

PRE-TOURNAMENT INTERVIEW
August 12, 2020



WEBB SIMPSON

MARK WILLIAMS: Thanks for joining us, Webb Simpson, in the virtual interview room here at the Wyndham Championship.

Webb, you've had a stellar season, a couple of wins, once before the pandemic and once after it at RBC Heritage and Waste Management earlier. you won here in 2011 as one of seven top-10s in 11 starts here. You've gone third, second and second the last three years. Do you feel like you're primed for another victory this week? Most people on the outside looking in would say that, but do you feel that way?

WEBB SIMPSON: Yeah, I feel definitely more confident on this golf course than about any golf course we play all year. I love the holes, I love the shot shapes and these greens are very grainy, so for Paul and I to be able to read them, this is probably our best week usually of reading greens.

So you put all that together, I've had some good finishes here. My first win here, I'm close to home where I grew up, close to where I live now and obviously a short drive to where I went to college, so I love being here.

I think for us players, when you love a golf course, you love being in an area, it really does help. I think I'm more patient here and things don't bother me as much as maybe another week where I don't enjoy the golf course.

So great to be back. Yeah, your expectations do go up, you feel more confident not in a pressure sort of way but, like I say, a confidence sort of way and I hope to play well.

MARK WILLIAMS: You enter this week No. 3 in the Wyndham Rewards Top-10 program. A win here would elevate you to No. 2. What sort of incentive has that program provided you, particularly this year, an additional incentive? I mean there's plenty of incentives, but just talk to that a little bit if you would.

WEBB SIMPSON: When the FedExCup came on board, it was obviously something that guys looked at quite a bit but more at the end of the season. You know, not a whole lot to look at in January, February.

But Wyndham Rewards, knowing that it's going to end before the Playoffs, it's something that I tracked a lot more than I thought I would, and I think other guys do as well. It's a massive bonus they're giving us for top-10. last year it was a great experience to be here and be on the outside looking in and knowing I had to play well to get in there.

So they've done a tremendous job, an unbelievable sponsor for the Tour to get this thing going. I think it's led to some excitement. Some guys maybe last year weren't going to play, I think Paul Casey was one of them, he wanted to protect his top-10 in that and he came and played. I wish more guys would do it. I've been pushing for maybe we take a week off after the Wyndham before the Playoffs because most every sport they get a week off. I think that would bring more guys here to -- and the Rewards might be more exciting if they knew that next week they get off.

So that's been, you know, a tough thing I think for Wyndham is that guys who are in the top-10 who could improve their position aren't here due to the schedule. That's been -- I wish it was different because I wish -- this is such an elite golf course, a great tournament and Wyndham does such a good job, so I wish we could see kind of more of the top-10 here.

Q. Webb, thanks for doing this as always. I just had a question U.S. Open-related as we're getting closer to Winged Foot. Obviously you are a U.S. Open winner, you won at a pretty brutal kind of conditions and layout, whatnot. I'm kind of curious what you're expecting out of Winged Foot. I don't believe you've competed there in any tournament play. Do you have any experience there? Have you played there in any outings or anything like that?

WEBB SIMPSON: Yeah, I played the U.S. Am there in '04, that was my only experience there. I love it. I feel like it's just a brutally hard golf course, but they do it the right way. We come to a lot of these courses and they've got bunkers, you carry it at 295 or 300. Winged Foot, it's like Harding Park, it's right in front of you, it's long, it's hard, there's really not a whole lot of birdie holes, so I think that's a perfect venue for a U.S. Open golf course. I want to see us kind of staying at those type of golf courses more than kind of branching out and trying different stuff.

Q. Just as a follow-up question, in '06 you were just coming out onto the Tour. You were just about to come on the Tour, I suppose. What do you remember of what you watched? I'm assuming you watched. Obviously it was so defined by Phil not closing it out and all the madness that happened on Sunday. Do you have any recollections at all of that day or where you were watching it?

WEBB SIMPSON: Not really. I remember Geoff making -- seemed like he made about a five-footer for par on the last hole. I remember seeing Monty on the fairway on 18, he was in a great position. I just remember thinking, man, it's really hard to close out golf tournaments, it must be especially hard to close out majors. These guys at that time, well, I guess for Colin and Phil, having not won a U.S. Open, you could tell how bad they wanted it And Geoff kind of snuck under the radar there a little bit on Sunday and had an amazing last few holes and got it done.

