

John Deere Classic

Tuesday, May 19, 2026

TPC Deere Run

Silvis, Illinois, USA

Brian Campbell

Andrew Lehman

Wendy Williams

Barry Cronin

Press Conference

ANDREW LEHMAN: Good morning and welcome to champion's day, officially kicking off the 2026 John Deere Classic. I would love to take credit for the weather for all the media members playing golf out there. Sorry about the rain last night. I didn't have that in the forecast.

But it's going to be an unbelievable day for golf. Excited to bring back the second year of our media members getting a chance to see the golf course, and can't wait for you to see Deere Run.

Just know, and I know I've had a lot of questions about this, there is construction on hole No. 4. You will be playing that as a par-3 today. I do promise you it will be done for tournament.

I would like to take a chance to thank our sponsors and our charity donors who all make this event and our Birdies For Charity program possible. You make the John Deere Classic the envy of the PGA TOUR.

I would like to thank our media officials, many of whom are here today, for all your coverage throughout the year, and especially during tournament week. You make the John Deere Classic feel like the Masters each and every year.

I would like to thank our past chairs and board members who are in attendance today, folks that have given tirelessly of their time and their effort. Can't thank them enough for their continued support and guidance. Truly, truly the backbone of the volunteer leadership here at the John Deere Classic.

I would like that thank WQAD for making today possible. We took a chance last year to bring this event virtually. I would hate to think where we would be with all our expertise. We're pretty good at putting on golf



tournaments. I don't know if we would've had the technology thing figured out. So thank you WQAD for making this such a seamless event.

Lastly, I would like to thank the greatest title sponsor on the PGA TOUR, John Deere. Without their support, this event isn't here in the Quad Cities, and I don't think we should ever take that for granted.

With that, 2025 was a huge year for a number of reasons. We had just under 2,400 volunteers, people who signed up and gave freely of their time, talent, and energy. Talking about that network of volunteerism, we can't put this event on without the volunteers at the John Deere Classic.

It was our third year of Concerts on Course. I know I don't speak for our entire staff, but I don't stress like I did in 2023 for the concerts anymore, although last year was interesting on Sunday with our first playoff.

A contract extension that keeps this event right here in the Quad Cities through 2030. We talked about it a lot, but the best field in John Deere Classic history going back to the official World Golf metric starting in 1986, a record 16.9 million for charity with a 9% bonus to 460 organizations. Simply amazing, and magic does happen here.

That total brought our event to over 206 million over the history going back to 1971. The reality of that 206 million is that nine 9% of that has been raised since the John Deere Classic signed on as title sponsor.

Then I would be remiss if I didn't mention a record \$75 million in economic impact, what this event means to this region and this community through our charity dollars and our support. Again, a staggering number that we never take for granted.

With that, I would like to thank our defending champion, Brian Campbell, for being here today. I don't think you can ever take for granted getting your champion to do a media day, something that has been happening over my 20 years. Never missed one.

Brian had a great 2025: two wins; both came in playoffs. Again, the first playoff happening since 2015 at the John Deere Classic, our staff was always begging no playoff, we have a concert to get in.



Thankfully, Brian got it done in one hole and didn't stop us from putting on a world-class concert on Sunday, along with crowning a world class champion in Brian. It was a poetic win for Brian. Ten years to the date that he tee'd it up for the first time as a professional as an exemption in 2015.

And then I would be remiss if I didn't mention from a Hawkeye fan to an Illinois guy, when whispered to him on the green that I guess this Iowa fan and Illinois fan have to coexist, I didn't have it in my bingo card that Illinois would take Iowa out in the NCAA basketball tournament, but I think I can say this confidently: both of I was would've taken that outcome on the green back in July.

With that, I would like to welcome our 2026 chair, the leader of 2400 volunteers, Wendy Williams.

WENDY WILLIAMS: Thank you so much. It's such an honor to chair in 2026. Thank you for everyone in attendance today, and a special thank you to Brian for joining us.

Brian's story is one that resonates deeply with what this tournament represents. University of Illinois standout, and former Big Ten Player of the Year, Brian has strong ties to this region and to Midwest golf.

With that, let's kick off this morning with a highlight video of Brian's championship performance courtesy of our media partner, WQAD.

(Video shown.)

WENDY WILLIAMS: (No sound.)...record year, and as we look forward, our goals remain ambitious. We're focused on building on this momentum and continuing to grow our impact in the communities that we serve.

