

Arnold Palmer Invitational

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Bay Hill, Florida, USA

Bay Hill Club and Lodge

Patrick Cantlay

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: We would like to welcome Patrick Cantlay to the interview room here at the 2023 Arnold Palmer Invitational presented by Mastercard. Thanks for joining us for a few minutes, Patrick. Just wanted to get you started. This is your first start here at Bay Hill. I don't know if you've ever played at Bay Hill before this in any junior events. If you have, what are your thoughts on the golf course?

PATRICK CANTLAY: Yeah, I played the AJGA, I can't remember what tournament it was, but I played a tournament here when I was maybe 15 or 16 years old. It's set up much different this week than it was then. Golf course looks like it's going to be tough and with the weather we have I'm sure it's going to be very tough.

THE MODERATOR: I was talking to you as we came on here and you said you met Mr. Palmer awhile ago when you played in the Palmer Cup. I know it wasn't here, but what was that experience like?

PATRICK CANTLAY: Yeah, it was at the Palmer cup after my freshmen year of college. I thought it was impressive that he was there at the event. Obviously the event had been run a number of years, but seems like he went to at least all the American ones. I just heard so many stories about what a class act he was and that day was no different.

THE MODERATOR: This is your sixth start this season. A couple of top-5 finishes early on. How would you assess your season going into this Florida swing now?

PATRICK CANTLAY: Yeah, off to a little slow start, but hopefully catching some momentum after Riviera. Really looking forward to basically a bunch of big events coming up this spring.

THE MODERATOR: All right, we'll take some questions.

Q. Do you still have that trophy from that AJGA event?

PATRICK CANTLAY: I didn't win.

Q. Oh.

PATRICK CANTLAY: (Laughing.)

Q. Didn't want to bring that up. Some details are starting to come out. You've been a strong voice in kind of this future. I just wanted to get your opinion on the value of not having a cut, what are the pros and cons and how do you think you guys got to that decision?

PATRICK CANTLAY: Yeah, I think -- well, first and foremost, I think they're really exciting changes. I think they will make the TOUR stronger going forward. I think as it pertains to no cut, I think it would be, you know, the biggest advantage of it is locking in the stars that play those events into four days.

So if you're a little kid in whatever city that a tournament, one of these tournaments is going on, L.A., for example, and you can only go on Sunday, for sports or that's when your mom or dad can take you, you know that if Tiger Woods enters the tournament on Sunday you can go watch him. Rory, you can go watch him. I think that's really powerful.

Q. Is there any part of you that's excited about the PIP being cut in half?

PATRICK CANTLAY: (Laughing.) Well it doubled this year and then went back to where it was.

Q. You've had some pretty good runs yourself. We had Scottie in here a little while ago and he's had an amazing run the last 12 or 15 months. Can you speak to the dynamic of psychologically keeping that going? You're kind of, to some degree, in the middle of it now, even though you had a little bit of a slow start. How difficult is that to keep that momentum going, because it is very cyclical, obviously.

PATRICK CANTLAY: Yeah, I think in golf it's very easy to be searching, even when you're playing really well. Because you're always trying to get a little better. I think



sometimes you might have a very good process and just doubling down on the process that's got you to where you are is the way that you get just a little bit better.

So I think we have seen over the years a few guys make radical changes even when they were at the top of their game in an effort to try to get a little better at something that they weren't the best at. And not everybody has been able to pull that off. Sometimes guys have gone backwards when they do that. So I think first off knowing what's working and then continuing to do that is really the recipe for staying on a heater.

Q. As an equipment free agent this year I'm wondering if you've done any club testing, any recent switches and how that process has been for you?

PATRICK CANTLAY: Yeah, I've done a little testing. In general I'm not a big tester. But if something's better or potentially better, I'm now in a position where I can go out and put that in right away. That's exciting.

I really have only done some shaft changes this year. I experimented with some stuff in the off-season and then at the beginning of this year. I thought maybe going heavier in everything would help me hit it a little straighter. I have been swinging the golf club just a little bit faster lately and that's by design. I think it's important to try and hit it farther these days. It's just the simplest, fastest way to get a little better.

So I noticed that the club or the shaft started to feel a little weak. So I went to try and find what the right nudge into stiffer was. I tried to go heavier with everything from DG 120s to X 100s and then just 10 grams heavier in the same wood shafts. And the heavy change was really difficult for me to have similar feels.

So what I ended up doing was going back to the old weights, same shaft, and then tipping the wood shafts and hard stepping the iron shafts. That's made a big difference in kind of just straightening out the ball flight, feeling like I don't have to guard against too big of a draw. It's been easy, much easier than going heavier as far as the feels go.

Q. Can you talk about the positives for the non-elevated events in your mind.

PATRICK CANTLAY: Yeah, I think we're going to see now that the non-elevated events will most likely have stronger fields. I think you won't see any fields like you saw at Honda last week. Because when you have 120 or 130 players all playing those designated events, they have to take a week off somewhere or they will play five weeks in a

row. So I think one of the real good changes with this is not only because the fields are limited, but there won't be as many designated events and they were very cognizant of making sure that there weren't any weeks that would most likely have a bad field, just because of their slot on the schedule.

So I think the full-field events will have much stronger and deeper fields throughout the course of the year.

Q. You're a California guy who went to UCLA and of course the U.S. Open is going to be at Los Angeles Country Club. Is this going to give you a unique comfort level perhaps for winning your first major? What are your thoughts?

