

TOUR Championship

Wednesday, September 1, 2021

Atlanta, Georgia, USA

East Lake Golf Club

Patrick Cantlay

Press Conference

THE MODERATOR: Congratulations on your victory last week. Great playing. Just talk about coming in here with a two-shot advantage, No. 1. It's like you got a target on you right now. What does that feel like coming in here with a two-shot advantage before the tournament's even started?

PATRICK CANTLAY: Yeah, I think that it's, first of all, I think it's different than almost any other golf tournament you could possibly play in. I don't know another format even remotely close to this. So I'm going to do my best to throw that out the window and try and treat it like any other golf tournament because at the end of the day the best chance for me succeeding is shooting the lowest score possible. So that's what I'm going to go out and do and I'm just going to put all my focus and attention on that.

THE MODERATOR: This is your fourth start here at the East Lake. Top-20th is your best finish in those previous three starts. What have you learned in those three starts about East Lake that you can put into practice this week to give you a foot in the door and a head up.

PATRICK CANTLAY: I think controlling your golf ball out here is really important and I think leaving the golf ball below the hole because the greens are very fast and undulated, so that gives you a chance to be aggressive with some of your looks.

I think hitting the ball in the fairway is really important out here because the rough being Bermuda and being long it gets really hard to leave your golf ball in the right spot if you get off track and you hit it in the rough. So I think controlling your golf ball and staying below the hole and hitting a bunch of fairways is a recipe for success around this golf course.

THE MODERATOR: Questions.

Q. Good to have you here. What have you found to be the carryover week-to-week in golf? How much can you carry over from your performance last week to here, do you think?



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PATRICK CANTLAY: I think, well, that's an interesting question. You say carry over from week-to-week. I mean, it could be a bad week. It could be a great week. It could be an average week. I think it has a little bit of an affect. I think if you can get some momentum and you get on a roll, I think that can really help. I feel like I'm in a comfortable spot with my game where I don't need to tinker. I don't need to work on anything extra hard this week. I just need to get fresh and ready and do my standard routine to prep for a golf tournament and the results should take care of themselves.

I think after a big week like that, I think, though maybe the number one thing that people don't think about is it's very tiring to have, to be close to the lead for four days in a row, and so, especially with an extra playoff where it was just your adrenaline is running as hard as it can, being able to give yourself enough time to rest and relax after that is really important. I think the energy is maybe the biggest thing after a win to come back, tee it up on Thursday with the same type of intensity.

Q. I think you said on Sunday that you had never heard the Paddy Ice thing before last week. Do you like it and have you ever had a nickname for any reason?

PATRICK CANTLAY: I've had people tell me that it's hard to come up with a nickname for me. This is the first one that seems to have stuck a little bit before this. Before this, the only thing I'd ever get is PC. I like it. I think it's great. I think it's cool when people are getting to know me a little bit and that maybe this moniker maybe has some traction because it maybe rings true.

So I think it's great and I think having the support of everybody last week was awesome, and I could feel it. It was palpable. I felt like everyone was on my side and they were really pushing for me to get it done. So I might need some help out there from those people to maybe make a logo or something. I need to maybe figure something to do with that, who knows, but I feel like it's great and I feel like having people on your side is a great thing.

Q. Nice use of moniker by the way. That was good. It seems like there are a select few golfers who when they have a chance to make a huge putt really relish the moment. Obviously, it's possible to react with fear

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to that moment. You do have that kind of flat affect on the course, but is there a part of you that gets excited? Like, in the playoffs last week when you had a chance to kind of sink a dagger, do you sort of get jazzed up for that?

PATRICK CANTLAY: Yeah. I think it's the reason why I play golf. I think it's the reason why a lot of guys play golf. Being in that moment is exactly why I prepared and practiced the way I have my whole life. I think golf, in a weird way, you may only get so many moments like that to make putts when they really matter and it's something that I enjoy immensely. I think I felt it, you only get so many opportunities. I had it in Presidents Cup a little bit when we were trailing on the second day and I had a putt on 18 to win the match with Xander. I've had some of those moments at Memorial on the 18th hole. So that's like the most fun part of golf for me of the.

Q. Everybody talks about, including yourself, trying to focus on your own business and do your own thing, but getting in that situation with Bryson on that last hole, are you aware that, yeah, he's closer than me, but I can completely change the tenor of this situation by making this putt? In other words, are you aware of the situation to him too?

PATRICK CANTLAY: I think inherently, obviously, yes. Yes, I know that's the situation that I'm in. It's a very match play situation. But it doesn't enter my brain for one second. I mean, I'm so locked in on knowing -- I already know that I got to try and make this putt, right? So, like, I'm just locked in. I'm already pass all that other stuff. I'm trying as hard as I can to take in as much information as possible on where I need to roll this putt and the energy it's going to take to get it to go on the right line, and I am focused with every ounce of energy I have into doing that. So all the potential outcomes of that are very secondary. They don't tend to enter my brain when I'm in a moment like that.

