

TOUR Championship

Thursday, September 3, 2020

Atlanta, Georgia, USA

East Lake Golf Club

Kevin Kisner

Press Conference

LAURA VESCOVI: Thanks for joining us here, Kevin. Welcome back to the TOUR Championship. We'll go ahead and get started. We're glad to have you back. With a tie for 4th place at the Northern Trust a couple weeks ago you moved into the top 30 of the FedExCup standings, earning your fifth career appearance here at the TOUR Championship.

Talk about your excitement to be back at East Lake for the finale event.

KEVIN KISNER: Obviously every year to start the year the goal is to get to East Lake, and without being at East Lake you don't have a chance to win the FedExCup. Five out of the last six has been a great run. The one year I missed, you don't want to be sitting at home watching this event, so I'm excited to be here. I'm hoping to continue the trend for years to come, and having a chance to win the FedExCup is the biggest goal of the year.

LAURA VESCOVI: You serve as a player director for the PGA TOUR policy board. You've been a part of many discussions during the return to golf, both before and during.

Can you talk about your experience with that and the gratifying experience that it might be?

KEVIN KISNER: Gratifying? I don't know if it's that -- I'm just kidding. This was my first year. I don't think anybody saw what was going to happen, come, but it's been a long time, a lot of talks, a lot of efforts to get us back to the return to golf.

I think the first thing that we can do is just applaud the PGA TOUR for what they've done, what they've pulled off, how quickly we returned to golf, how we kept our sponsors on tap and basically in line to continue playing.

For us to continue to play for the same amount of money that we have in weird times, no spectators, no hospitality, has been phenomenal.



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I think first-class run organization, starting with the top with Jay Monahan. His leadership led us to this point. I think we've done a remarkable job with the testing protocols, all the new protocols, and to be here at East Lake to give away that big silver trophy on Monday is going to be kind of the big sigh of relief from all of us that worked so hard to get to this point.

Q. If you can, take me back to that week after THE PLAYERS Championship. How much work was involved to get that plan together and how many hours did you spend on the phone and in Zoom meetings?

KEVIN KISNER: Well, I don't know if I could tell you the exact amount of time, but it sure felt like about a million. I told Jay he owed me a few new iPhones because battery was dying so often from being on the phone so much.

They did a remarkable job, like I said. I can't tell you the first meeting or the first phone call we had, but I think it was probably that next week. And I don't think any of us knew where we were headed at that point, but we knew we weren't going to play for at least a little while.

As things progressed and we knew we were going to have to come back to a different way of life on the PGA TOUR, the calls ramped up, the amount of time that we spent on the phone was longer, and I guess we had so many different aspects we had to go through. We had to go through membership, we had to go through schedule. We had to go to new COVID-19 protocols, and we all had to come up with an agreement on how we were going to do things.

Between -- we basically made Charley Hoffman another board member during this whole time because we needed more hands on deck. He's the PAC chairman for this year. When we would come to an agreement we would take it back to the PAC that had 16 guys on it and display it in front of them and take their feedback, and then try to go back and monitor it. Or adjust it. And then see if we could all come to an agreement.

It was really a remarkable job done by all in a short amount of time, and the fact that we teed it up in June I think is something that is nothing short of a miracle, and I just applaud everybody that was a part of it.

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Q. Are you surprised you've been able to get this far considering other sports leagues have had work stoppages, can't come to agreements? Are you surprised we got this far?

KEVIN KISNER: There were times, yeah, for sure, that I wasn't sure how far we were going to get. There were times that we didn't know -- nobody knows, right? And one of the things you've got to figure out on the fly is what's going to happen when.

We never set a set number if we had a big outbreak, are we going to shut it down, but we knew that if it ever became unsafe we weren't going to move forward with that tournament.

We've done an awesome job. We tried to be as safe as possible, and the biggest thing is we didn't want to affect the integrity of the competition, and I think they've done a remarkable job.

I remember the first meeting with the protocols that they put in front of us. I don't think they got past slide two before we said, Nope, we're not doing that. There were a lot of discussions, a lot of heated discussions on how we were going to go about doing things that would not affect the competition, and the cool thing about the PGA TOUR is every player is different. We don't have a union or a player representative or a big lawyer out there that's going to tell us exactly what we're going to do.

It's the players and the TOUR working together to come up with the best solution. I mean, every time we came up with an idea they came up with a solution for us, and I thought it was a great plan, and they're doing a tremendous job.

Q. Along those same lines, what kind of discussions are you guys having -- we know pro-ams are coming back in a few weeks. What kind of discussions are you guys having about getting spectators back even in a limited capacity? What do you think it's going to take?

