

PRE-TOURNAMENT INTERVIEW
November 20, 2019



DAVIS LOVE III

JOHN BUSH: We would like to welcome the RSM Classic tournament host, Davis Love III, into the media center. Davis, sort of our annual state of the tournament address here and just start right off with the announcement last night, \$3.8 million, a record here for the Birdies Fore Love Charities. Obviously the tournament is in strong shape.

DAVIS LOVE III: It's in great shape. There's so many programs that RSM has taken or instituted to raise money and it gets almost confusing. You know, Lanto Griffin is leading the player, the Tour player Birdies race coming in this week. He told me in Bermuda the only reason he was playing Bermuda was to make more birdies to try to win the \$300,000. He already won, what, \$50,000, I guess, in Houston.

On top of that, we have some programs we run here for local charities. Then RSM took over our Birdies Fore Love program a few years ago and last year did \$2.8 million and this year \$3.8 million to charities. It flows through the Davis Love Foundation, but it affects their 80 offices, 80 different communities around the country that that money goes back to.

Just incredibly blessed to have a partner like RSM that gets what the Tour does and gets what our foundation does and pushes us to be better and raise more money for children and families in need.

It was an incredible night last night for everybody. We had a great party. Obviously the amateurs are looking to get their pro-am team and get ready to kick the week off, and then to start it off with a \$3.8 million check is really incredible. Then everything else we do this week will go to local charities to support things in our community.

JOHN BUSH: And now for the state of your game, a mind boggling number, this is your 769th start, which is fourth all time on Tour. Just comment a little bit about the state of your game and the longevity of your career as well.

DAVIS LOVE III: Well, I've been really blessed to play this long obviously. I've had a few injuries or I would have already passed Mr. Mark Brooks at 802 or 3, whatever he is. He's been saying that if you go to pass me, I want to caddie in that tournament. So we've been back and forth on the Champions Tour a lot about that record.

I had a plan at the start of last season that I was going to play full seasons on the PGA TOUR last year and this season and would break that record. I had another surgery this summer that stalled that game plan. So it's going to be getting harder and harder to break Brooksy's record, so he may be safe now.

Obviously I announced a deal, I'm going to do some TV for CBS next year, so I will not pass him in CBS events the next few years, so I'm going to have to play around that schedule.

But state of my game is I'm hitting the ball pretty well on the driving range and in practice, I just haven't been shooting very good scores either on the Champions Tour or the regular Tour. So I've got to get it in gear, start turning in some better scores.

But I'm happy with the way I'm hitting it the majority of the time and I'm feeling better after my surgery this summer, I'm bouncing back and starting to get my legs under me. That's why I went to Mexico last week. I should have been here in the office helping Melanie and everybody else, but I went to Mexico to play to try to get a few more rounds in and get to playing a little bit better.

Q. Davis, this is obviously 10 years for the RSM but it's also kind of the end of the decade for a span of golf, this is the last official event of the decade. When you look back, just professional golf overall, what sort of stands out to you over the last decade?

DAVIS LOVE III: Well, it's just incredible how much it's grown. Even our little event, how much it's grown in just 10 years, how big the Tour is. We're talking about the old days when I started golf really wasn't even on Sports Center and it wasn't that big a deal, and now, you know, Brooks Koepka and Dustin Johnson and Rory McIlroy and obviously Tiger Woods are superstars in the world of sport, not just in golf.

It's amazing what the PGA TOUR, what all the golf organizations have done. I mean, you never thought the Masters could really be much bigger when I started playing it and it's incredible how big the Masters and how big the U.S. Open is. It's just amazing how much it's grown, obviously the purses and the charity and everything around it. And we have to give a lot of credit obviously to Arnie and Jack, but then there was the Greg Norman bump and the Fred Couples bump, superstars like that that made golf fun and cool for a generation.

Now, obviously Tiger is affecting a generation. And then Rickie Fowler, how much little kids wear orange hats on the golf course. We have stars now that are influencing the next generation. It's amazing where it's come and it's been fun to see all of it. I've really seen the major growth during my span on tour, been a lot of fun to watch. I don't think there is any limit, it's just going to keep going.