Thank you to everyone who plays a role in making this possible, from our sponsors and partners to our volunteers and fans. Here is to a great 2026.

Andrew.

ANDREW LEHMAN: All right, before I bring Barry Cronin up here who will ask a series of questions and then we'll give effort one a chance to ask questions, just know Brian can't see the room but he can see you at the podium. When we get to a chance where you want to ask a question, we'll invite you up to the podium.

With that, please welcome Barry Cronin.

BARRY CRONIN: Good morning everybody. Look forward to another great tournament here at the John Deere Classic. Brian, how are you? Can you hear me okay?

BRIAN CAMPBELL: Yeah.

BARRY CRONIN: Good. We interviewed you earlier this year. You're going to be on the cover of Chicago District Golfer magazine, so all the Illini in northern Illinois will be able to see you on the cover.

I think you had never seen that awesome highlight video that we just watched of last year's tournament. What went through your mind when you were looking at the highlights?

BRIAN CAMPBELL: Really just smiling and watching it the whole time. What's crazy is I kind of forgot it rained during that time. Yeah, just thinking about the last few holes and what I was thinking about and how 15 didn't go the way I wanted it to, but we were still in there and pulled it out at the end.

BARRY CRONIN: Was there any key to winning? Was there anything going super well for you last -- during the final round?

BRIAN CAMPBELL: I would say my speed, my putting on the greens just felt like I couldn't really do anything wrong, and gave me a lot of confidence to put the ball on the green wherever I could do it, and got it close in some instances and made some putts. So it was really good just keeping it in play and giving myself chances.

BARRY CRONIN: And after you made the double on 15, what sort of went through your mind?

BRIAN CAMPBELL: The second it went out, probably a cuss word, but, yeah, wasn't too happy with that. You know, I'm the kind of guy who likes to just be real about it and it's like, all right, that just happened, but we're still here to win a tournament and we are still in great position.

So I knew we could do something special.

BARRY CRONIN: Yeah. I know you must have a soft spot in your heart for the Quad Cities. I know last year you went down to the University of Illinois and you hung out with the team and with Coach Small in advance of last year's event. Are you going to do that again this year? Do you have any plans for that?

BRIAN CAMPBELL: I will -- I'll plan on doing that if I have the time for it. If we have a couple days beforehand I'll



definitely fly over there and see if Coach is there; be awesome to see him.

But, yeah, that's definitely the new game plan before the John Deere.

BARRY CRONIN: So you're a little superstitious then I guess.

BRIAN CAMPBELL: I mean, I could say I'm a little-stitious, I'm not super-stitious. But, you know, there is a few things, like my ball marker has to be the same, the way I line up my ball, stuff like that. But it's really not -- I won't go crazy if it doesn't go accordingly.

Q. How often do you talk to Coach Small during the year? You guys get on the phone at all? And how does he help you?

BRIAN CAMPBELL: Yeah, we will talk whenever we can. We text here and there. He's a busy guy. It's hard to kind of match up our schedules. But I would always love to hear from him when I can.

And the way he helps me is really I'll send him a swing video or I'll just tell him something I'm dealing with and he gives great advice.

So whatever I need, he's there for it.

BARRY CRONIN: Yeah. How did your life change? You obviously won twice last year, which is pretty unbelievable. Very few people do that. How did it change your schedule and the way you were able to approach 2026?

BRIAN CAMPBELL: Yeah, it freed up a lot. Gave me a full schedule to really deal with, and you can kind of approach it from a much larger perspective, so you almost start thinking about the majors and you're like, all right, how do I want to be when those come around?

And then obviously planning really hard for the John Deere when that comes back around, too.

But it's just been a lot different and I'm getting used to it, but I'm here for it all and just excited for what's next.

BARRY CRONIN: (No sound.) Been tough for you for the last, I don't know, since the you've been on TOUR almost. What injuries were those, and how did you deal with them and how did you come into 2026?

BRIAN CAMPBELL: It was initially a leg injury that kind of led to me overusing my shoulder and my neck. So I injured the neck and the shoulder, and when those weren't

strong enough, it put a lot of stress on my wrist.

So talk about everything, I've got it all. But, yeah, it really put a lot of things in perspective for me in terms of how to deal with that going forward. You know, it's like very real. This is what I deal with, so this is how I'm going to approach every tournament.

BARRY CRONIN: And how has your year gone so far? You look at the data and statistics, but how do you feel like your year is going?

