



## **DAVIS LOVE III**

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**JOHN BUSH:** We would like to welcome Davis Love III into the interview room, our tournament host here at the RSM classic. Davis, welcome back to the media center. We're now in year nine of this event. Just talk a little bit about how much it has grown over the years.

**DAVIS LOVE III:** Just amazing that it's been nine years. We're talking extension again for the second time, and last night at the pro-am draw party RSM presented us with a check for over \$2.8 million for the Birdies Fore Love program, so that's just a staggering number. I think it was like \$2.1 million last year. They're doing an incredible job taking over that program from us. Just everything that we do, and that includes RSM and Sea Island, just continues to get better and better for the tournament.

**JOHN BUSH:** Speaking of that program, it expanded this year to the first eight events of the fall. Cameron Champ is currently leading it among players in the field. Can you talk a little bit about that program and also about Cameron's game while you're at it?

**DAVIS LOVE III:** Yeah, on top of the \$2.8 million, RSM took over our Birdies Fore Love program a few years ago and going out throughout all their offices and promoting and selling that program. So that money flows through the Davis Love Foundation, but it goes back to the local communities that help raise the money all around the RSM, I think it's 700 offices maybe. But they compete all year long to raise that money.

Then on top of that, in conjunction with the Birdies Fore Love and the Tour and RSM Classic, players from Safeway through the RSM Classic, whoever makes the most birdies gets \$300,000 to a charity of their choice, and then \$150,000 for second and \$50,000 for third, so that's another half a million dollars on top of that \$2.8 million. That's the new program that they came up with. I asked them, "Do you think you're getting a lot of publicity out of it," and they go, "Well, that's not why we did it, but yes, we think we are."

They have really bought into the whole PGA TOUR motto of giving back to charity and charity is what they're all about. I know that's not why they got into it in the beginning, but they've really jumped in.

It's amazing, the upper management is not angling for the best pro to play with in the pro-am, they're angling for a tee time so they can get done in time to go putt in the charity putting contest this afternoon with the kids. That's just the way their team and our team is focused and the way the whole PGA TOUR's focused on charity and giving back.

**JOHN BUSH:** And talk a little bit before questions about the state of your game. Two starts

so far this season, two made cuts. How are you playing?

**DAVIS LOVE III:** I like the first one in Malaysia where there wasn't a cut, but I played well enough to make the cut if there was one there.

It's pretty good. You mentioned Cameron Champ. I was joking with Dru, I said, "Maybe we could rig a pairing where you and I could play with Cameron Champ." Dru goes, "I don't want any part of him, I don't want to get outdriven that far." I said, "Well, think about me."

Then I get paired with him and Patton Kizzire. Patton and I are playing in December in the QBE Shootout. We can talk strategy while we're waiting for Cameron to hit because he'll be outdriving us.

My game is okay. I ran to the range as soon as I got off the 18th hole and hit a few more balls. I'm hitting it great on the range. I've been working on my game a lot the last month. Last week I said, "This must be a major because Dru Love's been in the gym about 6:30 every morning and I haven't gone fishing all week."

We've been working hard to get ready. I worked hard to get ready for Vegas. I didn't putt well there, but I hit it really well, my tee-to-green stats were actually pretty good. Same thing the last couple days. The pro-ams, I've hit the ball decently most of the time and just hadn't made many putts yet. As usual, golf, it's going to come down to putting for me.

**Q. What's your long-term vision for this tournament in this regard? Do you see this becoming a Memorial, do you see this becoming a Bay Hill, or do you --**

**DAVIS LOVE III:** That would be nice.

**Q. Or do you think you'll stay in this time of year? Right now nine years is probably a good body of work to evaluate and go forward. Where do you think you stand?**

**DAVIS LOVE III:** We stand with RSM. They have been an incredible partner, so whatever works for them and for Sea Island will work for us because we built a pretty good team.

The long-term vision is to continue the tournament. We started off wanting to be early in the year. It's worked better for Sea Island and/or RSM to be the week before Thanksgiving. In the near future, I think that's probably where the Tour has us penciled in.