Q. I have two. First, how do you feel the new PGA TOUR schedule is working out with the fall events and with the -- everybody says compressed majors, but that's still a month apart. And then the second one is, do you know exactly what you're going to be doing for CBS?

DAVIS LOVE III: I'll answer the second one first. No. Lance Barrow was actually here yesterday, coordinating producer and close friend of mine, and he still doesn't really know

what I'm going to do. I'm going to practice after Thanksgiving with Lance and my other friend that I've grown up with on the tour, Jim Rikhoff. They're going to try to see if I can handle the microphone and what I can do.

But I have always been, no matter whether it's in this office or Ryder Cup, Presidents Cup, I'll do whatever the team needs me to do. I'll walk. I told Sean McManus I'd pull cable and work in the compound if that's where you start on the ground floor.

But you all know that I've been hanging around the CBS crew. I'm welcome in the compound or the truck all the time because of my friendships with so many guys on that team.

We're going to figure that out before San Diego, but I have a feeling I'm going to do some on the ground and maybe some in a tower. Excited about that.

I love the new schedule. Obviously I've played in a whole bunch of different versions of the schedule, when there was a silly season and when there was a short official fall and it's gone back and forth, but I like it. The major championships, I'll include THE PLAYERS Championship in that so I can bump my number up a little bit, the five big tournaments are spread out in a nice order.

Obviously I think the Olympics throws us a monkey wrench every time we have it, but the players have really embraced the Olympics. It's a goal now. Obviously Ryder Cup and Presidents Cup. No matter how you do it, like you said, no matter how you lay it out there, there's going to be five to six to eight big tournaments that everybody's going to plan their year around and I think it flows very nicely now.

Q. Davis, I was just wondering your thoughts on Rickie Fowler getting added to the Presidents Cup team. As someone who made him a captain at the 2016 Ryder Cup, you obviously have insight into what makes him such a good pick.

DAVIS LOVE III: I'll go all the way back to 2010 when I was assistant for Corey Pavin and Corey knew that I knew the Bob Tways and the Oklahoma State guys, the Scott Verplanks. He said, "Find out about Rickie, we've got to make this last pick." When I called them, Bob Tway pointedly said, "He should be your first pick," and Rickie proved that over in Wales. He played like a veteran. We were nervous about picking a rookie.

But Rickie loves the stage. A lot like a Phil Mickelson or now hanging around Kevin Kisner some, there's some guys that like to walk out on the final green and make that putt, they want the ball with no time on the clock and Rickie's that guy. I know he hasn't been playing that much, but Rickie in the team room, Rickie as a partner, look, guess who took him -- Phil Mickelson's like, "I want Rickie." Rickie's a guy you want on your side. It's unfortunate for Brooks, but I think they picked up an all-around team guy both playing and in the team room, so I'm excited for him.

Q. Davis, why did you think this was the right time to head into the booth for you?

DAVIS LOVE III: Well, my body would tell you that it's been coming the last two or three years, that I need to slow down playing, I need to play a little less. Timing is right. Just again, 25 years of dinners with the CBS crew, watching where they're going and what they're doing. They're obviously making a lot of changes right now, so it was just good timing.

I took the opportunity when the opportunity was presented to me. I would like to fantasize that I could play on the tour a couple more years and stay competitive and break that record that we talked about, but I think my game is showing that I'm losing speed, losing power. I'm not going to really play on the regular tour on big golf courses. I would like to play Hilton Head a couple more times maybe and some of those places. I love the PGA TOUR, but I know I'm not going to play it forever, and CBS is a team that I've always wanted to be on, so good timing.

Q. Is the Champions Tour not appealing to you?

DAVIS LOVE III: No, I love it. I played six out of about eight weeks once the Playoffs started and I had a great time. I want to play as much as I can out there. Trust me, the last three years I have been looking at the CBS versus the NBC versus the PGA TOUR versus the Champions Tour block of tournaments. I've been watching it and I can play -- clearly you can't do both, so I'm going to be -- I'm going to be working for CBS and then playing golf.