PATRICK CANTLAY: I hope so. It's a very good golf course and only a couple miles from UCLA. I've played there a number of times. Maybe 20 or 30 times. Maybe more. So I think it does. Any time you've seen a golf course a number of times you're more comfortable out there. I'm really looking forward to it.

We'll probably get great weather. It's Southern California in June. So they will be able to set up the golf course however they want. I'm sure that place will play fast and firm and difficult.

Q. I asked Max Homa this question and he had a good answer, but he wasn't a hundred percent certain what would happen. As you know, there are exemptions on the PGA TOUR for winning majors, winning THE PLAYERS, two-year exemption for a victory or two or three, depending upon the tournament. What happens with those exemption categories and the designated events? It's kind of like 20 pounds of sugar and a 10-pound bag, you know. Are there going to be more people in the exemption categories than you can fit in in the designated tournaments or has the TOUR run stats on that? Max thought maybe it was going to have to do with FedExCup points. I'm seeing some stuff in here that in a Golfweek story that I haven't digested yet, so I thought maybe you could --

PATRICK CANTLAY: I'm not sure exactly your question. Could you ask it a little differently.

Q. I'll try. There are five tournaments every year where if you win 'em you're exempt for five years.

PATRICK CANTLAY: Okay, I see what you're saying.

Q. So if you're exempt for five years --

PATRICK CANTLAY: I got it.



Q. Okay.

PATRICK CANTLAY: So I think what's really important here is not to conflate designated events with a TOUR card. So I imagine that those TOUR card exemptions will still apply, but you may not be into the designated events by way of that. Just because you're not in the designated events doesn't mean you may not be a full, card-carrying member of the PGA TOUR.

Q. So you have track A, where you have a card, but you may not qualify for the elevated events, designated events?

PATRICK CANTLAY: Right.

Q. And you got track B where you do.

PATRICK CANTLAY: Well, I wouldn't even call them track A and track B. I would think of all the designated events as having a similar, but all, all having qualifying criteria. So just because you start the year not in the first designated event, if you play well you'll be able to get into the next designated event. So it's not track A or track B necessarily. You could shuffle up or down into those tournaments or out of those tournaments even in the course of the year. But just because you're not in those tournaments you could still be a full card-carrying PGA TOUR member.

Q. So it's just that that exemption might not count for those particular designated events, depending upon how you're playing.

PATRICK CANTLAY: Correct.

Q. And in the past it didn't matter how you were playing, you got into the events that you wanted to get into.

PATRICK CANTLAY: Right. It will be more competitive to get into the best events on TOUR.

Q. Assuming -- do these changes happen without LIV? And if that's the case what kept them from happening previously, if this is the right direction to go?

PATRICK CANTLAY: Yeah, that's a good question. I think in general if a company or a product doesn't have competition the incentive to innovate is low. So now with competition it makes everyone want to look inside to see how they could make their product better, how they could do things better.

I think the TOUR's done that. I think this accomplishes that. I think it's going to make the TOUR stronger and put an emphasis on those weeks. I think it's a really good story tell and there will be a ton of good story lines of people playing into the events and playing well or people falling out of the events. I think, as you've seen with the designated events just this year, those tournament finishes have had amazing leaderboards and lots of really good golf. I think we're going to see more and more of that.

Q. Is there anything that didn't get accepted that you would have wanted to? Any change that didn't get adopted that you would have lobbied for?

PATRICK CANTLAY: I'm sure there were multiple.

Q. We'll take three.

PATRICK CANTLAY: You know, it's a collective effort, right. So I think the main thing is trying to improve the product and make it better. I think this does that.

Q. How do you think you would have accepted -- this is kind of hypothetical -- but when you came back at Pebble and Tampa, coming off your back injury and had limited status, would you have been as excited then as you might be now?

PATRICK CANTLAY: I'm sure.

Q. I'm asking you to speak for players who are lower on the Money List, if you will. Excuse me, FedExCup.

PATRICK CANTLAY: Yeah, I mean, I would have been extremely incentivized to play well to get into those events. And I think that's the great thing about this. If you get into these events, you get to play in the biggest, best events for the most amount of money. Anybody can play well and get into these tournaments.

Q. In this emerging designated, non-designated schedule, does it change the way you as a player set up your schedule and have you or do you foresee having to tell certain tournaments that you really like to play, I'm sorry, I can't do it anymore?

PATRICK CANTLAY: It definitely does. I think you see this year, this is a tournament I've never played before. But I would say one of the main reasons I'm playing is because it is designated. And so, I mean, I don't know if there's tournaments that I love that I won't play. Like this year I played Vegas, it's a tournament I played well at. So there will always be tournaments that myself and other top players view as their favorites. So it wouldn't surprise me if they continue to play those tournaments.

The other nice thing is that the amount of designated events for next year is not overly burdensome. So there will be plenty of available slots on guys' calendars to be able to play the tournaments that they love to play, even if they're not designated events.

Q. So you see it more as an add than necessarily having to subtract.

PATRICK CANTLAY: Definitely. You know, like I -- I use Travelers as a good example. Incentives run the world. And Travelers puts on a wonderful golf tournament. They have been able to attract a top, world-class field, even though they're the week after the U.S. Open.

So, competition is good. There's competition even among tournaments to attract the best players and that's not changing.

THE MODERATOR: All right, Patrick, we appreciate your time. Good luck this week.

PATRICK CANTLAY: All right, thanks.

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