

# THE PLAYERS Championship

Wednesday, March 10, 2021

Ponte Vedra Beach, Florida, USA

TPC Sawgrass

## Patrick Cantlay

### Press Conference

JOHN BUSH: We would like to welcome Patrick Cantlay into the interview room here at the 2021 PLAYERS Championship. Patrick, No. 2 in the FedExCup standings, six straight top 20 finishes, including a win at the Zozo Championship and a runner-up at the American Express. Patrick, if we can just get you to comment on what has been a fantastic year up to this point.

PATRICK CANTLAY: Yeah, thank you. I feel like my game's in a really good spot and I'm just been knocking on the door. I thought American Express, that round when I was waiting would be good enough for a playoff, but Si Woo played great, so that's the key, just put myself in contention and keep knocking on the door and eventually I'll get through. I've been working really hard and sticking to my game plan and I really like this golf course this week and I think it's, I think it's in the best shape I've ever seen it. So I'm excited.

JOHN BUSH: Patrick, one year from last year, obviously when the PLAYERS Championship was shut down, you opened with a 67 and now here we are 12 months later, just talk a little bit about how exciting it is, how excited you are to be back and also to have the fans here this week.

PATRICK CANTLAY: Well, yeah, I'm just a corn dog living a hot dog life out there now again, with fans. And so it will be fun. I mean, it was so weird when everything got shut down and I'm so happy to see fans back here and I know it's been a year, but you could really convince me it's been five, because I feel like we have lived through so many changes and so much disarray the last year that I'm glad that we have some fans back and I played a practice round with Xander, JT and Jordan yesterday and it was cool, we had a nice group and we had a really nice crowd following us and it was nice to feel like normal again on the golf course.

JOHN BUSH: We'll open it up to questions.

**Q. Last year coming into THE PLAYERS you were, you had played well on the West Coast, maybe not quite as well as you played this year, but you were certainly**



**trending up and to post the number one a day with the conditions were ideal and it looked like it was going to be a real shoot-out, when it was cancelled, did you allow yourself a little maybe a little bit of a pity party or did you at that point when you realized what was happening, whatever anybody shot in that round didn't matter?**

PATRICK CANTLAY: You know, I think I was more worried about all the other stuff that was going on. It was pretty, a pretty scary unprecedented time to have all sports be cancelled. It's like having a really good first quarter in basketball, there were still three quarters left, so it didn't mean -- it was a nice round but it didn't mean too much in the grand scheme of things. I just remember, I remember hearing that morning that all the sports had been cancelled and that everyone was shutting down and I just, I didn't know really what to think. And then I was kind of surprised but kind of not surprised when they shut the tournament down after one day and it was just, it was scary, it was like all of a sudden because it impacted me, you know, it was real and so I'm glad we're getting back pass that.

**Q. You were in a Junior PLAYERS at this tournament in the past, weren't you, or this course? Have you played in the Junior PLAYERS?**

PATRICK CANTLAY: I did, yeah. That was 10 years ago or more but, yeah, that was the first time I came to the course and I remember liking it then, even though that was played in July or August, it's in much better condition in March.

**Q. From that point have you always felt like that this is a place that suited your game?**

PATRICK CANTLAY: Yeah, for sure. I remember liking it -- I remember liking it then. I remember having a much more difficult time with Bermuda grass then because I had grown up my whole life without ever seeing it and it might have been the second or third tournament I had ever played on Bermuda grass. But it's definitely a course that favors precision, so if you can hit your driver in the fairway, you can have lots of scoring opportunities. You can take advantage of the par-5s if you play from the fairway. Even some of the harder holes are gettable if you drive the ball well. A Pete Dye golf course, I feel like it will show you one



side with trouble and you almost have to ignore the big flashy trouble and hug the trouble, because the worst side will be the bailout side and once you bail out into the wrong, into the fat side, then the troubles start mounting.

And that would be, an example of that would be the 14th hole here. They flash that water up on the left side, but all the big numbers you've ever seen are from the moguls and the crap up the right side because your angle gets bad and you get a terrible lie in that rough. I think Tiger even won the golf tournament there hitting it in the water left, he might have made a bogey or something on that hole, even when he hit it in the water. Pete Dye kind of does that all day and if you have enough guts to hit quality shots all the way around, you can shoot good numbers.

**Q. Going back to last year, you were paired with Hideki who tied the course record with a 63. What do you remember about that round?**

PATRICK CANTLAY: I remember I thought he couldn't make any more birdies and then he eagled the 9th hole to finish off the day and shoot 63. And I thought I had played pretty good and shot 67 or 66 and he beat me by a few. I remember he just played an almost perfect round of golf.

Like I say, if you hit the ball really well and take on a little risk and pull it off, you can shoot a low round out here and, yeah, he played great.

**Q. Just wondering if Tiger said anything in particular that sticks in your mind when he paired you and Xander together at the Presidents Cup.**

PATRICK CANTLAY: I remember -- I can't remember if it was an assistant captain or Tiger, but one way or another when we were playing the day -- the 36-hole day, so maybe Saturday? Saturday morning, we were getting beat up in the morning in alternate shot. And we had, this was our third match at that point already together and we were maybe on the 12th or 13th hole and we were 2-down or something and didn't have any momentum that day, that morning. And somebody drove a cart up to us and said, Tiger wants to put you guys out in the afternoon, what do you think about that? And we kind of looked at each other and didn't really hesitate, we were like, yeah, put us out in the afternoon, we'll go get it done. And we won that afternoon and played really well.

