

PRE-TOURNAMENT INTERVIEW
April 3, 2019

JIMMY WALKER



JOHN BUSH: We would like to welcome Jimmy Walker into the interview room, our 2015 Valero Texas Open champion. Jimmy, your 14th start at this event. I know this is a special one for you, just get some comments on being back.

JIMMY WALKER: Well, it's good to be home. I've had a lot of success here, so looking forward to starting tomorrow. It will be an early morning and my bed at home feels nice.

JOHN BUSH: Speaking of being at home, sounds like quite a shindig you hosted last night. Can you talk a little bit about what was on the menu?

JIMMY WALKER: Well, we usually host -- this is, I don't know, I think that was our fifth year, I host Titleist FootJoy at the house just as a thank-you for everything they do for me and my family, just a way to show them thanks. So we've been catering, we do Mexican food, we've done that for the last four years but this year with all the stuff we've been doing, we just decided to do a little barbecue. So did a brisket and a bunch of steaks. Erin made all the sides, so it was all home cooked and made. A lot of people showed up and we ate everything. There are no leftovers. I don't know if that's a good thing or a bad thing. There might not have been enough food.

JOHN BUSH: And before we open it up to questions, nine straight years of advancing to the Playoffs, I know you're a little bit outside the number right now but you are getting healthy. Just talk a little bit about your season up to this point and your expectations going forward.

JIMMY WALKER: It's been pretty bad. I haven't played well, but I'm working as hard as I've ever worked and it just hasn't really come together yet. I'm expecting to see it flip any second. That's all you can do is just keep banging away.

JOHN BUSH: Great week for it to flip. Start with questions.

Q. Jimmy, when somebody is scoring well out there and putting up red numbers, what are a couple of one or two things that they're doing really well if they're playing this golf course really well?

JIMMY WALKER: Here I think that you're -- to make birdies out here, especially with kind of as firm as the greens always seem to get here and with as windy as it gets, you've got really good control of the ball on the greens, you're landing it in the right spots, you're getting it to funnel in, and because a lot of these shots you've got to kind of work the ball into some of these pins.

So I think I know when I won here and the years that I've played well, it's really been about really good iron play, I think. Off the tee, there's only a few holes where you've got to really kind of hit a few tough -- you've got a couple of tough tee shots, but it's really all about the greens are pretty small in spots so it's about hitting your irons really well, I think.

Q. We were here yesterday with Rickie Fowler and he talked about his friendship with you. He's never been to San Antonio, but he's been to your house. I was wondering if you've sort of become sort of the unofficial ambassador for San Antonio with players or wives or families asking you about San Antonio, what to do around San Antonio.

JIMMY WALKER: Well, I hope so. I do get a lot of calls. I had a lot of calls leading into this week, text messages mostly where do I go to eat, where's a good spot, where's the best barbecue, where's the best steak, where's the best Mexican food.

So yeah, I would hope that people would look to me to ask what's going on around the town. It's a big town but it's a small town and it's easy to get around and there's a lot of good stuff here.

So Rickie came in before the Match Play one year a few years ago and hung out at the house and we played golf at my place. I think he really enjoyed it. I had a couple of new guys out last night and got to see the Texas Hill Country and I think they really liked it.

Q. With the schedule change and this being a week before the Masters, how does the tone and the field compared to years in the past? We were looking at the numbers, there's 17 guys in the field as it stands -- there will be 18 -- who have an invite already. It was the same for last year. So the numbers of the quality of talent seems to be the same, but what does it feel like as a player to have this as maybe a tune-up week, so to speak?

JIMMY WALKER: It's different for me being at home. I think for everybody else it might be the same. I know Houston had a little bit more of an Augusta look with the pines and the tall trees and all that stuff. But as far as the golf course, I mean, they got it close, but the greens are never the same. It's a different grass. You are playing off the same surface here as you are going to be next week. Greens not so much, but I think you'll get used to the first cuts here and the fairway and the balls are going to chip and feel the same. I was at Augusta last week and it's virtually identical.

Q. How about the difference in the course from last year to this season? Andrew Landry was making some comments about that himself and talking about how precision is a little bit more important this time around.

JIMMY WALKER: Yeah, it was overseed last year, but it was so much later that a lot of it had burned out and we had a lot of bermuda left over. I think it's going to play -- I don't know

how much different it's going to play. We don't have a lot of rough, so I remember in years past when we did the full overseed, there was some more rough and I think they didn't keep it long, I think, because of what's happening next week.

So maybe the scores won't be as high as they have when it was fully overseed, so I don't know. A lot of it depends on the wind here. I mean, it can really blow.

Q. Jimmy, a lot of players enjoy being able to sleep at home during their home game, but the rest of it can be complicated. What has allowed you to thrive on the weeks when you play here in San Antonio?