The next couple years are going to be very interesting. I'm glad I'm moving off the board this coming Monday because making the new schedule the next few years is going to be quite a challenge, which it always is. For now there's no guarantees ever. I've learned as a tournament operator, there's no guarantees where the Tour's going to put you, but for now we're happy with this date and the players that play here love it. It's perfect timing. The guests that come from RSM and from our other sponsors, they like it this week. It leads into obviously a family week, so it's worked out well.

What we want to do is continue to grow our charity dollars, continue to grow our purse. We are the smallest market on the PGA TOUR, so it's a challenge for us to raise money and to get our purse up. You know, great partners, we're working on that. Hopefully sometime soon we'll have an announcement on where we're going for the next six or eight years.

The Tour, and I've said this in here before, the Tour told us our first year that we would lose money and we made money, and ever since then we've grown exponentially. We've raised -- we'll go well over \$10 million to charity this year, but most of that's really been in the last four or five years.

So we've gotten better at it, RSM's gotten more and more involved and growing leaps and bounds. Going to two courses helped us for charity as well, playing basically a double pro-am really helped. It's kind of crazy out here on Wednesday, but parking's a challenge. That's what mostly on the golf course today I was taking parking requests. The only way to get a parking pass must be through Davis. After today, the parking frees up. The two courses for pro-ams has just been a blessing for us raising money.

**Q. You talked about the state of your game, and I think Vijay said just recently that he's going to focus on the Champions Tour next year. Do you think you'll ever come a time where you'll make the shift and focus exclusively out there?**

**DAVIS LOVE III:** Yeah, the first six or eight holes today I was thinking focus on the PGA TOUR, and then when it got colder and windier I started to think maybe I'll go to the Champions Tour. When you start thinking about playing with Patton and Cameron, I know -- I just know I can't keep up ball-striking wise, distance wise.

But Vegas was encouraging, I hit the ball well enough, and if I would have putted just decent I would have finished probably in the top-25. I've got some goals of continuing to compete. If I don't feel like I can do that, yeah, I'm going to go to -- I've loved it. Stricker's event and Calgary, Senior Open this year, I've had a great time. I haven't played any good out there, but I've had a lot of fun.

The time is coming. I keep using the excuse "I just had a surgery," so I would like to play a full season. Like I told you, if Tiger plays a full season, he'll win a golf tournament. Well, he played a full season and he won a golf tournament. I would like a shot at playing a full season without being hurt. I played 15, 16 tournaments last year and 15 the year before combined on both tours, so I haven't really played my normal 23 or 24 or 25 events. I would like to do that this year and just see how I play.

**Q. Davis, among so many things you've got on the burner, talk a little bit about the changes that you and Mark are getting up to at the Sea Island Resort?**

**DAVIS LOVE III:** Right. Again, we've assembled a great team. Obviously the Sea Island staff here, Brannen Veal, Scott Steilen, the group that's been the driving force behind all the

construction you see out there now, they know what we need to do over there on Plantation, so it's going to be a group effort. It's going to be a lot of fun.

Tom Weber, who works for MacCurich Golf, who's my caddie's brother, we did a course for Sea Pines, actually finished about a year and a half, two years ago, been a well-awarded golf course. Sea Pines members and guests love it, so we're shooting for the same results over here on Plantation. We've got a style picked out, and I always say Mark's been looking out that window of his office in that direction for a long time drawing plans, so we're ready to do it. Sea Island's committed, and you can see the change on the back end of the driving range, the new chipping and putting greens, the new putting course. We're just going to take that out onto the golf course. And it needs it. It's hard for the members, it's difficult to get in and out of the bunkers, so it's going to be fun to make some changes with a great group effort.

**Q. So if you do play a full schedule in 2019, how many tour starts will that be and what were some of the problems this year that kept you from playing?**

**DAVIS LOVE III:** Well, I had my hip replaced last year after this tournament, so I've been bouncing back from that. That probably cost me -- I keep looking at the stats and I always plug Helen Ross because she said one year I said, "This is my 700th start." I think it was in Vegas. She said, "No, 708, because you had British Opens that didn't count."

I've been watching ever since then how many starts I had and I'm at like 760 now or something like that. Then I added up all the ones that I missed for three months here and four months there and three months here, all these surgeries or injuries I've had, so this season's schedule hopefully doesn't include any stopping. And if I can play, I'm going to play at least through the west coast on all regular Tour and then kind of make a decision.

