

THE PLAYERS Championship

Tuesday, March 12, 2024

Ponte Vedra Beach, Florida, USA

TPC Sawgrass

Patrick Cantlay

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: We would like to welcome Patrick Cantlay to the interview room here at the 2024 PLAYERS Championship. Patrick enters the week No. 17 in the FedExCup standings, is making his seventh start here at THE PLAYERS Championship.

Patrick, what do you look forward to most about this week, and what's the biggest challenge that TPC Sawgrass presents for you?

PATRICK CANTLAY: Yeah, I think it's one of the best golf courses we play all year. It really demands smart golf shots, especially off the tee. You hit a lot of clubs that aren't driver around here, especially when the wind changes direction, and I think it's one of the golf courses probably most on TOUR that you have to control your golf ball. The areas are small, and there's big penalty if you don't play from the correct areas.

THE MODERATOR: We'll take some questions.

Q. Jay said earlier today that he believes he's got the full confidence of the board and that he is the right person for the job going forward. Do you agree?

PATRICK CANTLAY: I think it's really important that we're all rowing in the same direction, I think with this PGA TOUR Enterprises board, I think it's really exciting that we do have a chance to kind of start with something new and all move together in the right direction.

Q. Where are you on the optimism meter about a deal getting done with PIF, and as a follow-up, what is the danger of a deal not getting done?

PATRICK CANTLAY: Sure. Well, I haven't had any conversations myself, and so wherever that's at, I'm not involved in those day-to-day conversations, so it would be wrong of me to say one way or the other.

Q. A little off the trend there, but what's the most memorable shot you've seen anybody hit on 17, either your shot or somebody you're playing with?

PATRICK CANTLAY: Good question. I mean, probably Tiger's putt from the back of the fringe there. We have seen it however many dozens and dozens of times on TV.

Q. I mean in person.

PATRICK CANTLAY: Oh, in person.

Q. It could be memorably bad, it could be memorably good.

PATRICK CANTLAY: I mean, I played one year from the walkway up the left side on a memorably bad shot.

Q. Just to go back to the first question and your answer, I didn't understand; I want to make sure that I understand it. Are you saying, yes, you believe he's the best person or you're just all rowing in the same direction now and that's good enough?

PATRICK CANTLAY: Yeah, I think it's very important that we're all rowing in the same direction, and right now he's definitely our leader, and so it's important that we're all doing our best, and like I said, rowing in the right direction to do what's best for the membership and the TOUR.

Q. And then to get back to another question, on the status of the negotiations, I understand you're not in the room - very few are - but are you saying that you guys have not gotten any kind of update as a board member since they have started the discussions?

PATRICK CANTLAY: Oh, no, we've had updates. I just don't think it's appropriate really for me to be saying, because I'm not in the room.

Q. Golf-related question, in terms of what Scottie's been doing lately, as a guy that's been pretty consistent over the last few years, can you talk to what he's been doing and the way he's sustained things and what you see out of him?

PATRICK CANTLAY: Yeah, I mean he's been playing great. Some of the wins that he's had, the margin of victory, like last week, on a very, very difficult golf course, it's extremely impressive. I mean, watching him hit the golf



ball around Bay Hill in the final round with the lead, shooting 6-under on a day that was pretty difficult, yeah, it's impressive.

Q. I was hearing a conversation this morning about what it's like to play this golf course for the golfers who are out there, and the idea was that the golf course tricks you into trying to play the heroic shot instead of the smart shot. Is that something you've experienced? The other idea is that the course tires your brain out as much as anything else so that you're tired mentally by the time you get to 15 green, and then you've got 16, 17 and 18 staring you in the face. Can you comment on those, please.

PATRICK CANTLAY: Sure. I think there's a lot of hole locations where you have to take the hole location on. The left hole locations on 4, there's no real safe place to play away to because the two putts are so hard. 17, obviously, there's no place to bail out, tee shot on 18 and second shot on 16.

So I think if you hit good shots, they look very heroic because that's just the nature of those golf holes.

