

WGC Dell Technologies

Match Play

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Austin, Texas, USA

Austin Country Club

Corey Connors

Press Conference

LAURA VESCOVI: We would like to welcome Corey Connors to the virtual interview room. You're making your first start here at the World Golf Championships Dell Technologies Match Play. Let's start with some opening comments about being here in Austin and your thoughts on the format.

COREY CONNERS: Yeah, really excited to be here. It's a really elite field. Been thinking about this tournament trying to play well and earn my spot in the field, so it's awesome to be here. And as far as the format, don't play a lot of match play on TOUR, obviously, so have to remember some of the good memories in the U.S. Amateurs that I played, and playing match play in amateur golf, I feel like I've had a lot of success in that format and I'm really excited to put myself to the test this week and hopefully can win some matches.

LAURA VESCOVI: You had a chance to play a practice round here this morning at Austin Country Club. Can we get your thoughts on the course.

COREY CONNERS: Yeah, it's my first time here. It's a really awesome golf course. I really like it. It's got a lot of tricks to it. I think there's a number of risk-reward holes where you can play aggressive. Yeah, I think it's a great match play golf course. Like I said, there's a drivable hole on the back nine, a number of the par-5s are within reach, so I think it's going to be a lot of fun to play this week.

The greens stood out to me as being really challenging. There's a lot of slope on the greens, and it will be important to get yourself in the right spot on the greens to give yourself chances at birdie. Missing some of the greens in the wrong spot can be quite penalizing as well.

LAURA VESCOVI: We'll open it up to questions.

Q. What skills or type of player do you think match play sort of demand to be successful, and how different would a match play world rankings look in

your mind?

COREY CONNERS: Yeah, it would definitely -- you know, it's a different game, different beast. I think the top players would still do really well at match play. You've got to get the ball in the hole as quickly as possible. I think from my experience in the past, it favors steady players, where if you don't make a lot of mistakes, don't give away any holes, I think that's definitely going to be important.

It's a format that I've had success with in the past. Playing on difficult or tricky golf courses I think adds another element to it, where you can make some -- hit some balls in the water or make some big numbers and lose holes pretty easily. So being really steady I think is definitely something that I think I'm good at, but I think that translates really well into success in match play.

Also, it's a grind. You can -- if you make a crazy par or crazy up-and-down par or something like that and end up halving a hole, that can be a really big momentum boost for you and can put your opponent down a little bit as well.

Q. Did you see the shout-out from Presidents Cup captain Trevor Immelman when you were at Bay Hill talking about your ball striking, and anything you would be hoping to show him maybe this week?

COREY CONNERS: Yeah, I think obviously that format is match play, as well. No, just going to try and play my game and see what happens. I've spoken with Trevor a little bit over the last few weeks and months and I know he's watching, but just going to try and play as good as I can, continue the solid ball striking, hopefully that serves me well here this week.

Q. Obviously your finishes at the PLAYERS Championship and the Arnold Palmer, big confidence builders for you. Just wondering though was this already established before or after you finished tied for 10th at the Masters in October? And also, just describe your confidence level going into these big events compared to what it was going into the Masters two years ago.

COREY CONNERS: Yeah, I think I've had a number of good finishes over the last six months or so, and those have all been big confidence boosters to me. I've been



really patient and a lot of good things have happened, so definitely gained a lot of confidence and definitely have a lot of confidence right now going into a big event like this. Definitely have a lot of trust in my game, felt like I've done a lot of things well. I've continued to improve a lot of areas of my game and just kind of polishing things and the hard work's paying off, so it's great to see and definitely excited and definitely feeling confident now in this event and looking ahead to the Masters as well.

Q. That T10 finish in October, that must have been a big one for you.

COREY CONNERS: Yeah, it certainly was. I felt like I was playing well. I got off to a poor start there, so it was really great to battle back and ultimately finish in the top 10. Definitely was a highlight and hopefully can keep building off of that and get myself more chances in the coming weeks.

Q. Wondering in match play how much do you look at your opponent, play your opponent, guess what your opponent's going to do compared to obviously week-in and week-out? How much more attention do you to pay to them and how much does that go into your strategy? And then the second part is if you could just talk about your improved putting over the last month or so and what's gone into that as part of that with Danny?

COREY CONNERS: Yeah, so the first part of that is it's funny, Danny and I were talking about that in the practice round this morning. Got to be aware of what your opponent's doing, but we're going to make a plan of attack for the golf course and hopefully just stick with that.

There might be certain situations where you have to be a little more aggressive or can you play a little more conservative depending on what your partner is doing or where you stand in the match. But I think almost treat it like preparation for any other week; build a good plan and for the most part stick with that. Obviously we'll be aware of what's going on with our opponent, but I think something that I'm going to focus on is just trying to stick to my game plan and play my game and not sort of get thrown off or change my strategy too much if I can help it.

We're building a plan to try and shoot the lowest score we can on each hole basically, and if we commit to that plan and execute that plan, I think whatever happens with the opponent I'm going to have a good chance to win the match or give myself a chance.

The second part with the putting, I switched to left-hand-low or cross-handed grip end of last summer and

I've continued to build confidence with it. I found that it's been a lot more consistent getting a better roll on the ball, and yeah, just building confidence week-in and week-out.

