

WGC Dell Technologies Match Play

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Austin, Texas, USA

Austin Country Club

Matthew Fitzpatrick

Press Conference

MICHAEL BALIKER: We would like to welcome Matthew Fitzpatrick to the virtual interview room here at the World Golf Championships Dell Technologies Match Play. This is your fifth appearance here at Austin Country Club in this event. And then you're also entering the week with four consecutive top-10 finishes, including a T9 at THE PLAYERS Championship.

Wanted to get a few opening comments from you on your recent form, how it's been going and maybe how your game fits this golf course under obviously a very different format.

MATTHEW FITZPATRICK: Yeah, I'm looking forward to the week. Not really had too much success here, unfortunately. It's a strange golf course; the front nine's very different to the back nine. And it can get windy here, so it can be quite tough. So yeah, it's going to be an interesting week.

I feel like I've been playing well recently, so hopefully just bring it to this course and improve on previous years' finishes.

MICHAEL BALIKER: We'll take questions.

Q. It's come to our attention that you collect your own stats pretty extensively and create your own sort of shot dispersion, etcetera. Can you run us through that process and what made you think to do it and maybe where you got the idea from.

MATTHEW FITZPATRICK: Yeah, I've been doing my stats for a long time. Over the lockdown in the U.K. back in May last year, back in March last year, I switched over to Edoardo Molinari, who you probably know because he plays on the European Tour full-time, as well, so he's a very busy man and he created his own program, if you will, that does anything you want to record. Anything you want to record, he can fit it in. He's a genius, basically. One of that was tracking dispersion.



So we know what my strokes gained to my target is rather than just strokes gained to the pin. Obviously if you're aiming four, five yards left or right each time, but you are pulling it to two yards left of the flag, there's a six-yard difference there on your aim. So it might look good on your strokes gained approach, but that actually to your target you're still six yards away. So it just made it obviously more specific to myself, seeing my own patterns and just helps me sort of take on different golf courses and plot my way around a bit better.

Q. It wasn't as long ago as like Pat Goss with the economics major whatnot, at Northwestern, it was more recent?

MATTHEW FITZPATRICK: No, no, I mean the dispersion stuff, yeah, in March. I thought about that for a long time, just never had the ability to do it with the program I've used before. But I've done my stats since I was 14 effectively on different programs. So yeah, it's not a new thing.

Q. It works for you? You're seeing the results?

MATTHEW FITZPATRICK: Yeah, so far, so good. Yeah.

Q. Question about what makes match play golf unique. You've had a pretty long experience at this point in your career; you've won, you've beat some good opponents, but I'm really curious about two guys who have beaten you, Patrick Reed and Rory McIlroy, and whether the experience of playing those guys and seeing what they do uniquely in match play has taught you anything about the format.

MATTHEW FITZPATRICK: Not particularly. Not particularly. I've only played the Match Play at this golf course. As I said, I feel like it's quite a funky place to play. I don't really know what it suits in particular, what part of the game, but I feel like when I played those guys I was a different player to what I am now and last year and the year before. So there's obviously a little bit of that in there.

But match play is -- at the end of the day you can shoot 2-over and win every game all the way to the final. That's just the way it is. And someone can shoot 4-, 5-under and lose. It is that game. So you just got to sort of -- in my opinion it's just about beating the guy in front of you, and if



they're making a bogey you make a par. If they make a double you just make a bogey. You just do enough to get by effectively and get yourself over the finish line.

Q. So beyond those tactics there's nothing psychologically that you would do different concerning your opponent when it comes to the match play format?

MATTHEW FITZPATRICK: Not from the outset, no. Obviously if you are a few down and you need to be a bit more aggressive then you're going to start firing at pins, trying to make birdies to make up the difference. But particularly if you are kind of -- if you're coasting and you're well up going into the back nine or whatever it is, then you just try and make life difficult for them, fairway, green, and just sort of try and eat away the holes, really.

Q. You talked about your history at this event but when you look at the sort of the pool play version I'm sure every TOUR pro just wants to go 3-0 and not even thinking about losing, but statistically less than half of the guys who have advanced have at least one loss or a tie. Has your thinking on pool play sort of evolved since 2015 when this event first started using the format?

MATTHEW FITZPATRICK: Yeah, I would say so. I was speaking to a lot of guys this week about it, and I've got like mixed views on it. I think it's great for the fans that you can have this group stage. Obviously Justin Thomas loses to someone that's well outside the rankings, he goes home on day one, it's not great for TV, it's not great for people at home, but obviously he could lose his first game and go through and win the whole tournament. And I think that's great for the TV. And I think it's great for the fans that want to come and watch the event, I think that's fantastic and part of it.

But I think in terms of the players, I think there's a lot of guys that kind of just want to do straight knockout and just get on with it, and if you lose, you lose, and you win, you're on to the next one.

But for me I don't -- either way, really, works for me. I don't really have a preference. I quite like being able to lose the first round and sort of have a chance at redemption the next two days, obviously. But guys who win the first round probably think the opposite. So, yeah, it doesn't really bother me too much.