Q. Sort of off that, a lot of players and coaches will talk about you being a very smart, strategic player from tee to green. How did you cultivate that skill? How do you work on being a smarter player?

PATRICK CANTLAY: Good question. I'm not sure I have the perfect answer. But I've been working with a stats team for a number of years, and so the way I think about it, the more decisions I can make that are reinforced by the stats, as long as I feel comfortable with the shot, I'm just gaining incrementally every time I make those decisions.

I'm not sure if that's the smart way to go about it or not all the time, but trying to make the most data-based decisions over and over and over again to give myself the best opportunity to succeed, that's really how I think about it.

Then realizing that there's a time and place for deviating from that plan, whether it's wind or conditions or how I'm feeling, that's really the bulk of what goes into my game plan each and every week.

Q. How often are you consulting those stats? Is it after every round, every tournament?

PATRICK CANTLAY: Weekly, at the beginning of the week.

Q. Not too many UCLA Bruins out here. I know that you've known Jake Knapp for a long time. What's

been your impressions of seeing him emerge in the last couple months, knowing that you guys go way back and it took him awhile to get here.

PATRICK CANTLAY: Yeah, I think the last competitive round I played with Jake I was a senior in high school and he was a freshman in high school in our CIF championship. So I'm looking forward to playing with him, hopefully, coming up soon. It's been really great. To have another Bruin out here, like you said, we're few and far between. He's been playing fantastic. He not only won but then backed it up with a couple top 10s, I think.

Q. What do you remember about him as a freshman?

PATRICK CANTLAY: He didn't hit it as far as he does now. But I remember he played really well that day. I think he finished either second or third or he played really well that day.

Q. Your profile has definitely increased over the past few years because of how much you've won. I was thinking about how you've evolved in that greater level of fame. You've had to go through some things like the slow play stuff and everything that happened at the Ryder Cup. I guess my broad question is, what has that been like to be more famous, to be more under scrutiny and how has it changed you, if at all, or your relationship with the media, with fans, with whatever?

PATRICK CANTLAY: I think it's just part of it. I think it's the natural development of playing professional golf out here, of playing and winning tournaments. Anytime you play and win tournaments, there's going to be increased attention about no matter what you do. I think it's something that you have to embrace, and I don't have it near as bad as a number of people that are out here that are under the microscope a lot more.

Q. Were you ready for it, or was it something you had to adjust to after it happened? Can you be ready for something like that?

PATRICK CANTLAY: A little of both. I don't think you're ever ready for things that you haven't experienced before, whether it's this or really anything else. The first time you're in a final group of a tournament, it's hard to say, are you ready for this; you've never experienced it before.

But it's something that, like I said, you just have to embrace and really just figure out what's best for you.

Q. Along the Jake Knapp lines, he spent five years on PGA TOUR Canada before getting his Korn Ferry Tour card, winning, breaking through. What's your take on

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why that kind of is allowed in pro golf where someone can spend all that time at that level and come out here and just make an impact so quickly?

PATRICK CANTLAY: I think golf really rewards playing well, like having your best stuff for certain times of the year or certain weeks. I think he won a number of times on the Canadian Tour, right, so if you're good, really, really good, you're going to make it out here eventually and have success.

Q. There's a lot of buzz with him and his win. It resonated a lot. Just what's your take on kind of how that has happened and what's helped -- I know you haven't spent too much time with him lately, but why he's been able to gravitate toward people in that kind of way?

PATRICK CANTLAY: Yeah, I think his story's really great. Anytime you see a guy that's spent a number of years on the mini-tours, I think people can relate to that. And then the way he plays, he hits it a really long way, and the way he won, I thought he was really impressive. He played solid in Mexico and not only that, just backed it up with another couple solid weeks after that. From relatively unknown to winning and then top-10ing a couple times on TOUR, I mean that's what's so great about our game.

Q. What has Colin Neville's role been, and what has he done for you guys, and can you give a specific example of how he's helped you in the process of coming to some of the decisions you've voted for?

PATRICK CANTLAY: Yeah, Colin was very instrumental throughout the process over the summer, and he and Raine, his team at Raine, did an amazing job, just helping us players through the whole process understanding. There was a lot of learning that needed to take place. So he was just fantastic pretty much the whole time.