BRIAN CAMPBELL: Not great statistically-wise, but I really don't pay attention too much to that.

It's more so the larger picture for me and kind of where I have goals set for how I want to feel and how I want to play more in the future and after I get over this injury period.

But I know that there is good golf that I can play, so I'm just excited for when that comes.

BARRY CRONIN: You won in Mexico last year. It was before the Masters, so you got in last year's Masters. Won the John Deere so you got in this year's Masters. That's pretty strategic or was that -- that was pretty good.

BRIAN CAMPBELL: Oh, yeah, that's exactly how I drew it up. Yeah. (Smiling.) I was targeting those events just to get into the Masters.

No, it was a complete surprise. It's just all culminated at the right time. I was feeling good I think in those moments that I do feel good I like to capitalize on it and take advantage.

BARRY CRONIN: And you played really well at this year's Masters.

BRIAN CAMPBELL: Yeah.

BARRY CRONIN: You're not a bomber, but people normally associate the Masters with long hitters like Rory and all those dudes.

BRIAN CAMPBELL: Yeah, it's definitely a course where you can get around, and if you can hit it far you're going to have lots of birdie looks. But the thing with the greens and the short game around the greens is it makes it even harder with short irons.

So my whole game plan is just limit the mistakes, and if I do that, then I can hang around.

BARRY CRONIN: I think a lot of people look at your

statistics and say, wow, how can a guy who drives it 280, 288 or whatever it is now, survive on the PGA TOUR, which now is an unthinkable thing. 20 years ago you would have been right up there.

BRIAN CAMPBELL: Yeah.

BARRY CRONIN: How do you survive on the PGA TOUR driving it quote/unquote short?

BRIAN CAMPBELL: You lean on the short game. There is no hiding behind anything else.

But I like to think that when my driver is feeling good it's actually one of my advantages. Being accurate at 290 can be an advantage at a lot of courses.

So I lean on that, and then I lean on my iron game, and trusting my putting and short game is just the recipe that works for me.

BARRY CRONIN: And are you one of those guys that chases speed so to speak? We've seen other players on the TOUR who have really improved by chasing speed. Do you do that?

BRIAN CAMPBELL: I wouldn't say I chase speed, but it's definitely something that I am working towards is getting stronger, and something that happens when you start hitting it longer is you start hitting it over the green.

And so as I get stronger, that's one of the challenges I've been dealing with the last couple weeks, is getting used to being stronger and getting used to the club changes, too.

So it's a challenge, but, yeah, I definitely am working on getting stronger.

BARRY CRONIN: Very good. Okay. Questions from anybody out here in the media? Come on up and join me. You can speak into this microphone.

Q. How you doing this morning, champ?

BRIAN CAMPBELL: I'm good. How are you?

Q. Fantastic. I was wondering about your relationship with your caddie and how impactful that is throughout the whole tournament and especially on that Sunday after the hiccup on 15.

BRIAN CAMPBELL: Yeah, it's huge. To have someone that you can kind of lean on in those moments is everything, a guy who will have their back regardless.

And it was funny, we kind of -- after the 15th hole we made -- I made a joke to him like, you know, that ball -- we needed a new ball anyway. I think it was just that moment of letting it go that helped us kind of refocus and move forward.

Q. Take us into your mindset with the fan support that you had here in Illinois and how much that helped out and how much you envision that propelling you this July?

BRIAN CAMPBELL: Yeah, watching the highlight video, you know, just seeing how was it just the most amount of fans I've ever had cheer for me during a tournament and it was just such an amazing experience.

You know, it's something that you crave and you want to get that again, and I was just really happy that I was able to finish it off for the fans out there.

Q. Finally, I have never won anything in my life, so take me into your head, how that was when that final putt rolled in and you were the John Deere Classic champion? What's going through your head?

BRIAN CAMPBELL: You know, I think I had 15, 18 feet and I had a two-putt to win. All of a sudden it looks like a 40-footer and gets a lot harder.

So winning is not easy, but I was able to lean on my speed and get myself a little tap-in for the win.

Q. Thanks. Good luck this July.

BRIAN CAMPBELL: Thank you so much.

BARRY CRONIN: I have another question for you, Brian. I think maybe the star of the show was Kelsi who ran on to the green afterwards I think. What's going on with that? I heard maybe there was some developments there. (Smiling.)

BRIAN CAMPBELL: There is a few developments, yeah. We are engaged and we're getting married this offseason, so...

