

Ascension Charity Classic

Wednesday, September 6, 2023

St. Louis, Missouri, USA

Norwood Hills Country Club

Billy Andrade

Press Conference

THE MODERATOR: Billy, thanks for joining us for the third Ascension Charity Classic. Being back in St. Louis overall, what are your thoughts? Thoughts on the course.

BILLY ANDRADE: This is one of our best tournaments of the year. The people come out in droves. It's awesome to have the energy that the fans here in St. Louis have always done, especially in the last couple years here.

Great golf course. It's very challenging. You can just -- it's just evident by the scores. If you can get to double digits here, you have a good chance of winning.

I haven't played well the last two years here, so I'm thinking in my brain that it's time. There's no reason I shouldn't play well here. It reminds me of courses I grew up in Rhode Island with undulations and having to hit drives into some tight driving holes. It fits my eye, so really I have no excuses, so hopefully I can get in the mix here.

Q. Billy, what do you think you've learned the last two years at this venue that you can put to good practice this week?

BILLY ANDRADE: Yeah, you've really got to drive the ball straight here, keep it out of this wispy rough where you really can't control the ball. If you can do that, you're at a big advantage.

Then from there, you have to be precise on where you're hitting your birdie putts or your putts from. It's easy here to play defensive putting. If you get above the hole all day, versus if you have some good looks you can make some putts.

I think that's what I've learned the most is that if I can drive it pretty straight, which I'm okay there, I can give myself some good opportunities.

Q. You had a top 5 in Canada in your last outing, your first top 10 of the season. Did you find something there that you're leaning on this week?



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BILLY ANDRADE: You know, I really honestly have been playing really well all year. My only hiccup was in Seattle, which was weird because I've always played well there, winning there back in '15, and I think I finished third there last year, and then I came out after a three-week break and just didn't have it the first day, played terrible.

Then I get to Calgary where I've had success in the past, and I just love the place. I love the course.

As you know, it's all about making putts. A few went in in Calgary, which was nice, and that's what you've got to do out here. These guys are so good, and the scores are so good that you have to get the putter rolling.

When I do that, I'm okay.

Q. A week like that when you hole a few and you see a few go in, does that give you a little confidence coming into a week like this?

BILLY ANDRADE: Absolutely. Anytime you have success under pressure and you play well -- I played really some flawless golf coming down the stretch in Calgary on Sunday, and if I could have made a couple, I might have had a chance.

All in all, yeah, you always -- when you get under pressure, can you do it? You think you can, but until you do it, you don't know. Even going from one week to the next.

I'm going to think about that good week in Calgary, and hopefully I can continue it here.

Q. Can you speak to just what Ascension has done with this tournament and how charitable it is and what is it like to be a part of it?

BILLY ANDRADE: Well, I've been an ambassador with Ascension since the beginning. I think I was the first one.

Yeah, just to see what Nick and his team has done is unbelievably impressive. To see the fans here really embrace this tournament is what makes it, and then at the end of the day or at the end of the year, you've got these great charities that get all this money from us playing golf. It's pretty amazing that this model has been done on the PGA TOUR for decades and decades and billions of



dollars has been raised for charity, and it's great to see that St. Louis is part of that.

Q. You mentioned the fans; a lot of guys have said this takes them back to being on the PGA TOUR because of how great the fans are.

BILLY ANDRADE: Yeah, we have tournaments where the PGA TOUR plays in some cities and it's just a different vibe because who do you want to go see, do you want to go see the legends or go see the young stars, places like Atlanta and Houston. It is what it is. But when you come to places where the PGA TOUR doesn't play every year, places like here, Madison, next week in Sioux Falls, those places are electric for us.

My analogy would be, hey, we're going to play a pickup basketball game in an empty arena, and then all of a sudden we're going to play a pickup basketball game and there's 20,000 people watching you. It's a little different, and it's fun.

That's what we all grew up doing, and that's what we love to do is entertain and play well in front of fans.

Here in St. Louis we definitely feel like it's a regular event and it's got some energy. We all feed off of that.

Q. Do the other golfers -- I know you've got a lot of stops, but hey, St. Louis is one, we've got to be there?

BILLY ANDRADE: Absolutely, absolutely. Just like Madison, just like next week in Sioux Falls where the TOUR doesn't go to, like I said, and to come here and see people watching you is huge.

It's not friends and family like some tournaments are it seems like. This is like a real PGA TOUR event, and all the players love it.

Q. I don't know if somebody addressed it earlier, but Bernhard and the record at his age, playing at this level, what do you think?

BILLY ANDRADE: You know, in 2015 to '16, okay, we're going to go to a shorter putter, his game is going to definitely probably slip, and he got better. What he has done in his career, to beat Hale Irwin's record which I thought would never be broken, is just simply amazing, to his gut, his mindset, his preparation. He is a machine. He has no weaknesses.

It is simply amazing at his age what he's doing.

A couple years ago at Warwick Hills he turned 64. The first

round of the tournament, I said, hey, good luck today; maybe you can shoot your age. Well, he did. He shot 64. He shot his age the first day of turning 64.

I mean, he's just simply amazing, and everybody shakes their head, and he's a nice man, too. It's hard to not like him.

Q. As you know, we're a baseball town here, and you have this incredible association with MLB. Tell me about that and your love of the game.

BILLY ANDRADE: Yeah, I've been a baseball fan my whole life. I got to meet the brass at MLB, and I was getting ready to get on the PGA TOUR, and they asked me if I had a hat deal, and I said no. The guy said, well, how much, and I gave him a number, and he said, done, three-year deal. Then I was like, man, I should have asked for more money.

I'm in my 10th year with them, and it's simply amazing.

The crossover from, hey, we're playing golf here, but I'm representing baseball, the whole MLB, is really cool, and I get to see some good games, so it all works out.

Q. A lot of team golf going on, the Walker Cup just finished successfully, you were a Walker Cup player, on a winning team. Did you watch any of it, and with the Ryder Cup coming up, some thoughts on that?

BILLY ANDRADE: Right. I only watched very little of the Walker Cup because I was a little busy being nurse Billy back in Rhode Island with my wife's surgery of a torn achilles, but the memories that I remember, that you're a young kid, to experience -- my Walker Cup was at Sunningdale. It was an unbelievable experience, with the team, with our captain was Fred Ridley. We had older players and younger players, and we meshed well, and we just had -- the experience of it is just amazing.

To see these kids pull it together and to come back the way they did, the fun, the smiles, I just hope all those kids turn pro and have great careers and they continue to smile and continue to enjoy the love of the game, which sometimes we don't see.

As far as the Ryder Cup, I thought before the picks, I really thought that this was going to be the easiest chance for the U.S. Team to win, and then Luke Donald picked his six guys, and now I look on paper, and I go, man, this is going to be a nail biter just like every one is, especially not winning over there since 1993. They have got a stronghold on this.

Chemistry is huge, and over all the years of watching the Ryder Cup and almost making the team a couple times and looking at professional sports teams, what makes a team win the World Series or a Super Bowl versus a team that doesn't, do you like each other, do you have that chemistry, do you have that -- it really looks like Zach Johnson has done a wonderful job of picking who he picked, because he's looking at match-ups, he's looking at chemistry, really. It's all about that for him, and I think they're in the right direction for sure.

Q. Will you be watching?

BILLY ANDRADE: Oh, yeah. Everybody will.

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