

Valspar Championship

Tuesday, March 15, 2022

Palm Harbor, Florida, USA

Innisbrook Resort (Copperhead)

Alex Fitzpatrick

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: (No audio.)

ALEX FITZPATRICK: Just because I knew I was going to be here. Decided to get the week going and so far it's been a good time.

THE MODERATOR: Just as you mentioned, going back to a year ago to the Valspar Collegiate Invitational, just walk me through that final stretch of ending up winning the tournament and knowing you were getting an exemption spot for your TOUR start.

ALEX FITZPATRICK: Yeah. It was a funny one. I didn't really know until I had finished the first day, which was 36 holes, and they kind of sat everyone down. It was like a dinner, and they announced that the winner would get an exemption.

So then I was, my eyes kind of lit up a little bit, and I was a bit taken back. So it was kind of a nerve wracking final 18 holes. It was always in the back of my mind, but I played nice golf and managed to get it done and now I'm here and I couldn't be happier.

THE MODERATOR: What went into the scheduling that was for 2021 but making the start a whole year later.

ALEX FITZPATRICK: Say that again?

THE MODERATOR: Making the start a whole year later than when you earned the exemption last year.

ALEX FITZPATRICK: Yeah, it was an interesting one. Last year was kind of a busy period with the Walker Cup and it made my life pretty hectic with the Walker Cup and then finals for school and trying to juggle all of that and I felt like if I gave myself another year my golf game could progress and mature a little bit and felt like I'm more ready now than I would have been last year, which is nice and, yeah, just excited.

THE MODERATOR: Speaking to how you're feeling ready right now, with the start of the collegiate season, already in

the past 12 starts you've had six top-5 finishes, so how is your game feeling entering this week?

ALEX FITZPATRICK: Yeah. It's been a funny one. I've made a couple changes in the past month or so, which have been fairly big ones, I would say, just for more, looking for more of a long-term goal, just little parts of my game that I felt like needed to be a pro.

It's definitely something that I've sort of worked towards and just making sure that I'm sharp for this week. But the past couple weeks has been a little rough, to be honest, with some of the scoring. I played nicely today, so there's some hope, and I'm sort of going there with no expectations, just trying to enjoy my time.

THE MODERATOR: What is your experience with this course? Were you able to get in some holes today? Have you been able to get in other rounds prior to today?

ALEX FITZPATRICK: I came Sunday, managed to do a little bit of practice, wasn't allowed on the course. Played 18 yesterday in the pro-am and 18 with my brother today. So we got off early, managed to see all of the course, felt like it's pretty straightforward. It's pretty, all ahead of you, so there's not too many holes where you have to sort of think about a lot of different things. Yeah, just the course is in good condition and looking forward to Thursday.

THE MODERATOR: Lots of friendly faces on TOUR, fellow Wake Forest players. Have any reached out from your win last year or wins this year and can you just talk about the program and speak to the success with the Wake Forest program?

ALEX FITZPATRICK: Yeah. I think Wake Forest is great because they sort of have so many great players that have come out of the program. You look at some of the older guys, like Curtis Strange, Bill Haas, and then you got the newer guys, like Will Zalatoris and Cam young. I haven't sort of sent and received many texts, but I know that they're definitely checking the leaderboards all the time.

It's a university that feels more like a family, which is great. I feel like you're always looking out for the people who



represent your university. So I know that, I definitely know that they will be checking the leaderboards and hoping I'll make some birdies and keep the big numbers off the card. So it's nice to know that I have that support from far away.

THE MODERATOR: Speaking of support, have you gotten any advice from Matt about making your TOUR debut.

ALEX FITZPATRICK: Not really. He's sort of left me to it. I feel like he's got to a point now where he feels like I'm mature enough to sort of make my own decisions and manage my way around the course. And I've got a very good caddie this week in Mick Duran, so he's helping me out in just plotting my way around and just very lucky to have the people around me and the support system that I've had since I was younger.

Q. (No Microphone.)

ALEX FITZPATRICK: It's played at the Floridian. It's fairly far away from here. We have a really, really great course and that's the college event where it's played each year.

Q. Given that you've played a couple Walker Cups and your brother does this as a profession, do you will feel kind of more prepared than most might be being in your seat this week?

ALEX FITZPATRICK: Yeah. I would say that I'm probably in a luckier situation to where I can call upon someone as close as my brother to for advice all the time, someone who I can run ideas past and ask for help. He's always willing to help and do anything to help my game get better. I'm very lucky with that.

So, yeah, I would feel like I'm in a slightly more prepared situation. But golf's a funny one. You can play well for five weeks in a row and then the next week you might play terrible and that's just how golf is. So as long as I feel like I'm as prepared as I can be, that's all I can do and just go out there and enjoy my time.