BARRY CRONIN: Congratulations.

BRIAN CAMPBELL: Thank you so much.

Q. Hi, Brian. I wrote for PGA TOUR.com last year. Curious, watching Aaron Rai win the PGA Championship, Rory McIlroy said it was a popular victory across the TOUR. Were the journeyman, so-called journeyman particularly energized by that

success, and how do you feel about the proposed changes and where that might leave the opportunity to become the next Aaron Rai?

BRIAN CAMPBELL: Yeah, first of all, it was amazing to see him win. I moved to Jacksonville recently and he plays out there as well so I see him out there often.

He's a good friend and he's just a great guy like everybody says, so happy for him. Seemed like he had everybody chasing him down on that back nine there and he was able to come out and make that amazing putt on 17.

But, yeah, as far as going forward, I think it just proves that if you stick to the basics of the game and work your ass off, excuses my language, you can accomplish anything.

Q. Do you see iron covers becoming en vogue at every TOUR stop now?

BRIAN CAMPBELL: They might get a little more popular now, surprisingly. They might get a little bit of momentum here. (Smiling.)

Q. Have you talked to Steve Stricker following your victory? What kind of thoughts did you share about Deere Run and the Quad Cities with him?

BRIAN CAMPBELL: Not recently haven't talked with Steve, but in the past we've talked a few times and he's just so open with any questions you have for him. He's just such a down-to-earth guy.

But, yeah, it's such a special event and I can't believe I was able to win at place where he was able to do what he did.

Q. And finally, where were you when Illinois took down the Iowa Hawkeyes in epic fashion in March?

BRIAN CAMPBELL: Oh, man, I don't know if Andrew wants me to bring that back up, but, nah, it was just good to see both teams play well. I'll leave it there. (Smiling.)

BARRY CRONIN: Wow, future in broadcasting, network broadcasting there. That's pretty good. Other questions?

Q. Morning, Brian.

BRIAN CAMPBELL: Morning.

Q. Talk about your injuries. Were you hurt earlier this year?

BRIAN CAMPBELL: Yes. It's still something that I deal with. My shoulder blade is kind of like out of place and

pushed forward, so really puts a lot of stress down my, arm, and so even just gripping the club is kind of an issue that I deal with.

Getting better of course, but it's not ideal.

Q. Have you figured out something just recently making more cuts here as the season goes on?

BRIAN CAMPBELL: Yeah, definitely. I would say it's come such a long way. I mean, I used to be in a place where it hurt to hold the club and so I've -- it's just been progressing.

But as of recent it's really just about getting used to playing, and so it's like really hard to fix it when I'm playing in tournaments and stuff.

So the weeks off and the rehab that I have to do for that is really necessary.

Q. Has that altered your tournament week schedule as far as time spent at the practice facility and getting your game prepped?

BRIAN CAMPBELL: Yeah, the weeks that it feels good I push the pedal down and I practice probably too much, and then the times where it kind of flares up I need to pull back.

So it's definitely part of my routine now, dealing with that and less about golf really. It's about getting myself to feel right.

Q. How does that change, affect your mindset then coming in for a title defense in a month?

BRIAN CAMPBELL: You know, it's kind of put in the back of your mind and go compete. This is a lot of stuff that Coach Small talked about, but at the end of the day something he liked to say was: The hay is in the barn. You put in the work. Now it's time to go out there and be an athlete and play.

BARRY CRONIN: Anybody else?

Q. You talked a little bit about leaning on your accuracy. How does this course set up for game and the accurate golfer that you were able to have the success that you had over the four days here?

BRIAN CAMPBELL: Yeah, I think the course -- I think the course sets up really good for me. It can give you a lot if you keep in play, so hitting fairways you're going to have lots of opportunities.



It was funny, the first year I played it I'm seeing guys shoot 61, 62, and I'm like, I don't see that at all out there. Like it honestly looked like a pretty challenging track the first time I saw it.

But I think as you kind of get used to it, the ebbs and flows and kind of learn the places to be and where not to be, it kind of opens up a little bit more for you.

And then last but not least, the greens. They're just always so pure that you can make putts from anywhere. They're just kept so well, the condition, and so I think that's why you see a lot of the low scores.

As far as accuracy, there are some tight holes I can take advantage of. It's not necessarily going to be the par-5s but the par-4s I think I played really well.

Q. ... like no other it feels like. What's that feeling going to be like in a month and a half when you drive down the driveway here coming into a place where you're going to be welcomed as defending champion?

