

PRE-TOURNAMENT INTERVIEW: DAVIS LOVE III
May 3, 2016



MODERATOR: We'll go ahead and get started. I would like to welcome Davis Love III to the interview room here at the Wells Fargo Championship.

Davis, thanks for joining us for a few minutes. We know you've got a lot on your plate with the Ryder Cup coming up. You're making your 11th start here at the Wells Fargo Championship. With that said, just a few thoughts on being back here, obviously North Carolina, a place very close to your heart. With that, just some thoughts being back at Quail Hollow.

DAVIS LOVE III: Yeah, I'm excited to be back at Quail Hollow. I missed it last year, so I'm excited to be back and always excited to play in North Carolina. Always good vibes. Saw a lot of North Carolina Tar Heel hats today. So yeah, excited to be back. Had a busy week off with some Ryder Cup duties, but I did get a week off from playing and I'm excited to be back on tour.

MODERATOR: Coming into the week, how are you feeling about your game? I know you're making your 11th start. You haven't missed a cut all year on tour. Just some comments how you're feeling coming into the week.

DAVIS LOVE III: Well, I'm hitting the ball well, just have to score and that's the biggest thing really. Strokes gained putting and strokes gained around the greens are where I need to improve and where the money's made. So I just have to putt better basically, score better. But I'm hitting the ball really well. Kind of proves out, I'm making cuts but I'm not finishing well. So I just need to get the ball in the hole a little bit better. But I worked real hard with Jack Lumpkin probably since right before Bay Hill to get my swing straightened out and I'm hitting it pretty good, so I'm excited about the week. This is a good golf course for me. Well, for any good ball striker, it's a tough course. It's playing extremely long with that rain the last few days, I guess. It's pretty wet, so it won't be playing run and fast and short, it will be playing long, which will suit the ball strikers for sure.

MODERATOR: With that, we'll take a few questions.

Q. You played with Jim today. He said a lot of the talk was on the Ryder Cup. Can you give some insight on what was said?

DAVIS LOVE III: Yeah, he keeps saying, Call me if you need any help, and I just kept feeding him more stuff. I said, You're helping me, you don't think you are, I'm asking you little things for advice. So today and through a lot of -- well, he was there in March when we had the dinner at Nicklaus' house and he helped me line stuff up for that. He's been very helpful as the rest of the guys have. But there's just always something.

Blake Olson that we were playing with said, When does it get busy for the Ryder Cup, and I

just kind of laughed. He said, It's already busy, isn't it? Extremely busy. I didn't want to bug Jim today. When you see a guy in person, when I saw Tom Lehman a couple weeks ago at the Bass Pro tournament, I'm hitting him as soon as I see him, I've got to ask you this. It's one thing to email or text or talk on the phone, but when you see them in person, with Jim and I, what do you really think about this, where should we go with this. It's nice to be out there with him, but more importantly, it's nice after like three holes, I said, Wait a minute, you and Fluff are going to play. Let's quit talking about assistant captain role, let's get back into playing. He said, Good point. I'm just glad to see him on the golf course and not hurting, and hopefully we'll see him making some points soon.

Q. When you come to a tournament like this, how do you balance being a player and being Ryder Cup captain? When do you switch modes?

DAVIS LOVE III: Well, I've kind of gotten a little bit used to it. You know, when you call a guy or text a guy and he says, Okay, Captain, I'm getting used to it. Starting with all the way back in 2010 with Corey as an assistant, I've been involved in a lot of them so I'm kind of getting used to it.

But it just seems like every year they get bigger and bigger and bigger. There's more going on. I was really impressed with what Corey did and the tasks that he undertook and that he needed his assistant captains to be able to pull it off. And now it's just, it's not that far away. It's so much bigger. Just seems like every two years it gets bigger and bigger and bigger. Obviously we're getting more and more attention and pressure as a U.S. team. We're trying to do as much as we can to help them get prepared, especially in an Olympic year.

So I'm balancing the role by, as my friend Fred Couples said, I love the four hours inside the ropes, the rest of it I'm not very good at. My four hours inside the ropes right now is great. That was great to get out there and play today. Even though we talked Ryder Cup, it was just nice to almost put your phone away. I pulled it out a few times, but it's nice to get out and balance it.

But the best place for me to be right now is out here. I caught myself watching more golf recently when I'm off because I don't want to lose track. I mean, I watched Patrick Reed and Charley Hoffman those last three or four holes to see what was going to happen, and then I got to play with Patrick today and talk about it. This is where I really need to be is out here in and amongst them. I learned something today from Patrick, you know, so if I'm out playing with him and I learn more about, you know, the team, the guys that couldn't make the team, then it's good.

