

# THE PLAYERS Championship

Tuesday, March 8, 2022

Ponte Vedra Beach, Florida, USA

TPC Sawgrass

## Lucas Herbert

### Press Conference

THE MODERATOR: This is your first time here at THE PLAYERS Championship. Take us through the first couple days here at Sawgrass and your impressions of the course and of the event.

LUCAS HERBERT: Yeah, this is my first day onsite. I just drove up from Orlando yesterday. Yeah, it's a great spot. It's a beautiful course, facility, clubhouse, practice area, everything. So it's a really nice place to be around.

I think it's quite lush and green this year compared to maybe other years because I've watched some stuff on TV in the past and it's been quite burnt out and quite firm.

But this year it's quite green and quite lush, which is really nice. You can see why a lot of guys want to base themselves here and practice every day, because very cool place.

**Q. Have you had a practice round today or have you sort of walked the course, had a look at it?**

LUCAS HERBERT: Played the front nine and then just walked the back nine and sort of had a look at the greens.

**Q. My question relates to a quote I saw from Pete Dye where he said, it looks hard but it plays easy. What's your impression of that?**

LUCAS HERBERT: It definitely looks hard. He's got that right. I'm not sure about playing easy. It's always a little different come tournament time when you're not trying to think of a bunch of things.

But yeah, it feels like a pretty demanding golf course. There's just -- even the nine holes I played you could just see there was a variety of different shots you had to hit with trouble on different sides.

Yeah, it feels like a very good test of golf and a very fair test of golf. I don't know about it playing easy. It definitely looks hard, though.



**Q. How far do you feel you've come in dealing with that challenge? We talked last year about big boy golf and these golf courses you're going to be faced with on a weekly basis. How far do you think you've come in 12 months to deal with the challenges that Sawgrass presents?**

LUCAS HERBERT: Yeah, I feel like I've probably come a long way mentally from -- I look back at -- I played the Honda Classic last year around this time, and I remember just the way my mental game was at the time, I'd say, compared to what it is now, very, very different.

There's just no bail-out. There's no safe way to play the PGA TOUR. You've just got to kind of full throttle.

It's not necessarily firing at every single pin, but you've got to be aggressive with every swing you make. You can't be just trying to steal one down the fairway or dial in a shot and not miss it left or not miss it right.

Yeah, I think I've probably got the mentality sorted a little bit more and probably physically a little bit more, as well, 12 months down the track.

I still think I'd like to be sitting here in two years' time, in five years' time, saying that I've come a long way since I played my first PLAYERS here in 2022, as well.

So it's nice to be at this point in the journey.

**Q. Did you play with anyone this morning or have you got a practice lined up tomorrow with someone that you want to get some insight from?**

LUCAS HERBERT: No, I kind of -- I played this morning on my own, but Ryan Palmer and Cam Davis were behind me and I felt like I waved them up on every green because I was just around the greens taking a bunch of notes, hitting little putts, trying to figure out where the ball was rolling and where the pins are going to be.

I felt like I played with those two boys even though I kind of didn't.

**Q. You mentioned on Sunday down at Bay Hill that you've only seen Sawgrass on TV and you know where**



**the holes are. You're doing that sort of on a weekly basis, coming up on courses you may previously have only seen on TV. Do you have any sort of learnings that can actually help you having watched so many PLAYERS Championships and now you get to Sawgrass and as you say they're working around the greens and they're significantly different?**

LUCAS HERBERT: I think you try and come to every course and every hole with somewhat of an unbiased opinion on how to play the hole or where to miss certain pin positions or whatever.

But I think these guys are pretty switched on out here, so if you see them missing it left of a certain flag or they're taking a certain flag on, you kind of look at it in the end and go, yeah, I can see why they're doing that; that's probably the right thing to do.

As much as, yeah, you try and bring in a fresh approach, it's just a lot of the time what these guys are doing out here is pretty switched on and going to be pretty much the right play anyway.

Yeah, we get a lot of data from the courses the years prior and the scoring from years prior and where the correct spots are to miss it around the golf course.

