

PRE-TOURNAMENT INTERVIEW
August 2, 2022



DAVIS LOVE III

JOHN BUSH: We would like to welcome Davis Love III into the media center here at the Wyndham Championship.

Davis, first of all, closing in on 800 starts on the PGA Tour, 25 now this week which have come at the Wyndham Championship. Just talk a little bit about what this event means to you, especially as a two-time winner.

DAVIS LOVE III: Well, I'm thrilled to be back. Obviously won it at Forest Oaks across town and won here, so it always gives me good vibes when I come back to a place that I played well. But now I'm playing with guys out there in practice rounds and they're saying, so how long ago was it when you won here and wasn't it another course? So it's kind of history, but I always do play better when I get to North Carolina for some reason. My game's been trending. The scores don't look good but my game's been trending up, so I'm hoping it will all come together this week.

JOHN BUSH: But it hasn't really been that long since you got the last of your 21 PGA Tour victories. What does winning here in 2015, your last Tour win, mean to you?

DAVIS LOVE III: Well, it's another kind of almost a record, I guess I'm the third or fourth oldest to have won a PGA Tour event. Just for the look on Bobby Long's face when I walked off the green that day when he told me that I had won and I hadn't been looking at the leaderboards, that was worth it.

And Bobby and Mark Brazil and the team came down to talk to me when they were going to move from Forest Oaks and I said, look, I'm with you guys, whatever's best for the tournament.

Yeah, I had some success at Forest Oaks, but I love Sedgefield, too. Look at how it's changed around here. The tournament's grown, the neighborhood's grown, the fans support it incredibly over here, so it was a great move and I'm happy to be back playing it again.

This is one course, where last week I couldn't bomb it over the corners like those guys could, but this is one course where I could just get it in the fairway and old age and treachery can overcome some of the guys' power, maybe not all of it.

JOHN BUSH: And as captain of the U.S. team for the Presidents Cup, I know you have some exciting news to share with us.

DAVIS LOVE III: Yeah. I've had Fred Couples and Zach Johnson named as assistant

captains for a while now and we've been watching guys play and waiting, but we want to announce today Steve Stricker is going to be an assistant captain, which is really no surprise with his recent Ryder Cup and Presidents Cup captaincy wins. Keep his streak going and keep him involved in the team.

Our goal has always been to add somebody new, like we added Zach Johnson, we had Matt Kuchar go to Paris, get some guys broken into the system that could be captains down the road. This year we're going to add Webb Simpson. We're going to add a local favorite on the course, neighbor, inside course knowledge, plus one of the guys on the Tour that the players really respect. Obviously they respect the game, but they love him on and off the golf course, but he's a leader in the locker room, in the team room and he's a connection for -- Fred and I don't play a whole lot out here on the regular Tour, we're on the Champions. So Webb's going to be a great resource because he knows the players a lot better than us.

He's a great addition. He's excited and that makes us excited to have him on the team because he's always been a team guy and we're excited to have him and his influence around these players for this year.

Q. Between playing and Presidents Cup, what gets the most attention from you right now? Your playing career, are you focused more on the Presidents Cup?

DAVIS LOVE III: Oh, I'm focused more on Presidents Cup. My wife said, what happened with those three doubles on Thursday, and I said, well, it was a bad day on the golf course but I made a lot of progress that week. I had a couple dinners. I got to eat dinner with Tony Finau and fly on a plane from Zach's pro-am with Tony Finau in the middle of him winning two golf tournaments. You can't get any closer to your team doing something like that, hanging out with Tony for two or three days.

And then, you know, being around is beneficial. You pick up things. Just playing with Will and Cam, not only the power and what great players they are and seeing it up close, it's one thing to play a practice round or watch them on the range or talk to them, watch them on TV -- I watched a lot of the British Open -- it's another thing to see them interact together and watch them on the golf course and see their personalities. Obviously they're friends, they do a lot of things together. They're pretty different. It's hard to get something out of Cam and you get a lot out of Will. It's good to know that and it's also good to know that they're good together. Wake Forest guys is OK, we're overloading our team with Wake Forest guys right now.

Little things, spending some time with Maverick McNealy and Zach Johnson last week and then a lot of great things have already happened here in just a day, day and a half. It's good for me to be out and connected.

Q. Along that same line, Billy Horschel was in here earlier and he talked about how much he wanted to make the team and said you had reached out to him. Could you talk a little bit about what you think he might bring to the team should he --

DAVIS LOVE III: Well, a lot of energy, a lot of passion, you know, and a hot game. That year that Billy ran through the FedExCup and then wasn't on the team and then we changed our system a little bit to catch the hot guy, we want Billy to get hot again because when he's on a roll. Nobody makes birdies faster than him.

But what we want and what I've been saying about the distractions in the game right now, we know we're going to get 12 guys that really want to play, and Max Homa and Will Zalatoris and Billy Horschel, guys like that, Brian Harman, they're passionate about the PGA Tour and they're passionate about playing the Presidents Cup.

