

# WGC Dell Technologies Match Play

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Austin, Texas, USA

Austin Country Club

## Billy Horschel

Press Conference

THE MODERATOR: We'd like to welcome the defending champion of the WGC-Dell Technologies Match Play, Billy Horschel, into the interview room. As we were walking in, you mentioned you didn't get to come into the interview room last year after winning, so welcome. How does it feel to be back on the property here at Austin Country Club?

BILLY HORSCHTEL: Yeah, it feels great. When we moved here from the West Coast, fell in love with the golf course. I think it's a perfect golf course to hold a match play event on, and then everyone knows how great the town of Austin is and the people are that come out and support this event tremendously. Yeah, it's always fun to come back here.

The weather is going to be great this year. We got through it last night unscathed, thankfully. And so looking forward to another great week, and hopefully maybe being able to duplicate what I did last year.

### **Q. You've won other events before, but was this one more grueling physically or mentally?**

BILLY HORSCHTEL: I'm going to say physically. I got home Sunday night, and Monday and Tuesday and even into Wednesday, I was exhausted. I remember people texting me, I was responding back to text messages, and I remember talking with Tiger and being like, man, I'm exhausted. Seven rounds in five days. Yes, we know how long it can be, but I was just absolutely wiped out both physically and mentally, but just the physical part of it, just playing so much golf.

Probably doesn't help the week before I had a week off and then before that I had three weeks on. It's just one of these weeks where it can be a mental challenge or it can be a physical challenge or it can be both, depending on how well you're playing and some of the matches you've got to go through.

### **Q. Did you still feel it at the Masters? I know that was a week later.**



BILLY HORSCHTEL: No, I think what may have just happened is that my prep the week before the Masters, I just didn't do nearly as much just because I was just exhausted, tired, sort of a little burnt out from the game of golf. Sort of took it easy the week before the Masters. Maybe only started practicing two or three days before Augusta, because that Augusta stretch starts another three-week stretch of golf for me.

Obviously I made the cut at Augusta and I played okay. But yeah, everyone is different how they deal with it and how they're affected by it.

### **Q. Can a player play their way into form in match play if they've been a little bit out of it prior?**

BILLY HORSCHTEL: I think they can. I think it allows you to not have to be perfect. In a stroke play format, one or two holes in a 36-hole -- in the first 36 holes could cost you from making the cut, making it to the weekend, or it could even cost you from having a chance to really contend on the weekend.

In this format you can have those one or two bad holes and only be down one hole, and you can get your way back into it a lot easier. I think it frees you up a little bit. You're not worried about trying to shoot a score. You're just trying to play that one hole the best you can right now, right then and now, and then move on to the next hole.

I think it allows you to play your way into form if you're not in form.

### **Q. Along those lines, if somebody came to you and said I need your best one or two pieces of advice on this particular format, whether it's psychological, practical, what would you say?**

BILLY HORSCHTEL: Oh, man. I think people get too much involved in trying to play the player, in my opinion. At least that's my own experience.

I've gone out there and just tried to play a great round of golf. I'm trying to birdie every hole. But there are times



when depending on the situation and what your opponent is doing, you do have to play the player a little bit.

But I think if you're more or less going out there trying to play a solid round of golf, trying to birdie as many holes as you possibly can, I think you've got a better chance of being more successful that way instead of focusing so much on what that other player is doing. Because sometimes a guy will hit it to 15 feet and you're like, man, I've got to hit this one close, too. Well, he's not guaranteed to make that 15-footer. Then you hit a bad shot and you wind up making bogey and the guy just has an easy two-putt par.

I think for me, I've learned I go out there and play the best I can on that hole and depending on what my player is doing, I adjust.

**Q. Your whole career of playing match play, is there one moment you look back on, best result or had a good moment or whatever?**

BILLY HORSCHEL: There's quite a few. I think the one I enjoyed a lot was 2007 Walker Cup. Rickie Fowler and I were playing Rory McIlroy and Johnny Caldwell in the Sunday morning foursomes and we had gotten off to -- we hadn't played well the first few holes and Johnny and Rory had played really well. And I think we were 4-down after 4, but Buddy Marucci, our captain, tried to come over to talk to us to sort of get us going, and I sort of brushed him off and put my arm around Rickie, and I said, hey, we're good, buddy, just let us be.