We just try and go off that information and come up with a plan that's sort of best suited for my game.

**Q. What about a tournament like this when you have seen so many -- what are your expectations with -- you get nine holes today, you get 18 tomorrow, and then you're into the tournament, plus what you've seen on TV, plus where your game is at coming out of Bay Hill. What are your expectations?**

LUCAS HERBERT: Yeah, it's a tricky one. I would love to have another top 10 here. I think that would be a real feather to add to the cap of the finishes that I've had over the past 12 months.

Yeah, look, you just never know. The first year out on a lot of these courses is a big learning experience, and sometimes 40th place might be a good week if things just aren't quite going for you.

I think this week is going to be a real slog. It doesn't look like the weather is going to be behaving for us too much, so maybe that's going to play into my hands a little bit more than with perfect calm conditions.

To be honest, I haven't thought too much about expectations for the week. I've sort of just -- Monday,

Tuesday, Wednesday, I kind of like -- this is just a big slog of information to try and take in from the golf course and try and figure out how to get on that first tee on Thursday as best prepared.

**Q. Just with everything you've gone through over the last little while, are there tangible things during a round that you think you've added to your game, whether it be going to a good mental place or a new shot or something like that? Are there things that you have actually learned in this period since you've been going up every week on the PGA TOUR against these weeks trying to go full throttle?**

LUCAS HERBERT: I think I've probably gotten better out of the rough. We don't really have a lot of rough in Australia like you get over here. I think I heard on the telecast earlier that it's four inches, the rough this week, and, I mean, we never get anything like that at home.

These guys that are playing out here pretty much have grown up with that kind of stuff and I'm still learning and figuring it out, but I think last week was really good. I think we were second in strokes gained around the green in rough that was quite sticky and very foreign from what I grew up on.

To come out and play the way I did and be as useful as I was around the greens last week, there's a lot of confidence in that.

It's a lot of experience to take forward into some of these events where you have got that thick rough around the greens.

**Q. You mentioned it might be a slog this week. Obviously it was tough going last Sunday. Is that the sort of thing that's got you feeling a bit confident this week, having played so well in the tough conditions last Sunday and it might be a bit of a slog this week?**

LUCAS HERBERT: Yeah, I'm not a big fan of playing in the rain, but I think all the events that I've won have rained on the final round at some point. It seems to be my thing.

If that's a bit of a nice omen to take into the week, that's something to hang on to. And yeah, it seems like whenever the conditions get tough my mentality goes towards that right way to think about things and grinding out pars and keeping a score together, whereas, I don't know, maybe some other guys just don't have that mentality. I don't know.

Yeah, I don't feel like I do a hell of a lot different when it does get to the tough conditions, and I seem to get better

 . . . when all is said, we're done.®

results relative to the field when the wind does come up or the rain does come through.

**Q. I wonder if you've firmed up any of your plans around getting to Augusta early and having a look around, because you've spoken to me about that, what you're going to do, previously.**

LUCAS HERBERT: Yeah, we're going next week. We're going to play twice next week. I think Min Woo is going up with me, as well. Yeah, just want to get it out of the way, the whole Augusta wow factor and just be able to really take it in, seeing everything that goes on, whether it be the clubhouse, whether it be the scoreboards that are up, whether it just be Augusta itself, those massive big trees that you sort of see on TV.

I think if I can kind of get a lot of that out of the way two weeks out from the event, then when we do get there we're still soaking it in, but at least we've done the majority of that and we can get into preparing properly to play the tournament.

**Q. Just wondering, obviously you had the day's best final round last week. How much confidence has that given you? Is that a reflection of where your game is at or did it all come together last Sunday?**

LUCAS HERBERT: I think it's a decent reflection where my game is at. I feel like I played really nicely at Phoenix and really nicely at Honda and missed both cuts; just didn't quite get a couple of breaks and just golf happened.

They felt like sort of hard breaks to take at the time, but I knew that my game was there and I knew that it wasn't like I needed to go away and do some soul searching to figure out what was going on.