Q. Now that you've had a couple days removed, when you think about last week, what's the enduring image or feeling that comes to mind?

PATRICK CANTLAY: I think if I could bottle up how I felt with the putter, that would be very, very good for me. I think the more times you can put yourself in a pressure situation and then you're able to come through, I think the more you're going to feel like you're going to be able to reproduce that.

So getting on the right side of that and getting some momentum for that feeling and feeling like when the chips are down, you're going to come through, I think that's invaluable in golf. So that feeling that I get and that

confidence that I had in being able to come through in that moment, I would like to carry that with me and really draw on that when I get, when I find myself in a similar scenario.

Q. Is there a favorite shot that you hit, I guess besides the final putt?

PATRICK CANTLAY: I mean, obviously, the putt to tie in regulation was very satisfying. The putts on 16 and 17, too, to keep myself in it, when it felt like just one miss there and it would be over, I mean, those were also very satisfying. I think like I said, when you can produce results when the chips are down, that is the best part of golf.

Q. Out of sheer curiosity, when you make that putt in regulation, as this relates to match play, what part of you expected Bryson to make his in regulation?

PATRICK CANTLAY: A lot, more than 50 percent of me, just because that's kind of how the tenor of the day went. Up until that point he had been making lots of putts, I thought. He made a great putt on 16. So it was, just kind of felt how the day was going, and up until that point, I realized that I needed to make every putt to even have a chance, and so I wasn't going to get more ahead of myself than the moment would allow. So I expected him to make it.

Q. I heard from a number of guys over the years that the sting of a bad loss can sometimes last longer than the joy of winning. How do you feel about that? And related to that, are you the type that's more prone to think more about the clutch putts you've made or some of the big ones you've missed? Good luck with that.

PATRICK CANTLAY: Yeah, I think that depends on the day, to be perfectly honest. There's days where still I think about shots that I should have hit differently or would have liked to have hit differently throughout my career. But that maybe is the interesting or fun part of golf is that you don't necessarily get to do it again and being able to live with that one way or the other, I think, is really key for longevity and continued success in this game, because if you do it enough and you play enough golf and you play enough pressure golf, you're going to hit some great shots, you're going to hit some bad shots.

And so being able to accept that beforehand I think actually makes it easier to hit better shots because you realize that you're not going to be able to be Tiger all the time in majors like he was until Y.E. Yang came along. I mean, he was maybe the most prime example of somebody that I felt like he was invincible. I mean, for every other golfer that's ever played the game, including Nicklaus, they don't have that,

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they never had that feeling. They felt like, sometimes I'm going to get it done, sometimes I'm not, and I think that's reality for most everybody.

Q. Do you look at this playoff run at all as being a chance for the world to get to know you a little better and get to know maybe an under-appreciated game? Is that important to you?

PATRICK CANTLAY: Winning is important to me and playing well is really important to me. I think with that, if I can be myself, I think people will gravitate towards you, if you are being yourself, even if it's different. And so I may not be the cookie cutter golfer. I may not look or have the same expressions as everybody else, but I think if I'm true to myself and I just act naturally for me, it will come across that I'm being natural, and if I play well and am myself, I think it will all work out.

So I think I don't get too caught up in under-appreciated or unsung or things like that. I don't think it helps. And so I think it does help to practice and focus as much as I can to produce the best golf I possibly can. And other than that, I'm just going to be myself and people may like me and people may not like me and I hope more people like me than not, but I'm still going to be myself.

Q. Rory mentioned that he was talking, I asked a little bit about Bryson and he said he felt sympathy for him. Having been, having played alongside him last week, just wondering what you feel.

PATRICK CANTLAY: I think it's a tough situation. I think, naturally, of course there is some sympathy because you don't want to see anybody have a bunch of people be against you or even be heckled. I think anybody that watches sports and sees someone being heckled, they don't like that inherently because if you imagine yourself as that person, it wouldn't feel good.

I think, unfortunately, it might be a symptom of a larger problem, which is social media driven and which is potentially Player Impact Program derived. I think when you have people that go for attention-seeking maneuvers, you leave yourself potentially open to having the wrong type of attention, and I think maybe that's where we're at and it may be a symptom of going for too much attention.

But it can be awesome too because if you succeed and you act perfect all the time and you do the perfect things all the time, and then you also go for the right attention-seeking moves, you get like double bonus points because everyone loves you and you're on the perfect side of it. I think it's just a very live by the sword, die by the sword type of deal. And when you leave it to a jury, you

don't know what's going to happen. So it's hard to get all 12 people on a jury on your side.