KEVIN KISNER: I think we will transition to spectators as soon as we feel like we have a good plan that the players are comfortable with. We need the fans back. Without the fans, the tournaments aren't the same. The revenues aren't the same. We need them back. All of us want to play in front of fans. We appreciate the buzz that the fans create. We appreciate having people applauding for our golf shots other than the one or two volunteers on a hole.

I think the start of the new year we'll probably transition into trying something. Obviously it takes time. And what we've done with this pro-am thing is we started on the Champions Tour and the Korn Ferry TOUR to test it, and

maybe we'll test some fans out there to see how the protocol works. I think we'll start with a very limited number and transition from there.

As we've seen throughout this whole process, each week we've adapted to the new guidelines and the new ways of the TOUR, and we just ease into each thing and hopefully return to normal as soon as possible.

Q. When you say "comfortable," what do you think that entails? Does that mean you'd like to see the rapid testing be available for spectators that's seemingly coming on board, or is it something less than that?

KEVIN KISNER: I would not think that we would be at a point that we'd have to test every spectator, but I think what we would do change the way the rope lines work to limit contact, and have way more volunteers that maybe were tested to help us limit the contact.

You know, it's not -- if you listen to the CDC, if they're not within six feet you shouldn't have an issue, right? So as long as we stay away from each other, we wear our masks when we're inside, we have the safest environment in the world to play our sport, and we can come up with a way to keep people away from us and people to be entertained.

I think we can move in that direction soon.

Q. I was wondering, from tee to green what makes the par-5, 18th, here at East Lake a unique closing hole?

KEVIN KISNER: I think one of the coolest things that I don't get to be a part of that often is the massive downslope at about 295 yards off the tee that my ball just barley get to and never creeps over unless I'm downwind.

It's a great finishing hole because it's a difficult tee shot. But if you hit it down the middle you can be rewarded by that downslope and get it down there close to the water and have an iron into a green.

I think there's no -- probably the best decision the TOUR has made is switching those nines for this FedExCup finale and having a chance for an eagle or a bogey and everything in between to decide the championship. I think there's just a great hole to finish the entire year on.

Q. Not really related, but I saw your video at Pinehurst with the Bar Stool Guys. I was just wondering in this varied TOUR event with Dustin Johnson starting at 10-under, with the four-player scramble, how much would they need to start out at to win this tournament?

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KEVIN KISNER: That's a good question. I would say they would have to start at 20.

Q. I'm sure you've noted that 10 percent of this field is Georgia Bulldogs. What are your thoughts about that, and is there part of you that will be disappointed that there won't be any barking on the other side of the gallery ropes this week?

KEVIN KISNER: Did you also research how many people from Georgia Tech are in the event?

Q. I did, and it would be zero.

KEVIN KISNER: (Laughing).

Q. Does that make you happy, as well?

KEVIN KISNER: I saw Harris English's quote this morning and I thought it was hilarious. Every year that I've been here we've had multiple Georgia Bulldog players from the school here. It's just a testament to the program and how many great players have been through there and how many guys we have on the PGA TOUR that are still succeeding.

The coolest part of this event is coming here and having that support, and that's what I -- I just finished a Zoom pro-am and told the guys that's going to be one of the biggest disappointments of the week is not having fans barking and screaming, "Go Dawgs" every time I hit a good shot or make a birdie.

It's going to be a quiet week here. Hopefully we can run around here and have a chance to win, and we'll do a lot of celebrating in Athens this fall at a football game.

Q. I don't know if you've had a chance to talk to your fellow Dawgs here at all. Has there been more discussion about golf or who's going to play quarterback?

KEVIN KISNER: The Jamie Newman saga.

Q. That's been it?

KEVIN KISNER: There's been plenty of text messages. I haven't run into B-Todd or Harry this week yet, but plenty of text messages asking what's going on around there. But there's a reason we brought in a guy from California.

Q. Does being on the policy board and the time you put into it, does that get you out of any virtual pro-ams?

KEVIN KISNER: Not yet. I'm still begging.

Q. We had a pretty good start to this thing last year, but two scenarios that Leishman, for example, thinks one of these days you're going to get someone from the 26-30 spot that's going to win this thing. The other alternative might be someone who turns it into a snoozer. Which is more likely to happen first?

KEVIN KISNER: 26 to 30.

Q. Before the snoozer? Why do you say that?

KEVIN KISNER: There's just too many good players in that 6 to 8 range, and that shot deficit is too easy to make up, but I don't think we'll ever get to a point that -- DJ could shoot 9-under tomorrow and run away and it would be a total snoozer, but I just think there's too many good players near the top that are not far enough away to run away, but 10 shots is surmountable over four days if somebody gets really hot.

LAURA VESCOVI: We'll let you go, Kevin. Thanks for joining us. Good luck this week.

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