I wasn't surprised to finish in the top 10 at Bay Hill given where my game was at, which would have been -- when you're sitting back in Australia looking at my results, it would have looked like my game was in turmoil.

Yeah, it's pretty satisfying to do that. It was very satisfying to do it given the conditions and how tough the golf course was. I don't think I've played that level of golf on a really tough golf course like Bay Hill was playing on Sunday.

Scottie and I were talking around the way around and said that -- he asked me if I'd ever played a harder setup at a tournament, and we both kind of agreed that a handful of U.S. Opens probably compared to it, but it was playing about as hard as you can set a golf course up on Sunday.

Yeah, to have low round of the day, to play the way I did, to

obviously climb that leaderboard gives me a lot of self-confidence and it sort of just -- I felt like it was probably nearly a bit of a next step in my golfing journey was to play some really high-level golf at a big quality event with a tough golf course and a good field.

**Q. You talked about sort of a top 10 might be a good week this week, for example. What's the mindset going into these big tournaments out here on the PGA TOUR? Do you go out on the first tee on Thursday thinking I can win this tournament, or is it all about just competing and seeing what happens?**

LUCAS HERBERT: To be honest, like Thursday is not really where you're thinking about winning the tournament. You're just trying to give yourself -- you're trying to get off to a good start.

It's always about positioning yourself in the tournament. You just never want to get too far behind, I guess. You can be leading by three or probably within eight heading into Saturday's round. As long as you're kind of somewhere thereabouts, you're going to have a pretty good chance come the back nine on Sunday. It's sort of all about positioning. You're not really sitting there thinking about winning the golf tournament first day on Thursday morning.

You just want to get yourself into a good position, and then, look, some weeks go well for you, some weeks don't. Obviously you might get off to a bad start and then making the cut and finishing inside the top 30 might be a great week. You might get off to a hot start and all of a sudden you finish outside the top 15 and that might be a poor week.

Golf is one of those funny ones, it's always reevaluating your goals on the way through. Yeah, pretty cliché, but you've kind of just got to make the best of what you've got.

Yeah, some weeks that's a tie for 30th and that's a great result and some weeks tied for 15th is a really frustrating one.

**Q. You've played in majors, you've now won on the PGA TOUR, but a week like this, do you still occasionally pinch yourself as to the fact you're playing at THE PLAYERS Championship at your age?**

LUCAS HERBERT: I don't really feel like I'm young anymore. I'm 26. As much as you guys might sit there and tell me I'm young, I don't really feel like -- I sat in that Presidents Cup dinner last week and I wasn't even close to the youngest one there.

I don't feel like I'm old anymore, I feel like I'm sort of just

 . . . when all is said, we're done.®

coming into the prime of my career. It's pretty cool. I'd love to have been here three years ago.

Yeah, it's just cool. This whole year is going to be a process of this, of going to all these venues and these courses and these tournaments where I've watched on TV as a kid and you've watched growing up and you've watched other Australians win. It's just really cool to be here in person and playing the tournament and seeing the golf course in tournament conditions and seeing all the stands up and just experiencing how hard that shot is on 17 on Sunday with the adrenaline running.

There's so much to experience that I'm just enjoying doing that side of things more than anything this year. I enjoy playing good golf. That's what I love about golf is playing good golf. I'm going to enjoy these places a lot more when I play well, but yeah, it's just going to be a lot of fun -- I absolutely loved playing Phoenix and I missed the cut because it was just such a great atmosphere and I really enjoyed the buzz that was around those final three holes.

Yeah, it's a lot of fun being out here.

**Q. Is there anything different maybe you've worked on with Jamie or anything like that for these bigger events where it's compartmentalizing really enjoying the experience with hey, I'm trying to win this golf tournament? Is there anything different you do or is it the same processes every week?**

LUCAS HERBERT: I mean, I think it's the same processes every week. I don't think it's healthy to place more importance on certain events here or there. I think you're always just trying to instill very similar patterns.