It's definitely been a lot of hard work to get to where I am now making that change and it's been my main focus over the last, whatever, eight months or so that since making that change, and I think my caddie, Danny, we both read the greens really well and I think that's helped as well add some confidence, add some trust and it kind of allows me to hit it freely when I'm on the greens when we both agree on the break and we both kind of see the same thing, so he's added a lot of confidence to that, as well. But there's been, yeah, a combination of things, but I'm really happy with where things are at and going to keep working hard as I have been and hopefully keep seeing improvements in that, as well. But the consistency with it as opposed to years past has been really good, and it's keeping me around and getting me in the hunt.

Q. Could you explain how important is it for your career to get into these WGC events?

COREY CONNERS: Yeah, you've obviously done something really well to be here, kind of on the world stage. They're world-class events, the top players in the world. I've been fortunate to play in a number over the last few seasons and hopefully can continue that. When you're in these events you've obviously done something really well, and I've had some good play over the last few years so definitely excited to be here and I think it's huge for your career.

It gives you a chance to test yourself against the best players in the world and hopefully can have some success here this week.

Q. As a follow-up, you've played yourself into a position where you could represent Canada in the Olympics. How much is that on your radar, and if you do make it, how big of an opportunity would that be for you?

COREY CONNERS: Yeah, I've been thinking about that over the last few years, and I put myself in good position last year to make the team before it was canceled and was definitely on my radar after that to try and make the Canadian team for this summer. So it's something that I've definitely been thinking of, but just trying to focus on playing good golf and that will be a nice reward if I can continue doing what I've been doing. It's a really exciting opportunity and something that I think will be amazing if I can get on that team. It's such a cool experience and something that as a kid it wasn't really on the radar, so didn't really dream of playing in major championships and

winning major championships, playing on the PGA TOUR, but it's sort of been a new thing to have golf in the Olympics and it's a really exciting opportunity, and if I keep working hard hopefully I can be on that team.

It would mean a lot, and I know whoever else is on the team with me, we would have a great time and definitely hopefully play some good golf there. But it's definitely on my radar but got to take it week by week and just keep playing good golf.

Q. When you've had such good results in back-to-back weeks, where is your kind of comfort level as it relates to just the process? You were talking about the process before; are those examples of just things really working well for you right now, just collectively and does that comfort carry over no matter what golf course you're playing on?

COREY CONNERS: Yeah, I think it does. I've been playing well for a long period of time and sometimes just don't see the results in tournaments, but over the last number of events I have found things that have come together a little more consistent I've been hitting the ball a little bit better, putting a little bit better, which is a good combination to shoot lower scores. But definitely something that I am not surprised by and I'm definitely more comfortable, to your point, every week, no matter what golf course we're on, you got to do the same stuff and every time I go back home to Florida and play golf, gain so much confidence, shoot low scores and try and bring that mindset of making a bunch of birdie, giving myself a lot of chances to these events and that's worked out well the last few weeks particularly and I've been able to give myself a chance on Sunday.

Q. You were talking about taking the game traveling between two golf courses. Obviously this is a different format this week in match play, do you take much stock in how you performed in match play events in the past, you look up your run at the U.S. Amateur a couple years ago, for example, like you beat Scottie Scheffler, Jon Rahm as well in that, who of course is playing this week too, do you take much stock in like, hey, I can play pretty well when it comes down to a mano-a-mano situation?

COREY CONNERS: Yeah, I think so. Definitely it's a format that I'm excited about. I think my success in the past, although it's a number of years ago, I think that I have a lot of good memories from that and it's going to be fun to be playing at home typically playing a match against buddies or whatever, so I have some experience in that and it's definitely exciting, I'm still trying to play well and like I said before, just stick to my game plan, try and shoot as

low a score I can and that will hopefully serve me well that -- I found especially in those U.S. Amateurs on difficult golf courses my sort of steady play just kind of wore out my opponent a lot of those matches where it wasn't, nothing was really flashy but it was just really solid golf, didn't make any mistakes and always left myself in the right spot and was able to pick some moments to be aggressive when I was feeling it and ultimately had some success there. So try and draw on some of those experiences and hopefully can win some matches here this week.

Q. Guessing you won't tell us too much about their weaknesses, but can you sort of handicap the strengths of the three other guys in your group?

COREY CONNERS: Yeah, obviously other great players, everyone in the field here is a world-class golfer and no matter who I'm playing it's going to be a tough test, but that will -- kind of different games, Matt Wolff is kind of a power player, he will definitely be out driving me and have some shorter clubs into the holes, but hopefully I can hit close to the fairways or keep it down the middle and I feel like he is a little less consistent off the tee, so that might open some doors for me.

Math Fitzpatrick got the better of me in the U.S. Amateur in 2013 in the semi-finals, really steady player, kind of similar games, he's a really good putter, so he'll be a tough opponent. Obviously Spieth, everyone knows quite a bit about him, I feel like our games are quite similar as well, he's probably one of the better putters, his game's been trending in the right direction as of late and but so has mine, so it will be a lot of fun and I know all those guys pretty well and it will be a tall task to beat them, but I'm looking forward to it, it will be quite fun.

LAURA VESCOVI: Okay, thank you so much, Corey and good luck this week.

COREY CONNERS: Thanks.

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