It's unfortunate we're not playing 20 guys this year because I've got so many guys that want -- Webb Simpson. I'm not counting Webb Simpson out. Webb can make a lot of birdies here and get hot in the Playoffs. It's his home course, he's a great partner for anybody. There's a lot of guys on the list. Harris English was out with a hip surgery, but he just came off of a great year and a great Ryder Cup. He was a great teammate, he's easy to pair. There's a lot of guys that are still on the list. There's a ton of points. When our stats guys start showing me here's -- I say, how many guys are locks, and they go, well, Scotty. Well, maybe Sam Burns.

So a lot can happen. We've only got six that qualify on points, so it's a little bit strange these last two Cups picking six guys. It gives you a lot of flexibility, but also you don't have as many locked up early like we used to do. But we would love to have the new guys. They talk about veterans versus rookies, but guys like Billy and Will bring that energy that you need on a team.

Q. Did you talk to Tiger about being part of your staff or could he still be involved? I know he's been involved a lot recently.

DAVIS LOVE III: Well, he's involved. He called Webb and spilled the beans early, so he's involved. He's been a resource since -- really since 2015. Well, all the way back to our meetings on where are we going to go with this Ryder Cup thing, who's going to be the captain for '16 and how are we going to restructure the way we run these teams. Tiger's been a huge influence and a huge resource. He really has opened up and embraced that role. Obviously he couldn't come last year and it would be challenging for him to come this year even. It's not the Masters, a controlled environment where you can walk around and be inside the ropes and be safe.

He's an unbelievable influence not only on the Presidents Cup and the Ryder Cup, but also on this LIV stuff, he's really mentoring a lot of guys. So he'll be involved, he just won't be on the golf course.

Q. What are the chances of, say, Will and Cameron being paired together in a Presidents Cup match? They're both young guys, haven't been out there that long. Do you know those guys very well?

DAVIS LOVE III: Well, since they'll probably hear it -- they've got to make the team first and then they have a really good chance of playing together. You know, that's what Will and Cam both said to me, it would be a dream come true for us to play together.

I tend to forget that they don't have that experience, so I ask questions that are probably over their head a little bit, but I ask them, you know, who would you want -- we send out a survey and some emails and some digging that they fill in and let us know some preferences from food to partners, all different kinds of things.

But they both said it would be a dream scenario for them to play together. It's an easy pairing. It's like Patrick and Xander, it's pretty easy.

We've had pairings in the past that they were automatic, but like Freddie and I didn't get to play together enough. It's almost too easy. I think that's one thing we've learned. Statistically, guys can match up, but comfort is better than stats if you're comfortable. Trust, I think Will and Cam would have just an immediate trust in a pressure situation. They've done it before, they've roomed together on the road, they know each other very well, they do a lot -- same with Patrick and Xander, you can't quantify that in the stats.

Yeah, I would see them playing together. I'm pulling for them both to have great Playoffs and stay on a roll and then on the team. We'll have to let Freddie make pairings and put the matchups out.

The best thing about the Presidents Cup is that wall between the Internationals and the -- and Fred's sitting on this side throwing out the games. I could see that we have three or four really automatic teams that are peas in a pod ready to go. And that didn't just come from the last few months, that comes from we're approaching, what, eight years working on this year in and year out, thinking about it all the time. Jordan and Justin were texting me already about alternate shot format, who's on what holes at Quail. Our guys, they know that we're working on it, they're working on it, they're prepared to tell us what we need to know and give us more information.

And the great thing about texting and emails and cell phones is the communication level. Xander was texting me and I was driving. I just called him and said, all right, what about this, what about that. He's like, got it, Cap. Just having that access, but knowing that they're into it. I was scared to death to say something to Raymond Floyd or Tom Kite back when I was a kid on these teams. Now we have that open communication and you put together a chat, and a lot of it goes down bad rabbit holes, but you get a lot of good information and you keep the team communicating.

And then they come to you and say we have our own, we have our own chat that you guys aren't involved in. Then you realize they're a bunch of kids and kids running the show. It's a lot of fun for us. Obviously Fred and I probably have gone past our time in doing this, but it's been so much fun just to help them chase their dreams because that's what Tom Kite or

Raymond Floyd or Lanny Wadkins, Ken Venturi or Arnold Palmer, that's what they did for me, gave me a chance to go play in those things.

Q. You mentioned distractions earlier and you've been pretty outspoken about some things. You've been on policy boards and all that. What do you think about where the Tour finds itself these days and maybe its course of action or reaction?

DAVIS LOVE III: Well, you know, the whole situation is unfortunate. I didn't try to single out the U.S. Open as the players striking or not -- threatening not to play. I was saying that if the LIV guys sue and are allowed to play on the PGA Tour, that the players are enough fed up with it, we understand that we make the rules on the PGA Tour and the commissioner's enforcing our rules and we don't want those guys playing, come and cherrypicking our tournaments, that we hold all the cards, not Jay or not Seth Waugh or Mike Whan. They don't hold all the cards, we hold all the cards.