I don't want to be a guy taking up a spot out here. You know, I can play until they run me off. "Your scoring average is terrible, time to go somewhere else." I don't want to be that guy. But if I think I can compete, obviously Vegas would be perfect for me; the ball runs and I played well there. Obviously Hilton Heads and Colonials that aren't quite as long. You know, I love San Diego. I won there, but I'm a little bit hesitant to go. If it's cold and wet, that's going to be a long golf course for me. Then I can go back to Pebble where I had luck and I think I can compete in that format. I'm going to pick and choose a little bit and see how I do.

**Q. The reason I'm interested like everybody else on where you're going to play on the PGA TOUR Champions schedule is I've been doing a ranking since about 2001 because there hasn't been one. And Hale Irwin asked, he said, we don't have a ranking, I think that the top players at our tour should be able to qualify in certain events on the regular Tour. He said, I think we're that good. He said, we're not that good top to bottom, but the top ones. So I started doing a ranking, I think I only got two where you got points --**

**DAVIS LOVE III:** If you only play four and you don't play well, you don't get many points.

**Q. So you wouldn't be playing Champions Tour until sometime in March?**

**DAVIS LOVE III:** Yeah, they don't really start up full speed until I guess it's about March probably they really get going. I'm going to unfortunately miss Hualalai this year. I'm going to play Pebble and L.A. and Sony, and then after that I'm going to kind of reassess again. I'll be reassessing a lot I think the next few years. I need to get my ranking up everywhere. It's low on all ranking systems.

**Q. Davis, when you came out on the tour in the mid '80s, I was a fan of yours, anxious to watch you hit that Ping 1-iron and Cleveland Classic driver and so forth. Just two-part question. How hard was it for you to live up to one of the longest driver on the Tour back then, and then also, when was that time in your career that you stop pursuing the distance and focus on the distance control and so forth?**

**DAVIS LOVE III:** I was lucky with my dad, he saw it coming that I was going to be the longest on the Tour. But I was long in college and he always not reined in my distance, but reined in my attitude a little bit about trying to hit it farther than everybody else or making that a focus of my game.

So when I came out on Tour, yeah, it was the new toy in the long hitter, but I had a good attitude about it thanks to my dad. He always cautioned me, "Don't go try to show them how far you hit it, you hit it plenty far." I like the driving contests and I like hitting drivers, but I think I had a pretty good approach to it. I was focused on learning how to play and how to win, how to compete, and he was good at keeping me focused on that.

I didn't ever really stop pursuing length, I'm pursuing it more now probably than ever because I need it. And Jack Lumpkin and Randy Myers, I went and took a couple TrackMan lessons from Dru's teacher, Jordan Dempsey, to try to learn how to use the TrackMan more efficiently to try to get a driver that gave me the most distance.

The difference now is, honestly, the first nine holes when it was -- it was actually not bad out there. I was hitting it plenty far, and then the last five or six holes I could tell a difference. I had a jacket on all of a sudden and I didn't hit it quite as crisp with the irons and the driver didn't go quite as far. In 1988 or '97, that didn't happen. It didn't matter what the weather was, I was the longest guy out there. Now I can keep up if the weather's good, and if the weather gets tough, it makes it tough on me.

I played a power game when not a lot of guys were doing it, now everybody's doing it. So you had better be able to keep up in every aspect of your game but certainly the power, I guess I'll see that from the next generation, Cameron.

That's what I hear from the college ranks is the ball speed is way higher than the guys out here on average. Obviously they're younger, but the power guys, that's the only guys we're

really going to see. It's like if you can't hit home runs, you're probably not going to make it to the major leagues. You better have everything else in your game, but you better also be able to hit the ball a long way, whether it's baseball or golf. We're only seeing the power hitters now probably.

**Q. Do you think you can win still, and is pursuing that record, is that part of the reason for staying on the Tour?**

**DAVIS LOVE III:** Winning's always my goal, and I've said it when I turned 50 and I still say it. If I putt well enough to win on the Champions Tour to beat -- watching Bernhard Langer all the time and Scott McCarron, they're putting great and they're making -- they're 18, 19, 20 under par in three-round tournaments. If I can putt well enough to beat them, I think I can probably still sneak in a win out here.

