

THE PLAYERS Championship

Saturday, March 13, 2021
Ponte Vedra Beach, Florida, USA
TPC Sawgrass

Lee Westwood

Press Conference

RACHEL NOBLE: I'd like to welcome Lee Westwood, our 54-hole leader into the virtual interview room here at the 2021 PLAYERS Championship. Just talk through that closing stretch there, birdies on 16 and 17.

LEE WESTWOOD: Yeah, well, I was playing well all day and trying to be patient and wait for the good things to happen. I missed a few around the front nine for different reasons, kind of misread a couple of putts, mis-hit a couple of putts, hit some good putts that didn't go in, and then one went in on 10, so that was kind of the impetus to kick on around the back nine.

Obviously 16 is a hole you look at and you think, this is a birdie chance, but 17 to that front flag, especially when it's stuck at the top of the hill, you're just trying to run it down there somewhere dead, so it's a real bonus that it rolled in, and a great moment, and that 17 green is always an incredible atmosphere, and it's nice if you can make a birdie for the fans that have hung around all day.

Q. If I could just get your take on being paired with Bryson again, second consecutive Sunday.

LEE WESTWOOD: Yeah, really looking forward to it. I enjoy playing with him. I enjoy his company and his caddie's company, and it's like round 2, the rematch. I'm going to really enjoy tomorrow. I enjoyed last Sunday, and I'm going to enjoy this Sunday.

Q. How much more different will it be on this golf course compared to Arnie's golf course, if there is going to be a difference?

LEE WESTWOOD: Well, I guess neither of us will treat it any differently. I suppose if you sat Bryson down here and you asked him which golf course would suit him more, he'd probably say Bay Hill. You can open your shoulders a little bit more around Bay Hill than you can around here. This place is a little bit more strategic. But credit to Bryson; you wouldn't associate this golf course with his style of play, and he's up there. It shows he can adapt his game.



Q. Just wanted to ask you about playing the 17th, how surprised you were that it didn't come back down, and I know you're a very skilled golfer, but how much luck is involved to make the putt?

LEE WESTWOOD: It's pure skill to putt like that, obviously. No, I hit what I thought was the perfect shot. In fact when it was in the air I was saying to myself, Don't hit the flag, don't hit the flag. It was coming down right on it and it probably landed about five feet, past the flag, got a big bounce, because the green does firm up as the day goes on. Then when it stuck on the hill, I thought, well, that's unusual.

And then got to the putt and the more I looked at it the more break I could see on it. And I set it off on the line I wanted to, at the speed I wanted to, and Fitzy said, That was in right off the putter. There's an element of skill but obviously there's an element of fortune when one of those goes in.

Q. What line did you take?

LEE WESTWOOD: I was looking sort of five or six feet outside left lip.

Q. Would this be your biggest win?

LEE WESTWOOD: Yeah, undoubtedly.

Q. And why is that?

LEE WESTWOOD: I think it's probably the -- it would be the biggest tournament I've ever won.

Q. Bryson, we were asking him earlier about what he saw from you last week, and he credited your caddie with helping you a lot, and he was serious about it. Like he said some nice things about maybe how she might help you. I'm just curious what kind of level of truth there is to that. Obviously you've had a lot of great caddies over the years.

LEE WESTWOOD: Yeah, I think at my stage of my career, there's not a lot a caddie can tell me, but obviously Helen gets me in a fantastic mood out there, and psychologically she can help me and say the things that I need to hear.



You know, she helps me in that aspect an immeasurable amount.

Q. Where do you live these days?

LEE WESTWOOD: I live in Newcastle in England.

Q. You don't have a U.S. residence these days?

LEE WESTWOOD: No, I don't, no.

Q. Besides two shots, which is not insignificant, what do you think your biggest advantage is over all of the other big-name challengers?

LEE WESTWOOD: I don't think I have any advantages. We'll see tomorrow what my advantages are, if I can apply myself properly. The advantage I have right now is the two shots.

But at the same time, I can't go out there and be defensive. I've got to still go out there and play my game, be aggressive at times, be defensive at other times, and just do the right things whenever possible and go through the correct processes. Don't get carried away with the situation and just try and do the best I can on each hole.

Q. You've been in this position enough times to know it's rarely a two-man race and people can come back from anywhere. I'm curious, from your experience on this course, how much more does that allow opportunities from the back?

LEE WESTWOOD: Yeah, definitely not a two-horse race, and this is one of the toughest golf courses to front-run on, as well. It's easy to lose your mind out there and lose perspective and the situation get out of control on yourself. People can come from behind. You saw Justin Thomas shoot a low round today. Came from 2-under to 10-under. It is possible around here, and like I say, it's a tough front-running golf course.

Q. Obviously you're holding up well, but how are you feeling seven consecutive rounds in the heat of competition?

LEE WESTWOOD: Yeah, not too bad. Legs are getting -- are a little achy towards the end of the day, but they still feel under me in my swing, and I still feel like I'm controlling them. I'll take it easy tonight and try and get a good night's sleep and try and take it easy tomorrow morning. I won't be running on the treadmill in the gym tomorrow morning or going and doing weights.

Q. You obviously have accomplished so many things

around the world in terms of victories all over. I just kind of wonder if you can reflect on your form right now, is this the best you've ever played, and how much are you enjoying this run right now?

LEE WESTWOOD: Yeah, I said yesterday, that I don't like to compare the Lee Westwood of 10 years ago or 20 years ago to the Lee Westwood of today. I'm certainly having as much fun on the golf course as I've ever had, and that probably is helping me play some great golf.

Q. You made reference a little bit earlier when you talked about Bryson how this course perhaps doesn't suit him, but do you feel like it suits you because of the way you strategize your way around and the length is not, so to speak, necessarily the advantage for him that it would be at Bay Hill?

LEE WESTWOOD: Yeah, I've always felt that it suits my game. That's probably why I've played well around here many times. I wouldn't say it doesn't suit Bryson, it just doesn't suit him as much as last week did. He can still use his length to his advantage. There's holes out there where maybe you don't want to hit driver and he can squeeze one of those low iron shots out there 280, and that's a massive advantage around here.

I won't really be paying much attention to what anybody else does. I haven't done that for a long, long time now. I'm working with my psychologist Ben. I've just tried to control the things that I can control, and that's me.

Q. If you are fortunate enough tomorrow, if it comes down to the final stretch of two or three holes and it's either you against Bryson or you against Justin Thomas, is there any chance that that might have even a little bit of a Ryder Cup feel, especially the way Bryson pumps up the crowd and kind of gets them going a little bit?

LEE WESTWOOD: No, I don't think so. I think the Ryder Cup is kind of the last thing on everybody's mind at the moment. I think this is such a prestigious title and a big tournament to win, we're all fully focused on winning THE PLAYERS.

Q. I know that you helped Shaun Wane out with the English Rugby League team from time to time and talk to them. What do you think he would say to you tonight going into this?

LEE WESTWOOD: Keep doing what you're doing, enjoy yourself. I mean, it's as simple as that. You've got to keep it simple. It can get complicated, especially when you're in final rounds. The more simple you can make it, the better.

 . . . when all is said, we're done.®

Q. If you're Wigan, does that make Bryson St. Helens?

LEE WESTWOOD: Oh, very much so. It's like a State of Origin game tomorrow.

RACHEL NOBLE: Lee, thanks for the time. Good luck tomorrow.

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