Q. You mentioned playing with your brother today. Take us into the dynamic of that. Are you guys ribbing each other? Are you in your own bubbles in the practice round? How does that work?

ALEX FITZPATRICK: I would say it used to be just him telling me what to do. It was kind of like, you can take this club, do that. But I've matured and he's sort of realized that I'm sort of capable now of just making my own way and making my own decisions and now it's more just a guiding thing.

If I ever need help or a call, whether that's golf or just life in

general, he's always there and I always feel like I can call him, which is nice.

Q. How often do you guys get to see each other?

ALEX FITZPATRICK: Not very often. More in the past six months, I would say, which has been nice. But before that it was sort of very rare with school and he was always away at tournaments and stuff. But recently a lot more, which has been nice. I got a bit closer to him.

Q. What are the best strengths of your game and what are the things you're looking to change right now? You said you're going through some changes.

ALEX FITZPATRICK: Yeah. I would say the strength of my game is probably short game and approach play. They have always been for me I feel something that I'm comfortable with all the time and sort of rarely look at changing.

The couple things that I would change are probably driving and putting. Just a few things that I noticed over the last couple years, which I felt like I needed to improve on, especially to reach the top end of golf on the professional side.

I feel like you can sort of get away with it a little bit in amateur golf, but when you turn professional and you're actually playing for money it's something that I can't really afford to do. So just kind of touching base with that and just making sure I'm on the right path for the long run and making sure there's a clear pathway for my driving and technique and stuff like that to get better.

Q. When you guys were young growing up as kids I imagine y'all had a lot of fun games together growing up, money games, anything like that? Do you remember the first time you beat him or how did that all shake down?

ALEX FITZPATRICK: It's a funny one. Because we're four years apart it's almost a little bit, the gap is almost a little too big to sort of play sort of games. Yeah. He was a lot better than me when he was like 16 and I was 12.

So this is actually the first, I would say, official tournament we actually played together unless you're counting like the local medal that you play at your golf course. This is the first tournament we've actually played together or against each other, should we say.

So, yeah, no money games, never really beat him when I was younger. My dad claims that's the one that beat my brother that spurred him on to play well. He calls it the

June medal. So if you ever see my brother just mention that and I'm sure you'll get a good kick out of that.

Q. Are you the type, I would imagine every TOUR player that starts in a TOUR event believes they can win. Are you the type that comes out here with a set of goals, expectations, or are you more of kind of a, especially on new ground, you kind of get the lay of the land, a little bit more humble with your expectations? What are you going into mentally look that with this week?

ALEX FITZPATRICK: It's interesting, just over recently I've sort of looked at trying to think about my mindset more and think about what my approach is to coming into this tournament. You got some of the best players in the world here no doubt, so the mindset of coming in here and being like, all right, I'm going to win, I think is probably a little optimistic.

But my mindset isn't come in here and thinking about the cut line. I feel like if you start thinking like that suddenly your goal is just to make the cut and then that's all you focus on. So I'm keeping my thoughts open, I would say, just sort of going out there and making sure that I enjoy myself.

Realistically, it's not the end of the world if I don't do very well, so that's my aim is to go out there, have a good time and hopefully play some good golf.

Q. Jackson Suber from Ole Miss is also making his debut. Is there any history with him between the two of you?

ALEX FITZPATRICK: No, being honest. I have known Jackson for awhile, but I actually the first time met him was literally two days ago. Seems like a really good kid, obviously a very good player in himself, but I'm sure he's going to have a great week.

Q. Can you talk about your plan post-college? Is it to turn pro shortly after the post-season and what kind of a motivator is the PGA TOUR U system for you?

ALEX FITZPATRICK: Yeah, ideally I would be in the top 5 for the PGA TOUR University, fingers cross that had would happen. So if that was the route that I would go down I would turn pro in June and go down the Korn Ferry route. If I didn't finish top 5, that's sort of an open door at the moment. I'm still trying to figure that out. I think regardless I think I'm going to turn pro in June.

I personally feel like I've done and experienced a lot of the amateur game and feel like I'm pretty close to making the

step to professional golf and hopefully making some money and page my parents back.

Q. As a brother experience, what did it kindle in you when you were on the bag for your brother during his amateur victory?

ALEX FITZPATRICK: I just thought it was really cool. He played great. At the time I was only 13, my goal for the week was winning an iPhone off my dad, who promised me, if we won the tournament, which obviously he never expected to.

But, yeah, just sort of just how cool it was effectively. It was exciting to be there and have all the fans come out and watch. You get to meet some amazing people and make some great connections and that was something that I thought I was excited for when I was older.

THE MODERATOR: All right. Thank you.

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