Q. My guess is you played just straight knockout predominantly growing up. Would you rather it be just that?

MATTHEW FITZPATRICK: I don't really have a preference, to be honest. It really doesn't bother me. I think getting to play three matches is kind of fun. At least you get to play in a bit more match play in general anyway. So I don't really -- I wouldn't say I have a preference.

Q. What was the biggest surprise or biggest takeaway from the stats? What did they show you that maybe surprised you?

MATTHEW FITZPATRICK: Nothing really -- nothing massively surprising, I guess. I don't know. I think because I've done it for such a long time now there's nothing, everything's kind of the same. The weaknesses are kind of the same; they don't really vary too much. And it's more about just chipping away at them and just making small gains. I'm not just going to all of a sudden go from .2 approach to one full shot average a round. That's just out-of-this-world improvement. So I wouldn't say there's anything that stood out in particular.

Q. Working with Edoardo, can you illustrate how it's maybe changed things or helped things?

MATTHEW FITZPATRICK: Yeah, it's helped me massively because the stuff that we're recording is very specific to me, it's very specific to all sorts of things. I mean, you name it and we're probably recording it and we're probably keeping track of it. Wind direction, wind strength, grass type, the greens, speed of greens. Yeah, he's got it in his system.

In a few years time hopefully when we've got all this data we can really sort of dive into it. Right now, for example, we might only have -- I don't know this for a fact, but 20 shots on a downwind right-to-left. So that's not really a big sample size; obviously you can't really look too much into it. But I feel like we have got a lot of good stuff from last year and obviously good stuff from the start of this year and we're always looking to see where my game's at and where we can make improvements.

Q. What is the biggest impact on how you allocate your practice time?

MATTHEW FITZPATRICK: That is a big thing. Yeah, that's a big thing. I'm a big believer in sort of having good structured practice when I'm at home and off weeks and even here at tournament weeks. There's no point if you're the world's best iron player but you don't know it and you're just spending all day hitting irons, there's no real point of that one; you need to improve your putting.

So yeah, it's -- I really, I think that's helped plenty, as well, to sort of structure the practice better.

Q. Could you offer us a few thoughts on your opponent tomorrow in Jordan Spieth. It strikes me that both of you have not been strangers to leaderboards in recent weeks and obviously he's a Texan in Texas.

MATTHEW FITZPATRICK: Yeah. Although I'm supposedly the higher seed, I feel a bit of the underdog in this one tomorrow. But he's played here plenty. He knows this course pretty well, I think, from his college days, and obviously he's going to have that home support, which is a little -- it certainly helps. And he's a good player, regardless. He's obviously -- we have seen the last few weeks he's playing -- his game is where he wants it and I saw a quote from him, he says he's never been so confident since his great run of form a few years ago, which is a big statement to make and I'm sure he believes it because he does have a great mentality. It's going to be -- it's going to be an interesting game and I'm looking forward to it.

Q. Presumably it's the sort of match that you would really relish though.

MATTHEW FITZPATRICK: Yeah, definitely. Definitely it is. For me you want to play against the best guys. You want to play against the guys that have been there and done it and continue to do so and continue to compete, and hopefully I can go out there and sort of we can have a really good game and see where it takes us. But you definitely want to play guys like Jordan Spieth.

Q. I noticed you posted a picture yesterday of yourself and Bryson, nice fun picture. Just wondering how do you get along with him? I know you had some comments when you spoke to us at Wentworth last year about his game, but how do you two get along?

MATTHEW FITZPATRICK: We hate each other. It's a really nasty thing between us. (Laughing.) No, it's fine. Listen, we spoke a few times since the whole thing anyway and I made my comments, and that was my opinion at the time. I think they were definitely taken out of context, there's no doubt about that, and yeah, we talked about it since, we talked about it yesterday, and yeah, there's no problems between us, it's obviously just a bit of a media thing that kind of people want it to turn into something. But, yeah, I wouldn't fancy my chances in a fight anyway, so...

Q. He said at the time he took your comments as a compliment anyway, so there was never really any bad feeling between the pair of you.

MATTHEW FITZPATRICK: No, not at all. And that was my whole post yesterday, because he said that I would be happy to help so, you know, I asked him, I asked for some tips and so there you go (laughing).

Q. What were the tips? How many protein shakes has he got you on?

MATTHEW FITZPATRICK: No, no, no. I was just asking him about his clubs and his speed training and stuff and I've been doing something similar and looking into it anyways before my comments that I made last year, so it's not -- it's nothing too new to me, it's just quite interesting just to hear his thoughts and how he's going about things to improve his swing speed and get longer.

Q. Have you been hitting the gym bulking up? You don't look as if you've been piling on the pounds.

MATTHEW FITZPATRICK: Not yet, not yet. I need to wait for the off-season. Or another lockdown, I think.

Q. Hopefully that's not going to happen.

MATTHEW FITZPATRICK: Exactly.

MICHAEL BALIKER: Thanks for the time, Matt. Best of luck this week.

MATTHEW FITZPATRICK: Thanks, guys.

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