

Sanderson Farms Championship

Wednesday, September 28, 2022

Jackson, Mississippi, USA

Country Club of Jackson

Davis Riley

Press Conference

JOHN BUSH: We'd like to welcome Davis Riley into the interview room here at the Sanderson Farms Championship. Native of Mississippi, making your fourth start at this event. I know this one means a lot to you. If we can get some comments.

DAVIS RILEY: Yeah, anytime I can get close to home and be back in Mississippi, it's special. Sanderson Farms was one of the first tournaments that I got one of my first PGA starts at, so it's always had a special place in my heart, and this is my fifth major, so it's definitely one I've had chalked up on the calendar and would have liked to have a chance to win at one day.

JOHN BUSH: Coming off an outstanding rookie season, almost making it to the TOUR Championship, which I know was one of your goals. Just talk about the season you had and also your expectations for this year.

DAVIS RILEY: Sure, yeah. I didn't get off to the, I guess, ideal start on my rookie year. I missed my first two cuts. That was kind of tough.

Yeah, I started just getting better and better each week, and I started getting more and more comfortable, started to make a nice run there at the end of March leading through the end of the summer, so that definitely gave me a lot of confidence just getting up there.

That's one of those things I knew I could always do in the back of my head, but to have a chance to do it and for that to come to fruition was another thing, so that gave me a lot of confidence there at the Valspar. I feel like I really turned the page there, and having a chance to win that tournament was awesome, and then having multiple times after that was pretty special.

I just tried to keep riding the momentum and get over to East Lake, and that was a little disappointing, but as a year, a rookie year, it was pretty solid.



SANDERSON FARMS CHAMPIONSHIP

JOHN BUSH: You just came off the golf course a little while ago. This course is always in great condition. The greens are outstanding. If we can get some comments on this year's conditions.

DAVIS RILEY: Sure, and I'll bet you could walk across that whole putting green and ask guys about this course and they'll tell you some of the best greens all year. It's an awesome place.

I've been fortunate -- I grew up right down the road and played a good many high school events here and have a level of familiarity there, and no, it's -- finally playing a full season on TOUR, I would say this is definitely one of the best stops all year. The course is awesome, and obviously being a hometown kid, just having some crowds out there and a little extra noise and a little extra weight out there is really fun to be a part of.

Q. From your high school memories here, do you have a favorite memory from playing here in high school, and any idea what your lowest score might have been, anything that sticks out?

DAVIS RILEY: Yeah, so I played -- I'm trying to think. We played regionals or the state -- I think it was regionals here. We actually won regionals here one year. I believe I won once or twice out here. I think we probably played five or six times out here, so I know I won a couple times out here.

Yeah, as far as the lowest score, I don't know if I could tell you. Probably around 67 might have been my lowest. I actually started my high school golf career when I was seven, so for the first couple years, this place was a pretty long golf course for me. I remember I was sixth, seventh grade just pulling out 3-woods all day from the fairway. It was a fun place to play.

Q. When you were seven years old?

DAVIS RILEY: No, sixth and seventh grade, so it was fun. I played a bunch of times out here, and obviously when I was about this high I played a lot. It was a tough test back then and still is.

Q. Were there any par-4s you couldn't reach in two at the time?

DAVIS RILEY: Ooh, I'm trying to think. I'll bet -- I couldn't tell you actually, but I feel like 16 probably would have been a tough one for me. It's a 3-wood, 7-iron now. It was probably driver, head cover for me back then. That's one that would probably come to my head.

Q. You referenced this as the fifth major for you. Can you explain why that is and the feeling of what it means to come back and play in Mississippi in your home state and have that experience?

DAVIS RILEY: Yeah, for sure. I mean, growing up an hour and 15, hour and a half from here and spending so much time here, just playing whether it's high school events or just having friends here just playing, it was definitely something special.

I know I will have a bunch of friends out and a bunch of family. Like you said, yeah, it definitely is a special tournament. Just anytime you can play in front of a home crowd and your family is really special.

There's definitely a little extra motivation there to do well, and that's part of it, too. You just don't want to put too much pressure on yourself, but you do want to perform. I think that's the biggest thing is just taking it day by day and trying to ride some of that hometown momentum a little bit.