JIMMY WALKER: Maybe just kind of -- it just doesn't -- it's funny, it feels like you're playing a golf tournament, but you're not. You are, but it doesn't feel like you're playing a golf tournament.

So being at home, doing the day-to-day things, taking the kids to school, cooking for them at night, doing the homework, it just all kind of feels just like regular normal life, and maybe that leads to playing better golf because it's more relaxed, you're at home. I know everybody always plays pretty good golf at home and when they're out just playing with friends and buddies. I get to see all those people when they're walking around and cheering. Maybe it just kind of sets a little different mood.

Q. You mentioned having some people over. Can you give a little color about what last night was like?

JIMMY WALKER: What last night was like? I thought it turned out great. There was a lot of laughing, everybody's having a really good time. Got some new guys over there and I thought it was a blast. I hope everybody else did, I hope everybody else thought the food was really good. And the weather was nice. I thought it was a really good time.

Q. Did you barbecue or something?

JIMMY WALKER: I did. I cooked a big 20-pound brisket for everybody and that lasted about -- not long. I did four big Tomahawk steaks, I did strips. Erin made all the sides; corn, potato salad, a salad, beans. I mean, it was all gone. We had 30 or 40 people over there, so it was quite a party. It was pretty fun, I had a good time.

Q. First of all, can I request that the media gets the invite next year? You don't have to answer that.

JIMMY WALKER: Man, I don't know.

Q. You don't want us there.

JIMMY WALKER: I invited Todd Lewis, but he didn't show up.

Q. What am I, chopped liver over here?

JIMMY WALKER: He had a good excuse.

Q. His baby's in town.

JIMMY WALKER: That's right.

Q. You mentioned playing Augusta National last week. Who did you play with? What did you see out there?

JIMMY WALKER: I played with three members and four nonmembers, so we had two groups. Stayed, had a good time. It's always fun when you can stay a night and hang out and play and enjoy the club and everything it's got to offer.

So we did that Monday, Tuesday last week and it was great. The golf course is in great shape.

Q. You mentioned you're not playing the best golf this season, but how much would it mean to maybe have a breakout tournament here at home for you?

JIMMY WALKER: Oh, it would be great. I mean, lots of success here, lots of great memories and not a better place to get some momentum going into next week, too. Play well here, play well next week. I'm not afraid to getting back to playing well, I know what to do when everything gets rolling. Never feel like I had -- I always felt more comfortable when I'm playing well and wasn't afraid to keep it going. So it's just a matter of getting back to that spot and this could be it.

Q. This is kind of an abstract question. I was talking to Jim Furyk because of his recent success about the balance between pressing but blocking out thoughts when things get frustrating. He talked about it being a constant battle, no matter how many years you're a veteran out here, you're always facing those thoughts. For you, how do you manage those things when they do pop up in times like this?

JIMMY WALKER: It's been tough. After being sick for a couple years and I'm still probably dealing with a little bit of lingering stuff, just a few little things, but sometimes I get to the golf course and wake up in the day and I just don't quite feel like the same person I was before as far as how the body works and moves. I don't think that's a product of getting old, I don't think I'm there yet because I still feel like I'm in great shape and still hit the ball as far as I ever have and can do all the things I've done. It's just maybe accepting that fact a little more and rolling with the punches better because it's been frustrating.

That's really about it, just working hard. I'm working hard with Claude and we're really banging away and doing lots of good work. It's just a matter of going out there and playing

good golf. I just haven't played really good golf as far as you hit a good drive on a par-5 and you've got an iron in and you miss the green in just the most absolute -- in the absolute worst place you can miss it and you just can't get it up and down unless you're going to make like a 20-footer for birdie. It's just little things like that that aren't clicking and adding up, where years where you're playing really well it just seems like all that stuff just kind of falls into place. Everywhere your misses are good and you're making it easy on yourself and I just haven't been making it easy at all.

Q. Jimmy, this is going to be the first time Rickie's playing here in San Antonio. Were you making a sales pitch to him that he ought to come, that this would be a good place for him, and if anything, what did he say when he told you that he was going to come here?

JIMMY WALKER: I was not making a -- I've always made a sales pitch to Rickie to come hang out in San Antonio whenever he wants to come hang out, but I didn't make any sales pitch to anybody. I mean, everybody's got their business to run. I know he likes to play the week before the majors, so it was pretty much a no-brainer when they got this date that he would be here.

It's good. I think I saw a lot of little kids running around in orange yesterday, and that's huge. There's a new part of the country that gets to see Rickie play in person and that's great.

JOHN BUSH: Jimmy Walker, best of luck this week.

JIMMY WALKER: Thank you.