Q. How did you do in '04?

WEBB SIMPSON: Lost in the first round of match play.

Q. Just wondering your thoughts today on the news that Augusta National is not going to go with patrons and do you think that that tournament is more defined by the patrons that they have there than a lot of other tournaments?

WEBB SIMPSON: I do, yeah. I was saddened to hear that. I know they're trying to juggle a lot of different things and trying to make the best decision, but I would say that's the tournament where fans make the biggest difference. You know, you're used to hearing roars all around the golf course. And as well behaved and quiet as the fans are when you're hitting, their cheers are loud and we're going to miss that this year.

I'm just glad it's happening. I was hoping it would happen worst case with no fans, but we are going to miss the fans for sure.

Q. Webb, you're paired with Brendon Todd the first two rounds. You guys have a lot of history. What do you make of the comeback he's had?

WEBB SIMPSON: Yeah, I mean, it's incredible. I think it shows kind of what he's made of. To be a great player and to go for quite a bit of time struggling and to come back and then, you know, get to the position he's in now. Last fall having two victories, a chance to win the next week in Sea Island, it's really admirable. You take your hat off to these guys, these star players who are just really good and they've been good their whole career. I applaud them.

But to see a guy go through what he went through, I feel like that's a story that isn't talked about enough out here or really in sports. It's hard to go from where he was to now on top of the world in the game of golf, or close to it. So it's really cool to see and I'm happy for him. He's a good friend of mine.

Q. Just was wondering about distance and sort of style of play. A lot of people are talking about distance with Bryson's transformation and then you had a lot of guys who are really long hitters who were up there at TPC Harding Park and you had Collin win. You're a multiple winner this year, Brendon is a multiple winner this year. How kind of gratifying is that to see, you know, look, you have the razzle dazzle, you have the flash of hitting it long, but the guys who can still get it in the hole, they can still play out there.

WEBB SIMPSON: Yeah. I think, Cameron, if you look at the golf course last week, it was long but there was no clear advantage for a bomber in the sense of I get on the tee box, Dustin Johnson gets on the same tee box and he's already got his advantage with his length, but too many times out here we'll see bunkers at 300 yards to carry and it's not even in Dustin's mind. Now you take a fairway for me that's a third of the width more narrow and his fairway's a third of the width wider, well, now he's got a double advantage.

So I think what I would like to see more on these golf courses when bunkers are put in or when they're trying to modernize golf courses is to think about not the 280 number where it

used to be long to carry, now everybody can do that on the PGA TOUR, but really make it tighter for those bombers who already have that advantage.

Last week was our example. I think Winged Foot we'll see the same thing. Unless they've added bunkers in the last few years, you're going to see some guys at my length up there because there's not those forced carries. So I was happy to see Collin do it, but it was a golf course where it was doable for kind of a mid-length hitter.

Q. Is it gratifying for you to see that style of play emerge victorious?

WEBB SIMPSON: Yeah, a little bit. I mean, it's comforting knowing that we're still playing major golf courses where my length can win. And he won by a couple, so that was cool to see. He's 23, but he looked like a 43-year-old out there just steady as she goes coming in.

Q. I just have one last question regarding this golf course and specifically your short iron play. With Sedgefield being a Donald Ross original and the course featuring Ross' signature small and undulating greens, just personally for you, what are the keys for accurate short iron play and distance control specifically on this golf course?

WEBB SIMPSON: Yeah, it's a great question. I think what's important here, there's plenty of kind of short irons where you want to be aggressive and make birdies, but very quickly with how undulating these greens are and the surfaces around the greens, if you short-side a little, it can go 10, 15 yards down the fairway to the rough and you're making bogey.

So I think there are certain pins where they're kind of greenlight pins and then there are other pins where you've got a wedge in your hand or 9-iron and you've got to be disciplined and hit it 15 feet left or right of the hole. I think those years that I've played well here I've done a great job of that, of not getting too aggressive, because if you go through the golf course, there's plenty of birdie holes and you've just got to be patient and let kind of your run of birdies come and be smart on those tucked pins where the short-side is a bad area. And when it's not a bad area, go right at it and make your birdie. So that's always been a focus of mine this week is those short to mid irons, really getting extra focus on where I want the ball to come down.

MARK WILLIAMS: Webb, thanks a lot for your time and good luck on what's essentially a home game here for you looking for your third victory this season.