So I'm trying to do both, but I went and hit balls with Jack Lumpkin for two hours yesterday with my swing to work on my golf game. So I'm trying to get ready for big tournaments like this, get ready for the players, get ready for trying to qualify for U.S. Open or playing the Memorial tournament. So I'm looking forward to, I've got a great schedule coming up, Colonial, Memorial, PLAYERS. I'm looking forward to playing a lot of golf and then handling the rest of it.

Q. I know you kind of touched on it, but what's your favorite part of playing here on this course in Charlotte?

DAVIS LOVE III: Well, I love the golf course, first of all. But we were trying to explain to Blake Olson, the kid playing in his first tour event, that you picked a really good one to come to because they do everything they can for hospitality, for taking care of you with the food, just every little thing they can do. Plus, it's a great golf course, it's a great city to come to and great golf fans. So this has become one of the favorite weeks on tour.

Q. Davis, another big, big event is the Olympics. I was wondering your thoughts on that. Is that something you're in favor of being there? I assume you would have liked to have been there maybe, and the format?

DAVIS LOVE III: Well, I think it's great that golf's in the Olympics. I was kind of on the side of it should be amateurs in the Olympics because we have, luckily in the professional game, we have a lot of great big events.

But it's a challenge for us. You've got four majors and Playoffs and Ryder Cups and Presidents Cups, it's a challenging time of the year. I knew being on the board at the time when it really was gaining momentum it was going to be right in the middle of our Ryder Cup year, and by the way, a home Ryder Cup year.

So it has a lot of pluses and minuses. Everybody has a different view on it. But I can understand that it's a tough decision for some guys and it's a goal for some guys. But I agree that the more we do it, it will become part of our -- like the FedExCup Playoffs were very foreign to us and we didn't understand how it was going to work and how can we play four weeks in a row and all the challenges. It's part of our culture now. I would think that the next generation, if we, you know, have four or five of them, they see a guy actually get a gold medal and it might not be the guy you expect, it might be somebody from another country. And it makes an impression on the next generation that it could gain momentum. It's exciting. I just saw their bag and it's cool looking. Anytime you get a bag that says USA on it, it must be a big event. I'm looking forward to watching it. Hopefully our guys play well.

Q. Harold Varner is a North Carolina guy, he's got back-to-back top-10s. Is he creeping under your radar screen at all and do you know him at all?

DAVIS LOVE III: I played with him at Hilton Head, know him just a little bit, enough to say hello and get a laugh out of him. He's a fun guy to be around. You know, obviously has a lot of talent. Yeah, he's on the radar. There's a bunch of these guys that you're interested to see if they can get some points. You know, someone asked me a few weeks ago, How far down are you looking? I said, I'm about 80s, so I'm looking at least that far. But guys move up. Brian moved up, I don't know, 75 places or more maybe, I don't even know. He shot way up into the top-30, I think.

MODERATOR: High 30s.

DAVIS LOVE III: So there's so many guys that can get in it. Two weeks, two really good weeks and you move up. But then some guys from Charley Hoffmans and Brooks Koepkas that have been around and are good solid players that had been on the bubble for a while, it's just exciting to watch. You can't really -- I was with Darren Clark a lot last week and we can't really say who's going to be on our team right now. We're a little bit, we're like right on the bubble. It's going to take another month or two to start solidifying guys.

But it is fun to watch. A guy like Harold, you know, that youthful enthusiasm, I think we're going to need a couple of those guys. We've got a bunch of guys with experience, we're kind of set on that. It would be nice to have some Justin Thomases or Harold Varners or Charlie Hoffmans that haven't played that bring a fresh look at it.

Q. Was there anything about Harold's game that stood out to you?

DAVIS LOVE III: I think that he's just so positive and he's got a lot of energy. You know, he hits like all these guys, he hits it solid, he's a good putter. I just like his attitude, that's his strength. He's got a really good, fun-loving, positive attitude. I didn't see anything negative. Neither one of us were playing that good, but I didn't see any real negative. I think his attitude is great.

Q. Along the lines of this golf course, do you catch yourself today (inaudible)?

DAVIS LOVE III: What's that?

Q. Some of the back tees that would be used for the PGA, how much length they put on this golf course?

DAVIS LOVE III: I think it was long today. You know, practice rounds and pro-ams here, the tee markers are like right on the back. Sometimes I can ignore them and just walk on up 10 or 15 yards. It played long enough today from where we played it because it's wet.

