

Zurich Classic of New Orleans

Tuesday, April 20, 2021

Avondale, Louisiana, USA

TPC Louisiana

Billy Horschel

Sam Burns

Press Conference

DOUG MILNE: We would like to welcome Billy Horschel and Sam Burns to the virtual interview room here at the Zurich Classic of New Orleans. You're making your 10th start, two-time winner here in the event both in the individual side as well as on the team side. Obviously a place special to you. Just some comments on being back here and playing with Sam this year.

BILLY HORSCHTEL: Yeah, I think I've said it for a long time. Whenever I come here, I get off the plane, it feels like a second home. I've gotten to have some really good friends here. We have our regular routine of going out to dinner certain nights at certain restaurants and just, it's a nice relaxing atmosphere that I love to experience, and the food's unbelievable, the fans are great. They really welcome all the players with open arms. And then this year, a native Louisiana guy on my team can only enhance my chances of hopefully winning this for a third time.

DOUG MILNE: Sam, Louisiana native, obviously special to you. You're making your third start in the event. Just some thoughts on being back here and playing with Billy this year.

SAM BURNS: Yeah, I always love coming back to my home state to play. I don't get to do it very often so it's a real joy for me to have friends and family be able to come down, but also getting to be good friends with Billy, and obviously his past success here and his resume speaks for itself. So we're looking forward to a great week and just enjoying the atmosphere.

DOUG MILNE: One question for each of you about your season so far. Sam, we'll start with you. Several top-10 finishes, highlighted by your third-place finish at Riviera. Kind of assess the state of your game as you're heading into the week.

SAM BURNS: Yeah, I think we got off to a good start this year. I think just continuing, trying to improve and peak at the right times as the season goes on. It's always a work



in progress. We're always trying to get better and find ways to improve our game, so I think that's just kind of the road I'm on right now.

DOUG MILNE: All right. Billy, talk about your season. How you're feeling coming into the week.

BILLY HORSCHTEL: My game's been in a really good spot, I think, for the majority of this year. It doesn't always mean you're going to get the results you want. It was nice to get that victory at the WGC match play. I knew a victory was coming. I just didn't know when. But there are certain parts of my game that we have been really focusing on over the last few years and it's nice to see those results sort of come to fruition, and we still got a long season left, a lot of golf left to be played, so still just trying to fine tune, tweak little things here and there, just to maintain that consistency week-in and week-out.

DOUG MILNE: We'll open it up to questions.

Q. Sam, you've really progressed up the world rankings and everything from, I guess, 170-something at one point last year to now you're in the top 100. Talk about the progression you try to make in your game and also the, a win on the PGA TOUR seems to be the last major step. How much is that something that's in your focus? How much are you focused on that or just trying to maybe not put yourself in that kind of stressful situation worrying about it?

SAM BURNS: Well, I think that's why we work so hard and that's what we practice for is to put ourselves in those situations. So I think for me the more often I can put myself in that position the more comfortable I'll become. I think just trying to learn from each of those experiences. And the unique thing about the game of golf is it will teach you a lot if you let it, and so just trying to take a step back and trying to figure out, okay, what did I learn from this experience that can help me moving forward? So I think for me just trying to continue to put myself in contention.

Q. Curious a little bit about age difference there and obviously from rival SEC schools. Where did the friendship or the desire to play with each other start?



BILLY HORSCHTEL: Yeah, I think I've been fortunate enough to have partner in Scott Piercy that I've been successful with, but I've been wanting to always switch things up. I always like to keep things fresh, and Sam, I've gotten to know Sam a little bit over the last few years and he started working with Mark Horton, my stats guy, and then Bhrett McCabe and we have obviously similar team members, and Travis Perkins is a really good friend of mine. And talked with Trav, and he didn't have a partner, and I was thinking about switching things up and I thought it was a really good situation for me to add on and hopefully add things to my success of bringing in someone from Louisiana to my team. Like, I need a little bit more luck to get that third victory. So hopefully this gets it done.

Q. Did you consult Mark with just stats for what might make an ideal partner? Were there any stats that pointed to Sam as being a good pairing or just more about the relationship?

BILLY HORSCHTEL: I think being in this format for the last few years, I know what kind of partner I need for the holes that are going to be hitting shots on, and Sam fit that profile to a T, and there's certain things in his game that he does really well. He's a really good putter. He drives it a long way. I mean, I think I saw -- obviously I'm not old. I'm 34, but.

Q. I'm older than you are.

BILLY HORSCHTEL: I know that. But the Ryan Palmer method is a really good method of getting some younger guys going forward. So with Sam being 24, I believe, so I've got a young partner for a long time now, as long as he doesn't kick me to the curb.

Q. In the last one you played two rounds with a young guy that's been playing well last week, Will Zalatoris. What did you see in his game that's allowed him to have so much success this season?

BILLY HORSCHTEL: I think when you see Will's game, he's an unbelievable good ball-striker. He's got a really good head on his shoulders. He thinks well about shots on the golf course, knows when to be aggressive, knows when to sort of back off a little bit. But I think the thing that sticks out to me is just his ball-striking capabilities and if you're able to strike your golf ball out here to the level that he is, you're going to have success and I think just the confidence he's built over the last year has led to the success he's had out here on the PGA TOUR so quickly.

