

PRE-TOURNAMENT INTERVIEW
May 4, 2021



WEBB SIMPSON

LAURA VESCOVI: Hi, Webb. Welcome to the virtual interview room at the Wells Fargo Championship.

WEBB SIMPSON: Thank you.

LAURA VESCOVI: We'll kick it off, this is a hometown event for you, so obviously very exciting. You have two top-10s in 11 starts here. Just tell us your thoughts and your excitement to be back.

WEBB SIMPSON: Yeah, I love being here for the obvious reasons. You know, it was Sunday night and I was getting in my bed and I'm like, man, it's nice to not be staring at a suitcase across the room, leaving this week to get on an airplane. So I look forward to this week every year.

I've had two weeks off, so I feel like I've got a lot of good work done around here. The golf course hadn't been too crowded. I love competing here. It's hard, it's a hard golf course. Super challenging all week, but super nice to have support from Charlotte, friends and family, and I'm looking forward to Thursday getting it going.

LAURA VESCOVI: Absolutely. And you've had a great season, your OWGR ranking is No. 9, you've got five top-10s in 13 starts this season, and your most recent was a T-9 at RBC Heritage. Tell us a little bit about where your game's at and your thoughts on the season so far.

WEBB SIMPSON: Yeah, I feel like it's been a bit up and down throughout -- since last fall, but I feel like we had a little turn at Augusta on the weekend. Changed a little something in my golf swing and hit it great for four days at RBC Heritage.

So confidence-wise, I'm more confident than I've been all season, but still looking to have a couple higher finishes, have a few more chances to win Sunday. I think I've only had one or two chances this year to win and that's what it's all about. That's what I think made last year so special is I had plenty of chances to win Sunday, and eventually you're going to get it done. As I look kind of the next three or four months of golf, that's kind of what I'm looking for is more opportunities on Saturday, Sunday to be in contention and, you know, I think what we're working on we'll see some fruit from.

Q. Webb, thanks for joining us. Can you just expand on what are the challenges of playing at home? I know you guys talk about it's nice being able to stay in your own bed, but what's kind of the drawbacks maybe of being a home game?

WEBB SIMPSON: Yeah, good question. I think people assume like if it's your home course, you should play well. I think what people don't realize is the golf course I'm going to play this week is very different than the course I played most of the year. For example, No. 9, I'm usually hitting anywhere from 4-iron to 5-iron into that hole. This week I'll hit 8-iron and 9-iron depending on the wind. So I even, last week coming out here, I numbered four balls 1, 2, 3, 4 and started hitting tee shots on a few holes, because I know this week my lines are going to be different with kind of how firm it is. So I relearn the course a little bit every year, so I think that's one kind of misconception that I've got a lot of advantage.

I think I have a tiny advantage. I mean, I really do. I think guys do such a great job in their prep work here Tuesday, Wednesday to get ready that there's not really such thing as local knowledge. And especially I don't play here a ton. I mean, this is my home track, but it's not like I'm busting 100 rounds a year. I'm probably playing once a months 18 holes straight. So I think that's one thing.

There's expectation that I should play well because it's my home course, but it's hard. It's a hard golf course. I've still got to go out and hit the shots, make the putts.

Q. Webb, I'm not sure if you read this or anything, but there was a report this morning from the Telegraph about the PGL guys making offers to some of the big-name stars. I'm wondering, have you been approached? And as someone who's been on the PGA TOUR for so long, what are your thoughts on sort of an outside venture trying to encroach on the PGA TOUR ecosystem?

WEBB SIMPSON: Yeah, it's been an interesting couple of years with this other league. I don't really get into the details at all, I let my agent handle everything, but from the beginning it seemed like something that seems pretty farfetched to actually happen. You know, to come in and shake up the way golf's always been. So I don't have an up-to-date -- I don't have any up-to-date information I guess as to how it's progressed in the last couple of months. I haven't talked really about it since THE PLAYERS Championship.

I love the PGA TOUR. It's given me an incredible opportunity these last 12 years of my life. It's hard for me to believe that it's really going to happen and the guys will really jump ship and go to a completely different way of golf than we've always had.

Q. Do you feel like the other guys in your position feel the same way where they're happy with the PGA TOUR and the experience they're having?

WEBB SIMPSON: I think so. I think some guys have spoken on it that they're very happy, very thankful for, you know, this particular opportunity we've had in golf. I feel like it's only getting better. Purses are going up, seems like we play better golf courses and golf course condition is getting better. Everything seems to be getting better with the PGA TOUR.