And if you're playing professional golf on the stage that you're playing on and 98 percent of the people are pulling for you and there are 10,000 people on the green, I don't know, what does that leave, 20 people that don't like you, even if 98 percent of the people like you? And if those 20 people have had enough to drink or feel emboldened enough to say something because they want to impress the girl they're standing next to, then, yeah, like, you're in trouble. Like, people are going to say bad things.

Golf, unfortunately, doesn't and probably shouldn't tolerate that. I think there's a respect level in golf and there's intimacy that the fans can get so, so close to you, and you're also all by yourself, and you don't have the armor of putting on Yankee pinstripes, and you don't have the armor of having, knowing that if you're on the Yankees and people hate you and you're playing in Boston, you can tolerate it for three hours in right field. But you only tolerate it because you know next week or on Friday you're going to show up and you're going to be in Yankee Stadium and no matter what you do, even if you fall on your face, you're going to have the pinstripe armor on and people are going to love you.

So golf is different in that respect, that if you only have 2 percent of the people that are very against you because you're polarizing and because you're attention-seeking, then you're kind of dead because those people are going to be loud, and they're going to want to say something to get under your skin.

And I think golf shouldn't let that happen. I think the Masters is a great example of a place that doesn't let that happen, and it's the greatest place to watch and play professional golf because of the atmosphere they create. I think if you look at the history of the game and you look at the respect that underlies the entirety of the history of the game, we shouldn't tolerate it, and we shouldn't celebrate that. We should celebrate the fan that is respectful and pulls for their side.

So it's a tough situation. It's a tough topic, but that would be my take on it and I'm sure it's not perfect, but after thinking about it a little bit, it's the best I can come up with.

Q. I thought you were reading from a script there. You actually made that up off the top of your head?

PATRICK CANTLAY: I'm looking around here. I don't see any prompters.

Q. I had one question, but the answer made me think

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of two others. What is it about either people or golfers that we tend to hear and embrace negative more than the positive? When you're talking about those 20 drunks, why do we, why do they stand out more?

PATRICK CANTLAY: Maybe people have watched too much Happy Gilmore and they don't feel enough sympathy for Shooter McGavin. I don't know. I don't know the answer.

I think the intimacy of it. I mean, no other sport can a person with your standard quote/unquote bleachers pass get right up to you where they can give you a fist bump. In no other sport can you do that. In golf, that's the great part about golf. You can do that. If you camp out all day, by a certainty, you can watch anybody in the game 4 or 5 feet. That's awesome.

But if you're one of those 2 percent or 1 percent of people that want to cause disruption and yell in your back swing or say the wrong thing and try and get under your skin, you can also do that and I think we got to try our best to mitigate that.

Q. It sounded from the very start of your comments that your focus is on playing good golf and shooting a good score and all that stuff. But I'm curious about something Rahm said a couple weeks ago that when they make the analogy of, Patriots can go 18-0 and still not win the Super Bowl, his answer was, Yeah, but they still finish second. And I'm curious what you still think of that and is there any part of you that is still annoyed about what happened two years ago?

PATRICK CANTLAY: I think, frankly, it's not a good format. I think it's obvious why they went to the format because the previous format was confusing. I think this format is less confusing. But I don't think it's a good format. I dislike the fact that we no longer have a TOUR Champion. So I dislike the fact that no one knows, when they look at the leaderboard, who shot the lowest round this week. I think the fact that Xander didn't get a tournament win for beating the field by two or three shots is absolutely criminal, not just because he's my friend, but I think that if that happened to anybody that would be criminal. And there has to be a better solution. I am not a mastermind on golf formats and there are lots of moving parts, so I'm not saying that I have the answer, there are lots of smart people and I guarantee you there must be an option for a better format out there than the current one we are playing in.

With that said, I am going to do the best possible job I can at winning in this format because that's all I can do. And in no way will that take, impact my ability to perform in this

format. I think if you play the best golf this week, you're going to be in a great spot by the end of the week.

Q. What's your PIP rating by the way? Do you know? Do you guys have access to look at it?

PATRICK CANTLAY: I don't know.

Q. Do they tell you?

PATRICK CANTLAY: I don't know. I got to be honest, I doubt I'm doing very well in that category. If I were to win any portion of the 10, I would let you know that I win in that 10 and I would be compelled to give all that money back to the fans that made it possible, because there's no way a person like me should be able to get into the top 10 of the PIP if not for people out there deciding that they want me to be in the top 10 and to try to get some of that PIP money for themselves. Because I, if I win PIP money, I am going to give it back to the people that made it possible in some way, shape or form. I won't take any of the PIP money. I think it's kind of ridiculous and I think it's, when I said there's a symptom of a larger problem, I think that's exactly what I'm talking about.

THE MODERATOR: All right. Thank you.

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