

# Black Desert Championship

Wednesday, October 9, 2024

Ivins, Utah, USA

## Mike Weir

Press Conference



# BLACK DESERT

CHAMPIONSHIP

**THE MODERATOR:** We'd like to welcome Mike Weir into the interview room here at the Black Desert Championship.

Being a resident of Utah and also a Brigham Young University standout, just talk a little bit about what it means to be here in Utah for this event.

**MIKE WEIR:** Lots of great emotions. In fact, you mentioned BYU. I played with a couple young guys, Zac Jones, who's a senior there yesterday, and Keanu Akina. We had a great time yesterday. He's going to be a freshman there, great talent there. I was recruited to go to BYU back in 1988 and just stayed, made it my home. To have the PGA TOUR back here in Utah is super special. Yeah, can't wait to get started tomorrow.

**Q. Zac Blair and Patrick Fishburn were in yesterday and they were talking about what you mean to the state of Utah and to the school. How does that make you feel when people look up to you around here in terms of what you've meant to the game of golf?**

**MIKE WEIR:** Yeah, it's great to hear that. I think when I came here, I was looking up to Johnny Miller and Mike Reed and players like that, Richard Zokol and Jim Nelford, a couple Canadian guys that came before me to BYU. And hopefully those guys have learned some things from me and they're passing it on to the next generation and there's a great pipeline at BYU for sure.

**Q. And speaking of veteran from Utah, Jay Don Blake is making his 500th start here this week. Any series that you have of Jay Don or when you first met him?**

**MIKE WEIR:** Yeah, I met Jay Don when I first got on the TOUR back in 1998, I believe was my first year on TOUR, and we had the Utah connection. He's always been great. What a gentleman. Great player for a long time.

I saw actually on PGA TOUR's Instagram the emotional response he got when he was invited for his 500th start. I thought that was really cool.

**Q. Now that the Presidents Cup is over, you can sort of get back into the grind of your golf game. Talk a little bit about the state of your game coming into the**

**week.**

**MIKE WEIR:** Yeah, my game feels good. My game all year has been solid. I've played quite well, and now I've got a nice stretch here, four of the next five weeks playing her on the PGA TOUR and then three more on the Champions Tour.

Yeah, my game feels good. It's a golf course that I feel like I can really play well on. You have to manage yourself around the greens, and I feel like I'm in good shape this week.

**Q. Last week in Canada where you are a legend and now in Utah, where again, you are legend and connected in both places, back-to-back, a part of your heritage, what does that mean to you? What's it like for you, I guess, emotionally to be doing these things?**

**MIKE WEIR:** Yeah, it's a special -- this last month or so has been a special time in golf for me. Two weeks ago at the Presidents Cup was something that was in the works for a long time and put a lot of energy into that for a couple years. Although we didn't get over the line and win the event, it was still such a special week.

Just the response of all the fans to our team, our players, having three Canadians on the team was really special, having a lot of family there. It was just an incredible week for me.

Then here we are two weeks later playing at home in a PGA TOUR event in my home state. It's pretty cool. I'm trying to soak it up.

I tried to enjoy the Presidents Cup, as stressful and demanding as it is. I tried to enjoy the golf, as well, when I was out there watching. Really high-quality golf there.

At this stage of my life, I'm still super competitive, but there's a lot of guys I'm rooting for out here, too. And I love to watch them as a fan of golf and watch the evolution of the game.

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Like I was telling John, the younger generation that I had a chance to play with yesterday and then to see some of the veteran guys that I know still playing, it's really cool at this stage of life to still be kicking the golf ball around a little bit and trying hard at it.

**Q. What's been your assessment of the course? What's the feedback been from not just the nine Utahans in the field but from everybody? How do they like the property?**

MIKE WEIR: Yeah, I think people are blown away by the property. Obviously the scenery hits them first when they get down here, such a unique landscape. I had a chance to play the course late spring and once this summer. We were down here for a family reunion-type thing. We buzzed over and had a chance to play.

And it's incredible how much better it's gotten even in a short period of time. The grounds staff here, the superintendent, they've done an incredible job. It's like carpet out there, the fairways. The greens are great. It was playing really fast when I played it in the summer, so the ball was really chasing out. It's not doing that now. I was thinking that the course might play a little bit short, but it's not playing that way. It's playing a little bit longer.

Looks like we'll have some pretty good weather. If we get some wind, it'll be a little bit tougher. But there's some demanding holes out there, especially on the back nine. The fairways are quite generous, but if you miss, it's pretty much a penalty. You'll see some low scores but you'll see some guys struggle on some holes out there, too.

**Q. I'm curious -- more than anything, this might be just me talking here a little bit -- but what was it like being the captain of the Presidents Cup team in your birth country and then coming here and doing this all over again? How do you balance what you were doing out there?**

MIKE WEIR: Yeah, two different things. I guess when you're the captain of a team like that, you put yourself aside and your game aside and you're focused on those 12 players. Yeah, there are assistant captains, caddies-wise, our whole internal team. It's a big thing that weighs on your mind all the time. You want the experience to be great for everybody.

