

# THE PLAYERS Championship

Tuesday, March 9, 2021

Ponte Vedra Beach, Florida, USA

TPC Sawgrass

## Webb Simpson

### Press Conference

RACHEL NOBLE: We'd like to welcome Webb Simpson to the interview room here at THE PLAYERS Championship. Webb is the 2018 PLAYERS Championship winner, making his 11th start at the event. Coming into the week, four top 10s this season on TOUR and world No. 10. Just some opening comments on this week and the challenge this worse presents.

WEBB SIMPSON: Yeah, I love coming here. I obviously have for a long time. Never really had success here until maybe 2016, 2017 I started playing this golf course better, and I think I just learned that you have to respect the golf course. There's trouble on every hole. You can try to pin the tail on the donkey, but eventually you're going to get kicked in the teeth.

Eventually broke through in 2018 and played great golf.

I love the feeling I have around this golf course. I'm a thinker. I like plotting my way around and you've really got to do that here. I just played nine holes and the course is in as good of shape as any course I've ever played. Really excited for this year's tournament and the conditions we're going to see.

**Q. Just looking back at kind of the last year's bizarre experience on TOUR, is there some optimism among the guys, this is kind of where it all ground to a halt last year for you guys, and is there optimism that this week at the same place it can kind of be a step back towards normalcy with the biggest crowds expected to date and that sort of thing?**

WEBB SIMPSON: Yeah, so many memories are already flooding back from last year. We've gotten in a nice rhythm since Charles Schwab Championship in June, and so we feel like it's kind of getting back to normal for us players with the exception of the crowds. But yeah, being back here, my rental house, same house I stayed in last year, driving there was a little weird. Just thinking back about kind of the announcement Thursday night last year and the panic with grocery stores and the whole world really, seemed like March 13th kind of went into hiding.



It feels -- it's wild to me it's been a year and a very tough, long year for a lot of people.

But so happy to see fans out there. I feel like everybody is just in a lot better place now that we're seeing fans, and the feeling is we're getting -- the world is getting closer back to what we're used to, what's normal for us.

**Q. Watching what Bryson has done to golf courses, like at Bay Hill, him almost driving the 6th hole, your game isn't quite in that league, but you have been able to do a lot of things successfully on a golf course. How do you adjust? Does he influence what you do or do you just have to do your own thing?**

WEBB SIMPSON: No, we always want to get longer as players, but I have to remember my strengths and what got me to be a top-10 player in the world, and so if I get too far away from focusing on those strengths, then I feel like I'll go backwards.

He's been able to do I think what a lot of people really can't do. Sure, he's worked his tail off, absolutely, and I have so much respect for him. But I think he's been able to devote more time to it than someone like me with a wife and five kids. Obviously it doesn't take away from what he's done, but my goals in golf -- I'm not thinking I want to hit it 30, 40, 50 yards further, just because I feel like the time that would take would be too much for me.

I've got to stay focused kind of in my lane and keep playing golf the way I know how to play.

**Q. Outside of fans, which everyone talks about that they look forward to the fans coming back, what part of TOUR golf do you miss the most, and what part would you love to see return to normal? Fans don't count, and neither does your wife or your five kids.**

WEBB SIMPSON: You mean now that we're playing golf in a COVID era?

**Q. Yeah, in terms of getting past that. It could be anything. It could be player dining, it could be whatever.**



WEBB SIMPSON: I understand. I think the testing -- the masks don't bother me, but the testing, it has taken -- they've done a great job, but it has altered my travel schedule. I'm currently under like the exempt list because I tested positive in December, but when I was testing every week, I mean, you would go get tested, wait an hour or two before you could go on-site. It would change my travel days sometimes by a full day because before I'd fly out Tuesday, get in, have enough time to do everything, but now it's really hard to do that on Tuesday and test. That would probably be the thing I'm most excited about getting rid of is the testing.

**Q. As we come back to this, is there any sense of feeling that it's kind of, mission accomplished, that the worst is behind us and not falling into a trap of thinking it's all guns forward from here?**

WEBB SIMPSON: Yeah, you know, I was thinking that yesterday leaving the golf course, that I was wondering if we have another virus that comes our way, will we react the same way? Probably not as extreme as a nation, each country, but I feel like it's kind of an unknown. Like what could come could be just as deadly and harmful, so what will we do. But it seems like we've learned so much on how to do it and how to continue to play golf at least through a pandemic.

But it does -- the sense I feel is that we wouldn't have to return to no golf for three months ever again. At least I hope not.

**Q. Where do you stand on the Olympics?**

WEBB SIMPSON: Oh, that's a tough one. I think it would be an honor to represent the country. Nothing against the Olympics, but I'm personally more interested in trying to win majors, THE PLAYERS Championship, the FedExCup than be a medalist in the Olympics. Part of it is exciting for me, but the thought of going halfway around the world for that timeframe in that part of our season is really tough for me to swallow.

I haven't made any kind of mental decisions yet, but it would be a hard one for me to go to, knowing what's at stake here on the PGA TOUR.

**Q. What would sway your feelings one way or the other more, if the Olympics had been played in like Canada or Mexico City in terms of location, or proximity, I guess, or the fact that if you would go to the Olympics you couldn't go to any other venue because of the restrictions?**

WEBB SIMPSON: Yeah, more so what you said at first. I

think the travel is what's getting me because we build our season around three championships for the FedExCup, and that part of the season is already hard for me because we have WGC Memphis, I played Wyndham, and so it would be hard for me to put that much effort into going to Japan. I feel like it would really shoot me in the foot for the Playoffs, and right now in my career, Playoffs are more important to me than the Olympics.

**Q. There might be as many as 10,000 fans here this week. On Sunday if you're in the final group, they all might be on one hole, and while you personally might have immunity, do you understand how a player might have some concerns, or if you didn't have a sense of immunity would you have concerns if you hit one sideways and know you had to wade into a big crowd like that?**

WEBB SIMPSON: That's a good question. I think we're going to have those situations this week, especially those big groups with big names. But I think people are a lot more aware of what's going on, social distancing, wearing masks. I think it's a lot harder to transfer this with masks and people being somewhat aware of how close they are to people.

You know, I think it's too hard to police that, especially in the situation that you're talking about, a wayward ball and the crowd has got to move.

Who knows how that will play out, but I wouldn't be uncomfortable as a player. I wouldn't really be thinking about it in that moment, I don't think.

RACHEL NOBLE: Webb, appreciate the time as always, and good luck this week.

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