We made the turn at all square, and then I think we won the next couple holes and wound up winning 2 & 1 or something. It was one of those fun little matches that you get down early, you know you haven't played great, you know you're going to be fine, you know you're going to wind up winning this match, and we were able to do that. That's a really cool -- one of those memorable matches.

**Q. If you watch a 20 handicapper playing in a C flight, a bunker shot might freak him out in a match or even a pitch shot from a tight lie. At this level what's the shot that freaks you out?**

BILLY HORSCHEL: There's a lot. I mean, we're talking about THE PLAYERS Championship hitting into a 25-miles-per-hour wind on 17 on -- Saturday wasn't very fun. I had to play that hole twice, and I live there and I've seen those conditions a lot.

Every player is different. I've seen guys who have somewhat of the chipping yips out here and they've got a tight lie, and you know they're not going to hit a good chip

or you know they're a little nervous and they could hit a bad chip.

Shoot, I saw Patton Kizzire, he was 5- after seven holes, the third round at PLAYERS and he hit a shank on 17 with a pitching wedge in his hand and there wasn't very much wind.

I think everybody has got their own little demons in there that -- depending on the shot or depending on the hole or how it's designed or whatever it may be. I'm not going to tell you what mine are, though.

**Q. You've been out here on TOUR for a while and seen a lot of stuff. Have you had a chance to play Southern Hills in championship condition or in a major championship, or have you had a chance to play there at all?**

BILLY HORSCHEL: I have never played there. I've only seen it on TV. I'm going to go do a little scouting trip Monday and Tuesday after Zurich to go check it out.

I think I watched the -- they had the senior players there or some senior event there last year, some major, and I watched it on TV. And I know they made some changes and it looked pretty great on TV, the changes they had made. So I'm excited to go check it out. Obviously it's a course that Tiger has won at, Retief Goosen has won at. It's been a course that has some really great champions on. And I think this PGA coming up, I think you're going to see someone who's a quality player win there again.

**Q. What do you hope to get out of a scouting trip like that?**

BILLY HORSCHEL: I'm more or less just going to go check it out, see some of the -- see the course, see the holes. I'm not getting to the PGA until Monday. Usually I get to a major Sunday before, but I'm not going to get there until Monday night. I'm going to go see a friend in London and watch him play his last football match, so I'm going to come in Monday night. So I'm just going two days early to sort of get a little prep work in the sense of the shots I may need to hit so I can practice, and then I'm going to have three weeks off.

**Q. What's your favorite game to play at home on the golf course? Do you have a game you like to play?**

BILLY HORSCHEL: No. I mean, to tell you the truth, I don't play a lot when I'm home. When I do play, I'm just playing with some buddies, some regular buddies. We're just playing basic Nassau. If we get a group of five TOUR players, I love the game of Wolf. I love that very much. I

think that that game goes to show you who has the belief in themselves to go out on their own, and then also who has the talent to back up that belief in themselves to handle going against four other TOUR players and trying to win the hole and hopefully not lose it.

**Q. The reason I ask is obviously match play is this week, there's a team event at Zurich; do you see a spot or maybe an opportunity for a week where you guys play Wolf or you guys play Skins or something a little bit more out of the box than just match play?**

BILLY HORSCHTEL: Yeah, there's -- listen, we play one match play event a year. We play one team format event a year. I play two. I play Shark Shootout, the QBE Shootout, and I love it, I enjoy the team aspect of it. But yeah, I'm sure we could find a week or two in there where we could create some money games like we have at home that are fun for the viewing and the spectators. You do get some of that smack talk out there.

I know they've tried to do that in The Match, but it doesn't work out because you've got to have guys that are natural at doing that, that are accustomed to doing that, and that they don't take offense if someone sort of does say something. I think they've had a couple of those guys on there, but I think their opponents haven't been that way, so that person can't go ahead and talk smack because the other person is sort of going to take offense to it and have an issue with it.

