

PRE-TOURNAMENT INTERVIEW
November 16, 2022

HARRIS ENGLISH



JACK RYAN: We would like to welcome Harris English into the interview room here at the RSM Classic. Harris is making his seventh start of the season, had a top 10 at the Fortinet Championship to start the year and is making his 11th start here at his home event at the RSM Classic.

Harris, as I mentioned, seventh start of the season, you've had a busy fall including that top-10. What's the state of your game coming into this week?

HARRIS ENGLISH: You've done some good research, I didn't even know this is my seventh tournament this fall.

Yeah, after getting hurt last year, having surgery in February, I mean, feel like I'm ready to go. Playing as much as possible and trying to get some rounds under my belt. That's the biggest thing about taking three or four months off of competitive golf is you kind of lose the competitive edge and the little things in this game that make it so difficult.

I've been playing a lot this fall, been playing well, feel like my game's trending in the right direction. Yeah, obviously love coming here. Live right across the street. It's nice to be back. A lot of friends and family in town and very comfortable around this place, so looking forward to the week. And paired with two Bulldogs in Kiz and Harm, so we're going to have a lot of fun out there.

JACK RYAN: Comfortable pairing, comfortable course, a place that you have a top-10 in 2020. Just how does this course fit your game? I know you know it as well as anybody, but specifically what is it about this course that you like?

HARRIS ENGLISH: Yeah, obviously they're in great shape. They're just a lot of fun. Seaside, I was telling my caddie today, I said I never get tired of playing this place.

The challenging part about playing this week is we never play it in these kind of conditions. It's going to be windy, it's going to be cool. We never see the pin placements where they're going to be in a tournament a whole lot just playing out here in a regular round. So the greens are obviously faster, it's just different.

And I don't know if it's putting more pressure on yourself this week of I should play well, I should know the course better than anybody. Maybe it is a little added pressure of wanting to play good for your family and friends and everybody here in Sea Island, but I kind of look at it as a great end-of-the-year tournament. This is a lot of fun and the more I can relax and have fun, the better I'll play.

Q. Harris, with your Ryder Cup experience, you played for Steve Stricker and he had a lot of past international captains around him, Davis and Zach helped out, and Freddie. Having had that experience and knowing Zach the way you do, what kind of personality as a captain do you think Zach's going to bring to this team? How do you think that experience is going to be? I know it's a long way away and nothing's clinched and everything, but like you said, you've got some knowledge of him and you've got the experience, but what kind of captain do you think he'll be, especially in terms of player-captain relationships?

HARRIS ENGLISH: Zach's amazing. He's been great for me ever since I moved down here, great to all of us, but I got to see him in that role at the Ryder Cup. He was not in my pod system, Furyk was my pod captain, but obviously I know Zach really well and play a lot of golf with him back here.

He's just got so much passion about him, that's the way he plays golf. I wouldn't say intense is the right word because intense could be thought of as negative. He's very positive and just a great guy. He's going to keep it light in there. He's been on a lot of Ryder Cup teams, kind of seen the good and the bad and he's going to take all the good stuff and lean on guys like Davis, lean on guys like Stricker to help him out.

I thought what Strick did at Whistling Straits was amazing. He's not a huge rah-rah guy, he's super quiet and conservative, but he just let us play golf. He didn't really tell us how to play our game, how to play the course. It was like, you know better than anybody what you do well and go play. I think Zach's going to take a lot from that and he's going to be an unbelievable captain to play for.

I hope I get to make that team because I know over there in Italy is going to be incredible.

Q. Harris, I think you're 52nd right now in the world if I just looked it up. How much is the top 50 and Augusta on your mind and have you ever been in a position like this before where you could kind of control your own fate?

HARRIS ENGLISH: Yeah, that's a good question. I don't know if I have been in this position before. I know top 50 at the end of the year is huge and gets you in Augusta, but I know if I don't, I've got a lot more chances.

I'm trying to win golf tournaments. I know I've got a lot of chances in the west coast events and Florida to get back in the Masters. I don't really see it as like a do-or-die situation. Obviously I'd love to play at Augusta. It really hurt having to withdraw last year because it's so special for us Georgia guys to be able to play it, but yeah it's not going to really be in my mind teeing off on Thursday. I'm here trying to compete at the RSM Classic and try to be in one of the last couple groups coming down 18 having a chance to win. That's kind of in the back of my mind. If it works out, it works out. If it doesn't, I've got a lot more chances.

Q. You played a lot this fall and there's a lot of discussion about what the fall's going to look like going forward. What would you like to see it look like going forward, like it looks now or somehow differently?

HARRIS ENGLISH: Yeah, so my first year in 2012 was the last time they had the old season, which it ended at the TOUR Championship. You still had the tournaments in the fall, but it didn't count towards the FedEx, it was just guys who didn't make enough money trying to keep their card, so if you wanted to play, you could play.