BRIAN CAMPBELL: Oh, yeah, I'll let you know that week I guess. I'm not sure what that will feel like, but I know it's going to be special and I'm just going to be excited to be there and excited to see everybody.

BARRY CRONIN: Brian, just wonder, are you the kind of guy that goes back to your hotel after the round or do you go out and about in the Quad Cities? And where are some of your favorite places if you do?

BRIAN CAMPBELL: You know, we might go out and about this year. I think last year there was kind of a lot going on and we were just golf course and home and recharge.

But I think we're going venture out this year, see what's around.

BARRY CRONIN: Great. And just back to your year and everything, when you look at the PGA TOUR and your own experience this year, there is a lot of changes. How do you view all this? I know it's nothing is in stone, but there is a lot of I think anxiety and change going on right now.

From your perspective, do you get -- for example, do you get in all the Signature Events? You won twice last year. Normally you would be in every event. You could write your own ticket. I think that's maybe not even the case this year even though you won twice last year.

BRIAN CAMPBELL: Yeah, so I'm in every signature event this year, but they're telling us those are going to be going away. No-cut events are going to be going away, but I

think is kind of a good thing. You know, I think we want to get back to normal tournament schedules and what that looks like.

But there is a lot changing and it's really nothing I can touch on because nothing is set in stone, so we don't really know what to expect. I can't speak for everybody, but I think we're kind of ready for anything. We trust where the TOUR is going and we're just looking to be competitors out there at the end of the day.

BARRY CRONIN: Great. Thanks. Other questions? I'll just keep standing up here asking him if you don't have any. All right.

Q. Just one more thing. You talk about the TOUR changed and things like that. Normally a win would get you in to Kapalua to start the season. That went away this year. What are your thoughts on that? Disappointed you didn't get to start your season at that event in Maui?

BRIAN CAMPBELL: Yeah, not going lie, I was pretty disappointed in that. For years and years I watched the TOUR and all the winners start the year in Hawaii; that's just something that I kind of was expecting to happen, so it was a bit of a bummer that we didn't get to experience that and see that golf course also.

I mean, I think it's a pretty fun course for people to watch. But that's the route that we're going and they expressed to me there was an extra signature event added to make up for that loss.

So it was unfortunate and I wish I could have played it, but just didn't work out that way.

BARRY CRONIN: I think this will be the last question: You had a great amateur and college career. The Western Am is headed back to Beverly Country Club where you were in 2014. I think you were in the final four if I'm not mistaken.

BRIAN CAMPBELL: I was. Yes, I was.

BARRY CRONIN: What do you remember about that golf course and just about that event in general?

BRIAN CAMPBELL: Oh, man, I just love that golf course. It was a really special week for me. I actually -- I met Brian Campbell the hockey player that week, and...

BARRY CRONIN: That's right. He was a Blackhawk.

BRIAN CAMPBELL: He was a Blackhawk, and came out and watched me play and then we went out to dinner one

of those nights, so that was a pretty surreal week.

But, yeah, I just remember a lot of familiar faces were at that tournament like Xander, Bryson, some other guys were there.

BARRY CRONIN: All right, okay, any other Quad Cities-focused questions? No? All right, here is Andrew Lehman back. Look forward to seeing you, Brian. Thank you.

BRIAN CAMPBELL: All right. Thanks, guys, (Applause.)

ANDREW LEHMAN: Brian, thank you so much for spending the morning with us, and can't thank you enough. Really looking forward to welcoming you back down the driveway at Deere Run as our defending champion. 42 days away to Wednesday when we open the gates, so see you in 41 days. Thank you.

I can't believe nobody asked a question about Coach Underwood playing in the pro-am. You know, ILL, baby, ILL.

Never gets easier. What do you think about Coach Underwood playing in the program?

BRIAN CAMPBELL: Let's see how his game holds up I guess. I'm excited to see. (Smiling.)

ANDREW LEHMAN: In all seriousness, we're looking forward to welcoming him here. I want to close this out with another reminder of why we have the greatest staff on the PGA TOUR.

As soon as Brian said I'm a little-stitious, the text chain started going off, and I'm proud to say that the first sign with Brian Campbell's quote underneath it will be hanging in the John Deere Classic office.

Looking forward to getting you back here. Thank for everything, and good luck the next couple weeks. We'll see you soon. Thank you.

BRIAN CAMPBELL: Thank you so much. (Applause.)

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