I think if you got like a Kisner and myself or I look at like a Matt Every and a Kevin Kisner, there's a couple guys out here that they can go ahead and talk some smack -- I would use a different word -- and the viewers would be very entertained by it. And those two guys are still going to be friends, they're not going to take any ill will over anything that's said on the golf course.

**Q. Your win here last year, did it rekindle your career, enthusiasm for your career? I know you've always had that, but --**

BILLY HORSCHTEL: No. I mean, I've worked just as hard now as I ever have. Yeah, I hadn't won since 2018, hadn't won an individual event since 2017. Golf out here is pretty tough. Just some stuff that I was doing at home in practice just sort of wasn't translating over.

I think if anything this win just -- not that I really need it, but just sort of validated what I believe in myself and what I can accomplish out here, and I'm still not done accomplishing anywhere close to what I want to.

Hopefully when I do look back at my career, hopefully this

will be that win that said, hey, this is what got you to that next level of winning more WGC events. You know, win the BMW PGA and the DP World Tour, winning hopefully a major, a couple majors, winning a PLAYERS Championship, winning another FedExCup, getting on the Ryder Cup team. Hopefully this is sort of just -- I guess is the foray point into me coming into my prime as a golfer.

I guess I was more or less coming into my prime in my mid 30s instead of my early 20s and late 20s like everyone else is doing out here now.

**Q. Your memories on The Match, you kind of controlled all the way through winning 2 & 1, and your thoughts on Scottie Scheffler's rise since then?**

BILLY HORSCHTEL: That match was ugly. It wasn't pretty to watch. I felt bad for all the viewers at home watching because it was an ugly match to watch. Only one birdie made between us. There were some really bad golf played, but I seem to do well in crappy golf. I seem to figure out how to get it done.

I said it last year. I think Friday or maybe Saturday, Scottie is an unbelievable talent, and at the time I said he's going to win a lot of tournaments out here, it's just a matter of time. With the record he had as a junior, with the record he had as a college player and as quickly as he's gotten out to the PGA TOUR and the success that he's had so far with contending in majors, it was just a matter of time before he got over the hump.

Did I think it was going to take almost another year for him to get his first victory? No, I thought it would be quicker. But obviously we've all seen what he's done so far with two victories in his last three starts, I believe. He's an unbelievable talent. He's the next generation. He's there with Sam Burns, two really good guys and they're both friends of each other, and obviously Sam is a really good friend of mine. But they're going to be challenging the Justin Thomases, the Brooks Koepkas, the Rory McIlroys, the Jon Rahms. They're a couple years behind those guys obviously in age, and honestly I see Scottie winning a major and I see Sam Burns winning a major.

**Q. So if I'm taking the implication correctly, you think you're a better smack talker than anyone who's appeared on The Match, first off?**

BILLY HORSCHTEL: Phil is pretty good. But like when I say talk smack, I'm like, I'm looking for these guys to be like, hey, don't shank that 7-iron into the water over there or hey, that five-footer, that one slides a little bit more to the right. Where's some of that that you hear that I'm sure when you play with your buddies at home, you guys are



saying that to each other and you've got some money on the line. I know I'm saying that.

I became a mentally tough golfer playing against Matt Every in college. Playing against him on a regular basis and hearing what he has to -- what he's telling me before I'm trying to hit a golf shot, trying to get inside my head? You've got to perform because the last thing you want to do is hit the shot that he's saying, and now he's going to come back at you even harder because you did exactly what he was trying to get you to do.

Like that's where I'm like, where is some of this on The Match? This is what the viewers at home want to see in my opinion. Yes, they can see two guys play each other or a team format any other time, but they want to hear some smack talk in between guys like -- he hits a bad shot, like gosh, that sucked. Whatever it may be.

I'm not good, I'm not good, I'm not going to lie, I'm not great at it, but you get me in a situation at the right time, I can come up with some witty things. I'm not the wittiest guy in the world. I know that for a fact. That's why Kevin Kisner, Matt Every, there's some other guys that are out there that are really good, but I'd be really good at playing with those guys and handling whatever they said.

