

BMW Championship

Wednesday, August 26, 2020

Olympia Fields, Illinois, USA

Olympia Fields Country Club

Tiger Woods

Press Conference

AMANDA HERRINGTON: We'd like to welcome five-time BMW Championship winner Tiger Woods to the virtual interview room here at the 2020 BMW Championship. Tiger, I'm not sure if you're aware but you need to play well this week to advance in the FedExCup Playoffs. Some opening comments from you.

TIGER WOODS: Yeah, I do. I have to play well. I have to earn my way to East Lake. I haven't done so yet, and need a big week this week in order to advance. If I don't, then I go home. This is a big week for me. I'm looking forward to getting out there and playing and competing.

This golf course is set up more like a U.S. Open than it is a regular TOUR event, but this is the Playoffs. It's supposed to be hard.

Last week I think might have been a little outlier because of the weather. The greens were soft and receptive, and the majority of the field went low and then DJ went absurdly low. That won't be the case this week. Pars will be at a premium, putting the ball in the fairway and trying to keep the ball in the correct spots.

The greens are quick, hard and firm for now. The weather is supposed to be really hot the next three days and maybe breaking Friday night. But until then this is going to be a very difficult golf course.

Q. With nine holes yesterday, 17 years since you've been here, how much of the course did you remember?

TIGER WOODS: Well, I probably remember maybe a couple shots from that Open. I went on YouTube and took a look at the golf course and the tournament setup but it looks completely different. There are a lot more trees, the tees have been pushed back 50 yards, 60 yards on some of the holes. It was a very different type of layout. Guys were hitting a lot of irons off the tees and putting the ball in play. It's going to be a little bit that way this week but we're further back.



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There are a few holes I noticed that -- in some of the conversations I've had with some of the guys that if you can carry the ball about 315, 320 and this golf course gets really, really opened up, but for me I can't quite carry it that far, so it'll be about putting the ball in play and playing from there.

Q. What type of course do you really look forward to playing? I'm not talking necessarily this week but just in general.

TIGER WOODS: I've always loved tree-lined fairways that are very simple, straightforward, classic golf courses that you -- you know, it's not all bulldozed and created. I think it's just more, like it's windows that we're playing through. I've always liked those. And I love links golf. Those are kind of my two favorite type of setups.

Q. Knowing that you likely have to finish top four to advance, does that change in any way your strategy going to the first tee on Thursday?

TIGER WOODS: I have to get the ball in play here and put the ball in the right spots. As I said to Doug, this golf course is set up more towards an Open than it is anything else, and with the weather supposed to be as hot as it is today and tomorrow and probably Friday, this rough is only going to get more difficult. The greens are going to be quick and hard. So we're all going to be playing right around the same time. But it's not a golf course which I feel like you can overpower with driver everywhere like we could last week. This is a totally different setup. As I said, there are a few holes if you can carry the ball 320 it's a big advantage.

Q. Jason Day talked to the Aussie press yesterday about talking to you about how not only to deal with back issues but how to deal with back issues involving your swing. Can you talk about that relationship that you've been having with Jason lately?

TIGER WOODS: Well, Jason and I have had a great relationship for a very long time, since he's been on TOUR, and yeah, we've talked about a number of things, and obviously one of the topics we do tend to talk about because we both have bad backs now and mine is a little bit more progressed than his, is trying to deal with it, trying to manage it, and the evolution of the swing. We can't do

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what we used to do, and how do you evolve that and still be effective. But also recovery from day-to-day. Recovery techniques have changed over the years, and lifting protocols have changed.

So that's a lot to do with it, but yeah, the swing does evolve, it does change. You can only swing the club how the body allows you to do, and I know that firsthand from all my nine previous procedures that I've had done to my body. It's just one of those things that as we age we wear things out.

Q. Can you envisage a time or do you remember a time where you wouldn't have essentially given as much advice in that scenario? You've obviously gotten older yourself and gotten much more helpful and he's very appreciative of what you've done for him so far.