Playing with Xander is a treat for me. He's such a good guy, insightful, smart, good attitude, and he's the best partner anybody could ask for. So we really bonded that week at Presidents Cup and I think our Friday afternoon or Friday match where we won on the last hole kind of got us going in the right direction and then JT made the same putt

I did and that kind of got the wheels turning and we were able to turn that whole week around.

**Q. Xander said yesterday that he's learned a lot from playing with you, but he wasn't sure if you learned from him. Have you? And if so what have you learned?**

PATRICK CANTLAY: See, there he goes again, just being the best partner you could ask for, saying nice things. I've definitely learned stuff from him and enjoy every time we play. We play a lot of practice rounds together and occasionally have dinner and so I enjoy being with people like him. He's just good people. So I feel like if it's not something golf, which sometimes it is, we talk golf and we talk strategy I'll learn something just that I can use in daily life, just because he's such a good guy.

**Q. Who usually wins when you play head-to-head in practice rounds?**

PATRICK CANTLAY: We're pretty split. He's been getting the better of me lately, but this week we have been on a team, so we took JS and JT on earlier this week and tied and it hurt tying, so.

**Q. For a California kid what's been the transition like settling in South Florida, some of the positives and maybe some of the drawbacks?**

PATRICK CANTLAY: It's been great. I've been there three years-ish and I like it. I think it makes travel so much easier. A lot of the events are east coast based. And then also with the time change I would rather, if I was playing in California, I would rather lose the time going back home than lose the time at the beginning of the week going to an event. That travel to California early in the week is hard.

So not only that, but I get to play on Bermuda, which I didn't grow up on, so I get to practice at some great places, at Bear's Club and Medalist, and so I feel like my practice time is more efficient than ever. Less time in the car, more time practicing and the practice facilities are great. JT and I can go and play a 18-hole match in 2:45 or 3 hours and feel like we got a good day of work done. And it's nice to have so many good players in town and so many good golf courses to go play.

**Q. What does it mean in terms of how you receive instruction or work on your game, because obviously working with Jamie for as long as you have not necessarily saying you needed hand holding, but when you were working on your game alone, what's the differences there?**

PATRICK CANTLAY: Jamie actually gets out quite a bit, so he runs Virginia Country Club in Long Beach and I grew up there and so when I am in California I see him a lot. But he gets out to a lot of tournaments. He's here all week and he's dedicated to staying on top of coaching me and he's doing an excellent job doing that. I'll send him videos from when I practice and he does a great job. I feel like even though he's running the club there and he's all the way across the country, if I called him on a Friday and said I need you on Saturday, he would be there. So in general we work a lot on feels and we don't work a ton on little technique stuff and so it's easy to give me a feel for a week or so or three or four days, a feel, work on it, and then send him a video and see if I'm going the right direction. So I haven't noticed a drop off or anything, not spending time with him, but I think that's a testament to how diligent he is and what a good job he does.

**Q. Back to Xander for a minute. Do you get a sense at all that he is under appreciated by the press and by extension the golfing public and if so why?**

PATRICK CANTLAY: That's a good question. I don't know if under appreciated is it, coming from another guy who I've been asked that about myself. We're not particularly flashy and so that doesn't get a lot of attention, if we're not winning golf tournaments.

So I think that may be even a little why we get along. I think we were kind of raised a little bit of the same way, let your clubs do the talking. So it doesn't surprise me that you ask that, but everybody out here knows he's really good and they see him up at the top of major championship leaderboards and it's only a matter of time before he wins some majors and people can't stop talking about him.

**Q. Secondly, there's a lot of memorable holes I guess on this golf course. I was curious if there was, in your time here, one shot, whether it was off the tee or into the green, I don't want to say that gives you fits but makes you maybe pay closer attention than others?**

PATRICK CANTLAY: Well, I think obviously, the obvious answers are 16, 17, 18. They are so dramatic and you pay such a high penalty for missing the shot at the wrong time. Missing the tee shot on 17 or missing the tee shot on 18, you instantly pay a shot- to two-shot penalty. And so we don't play a ton of golf courses that are that extreme penalty-wise for a miss.

But I will say maybe a not cliché answer, the tee shot on the 4th hole is very important. That's a wedge hole that you can get a 60-degree wedge in your hand with a couple bowl hole locations, like the front and the back right hole

locations, where you got a 60-degree wedge, you should hit a really good shot there. But the minute you hit it not in the fairway, that hole becomes very, very difficult because of the water and the big contours on the green, you can't hold it in the right section.

So I do feel like that is one of the key shots on the front side which doesn't get talked about a lot is putting the ball in the fairway on the 4th hole.

**Q. What's the worse miss on that hole, going left into the rough or right into kind of that waste bunker?**

PATRICK CANTLAY: Like I said at the beginning of the press conference, that's another great example, left in the moguls on 4 where you're blind and coming out of the rough and working on a really bad angle across the green the wrong way. From the tee box it looks like the bailout is left, because he puts a bunker up the right and water right of the bunker, similar to the 14th hole. He does that, he puts the bunker, which actually will stop the ball from going in the water and then he puts the water and flashes the water in your face, tee box on the 4th hole is on the right side, and you have to go over that bunker and water, so it looks like the left side is safe, but all the big numbers are from the left side. If you give me a good lie in the right bunker, I'm now working up the green and I can control the, I can actually control the distance, if I have a good lie in the bunker. So that's kind of the art of this place. Pete Dye did a great job. It's a masterpiece.

**Q. Between you and Xander who wing at gin?**

PATRICK CANTLAY: I win at gin. Yeah. And he won't dispute that. But I'll take him as a partner any time anywhere. So all the cities we go to, if anybody wants it play us, you know, you just let us know, we'll play.

JOHN BUSH: Patrick, we appreciate your time. Best of luck this week.

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