan of the sport.

Q. We're just looking for a handicap.

BRIAN ROLAPP: Listen, if I told you -- in fact, I'm not going to tell you. It's going to be classified. There's a reason I didn't put it in.

Q. The Strategic Sports Group investment, how big of a factor was that in enticing you to look into this job in the first place, and do you have a stance on how those funds should be deployed?

BRIAN ROLAPP: I think the Strategic Investment had a big influence. I think the investment of capital and the pledge of future capital has been one of the things that have strengthened the TOUR. I think it's a huge opportunity.

Where we deploy that capital, I have ideas. I don't think I want to share them now, but that's going to be part of the job to get in there and talk about it. But I think they saw when I saw, which is a great opportunity, and just getting sort of the right alignment and the right capital to do that, that's what really drew me to it. It's an investor group that is experienced in sports. They're smart.

I will also say I attended my first board meeting yesterday, and the player directors are bright and motivated and focused, and that was really great to see. I think what I've seen from the board have been very focused on growing the game, looking out for players, and so it was all positive.

But to answer your question directly, that was a big factor in my decision.

Q. Do you think that in terms of the PIF negotiations, do you think from what you've seen from the PGA TOUR that the TOUR can go on without a deal with the Public Investment Fund?

BRIAN ROLAPP: Again, I'm not close enough to any of those discussions, but I will say what I saw regardless of that is a very strong TOUR. I see a strong product. I see strong golfers. I think the Signature Events have been a huge and important progression in the sport. So I see strength that, just don't take my word for it, look at the underlying fundamentals; they're strong.

I think that really speaks to some of the changes that have been made in the last few years.

Q. With the NFL, you would stress how important reach was with your media partners, both digital and linear, and having kind of a longer term view and longer term horizon when it came to these partnerships. Do you think you'll have a similar type strategy with the PGA TOUR in this ever-evolving landscape?

BRIAN ROLAPP: Yeah, I think a lot of people ask what at the NFL might be applicable here, and that's probably one of them. I think there's three things, as I've mentioned before, that we can take from the NFL that I think applies to golf.

One is you sort of relentlessly focus on the game, getting the competition right, getting the highest level of competition is extremely important. That's something we obsessed about.

I think, second, finding the right partners. That's not only sponsors, but media partners could help grow the game distribute the game, reach as many fans as possible. That's something we'll look at.

And I think third is a constant mindset of innovation. You have to change. I think I said it in my fan letter, we're going to honor tradition, but we're not going to be unnecessarily bound by it, and where it makes sense to change, we're going to do that. I think that's something to take from my previous experience that I'm excited to apply here.

Q. We saw Tiger Woods amongst the board members who are here this morning. How much influence in your short time in the role have you seen that he has within the PGA TOUR and how much will you lean on him moving forward?

BRIAN ROLAPP: In my limited experience here, that's been both through the process and through the board

discussion we've had this week, I think I would classify Tiger's influence as significant. He works hard. He's smart. He's dedicated.

I would say that about Tiger and all these player representatives and other board members, they work really hard and they care a lot. I think the amount of time and work they're putting into this and rethinking this has been very impressive to me, and I think I would point out Tiger specifically.

He certainly cares about the game. I won't speak for him. He can speak for himself. But from what I've seen, the amount of time and dedication and work he's putting into this is -- he's driving -- doing this for, not his legacy necessarily, but he's doing it for the benefit of the next generation of players, and that comes through significantly.

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