Obviously like a few years ago at Greensboro, everything would have to go right, you hit it good and putt good at the same time. I think that can still happen. You get me within two or three of the lead on Sunday, I'm going to have a chance. I've just got to get there.

Obviously you have to get there a lot to win, so the odds obviously continue to decrease every year. But I look at what Tom Watson almost did, Greg Norman almost did at the Open Championship, what Sam Snead did late in his career, what Jack Nicklaus did at the Masters, that's the reason I keep working.

I started to say about all my teachers, experts are trying to get me higher and wider and longer and strong, so I'm still working at it to try to get to where I can compete out here. But it doesn't matter which tour I play, I have to putt better, frankly. I'm not going to win on either tour unless I get my putting going.

**Q. You talked a lot about your putting. Where do you stand with it or what is the struggle, and have you thought about any alternative methods on the greens?**

**DAVIS LOVE III:** I've messed around a lot. Scotty Cameron has made me a lot of Matt Kuchar-style putters, the arm lock or whatever you call it. I've tried it with very little success. I have to just be patient.

Again, all the things we've talked about that have to go right, that gets you a little bit more impatient or you try too hard or you get frustrated. So I just need to obviously go relax and have fun and play.

I'm rolling the ball great. In Vegas I hit a lot of great putts. I three-putted twice, hard to avoid a three-putt all week, but I just didn't make any birdie putts. I had a lot of 10- to 20-footers for birdie, I didn't make a lot. That's just golf. I've got to relax and play and quit trying to force it. I played two pro-ams and I probably made two or three birdies each pro-am. I just didn't hole a lot of putts. That's calling Rotella probably is the answer to that question.



**Q. Back to the Ryder Cup real quick. I know the whole part of this process going through Hazeltine was to carry the knowledge from each team forward. What would be the biggest lesson in your mind from Paris going forward?**

**DAVIS LOVE III:** I just think we need to communicate a little bit better as a team. That doesn't mean just the captains or just the players. I think we need to get to know each other even better and communicate a little bit better so little frustrations don't turn into problems. I said there was a few things I could have done better that I apologized to Jim for that we just didn't see early enough or deal with during the year.

But now going forward -- and I will argue that Phil said it, we're not going to win 10 in a row, and we've won three of the last four since we all sat down. We're counting Presidents Cup, too, but our team building and our messaging and our organization applies to both matches. We did a great job starting in '15 of having a plan to get '15 ready for '16, '16 get ready for '17, '17 get ready for '18. U.S.A. Basketball approach of we're a year-round, we are team USA golf and we need to build every year to get better.

We have to get better at some things. But as players, we have to be a little bit more prepared as well. Seven of nine weeks we had a lot of guys out, we had a lot of guys tired, guys that either started playing bad at the end of the Playoffs and carried it to the Ryder Cup or were playing great and ran out of gas when they got to the Ryder Cup.

I think the new schedule is to our benefit. We'll be able to pace ourselves going into the Ryder Cup rather than just coming off the TOUR Championship and racing to it.

It's disappointing. We hate to lose. Jim and Tabitha Furyk did an incredible job. We hate to lose, but I think we're still positive about the future and the way the guys, except for a couple little things that have created a big stir afterwards, we all got along great and we had a lot of fun and we had a great time even leaving and flying home and communicating afterwards.

The team is really together and excited. I'll never forget Brooks Koepka's face after he lost. You know, he had never lost. '15, '16, '17, he had never lost. Brooks Koepka doesn't want to lose again. He's going to come right back and be excited with Australia and he's going to fire up his teammates and he's going to do whatever Tiger asks him to do like he did for me a couple times. And whatever we need to do to build our team. We're going to have a challenge this year because we're going to be off. We lost down in Australia the first time because we were off and we weren't ready. So that's going to be Tiger's challenge is getting guys playing enough golf leading there. So anyway, we're excited about the future. We're still disappointed about losing for Jim.

**JOHN BUSH:** All right. Davis, we appreciate your time. Best of luck this week.

**DAVIS LOVE III:** Thank you.