Q. Billy, just in terms of strategy, how will you guys go about it? You touched on some of the, you mentioned

some holes that Sam can help you out on. If you could maybe expand on that a little bit and just compare and contrast the difference, dissecting a course in terms of strategy versus this week versus when you do it in a regular week.

BILLY HORSCHTEL: I think, I mean, dissecting a golf course this week is no different than what I would do or what we do as a team any other week, but now you factor in that there's going to be two days where you're going to have to play an alternate shot format, and then from there you got to decide what holes you're going to take. So you look at the advantages, the strengths and weaknesses, of the players on the team, and I've always felt like, or at least every time I played here, I've always taken the odd holes. I just, I like that. That's what fits my game very well, playing the par-3s, the difficult par-3s, are something I, if you look at my stats, I do very well. Sam does a really good job with some short irons to wedge shots and he puts it really well. And then certain shots on par-5s that his length can be an advantage is a massive key.

So there is certain things you can look at, but it's not diving too deep into the hole, because at the end of the day, the stats can say, hey, you should be playing these holes and this guy should be playing this hole, but you got to feel comfortable with the holes that you each have selected in the alternate shot format.

Q. Sam, just how much alternate shot have you played in your life? I imagine it's some but probably not a ton.

SAM BURNS: Yeah, a little bit. Kind of to add on what Billy was saying, I think strategy in this format is very fluid as well because when you're out there and you're both playing your own ball, if he is in a really good spot, I might play a little more aggressive or if I'm not in a great spot he may play a little more conservative, so it's always changing. That's the cool thing about this event is we get certain situations that we don't usually get to take advantage of or get to play for, so I think that's also a factor in here.

Q. I'm more curious about this matchup from a personality standpoint. Sam, I know you're a little bit more mild-mannered on the course. Billy, you're obviously the emotional one in the relationship, like?

BILLY HORSCHTEL: Why am I emotional? I don't do anything on the golf course that comes across that way. (Laughing) I'm joking. Obviously, I'm joking with you.

Q. I've seen you take out a bag a couple of times and a putter here and there. But I just want to know how that relationship works and do you see it working to your



benefit or is it just one of those events where you don't even think about it?

SAM BURNS: Yeah, I think Billy and I are pretty similar in the fact that we both have pretty tough skin. We can kind of bust each other a little bit and we know it's not personal. We can laugh it off. So I think that's a good thing to have in this event. We can go out there and have a good time. We enjoy getting to hang out and just kind of cutting up, so nonetheless, we'll at least have a good time out there.

BILLY HORSCHTEL: Yeah, I think when you look at teams and the situations, I think it's, too much is given to the personalities and -- not the personalities, but the emotional side. Like, I think it's great when you have someone who, I guess, I am the fiery guy. I've always been the fiery guy. I'm fine being the fiery guy. And then Sam does a really good job of being this mild manner. You watch him on TV, he's very even-keeled. And so there's situations where his even-keeledness can help me and there's other situations where when we need to get it going or we got to, we're playing a really great stretch of holes, like, that emotion that I carry can help us continue on that great play for further holes. So I think sometimes, I think it's great to have a little yin and yang, and I've always had that with the majority of my partners I've played with, whether it be in this format or maybe say the QBE Shoot-Out or even CVS Charity Classic. So it's something I enjoy. I enjoy playing with people that are different than me in certain aspects. But there's a lot of things that Sam and I have in common that we do very well and I think you have to have a little bit of commonality to at least be able to enjoy 18 holes on the golf course with someone you're playing with.

Q. Sam, being a LSU guy, being a Louisiana guy, how much of a sense of comfort is it just to be playing golf on Louisiana soil this week?

SAM BURNS: Yeah, it's great. Like I said earlier, I always look forward to coming to this event every year and playing in Louisiana. LSU is only 45 minutes or so away, and so getting to spend a few years down there, I made a lot of friends and got to know a lot of people that are close to this event. So, yeah, it's, you know, it's like Billy said, you get here and you just have that feeling of comfort and just the sense of it just feels right.

Q. Billy, you're 12th in the Ryder Cup standings. This being a Ryder Cup year, how much is this, do you see think of this in the back of your head as being a chance to showcase your skills for the team competition part?

And, for Sam, a little bit too, have you thought of wanting to help Billy in that goal of trying to make that first Ryder Cup

team?

BILLY HORSCHTEL: Yeah, I think my success in some team events and, like I said, over the past years have shown the type of partner I am, but it never hurts to add that, or add to that resume, add to that success. So being able to show my versatility of being a you believe to play with different partners and different personalities and different games, just lends me maybe a little bit more maybe if I need to get picked for the Ryder Cup team. So as I've said for the last month or so and I've said for a majority of my career I don't really worry about the Ryder Cup and where I stand on points. I mean obviously I want to make the team, it's one of my goals and hopefully before my career's over I make at least one, if not more. But if I'm more focused on the points and what where I stand week-in and week-out and how I play affects certain things, I mean then I'm not focused on what I need to do and that's playing good golf and if I can go out and just play good golf and continue the success I've had, then hopefully that will lend me to making a team and that would be great whenever it does happen.

DOUG MILNE: We appreciate your time and we wish you the best of luck. Thank you.

FastScripts by ASAP Sports