TIGER WOODS: Yeah, that's a great question because when I first came out on TOUR I was so young. I was the only one that turned pro at 20. There was really no one out here for a number of years. I think that most of my -- I think pretty much until I was maybe 31 or 30 that I was the youngest one on a Ryder Cup team or a Presidents Cup team for a number of years until I think Charles Howell got on the team. All those years I was always the youngest, so I was always asking questions of all the guys that now are on the Champions Tour, the guys that I had played with and that I grew up with out here on TOUR. I was always the one asking the questions.

As time goes on, there was a little interim, but then I got hurt and I was out of the game for a number of years and now I'm on the back side where I'm on the receiving end of a lot of questions now that I've been out here long enough. That's just kind of the evolution of when you're out here for a little over 20 plus years now. This is a neat sport in which we cross many different generations, and I was able to when I first came out on TOUR be able to pick Seve's brain and Ollie's brain and Raymond's brain on shots and things of that nature, Jack, Arnold, Gary. I was always the one asking the questions, and now I've been out here and seen different generations go and move on, and now all of a sudden I'm on the receiving end.

Q. Do we expect too much now out of youngsters given how much success the young guys are having?

TIGER WOODS: What do you mean?

Q. I guess the wider public now sort of expects if you haven't won on TOUR by the time you're 25, which was unheard of until you came along, then they're not there yet, they might not have done enough. But of course

people can come along between 25 and 30 before their make their mark?

TIGER WOODS: Yeah, I absolutely agree. I think that because of technology and because of either YouTube or all the different technical devices that we can use to enhance our practices and our game that kids are better players at an earlier age. Granted, they don't know the golf courses as well, but now with technology and on the greens with all our charts and yardage books and greens books, basically you can come out here blind and not have to learn the ropes and come out here and win earlier. So I think just the average age of a winner is going to get younger and younger.

It has when I first came out, and it certainly has evolved into that.

Q. You've been coaching yourself for about three years now, and in that same period it looks like Charlie has gotten really into golf. I wonder as you play with Charlie if there are things you can apply from teaching golf to Charlie that you can apply to your own game?

TIGER WOODS: Yeah, there's a lot of different things that we do. We just have fun. The whole idea of us going out there and playing is for him to just enjoy, enjoy the game of golf. That's one of the things that I was lucky enough to have had with my dad. When we went out there we played and we practiced and we had just an incredible time together, and I just want Charlie to just enjoy it.

Q. Is he interlocking like you do?

TIGER WOODS: Yes, he does.

Q. You've spoken a lot recently about the new normal and adjusting to the new normal on the golf course. I wanted to ask you specifically about the Masters. Do you think that they've made the right decision continuing with the tournament in these strange times? Specifically there, how will the lack of galleries affect you because you and the crowds there have been pretty strongly linked for the last 20 plus years.

TIGER WOODS: Yeah, as far as them making the decision to play and have the event with no fans, that's what we're doing right now with the TOUR, with our restart. So that's just a continuation of what we had. We've been very fortunate to have had no real big incidents and outbreaks out here on TOUR, and we've had guys that have followed the isolation and have quarantined themselves and have got back out here effectively. So there's no reason we can't have the Masters.

Now, it's going to be very different without 40,000 people there. That's one of the things that we've noticed out here on TOUR already is that the experience of having to deal with the movement of the crowds and the noise, that's going to be -- and the roars aren't going to go up. Well, week in, week out, that's changed. Guys are making more birdies because of it, not having to deal with the amount of distractions.

Augusta will be very different. When I first went there and had a chance to play in '95 and seeing it with no fans, it was eye opening how much room there is. When you put 40,000 people on such a small piece of property, it gets -- I know there's no rough, but it gets confined. But this will be very different. This will be a fun Masters, and I'm looking forward to defending.