**Q. You mentioned Kisner and Every. Give me a few other names of people that the average golf fan may not know who are really witty and really good at that kind of thing?**

BILLY HORSCHEL: I think you could get a Henrik Stenson out there, he's got a dry sense of humor and he can come up with some pretty good things. I haven't played with a lot of guys -- don't play with them a lot in practice rounds and money games. I don't play with a lot of guys that -- obviously there's not a lot of people that live in Ponte Vedra TOUR player-wise, but you put me on the spot with names and I can come up with two that I know for a fact -- Brian Harmon would be really good. Man, I know I'm forgetting one somewhere that's really good, as well, somewhere around my age. I don't know. I mean, I can guarantee you you ask Kis, he could come up with about five or six names that would be really good for that stuff.

Pat Perez, obviously Pat just talks a lot and Pat can be in there with those boys and have a few things to say. I'm sure you could put Harry Higgs in there. Harry would be really good. Harry would be entertaining and have some stuff to say.

Like I said, I think it's great to get the big names in those matches because that's what's going to draw the viewership's eyes, but I think they want to see some other

stuff. And when guys talk about they're going to talk smack to each other on the golf course during the match and then actual match happens and nothing is said, like it's sort of a letdown. It really is a letdown because I think the viewers would be really entertained from that.

I know I'm entertained when I watch the NFL stuff -- not the games, but you watch like Inside the NFL or the Hard Knocks and you see the guys sort of going back and forth at each other when they're playing on the football field, the corner backs going after wide receivers and what they're saying to each other.

**Q. There's a number of guys who are basically skipping a World Golf Championship this week. How much of it do you think, without reading their minds, is format, and how much with just where it is in the schedule with the Masters coming up?**

BILLY HORSCHEL: I think it's half and half. I know there's a lot of guys -- a lot of guys still play here, but they don't like the format. They don't like the pool play format. They'd rather go back to the knockout stages. But I think this pool play format has been pretty successful. If I'm Michael Dell and his team, last thing I want is Rory McIlroy and Justin Thomas and Jon Rahm and Viktor Hovland all being knocked out the first day of the match.

It's great that you have the pool play. You've got three days, you give the fans three days to come out and see golf.

I think the other portion of it is the schedule. A lot of guys have played -- for me, I played Honda, Bay Hill, PLAYERS. I get a week off and then I play this week, I get one more week off and I play three more events after that.

I do think schedule-wise and in the run-up to this event and then what is on the other side of this event, I think that does play a factor in not playing. Because like I said, you can play honestly seven rounds in five days. That's a lot of golf. We're athletes and we're trained well and we play a lot, but at the end of the day it's still a lot of golf to play over five days.

**Q. Just think if you had to carry your own bag; that would be brutal.**

BILLY HORSCHEL: Oh, I'd be all for that because then even the guys who are in better shape would have a better chance. Possibly, who knows.

**Q. If you were the Ryder Cup captain or even the Presidents Cup captain this year, how much stock would you put into this event and why?**

BILLY HORSCHER: I wouldn't put nearly as much stock as I think -- I'm not throwing anyone under the bus here, but as some of the people in the media put a lot of stock in this event. Because at the end of the day it's match play, and there's only one day where you play by yourself, and everything else is a team, whether it's four-ball or foursomes.

I would put more stock in a Zurich event in my opinion, how well do you play with a partner, how well do you play alternate-shot. That is where I would put more stock in. Not to toot my own horn, I've played really well with a couple different partners at Zurich. I've won with Scott Piercy, finished fourth with Sam Burns last year in our first time together. If I'm a betting man, I'd put a lot of money that we're going to win that event, Sam and I, in the next five years as long as he doesn't kick me to the curb as his partner, because I think that event goes to show that you can play with many different type of players. Obviously you get to pick who you get to play with, you get to play with your friends, but that format just, I think, shows more of what I think a captain would look at and how well he can be paired up with a player.

Same way as I played the QBE Shootout with multiple different people, and I've had success with multiple different people in the QBE Shootout. Yes, it's less in the importance factor and it's more laid back, but it still goes to show that you can be paired with different players of different skill level and talent than what you usually bring to the table.

I think this event in general gets overweighed a little bit because it's match play and it's a single event. But when I'm looking at the points system, there's only one point playing by yourself and then there's four rounds or whatever it is where you're playing with a partner.

Yes, it is overweighed.

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