But I've looked at it, there's a lot of Champions Tour events that are not opposite CBC golf tournaments. I can play a lot of golf, I can play as much as I want.

I have three granddaughters at home that will be the only thing that keeps me from playing like every week. Family and stuff going on at home. But I'm going to play a lot of Champions Tour events and some PGA TOUR events. Like Wai'alae I played well there last year, I think that kind of golf course where the ball will run and you have to hit it in the fairway and you have to be in a -- being a veteran is an advantage. A PGA Championship at 7,800 yards and deep rough, having experience might not help. Power really helps and Brooks Koepka's going to beat me pretty much every time at a PGA Championship. Some of those places that I've played well at in the past and I have experience, Hilton Heads and Greensboro and Wai'alaes I'll still try to play a little bit.

Q. Just speaking about some of your stuff outside of playing, obviously just remodelled the Plantation course and you have another course being done in Virginia. Just kind of want to know just what goes into that stuff from your aspect.

DAVIS LOVE III: Well, I love the creative side of it. Obviously I can't draw, so I'm not technically an architect, but I know what I like and I know what suits -- I just played with all levels of players out there today in the pro-am. I know how my mom played the game and

how amateurs play the game. We built the Plantation course not for the PGA TOUR players, we built it for the membership here, the resort guests and the members here. Obviously you're not expert, not all of them expert players. We have a lot of expert players that live on the island. I enjoy the process, I enjoy the creativity.

You'll hear a lot of stories this week that I also enjoy big tractors and bulldozers, so I like getting out there and building it. Pete Dye gave me a great piece of advice and an excuse to get on them. He said, "You're not a golf course architect until you learn how to build it yourself." So I throw that at my brother; "No, Pete told me I have to do that.

My caddie, Jeff Weber, his brother, Tom Weber, who walked the back nine with us, actually built this golf course and he has taught me to run the equipment.

So I see me down the road, to answer the question before, down the road I'm going to spend more time hopefully building golf courses, but literally building golf courses. I got to the point where they actually left me alone with a bulldozer and said, "Build a green by yourself, now it's time."

So I really enjoy that part of it. I was just at Mid Ocean Club in Bermuda studying what we tried to copy here, CB Macdonald, Seth Raynor. I actually bought two more books to study even after we finished this golf course. I was like, I learned a lot on this project, I want to learn more, I want to know everything I can know. Ben Crenshaw can tell me everything about Raynor or Alister MacKenzie. I don't have that information.

So I look forward to doing more of that. And I love the process. I know what I like and I know what's playable and it's fun to pass that on to other people and give that back to the game.

Q. Davis, your son, Dru, is making his way through this crazy game. How would you assess where he is now and where he can improve?

DAVIS LOVE III: He can improve a lot like his dad by quit getting hurt. He earned some status on the Canadian Tour this year, and then as soon as he got full status, he got sick. We had to fly him home from Nova Scotia and ended up in the Mayo Clinic, and he shot 60 the first round up there. Every time he gets going good, playing well, something happens.

He's had a lot of injuries, a lot of false starts, hadn't really played -- I would say the same thing, I would tell you, I probably told you before about Tiger Woods, if he plays a whole season, he's going to start playing really well, and same thing for Dru, if he can get a full season in somewhere, he's got a lot of potential.

There's a lot of kids on this island that have a lot of potential. I watched Dru play with the Greyson Siggs and all the way to major champions. You know, Paul Peterson, I don't know if you know him, he plays a lot around the world, works, plays here. Great player, could play on any tour. If he could just get on the PGA TOUR, he could do well. I see that for Dru or

Greyson Sigg or Davis Riley or a lot of these kids. I saw that with Robby Shelton at Alabama. If we can just get them onto the tour, they will do really well.