If we say to the FTC and to Washington, no, we support the rules, we don't want those guys playing, we don't care what the courts say, our only option really, the nuclear option is to say, well, fine, if they have to play in our events, we just won't play.

I think the Tour players, the Max Homas and Rory McIlroys have done a good job. I think the undercurrent of guys are getting more and more fed up with it, that these guys are threatening our way of life, they're trying to take money out of our pockets and cherrypick our best tournaments. The majors have to make their own decisions. I loved what Martin Slumbers said, I think they're all going in the right direction, but the PGA TOUR players, we support the PGA Tour and we support the rules and we need to stand up for them.

Q. Given what you said about some players, do you feel betrayed as a captain or as somebody who (inaudible)?

DAVIS LOVE III: Look, I told the players that I've talked to that have gone or thinking about going, it's your decision, you know, and you do what's right for you, but understand consequences. I tried to sound like my dad and I probably wasn't very good at it. I didn't argue. I said, look, you can do this or you can do this. You can be Tiger Woods or you can be banned from the game, take your pick.

But understanding the consequences, you signed up for these rules. And I keep using it kind of as a joke, but I'm wearing shorts today but I can't wear shorts on Thursday, that's a rule. I had to commit by last Friday or I don't get to play this week. I have to play 15 tournaments or I don't get to vote and I don't get my retirement money. You have rules that you have to adhere to.

You're getting -- I said fixing to, but you're fixing to break a rule that's a big rule and you're going to get penalized for it. And Jay's been saying it for a year and they either understood it, some of them understood that, some of them said it's not going to happen, and some of them just flat out lied, I'm not doing this, I'm not doing that.

And you hear it, the talking points or the interviews, they're spinning their decision because they know it's -- they know they've turned their backs on their friends and they know they're taking the money and they know it's not the right thing to do. But it is their decision and they can do that, they just can't come back and play THE PLAYERS Championship. That's just not fair. If I grind it out, make the 125 and get in THE PLAYERS Championship, I don't want those guys, that being the only PGA Tour event they play that year, that's not right.

Q. Is there an argument that the LIV tour actually -- the competition drives the purses up on the PGA Tour and the boat -- the high water raises all the boats?

DAVIS LOVE III: Well, in '94 Greg Norman proposed this 30-person world tour and what came of that, the commissioner, I wasn't on the board, said, well, what do the players really want? We said we would like to have some short field events, no cuts and big-money purses. It needs to be a little bit more competitive than 30 guys, so that's where the World Golf Championships came from.

Now, since the World Golf Championships came up in the late '90s, look how many changes we made to the PGA Tour. We changed the playoff system a couple times, we've changed the season a couple times. I have a great stat that I used for a long, long time when Tim Finchem was commissioner: 267 rules changes were made under Tim Finchem and 265 of them came from player suggestions, from the PAC, from player directors, from the players changing a rule.

We can change all the rules for next year if we want to and we can change the commissioner because he works for the players. The player directors and independent directors hired him. I've been on the board when we hired Tim Finchem and when we hired Jay Monahan. I watched the process. Somebody didn't just crown them and all of a sudden Tim Finchem was commissioner. Deane Beman didn't just walk in one day and say Tim's taking over. It was a process and players voted on it.

So as long as Jay's commissioner, his job is to uphold the rules that the players made and he's doing a very good job of that.

Now, he's playing defense and he's playing legal, so maybe you don't hear him say exactly what you want him to say or do, but he's bracing for over a year for a lawsuit, for a threat. Tactically, it's hard to know what to do. Nobody saw COVID coming, we handled it I think extremely well. Our sport did a very good job. You can argue that we may have done the best job of getting back to playing and handling it. Nobody saw the extent of LIV coming. It's hard to not be reactionary to something that when you're blindsided, you are being reactionary.

I told Jay a year ago and you can ask him, I said don't worry about it, it's not going to happen. I was completely dead wrong. Six months ago I told my own tournament, oh, don't worry about it, not going to happen. Mickelson's going down, but nobody else will jump ship.

So I was wrong. I don't know what's going to happen from here on out, but I know it's going to be a fight and the players are getting more and more unified against it.

Now, some guys said that they don't like the new schedule and some guys don't like the old schedule. I might not like the fall schedule right now, but it's going to work out because I'm on board with whatever the Tour wants to do. It will work out because I know the staff doesn't work for Jay exclusively, they work for the players and so does Jay.

And Helen, I went backwards a tournament. Me and Jay to our 800 chase. We went backwards. We lost a Presidents Cup. Jay went from 799. So I'm going to lobby rules changes that they count my British Opens and my Presidents Cup and then I'm almost 800 now.

JOHN BUSH: Davis, as always, thank you for your time.

DAVIS LOVE III: Thank you.