It was a wonderful experience, except not winning. The main goal was trying to win.

At the same time, now that that page is turned, now it's back to my game, and I can focus on my game. And I've been doing that -- kind of midweek last week, I took a few

days' rest and then when I got home, started working on my game. It was in a good place before I went to Montreal, and I was off 10 or 12 days. And then I felt very good about my game before that, and it seems to have continued.

My practice has been going well. Now I can just focus on trying to get in contention here.

**Q. Obviously you play on the PGA TOUR Champions. Is there any urge you have to resist to come out here and not try and keep up with the younger guys?**

MIKE WEIR: Yeah, that's a good question. There is that urge to -- I'm still chasing a little bit of speed. That's been part of my protocol for a while. But I know my game now. I think maybe in some past tournaments in the past couple years, I've tried to play outside of my game, and it's got me in a little bit of trouble.

I think I'm in a good head space that way to just play my game here this week. And it's something I'm actually trying to pay attention to because if I do that, I think I'll be in good shape.

**Q. Looking at where you are and the arc of your career and all the amazing accomplishments, I think back to when you were a kid, you sent the letter to Nicklaus about right-handed, left-handed stuff. What if he would have said golf is a right-handed game. Have you ever thought about that?**

MIKE WEIR: Yeah. I mean, yeah.

**Q. Go sliding doors with us here. What becomes of Mike Weir and his golf game?**

MIKE WEIR: I mean, that's a big if. I have no idea what would have happened. I was a natural left-hander. And for those of you who don't know, I wrote Jack when I was a kid and he said stick with your natural swing. 1983 when I wrote that letter, there was Bob Charles who had won the British Open. But Russ Cochran was on Tour and a guy named Ernie Gonzalez, but they were kind of middle-of-the-pack guys, good players. But the best players in the world were all right-handed, and I wrote Jack this letter, and he said, no, stick to your natural swing, so I did.

If I switched to right-handed then -- my dad was willing to do that, but when I got the letter back from Jack, it was, okay, we're staying with it.

Who knows; probably not on TOUR, I wouldn't think.

**Q. Just curious about as you played a practice round, played the course a couple times, do you have a game plan, and what can you tell us about how you're going to attack this course?**

MIKE WEIR: Yeah, I think for me, par-5s are important and getting as many wedges in my hand as I can. There's those couple of drivable holes. And to his question about playing outside of my game, maybe trying to reach those could be -- it's a stretch for me to get there on those holes. And if I try to push that, I don't know.

But if I put a wedge in my hand four times on those holes, my odds are going to be pretty good to make some birdies. So if I can do that on the par-5s, those short holes when I get the wedge in my hands, and if convert those and play the other holes smartly and make a birdie here or there you can shoot 4-, 5-, 6-under, so that's my plan.

**Q. I know you kind of briefly touched on it, but just talk about the overall beauty of this course, the uniqueness of this course, bentgrass in the desert. Not something you normally see.**

MIKE WEIR: Yes, it's such a unique landscape. I compare it to the big island of Hawai'i where we start our Champions Tour in January. I've been going over there for 20 years and using early January as my prep time for the season. So it's got a lot of that similar feel except the red rock is quite different. The grass is unbelievably consistent and solid for such a new course.

Yeah, it's unique. I think asked earlier what I've heard from the other players, they're saying, what a unique place, what a beautiful place, the hiking, what a great place for families, young players on Tour. I think word spreads fast out here on the Tour, and I think the field is great this week but will continue to get better as we go along here.

**Q. Just talk about how great it is and the importance of the PGA TOUR returning to Utah.**

MIKE WEIR: Yeah, I think it's great. It's such a big golfing state. People love their golf here. We get through the winter, and just like Canada, everybody is excited to get through the winter and get playing golf again. You play anywhere around especially here, it's tough to get a tee time. It's so busy. Everybody wants to play here. Any course in the Salt Lake valley is full, everybody is playing golf. Like the game is heading right now, it's on a great upward trend and it is here. Everybody loves the game.

To have the PGA TOUR, to get the fans to see some of the best players in the world, I think is really exciting going forward.

**Q. There are only three par-5s on this course. How much of a premium is accuracy going to be off the tee keeping the ball in the fairway, and are those par-5s reachable?**

MIKE WEIR: Yeah, the majority of the guys. 18 is reachable for me. I'm trying to think of the other ones. Yeah, 9, not for me. So if it was playing fast when I played in the summer, I could reach 9, but the way it's playing right now, I'll play that as a three-shot hole.

Most of the field can reach the par-5s. And to your point, you have to be in the fairway to be able to attack those holes. But again, there's danger lurking on those other two par-5s. If you go over the back of 18 there to the left you can get in a little bit of trouble and the tee shot is a little demanding if you try to cut the corner and carry the bunker, which a lot of guys can do.

But it's an exciting finish, and you have a big par-4 on 16 with a tough green, a birdieable 3 with some danger around the greens, and then a scorable hole at the finish. It could be set up for a really good finish down the stretch.

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