I said the same thing about Bill Haas as a young college player. Bill can handle the tour if he can get there. The challenge these days, I just caddied the first two rounds of Q-School. You know you have to shoot 12, 14, 15 under par for four days or you're going to get sent home and try it again next year. So his game is there, it's just getting over the hump and getting out on tour.

Keith Mitchell and I were playing last week and our exemption list came out on Friday and we were playing on Saturday and I said, "How strong are all these?" He knows because he plays with a lot of these kids. How strong is it? He said, "Yeah, Greyson Sigg could win the tournament, he's playing better than anybody on the island." That's how strong.

And south Florida has the same group, you know, of people you have never heard of that can really play golf. You see it on the Korn Ferry Tour or on the Mackenzie Tour, there's a lot of great players trying to make it to our level and I'd just throw Dru in the big group, if he can get over the hump.

I don't know, how many times did Paul Azinger go to Q-School, like seven or some astronomical number? Once he got there, he stayed, didn't he? You see that a lot. Even Justin Thomas, he got a slow start, but once he got going, and I see that in so many of these kids. If we can just get them out here and get them started, they'll do really well.

Q. You mentioned how you need power to stay in this game. Charles Howell was in here a little while ago talking about the evolution of the game, how he's seen it go from being an emphasis on good iron play and working the ball and hitting shots, now it's mostly drive it long and putt it great. Have you seen that and how do you feel about that?

DAVIS LOVE III: Obviously, let's go back to Jack. Jack was the longest. There weren't that many guys. Then my generation, there was four or five or six or seven guys that were super long. Now, there's a hundred guys that are super long and you have to have that and you have to have all other aspects. You better be strong mentally, physically, better chip, putt.

Now, when I watch these kids play, I watched a whole bunch of them two rounds of Q-School, I go, well, he's not chipping it very good, you know. Well, usually you could get away if you had one aspect of your game that you didn't do well. You can't be just a ball-striker. I came out just a ball-striker. I could hit it really, really good and I got out on tour with that. If I had to go back now with the game I had coming out of North Carolina, I probably wouldn't make it through Q-School because I couldn't chip and putt. It's just not going to happen these days.

So you have to have the power. Yeah, the game's different, but it's still the same. You have to hole the putts, you have to hit it in the fairway. It's just more guys playing Jack Nicklaus'

game. He did it. It's clear that Jack hit it farther and putted better.

Now, he didn't have a great short game. Later in his career he built a better short game. Kept him not competitive, kept him winning a bunch. Look at Tiger. Tiger got some bad chipping for a while and it stopped his comeback, so you have to have every aspect now to be competitive. But Charles Howell drives it not only long, he drives it straight. That's what's impressive about him.

Q. You've been on the other end of some of those text exchanges with Tiger over the years about captain's picks or pairings or whatever the case may be. The fact he made this pick so quickly after Brooks announced, he went straight to Rickie, do you see that as kind of the leader he is, he was prepared and this was his game plan?

DAVIS LOVE III: Oh, yeah, he knew. I talked to him before Japan about who he was thinking about. I said, "Great, you could pick yourself and then you could sit yourself out."

But he knew. Nothing's going to surprise the guy, you know? That's what, go back to everybody's been picking on me because all the videos of him beating me to win his first tournament, but he's been picking on me ever since then and he remembers everything that I did and he was just a kid. So he's analyzing my play and my playoff strategy and he remembers it, he just doesn't forget.

And so building up to the '16 Ryder Cup, every scenario that could happen in pairings, he had already thought it out. So now that he's in charge, yeah, I can't imagine the notes he has and the information.

But he knew what he was going to do I think even before Japan. He knew who he was going to pick, who his backup plan was. And now with Brooks, he's just been sitting on it, I think, waiting for Brooks to say yes or no. Unfortunately, Rickie got sick and couldn't play last week, but Rickie will be ready, and like I said to another question, he's a great guy to pick. No surprise that Tiger's on the ball.

JOHN BUSH: Davis, thank you for your time and thanks once again for having us all on the island.

DAVIS LOVE III: Thank you. Have a great week.