So I think there's too many unknowns and too many things they would have to figure out for

this thing to actually work. Are the best players in the world really going to go to this tour if only eight of the top-25 in the world ranking are going to go? I think as a top player, I want to play against the best. At the end of the day, you have a career long enough, I think most of these guys, they're financially set. They want to break records, they want to win. Be like Dustin, be like 20 times, be a life member, whatever it might be. You create a new tour, all these records get kind of thrown out the window, I think.

I just think too many thing like that are going to come up. I don't think throwing X amount of money at guys is as appealing now as it maybe once was because of how great the opportunities we have on the PGA TOUR. Whatever the number is, 350 million we're playing for this year, and what FedEx has done, Wyndham Rewards, now Comcast, there's so many opportunities for guys to make a great living here.

If I'm a guy who's on my way to make history like a Dustin or, you know, a few other top guys, I'm going after -- I want to go after records, not a dollar. So we'll see what happens, but that's kind of where I sit on it.

Q. I got a couple. One, having said what you did say about playing here at your home track, are you still a little bit disappointed about your results over the years?

WEBB SIMPSON: Yeah, I mean, I feel like, Steve, I've had two chances to win, you know, out of call it 10 tries. So yeah, I think I would have liked to -- this is kind of the one tournament for me that I want to win more than any other maybe besides the other majors.

So, yeah, I haven't had great results here. The one year I finished second, Rory went nuts on the weekend, kicked everybody's tail. Yeah, I would love more opportunities to win. I don't think it's really anything I'm doing wrong, it's just I've got to give myself chances to win on Sunday that I haven't really done in the past few years.

Q. Okay. And to take you to the next major we're playing, do you think the rule allowing range finders will have a big impact at the PGA Championship at Kiawah?

WEBB SIMPSON: No, I don't think so. I feel like, this is a fact, that it's not going to speed up play because everybody I know and have talked to, we still want front numbers, and the range finder, you can't always get the accurate front number. So you'll probably have the player shoot the pin, the caddie walk off the number because I'm going to want, hey, what's front, what's the pin.

I don't know the PGA's -- I haven't read the reasoning behind it or their desire to test it out that week, but I don't think it will really make a difference.

Q. Webb, I just was wondering, I think you said you were kind of not fully decided, but are you playing Congaree? And then also, how familiar are you with the program that they have going down there where they try to support junior golf and promote players like worldwide who could use a little lift?

WEBB SIMPSON: No, I'm actually not familiar. It sounds pretty cool. I've never been, which is funny because it's only three hours from here. Heard awesome things about the golf course. Heard it's hard and firm most of the time, which is ideal for me, but I'm actually not going.

I'm going to be with my family the week prior and it kind of bleeds into that week a little bit. I'm actually, after the PGA, taking three weeks off before the U.S. Open. So it's kind of my midway through the year break and hopefully come back rested, ready to go to the U.S. Open.

Q. Obviously you're a member here. Can you just speak to what the commitment has been here to build this whole infrastructure? Unlike almost anywhere else, it's sort of a plug-and-play for tournament golf now without sacrificing what the club is. You see all these other places. What makes Quail special in that way?

WEBB SIMPSON: I think having Johnny Harris here, he's kind of the visionary not only for the 2021 Wells Fargo Championship, but what Quail Hollow could be in five, 10, 15 years. I think he's always had the goal to get a major championship here and he got it, and he's going to have another one here and then a Presidents Cup. So I think he's always had the mindset of we are going to do two things, we're going to make the club enjoyable for members, feel like a small, home club in Charlotte, but also we're going to be able to big enough and infrastructure built well enough to host the biggest events in golf.

I feel like there's always something going on here, but there's always a great purpose to it. I mean, what they've done out front, I see it every day. I pass the club every day on the way to carpool, on the way home from carpool. Obviously I practice here, so I've seen it from day one.

It's amazing what they can do in such a short amount of time. Then put their landscaping touch and they make it look like it's always been here. So really happy that they've done it and they were able to get it done in time for this event. They've had crews here since I think two years ago at the tournament. So it's pretty special. Definitely proud to be a member here and see what they've done.

Q. One other thing. The Women's Open is going to the Olympic Club this year. You have a pretty good history there. How do you see that fitting the Women's Open?

WEBB SIMPSON: Yeah, I think I talked to Jason Gore about it a few weeks ago, kind of the approach shots I had into the greens and kind of where they're going to try to give the women similar approach shots. If I was hitting a 6-iron, kind of set them up to where it's going to be similar to them because it was such a perfect kind of test. I was 1 over par. I think the USGA, I don't know if their goal is 1 under, even or 1 over, but right in there is perfect.