But I hear there's some more changes coming in this next year. You know, this course, I think with the greens fast and if it's firm at all, which like I said, it won't be for the next few days, it's a good test, especially some of those -- you've got some short holes but you've got some really long holes and you've got some water. On the card it doesn't look like that long a golf course, but I hit a lot of 4-, 5- and 6-irons today and I wasn't that far behind Patrick Reed. Like on 18, we drove it kind of right near each other and we both hit it on the green, and when I got up on the green I asked Kessler, I said, Did he hit a 5-iron or 4? He said he hit 5, and I hit 4. Well, when Patrick Reed's hitting a 5-iron, a really good driver, I remember hitting some 3-woods, 2-irons off that hole, you know, because it was firm. That's a small green with a creek for a 4-iron for me. I don't think they have to lengthen it much. I can see a little bit more here and there. I think it's got a good mix of holes. Par 5s aren't necessarily easy and there's some long par 4s and some short ones. I think it's a good test for any

tournament, PGA or whatever they play here.

Q. In your mind does Jordan's start next week at the PLAYERS take on any added significance because of how he finished on Sunday at the Masters?

DAVIS LOVE III: Well, I'm sure after the Masters and a month off, it's going to be interesting to watch him play. But I think, and just listening to him and talking to him, he's got a good attitude about it. If he was 32 or 39, yeah, maybe it would be different. I think he's looking long term. I'm sure his team as he says, they've talked about it a lot. But my talk with him, he was talking about being more disciplined and sticking with his game plan better, the same things he said in his interviews right after it happened. So I think the reason he's so successful will be the reason that this doesn't bother him.

And I told him, '95 U.S. Open still bothers me but it didn't stop me from moving on and playing and winning more. So I think he's got a good attitude about it. If he wins five or six or seven Masters, he's still going to be disappointed about that one, no matter what. But I'm with you, I'm ready to watch and see how he plays. It might not be the first week but I guarantee you he'll play well and have a really good year. I don't know if he'll top last year, but obviously he's got a bright future no matter what.

Q. Earlier you said there's a lot of guys on your radar for the Ryder Cup and last week you mentioned Tiger being a possibility as a captain's choice. In your mind what would you need to see or hear from him to be comfortable with that decision?

DAVIS LOVE III: He needs to play. Jim made a good step this week. Hopefully, Tiger gets back and starts playing. He has to play enough to, one, to get going, and two, to impress everybody. It's not just me. We've got a nice big group of guys, but we have -- if he plays enough and plays well and some guys on the team are like, hey, we need him on the team, in the team room but also as a player, he's obviously going to be there in the team room. But if guys want to play with him and they have confidence in him, then he's an asset.

But he has to play. He can't just play one or two weeks and say, I feel good. We have to see him play and get some results. And he will and he will tell you the same thing. He wants to play, he wants to try to make the team on points. I don't think he's quite the personality that wants a pick, you know? I think he wants to earn his points. And I wouldn't put it past him if he's healthy to get on a roll, but he has to get out and play first and that's the first big hurdle. I'm always like a let's-take-this-one-day-at-a-time kind of guy. With Jim, let's get back and start playing and we'll talk later. Hopefully, you'll be back soon.

Q. (Inaudible) What's your recollection from playing there, just how difficult it is and what's it like going into that week knowing you're going to get up pretty good most likely by that golf course?

DAVIS LOVE III: I think Oakmont like a few others, Winged Foot a couple times, it's more of a mental test. You know you're going to get bad bounces, you know you're going -- it might

not be quite fair, so you've got to go in with the right attitude. That's where a Jordan Spieth, or look at the guys that have won there, pretty steady, easygoing. Well, one guy was nicknamed Big Easy, right? So a Larry Nelson-type player who just doesn't get rattled and hangs in there certainly fits that. So you have to be either really powerful, really strong, but you have to have a lot of determination and you have to have a lot of patience. Acceptance is one of Bob Rotella's words. You have to be very accepting that you're not going to two-putt every hole and you're not going to get a good break on every lie and it's going to be tough. I've got to do a 36-hole qualifier, which is a challenge. Then you get thrown into Oakmont, so that's another challenge. I think that's what the U.S. Open has really become, just a test of your will and your patience and your golf game.

Q. Will you talk a little bit about the foundation?

DAVIS LOVE III: Well, yeah, we just had another fundraiser for The First Tee last week, and obviously this tournament has been a big influence on our tournament down at Sea Island. Our foundation focuses on children and families in need. It's just great that the tour has created this culture that we continue to help, help charities in our town and our foundation. Like all the rest of the tour events, just appreciate the players' support. We gave almost twice as much money every year that we've been -- we've had the tournament, so we're growing fast and we're doing a lot for our community. We've got a lot of people we've stolen from this tournament, borrowed from this tournament, so we really appreciate the Wells Fargo event helping our event grow and continue to succeed.

MODERATOR: Davis, we appreciate your time. Best of luck this week.