Obviously when you get into contention you want the same patterns to be coming up, whether it's the Vic Open back in Australia or whether it's THE PLAYERS Championship here on the U.S. Tour.

I was quite happy with the fact last week when I did start playing well and I started getting up towards make eagle on 16 and all of a sudden thoughts start coming in, if you birdie the final two holes that could be a real number to post and make the guys nervous, and I didn't feel like I shied away from that at all. They were two pretty tough finishing holes. I played them about as well as I felt like I could have without being unnecessary with the risks I took.

Two putts didn't drop for me, and they could have very easily dropped then all of a sudden it's a very different conversation.

I was very happy with a lot of the mental processes I went through on Sunday and am continuing to go through when

I'm playing well in some of these bigger events over here.

Yeah, I mean, Jamie and I worked on a lot of stuff last year, like I said, with just committing, hitting shots, and probably trying to get away from feeling like I was avoiding bad shots rather than just hitting a good shot. Sort of two very different things that might sound a bit funny to non-golfers, but it was just -- it was a big change for me to be able to do that.

You've got to give up so much control because you can hit great shots out here on the PGA TOUR that just get absolutely punished just because the golf courses are very, very tough. Just accepting that and acknowledging it and then just stepping up and doing the best you can to hit a great shot each time.

**Q. You mentioned that Presidents Cup dinner. I know you've wanted to play a Presidents Cup for a long time. Does that sort of involvement with that group of players -- I know a few of the guys that were there, does that make it feel like it's getting closer and give you a boost of confidence going forward that this could be a reality by the end of the year?**

LUCAS HERBERT: Look, I still have a lot of work to go. I think I'm around 20th in the standings. I'm not guaranteeing myself a pick right now, and I think Trevor would have to be very, very generous to be putting me in the team as we speak, so I've got a lot of work to do there, but I would love to play that Presidents Cup. I feel like I would have a very meaningful contribution to that team. I feel like I'd be a good member of that side. I think I said on Sunday if the conditions at Quail Hollow come September are going to be no wind, soft fairways, soft greens, not a lot going on, maybe I'm not the best person to play in that team, but if it's going to blow 15 miles an hour and the rough is going to be up and the greens are quick and firm, I think I'd be a pretty good asset to that team for us.

**Q. I'm guessing you didn't play 17 at all today?**

LUCAS HERBERT: No, I just walked on the green, had a look.

**Q. Have you played Sawgrass before?**

LUCAS HERBERT: No.

**Q. Have you played Sawgrass on Xbox or PlayStation?**

LUCAS HERBERT: I think every golf fan in the world has played it on some sort of console, so yes, I have.



**Q. What was your console of choice?**

LUCAS HERBERT: I had a Nintendo Wii when I was a kid and I've traveled with a PlayStation for about the last five years. I don't even think I have a golf -- I think the last PGA TOUR golf game was Rory McIlroy PGA TOUR, or there might be one since then, but I don't even think I carry that on the road with me. Enough golf through the days. I play full time for a living. I don't need to sit at home and start playing Xbox or PlayStation and have a bit more of a think about golf when I leave the course.

**Q. What was it like then just to walk on that green today?**

LUCAS HERBERT: It was pretty cool just to take it all in, I guess. Yeah, you feel like you know every inch of that hole based off looking at it on social media or on a PlayStation or an YouTube videos, everything like that. But seeing it in real life and seeing -- both Nick my caddie and I commented it was quite a lot more sloped than we thought it would be from what we'd seen on TV and whatnot. That was kind of interesting.

Then just putting that -- I guess putting what's actually on the green to memory based on what you're kind of seeing and just matching everything up. It was pretty cool.

There's just a lot going on around that hole. There's a TV wire 150 yards that's got a little camera that sort of rolls back and forth along it the whole way, and there's stands everywhere on that hole, there's TV cameras everywhere on that hole. Just kind of taking all that in, and yeah, getting a feel for the place was pretty cool.

FastScripts by ASAP Sports