I think the difficulty of the golf course, men and women, is the length of the course. It doesn't look that long on paper, but being in San Francisco, the ball goes nowhere. So you're hitting these mid to long irons into these greens, some of them elevated. You need height, the greens are firm. It's just really hard to get the ball to stop. So obviously the ladies' strength is accuracy, which will help them in a U.S. Open-style golf course.

I think for them the key's going to be can they hit their approach shots high enough to hold the greens. I'm sure they will be prepared. Yeah, it's such a fun course to play and a great course to watch as well, so I'm excited to see it.

Q. Webb, just to follow up real quick on what Daniel asked, do you know if you were approached by the folks at the Premier Golf League or not?

WEBB SIMPSON: No, my agent wouldn't tell me either way. He knows me well enough to know that when I need to know something, he'll tell me, but he doesn't like to share anything with me until, you know, he feels like there needs to be a conversation or at least a decision made.

But at the same time, Rex, he knows where I stand on it. It's not that I'm against it, it's just I'm for the PGA TOUR. I'm not a guy who wants to just do the newest and best idea. They've given me an amazing last number of years, like I said, and I love the Tour stops, I love where we go, I love how it all works. I love everything about the PGA TOUR.

So yeah, that's kind of where I am and I think he knows that. We've had enough conversations to know that, for me, I'm probably not doing it.

Q. If I could look ahead to the PGA Championship a little bit at Kiawah, it's a long time ago, but you missed the cut there when the event was there in 2012. I'm curious if you, one, visited there much, prepared lately, and if you learned anything from that experience nine years ago?

WEBB SIMPSON: Yeah, sorry, the connection was a little off.

You know, I love Kiawah. I didn't play that great that week, but I love the golf course. I think this year is going to be a little different. We had PGA Championship in August then where we're dealing with a lot of thunderstorms, golf course is soft. You know, typical May in the Carolinas is pretty firm, not a whole lot of rain, and I think that's how the golf course plays best.

So it's super challenging, a lot of demanding not only tee shots but approach shots. It is a golf course -- I remember leaving in '12 thinking I really like this place, I just didn't play well. I had a month off after -- I played Travelers after the U.S. Open that I won and then I had a month off. We were having our second child. I remember feeling a little down that I missed the cut, but feeling like, hey, if we ever come back, I really do enjoy it. I like the lines off the tee, I like the wind and kind of dealing with those crosswinds, so looking forward to getting

back.

Q. Is it like anything else that you play regularly?

WEBB SIMPSON: No. It reminds me a lot more of golf at Open Championships with a lot of wind, a lot of crosswind. Certain tee shots that you can't really see exactly where you're going, you've got to kind of trust your lines over corners, over bushes, over marsh. You know, it's kind of like Sawgrass in a way that no matter how big a lead somebody gets, like anything can happen on that golf course. I feel like there's a 66 and an 80 every day for any golfer, which is exciting for a major.

Q. I'm coming in a little bit late on the questions about the Player Impact Program and I don't want to harp on it, but your love of the PGA TOUR is quite clear today for me. I'm just sort of thinking crystal ball-wise, if you were sort of grouped with Rory McIlroy this week, who's the chairman of the Players Advisory Committee, would you bring it up with him? Are you passionate about this program and your views about it to sort of mention it to take it further?

WEBB SIMPSON: Yeah, Rory and I are friendly, we talk about a lot of stuff. Sure, we absolutely could talk about it. But again, I kind of explained, I don't feel like it's that big of a concern for me right now. So I feel like for me, when something's not a big concern, I don't think about it a whole lot until, like I say, my agent will call me and say we have to have a conversation; whether they're signing players, if you want to look at it, or, you know, hey, is this thing going anywhere or is it going to go away.

It seems like it's been on the fence for a while now. Nobody really has any clear answers on timing of when they're going to do it or send contracts out or start. So I feel like it's so up in the air that it's hard for me to even form a strong opinion until I have like cold, hard facts and details that it's going to happen.

Q. Does it surprise you then that the PGA TOUR has not come out with those cold hard facts? (Simultaneous speaking.)

WEBB SIMPSON: Honestly, yeah, I feel like it's out there and everyone's talking about it. I'm sure they have reason for not having said anything official on it. But we've got our player meeting today, I'm sure it will come up in that and I'll have an answer.

Q. I'll ask you on Sunday night.

WEBB SIMPSON: That's right, that's right.

LAURA VESCOVI: Well, that's all the questions we have for you today, Webb. Thanks for joining us. Good luck this week.

WEBB SIMPSON: Thank you.