Q. Being from here it may be a little bit different, but you guys travel around so much. Do you pay attention to what's going on in individual cities? I know the city of Jackson has been through a rough past month with the water issue.

DAVIS RILEY: Not too terribly much just other than I have family here, so they've kind of kept me up to date on what's been going on around here with the water and stuff. I know it's been a tough time, but it looks like they're kind of moving in the right direction. It's getting better.

Yeah, like you said, we travel so much, and you kind of lose track of time a little bit. You're just traveling and going city to city and state to state and just traveling so much. It's kind of hard to sit back and just kind of realize what's going on with everything else.

But other than just having family here filling me in, I haven't been too familiar with what's been going on.

Q. Thinking about the BMW and coming down the stretch and having a chance to make the TOUR Championship, what's that like inside the ropes

mentally? Do you calculate what you might need or think about that and just that whole vibe in general? What is that like?

DAVIS RILEY: Sure. Yeah, I knew kind of exactly what I needed to do in Delaware. It's one of those things just because I was in a spot where I didn't have to win to make it so it's almost like when you think about that too much, you're like, I've got to finish 15th, I've got to finish 10th. If you do that too much, you find yourself kind of finishing there. So it's kind of just treating it like any other tournament, just trying to perform the best you can every hole or every day and try to win the golf tournament.

I actually played some solid -- I just got off to a terrible start the first day. That was nothing other than just it was a bad day. Every year, I'm sure every player can tell you, you have a handful of rounds that just absolutely don't go your way and you get bad breaks, and it was unfortunate that day came at the BMW. But I followed it up with two really good days. I think I did a couple under or handful under the next two days which got me back in it to have a legitimate chance on Sunday and just had an okay day Sunday which kept me out of it.

Yeah, when it's a goal of yours at the beginning of the year to make the TOUR Championship and just have that, you are nervous. You're thinking about you want to do it so bad and you're kind of right on the doorstep of one of your biggest goals.

Yeah, I feel like me and my caddie lance did a good job of trying to take care of the task at hand, and I can say that I gave it my all and unfortunately came up short. Good thing there's always next year.

Q. We were talking just before coming out that you said you followed a little bit of the Korn Ferry TOUR Championship this year.

DAVIS RILEY: Yes, yes, I tuned in whenever I could. I remember watching some of the guys, and I remember watching Evansville -- I believe Justin Suh won there, right? And just watching them finish up and stuff. Yeah, I did.

Q. What type of memories does that bring back, kind of following the KFT and the numbers and the status and all that stuff?

DAVIS RILEY: Yeah, yeah. I was fortunate -- well, we had the COVID year, so when I finished up we had played 40-some-odd events. I was lucky enough to get off to that really good -- I won twice in 2020, had an okay year in 2021. I was kind of always -- I felt like I was in the safe

zone a little bit, so I wasn't one of the guys that was having to grind it out, which was kind of nice.

But it's always cool -- you're still nervous because the number is so important, as well, where you finish on that priority list for when you come out here for guaranteed starts.

It's nerve-racking, and Evansville is a very intimidating golf course, and at that event you're going to get the best players rise to the top because it's one of the toughest courses all year and it's very demanding and you can't just sit still and relax on any shot out there.

When you see the guy clutch up there towards the end, it's really fun to watch.

I'm just thinking right now, there's so many of those shots that I'm just nervous thinking about out there at Evansville. The island green on 16, 17, 18 is one of the best finishes all year.

Q. Did you watch any of the Presidents Cup or follow any of that at all?

DAVIS RILEY: No, I followed the results. To be honest with you, I watched a handful of shots. I didn't watch too much of it. I was kind of back here playing golf, hanging out with friends. I was just busy -- nothing other than busy doing other things. But I did keep up with the results, so I know the USA obviously won, but they got off to a hot start and the Internationals fighting back and just seeing some of those finishing putts and stuff and guys winning matches on Instagram videos of the TOUR posts are really cool to watch. It's something I want to be a part of one day, and like you said, it's hard to watch some of your friends do it, and it motivates you even more.

But it was cool.

JOHN BUSH: Davis, thank you for your time. Best of luck this week.

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