Q. Will it affect your defense at all, the lack of the galleries, the lack of the vibe and atmosphere that you're used to, or should it not make any difference to what you do inside the ropes?

TIGER WOODS: No, it's going to make a big difference to all of us. It has out here week in and week out. We just don't have the same type of energy, and as I said, the distractions, too, as well.

There at Augusta National you just have all those roars that would go up of somebody did something somewhere and then if you have -- obviously the pairings, we know who that would probably be, we're not going to have any of that now. So scoreboard watching and trying to figure out what's going on, there aren't a lot of big leaderboards out there, so that will be very different.

Q. Your own game, any of the struggles that you've had so far in these three tournaments you've played, have you found you've just had difficulty bringing it to the course, or have some of these issues been apparent in your practice?

TIGER WOODS: A little bit of both. I think that trying to get used to playing and competing again, that's been one of the things that I've been a little bit rusty in that regard. But also trying to -- one of the reasons why I've delayed it and not come back and played earlier is we just didn't know how the protocols were going to be and was our sport going to be safe to come out here or were we all going to get sick. So that in my mind is -- I've just now played enough tournaments to try to have an understanding and feel for what's going on. Hopefully I can get it going this week and get myself into the TOUR Championship next week. A lot of great memories there and have to play well this week.

Q. What do you make of what Phil is doing this week on the Champions Tour?

TIGER WOODS: Playing unbelievable golf. He said he's been close to playing well. Obviously he played well in Memphis. You know, I think that he was already one of the longer hitters out here, and now he goes to where he's going to pick up a huge advantage off the tee, but you have to take advantage of that opportunity off the tee. His wedge game is off the charts, as we all know, and getting every wedge in there he's going to put it inside of 10, 15 feet each and every time, hole those, get momentum and keeps it going, there's no reason why he can't win every event he plays out there. He's got such a big advantage over the rest of the field just with sheer length.

Q. It seems like everyone else judges your career in terms of victories, but for you personally how important is it to make the TOUR Championship every year?

TIGER WOODS: Well, to be part of the TOUR Championship is being a part of the top 30 guys. They've been the most consistent players throughout the entire year. That has certainly evolved with the FedExCup and you can get hot late and get yourself to the TOUR Championship. They've tried to adjust the system over a number of years and I think they've got it right, but if you look at the players from 1 to 30, they're the most consistent players throughout the entire year. Granted, some players have had more success towards the late part of the year, but most likely in order to get to East Lake you've got to be consistent, and in order to win the TOUR Championship and to win the FedExCup, it's about getting hot at the right time and right at the very end just like everybody else will.

Q. I know it's six years away, but do you see a future in which you would play the Champions Tour like Phil?

TIGER WOODS: Well, there was a time in which I didn't think I would play out here again, so I'm just enjoying what I have here, and that's six years away. That's a long time. I've only been back for a few years. Looking forward to just playing out here and being part of the guys out here.

Q. In '03 the Open certainly got some criticism. I don't know if so much from players but certainly from the media that the course didn't do all that great. Is there any sense that Olympia is a much stronger place than it was way back when?

TIGER WOODS: Oh, it did great. It held up great. There were a couple hot rounds. I think Jim and Vijay both shot 63. But you get calm conditions, the right setup and you get the right guys, of course someone is going to go low.

But there were only a handful of guys that ended up under par anyway. It was a U.S. Open; it's supposed to be hard. It's supposed to be tough. There was just one day where a couple players went nuts. So what. But over the course of the entire week, the course panned out. It played hard, it played difficult, and this course evened out.

I think this year the rough is up again. There's six, seven inches in spots, and it's gnarly and if we happen to get the weather we're supposed to get Friday night and then if it gets wet, you'd better hit the ball in the fairway, but the greens right now are getting baked out, which as you know mid-90s the next couple days. They're hand watering the greens trying to keep them alive and keep them right on the edge, right where they should be.

AMANDA HERRINGTON: Tiger, thank you for your time today. Best of luck this week.

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