Q. Give me an example of what you needed learning, what you needed to learn.

PATRICK CANTLAY: Well, I had never had any experience with any type of M & A, so just even hearing what's normal or what's abnormal or what appropriate amount of control is or valuation or anything like that, I had no prior experience with that, so he was instrumental in kind of giving us that baseline.

Q. How much have you spoken to SSG investors since they have come on board?

PATRICK CANTLAY: Yeah, a fair amount. I mean, we've had some meetings and so hearing their initial insights has

been great. Obviously they're very savvy and sophisticated and they have been around the block, so yeah, we've definitely had an open line of communication.

Q. What has been their main feedback, for lack of a better term, since they have come on to maybe meet that evaluation they invested into?

PATRICK CANTLAY: Yeah, I think you've heard it from some guys over the last couple weeks, is just really trying to focus on getting the product back to serving the fans. I think that's, you know, the most important thing is giving the fans what they want to see and giving the fans opportunity to see us, both on the course and then also behind the scenes.

Q. I know one of the catalysts for you being a part of the board was just the idea of being responsible to your fellow players for the direction of the TOUR. But do you enjoy being part of this process? Conversely, has there been a cost that has come either personally or professionally with this new role that you have?

PATRICK CANTLAY: Yeah, I don't think too much about the cost side of things. Like I said before, I think I try to compartmentalize as much as I can. You're right, I do feel a responsibility to do the right thing for the membership and do my best in my capacity as a Policy Board member. That's really the driving force, driving force behind all the decisions I make on that front.

Q. Jay was in here and explaining to all of us something that we know quite well, which is communicating with the 200-player membership is a very difficult thing on both sides of that communication. I was curious, as a player who is in a position of power, like what is the clear and obvious way for TOUR members to communicate their wants and needs?

PATRICK CANTLAY: Sure, well there's the PAC, obviously, and then the PAC has 16 members and so all of those individuals should feel definitely free to communicate how they feel, and then also communicate up from the wider membership that should feel like they can talk to those PAC members and then talk to us. I think we've sent many communications over the summer that if anybody ever wants to talk or reach out to any Policy Board members, player directors, that they should, and we're happy to talk to them.

Q. Does it feel like there's an influx of that in the last few months?

PATRICK CANTLAY: Maybe, yeah. I mean, there's



definitely been an influx in the last year. I think, you know, naturally so, with everything that's been going on.

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Q. A flipside of the SSG question. At what point as a player director do you feel like maybe you need to meet some of the principals from PIF?

PATRICK CANTLAY: Yeah, I think when that time comes, I think we should all be open to it.

Q. Is that time in the near future, down the road, or I realize you're probably following -- or not probably, but following Jay's lead, but at what point do you think the players need to get to know those people?

PATRICK CANTLAY: Yeah, I'm sure when the time is right we will.

Q. Joe Ogilvie's been added to this whole organization. How much do you know about him? How much time have you spent with him, and what do you see him bringing to this?

PATRICK CANTLAY: Yeah, I know Joe. I think I met Joe a long time ago, maybe 10 years or so ago when I started playing some TOUR events. He's really intelligent and really well-versed in the TOUR. I mean, I think he was a Policy Board member maybe on two different occasions, so I think having him will be a huge value add for us.

Q. Does he sort of go between the business side and the players' side now, given his background?

PATRICK CANTLAY: Yeah, exactly. And I think that's exactly what we need.

Q. It's been since 2019 since Tiger's played this event, and it's no secret that his career's winding down. Would you actually inside treasure the opportunity to at least be paired with him one more time, just to be part -- despite all the distractions that does create for the fellow competitors, how much would you like to see that happen for you and also for the other players on TOUR?

PATRICK CANTLAY: Yeah, I think anytime he plays, we're all better for it. The golf world's been better off for it for a number of years now. I know he's working as hard as he can to be healthy and be able to play, and so I hope we get him out here as soon as possible for as many events as possible.

THE MODERATOR: All right, Patrick. Thank you very much for your time.