So I loved that way. I only got to do it one year, but I can't remember what I finished in the FedExCup that first year, but I played some in the fall just because I wanted to play and make money and go see new places. I wish it would go back to some sort of that. It kind of limits the guys of, hey, if you play well, you make the TOUR Championship. If you don't want to play the fall, you don't have to play it. If you want to play, stay sharp, you can play if you want to. I really wouldn't think it would hurt a whole lot of fields like RSM, the Shriners, Mexico. We had Disney back in the day, I thought that was a decent field. I only got one year of it, but I really liked that system.

Q. A lot of different people, nonprofessional golfers, have injuries and then try and go out and play golf and they struggle I'm sure just like the pros do. Did you find that you didn't trust your injury being healed? Were you starting to make mistakes, you know, overcompensating or anything like that when you were coming back?

HARRIS ENGLISH: I was very diligent with not pushing it too hard. I was on a pretty good schedule. One of my friends, Brandt Snedeker, had the same surgery years ago from the same doctor so they had a pretty good program of when I could start putting, when I could start chipping. Everybody told me it was like don't come back too fast because then you can start getting in bad habits, you don't trust it, you not reinjure it, but you just never get fully healed or whatnot.

I felt like I did a pretty good job. I know Memorial was about the soonest I could come back, and obviously that was a really tough test to come back for your first tournament with the U.S. Open the next week. I was just tired of missing majors. Finally got in all the majors and I hated missing the PGA out in Tulsa. So I didn't really want to miss another major, so that was kind of my goal to get back. I was doing two-a-days of rehab, so I felt like I was on a good program and it's feeling great right now.

Q. You mentioned the Ryder Cup earlier. Looking back, can you talk about how playing in that Ryder Cup maybe changed your life and also changed your life on Tour as a golfer?

HARRIS ENGLISH: Yeah, if I would have never made an international team like that in my career, it would have been a disappointment because it's truly the pinnacle of our sport. I've never played on a Presidents Cup before, but I don't know how you can get better the Ryder Cup atmosphere, the team camaraderie. It was amazing. It was everything I'd ever hoped

for or dreamed about being a part of that team. And that's what I tell other guys that are trying to make it.

Again, going to the LIV tour, that was one of the reasons why I wasn't going to go is if the possibility of giving that up outweighed anything that the LIV tour could have brought. It just means that much to me. I got to play in a Walker Cup in 2011 at Royal Aberdeen and it just gave me a taste of what the Ryder Cup could be and it's amazing.

Q. Are you going to go to Rome or have you played the course in Italy to see it?

HARRIS ENGLISH: I've never played it. I actually played with Rory McIlroy in a practice round at CJ CUP a couple weeks ago and he was talking about the course and how much he liked it, but I know it's going to be incredible. I've never been to Italy, I've never been to Rome, I can only imagine how special that will be.

Q. Was there anything positive that came out of being injured, both professionally and personally?

HARRIS ENGLISH: Yeah, it definitely gives you time to sit back and realize how much I love playing this game. I watched a lot of golf on TV and it makes you miss it so much. When you're playing three, four, five weeks in a row, at the end of a long season it can kind of be a drag of you're kind of doing the same thing every day, but once you're out, once you're seeing all your buddies play and then how much fun they're having playing in tournaments. Like missing Southern Hills really sucked, I didn't like missing that, I didn't like missing big events. So it definitely puts in a new perspective of how much I love competing how much I love playing this game and I was ready to get back.

Q. And I take it you were offered an opportunity to go to LIV and was that the deciding factor?

HARRIS ENGLISH: No, I never got into talks with them, but that would have been a deciding factor. Just giving the Ryder Cup, giving the Presidents Cup up is massive. That's very special to me and you can't really put a price tag on making one of those teams.

Q. Did you watch the Presidents Cup and if so, what was that like?

HARRIS ENGLISH: I did, I did. It was amazing. I talked to Sungjae and Tom Kim of how well they played. I loved seeing how great of golf was played in that event. People didn't realize how good the International Team was. They can play golf just as well as Americans. We all play on the PGA TOUR and there's some really good golfers. I just love the drama of it. It was really close there for about an hour of it could have gone either way. I love watching that golf, I love the passion of that event and I thought it was well done on TV.

Q. It didn't hurt that you weren't there enough that you couldn't watch it?

HARRIS ENGLISH: No, no, it will never hurt that much, because I love watching good golf. I love watching the guys pulling for the American team and just seeing the back and forth, seeing some good 12-footers being made, chip-ins, all that. Every Ryder Cup, every Presidents Cup I'm going to watch because it's fantastic golf.

Q. And one last one from me, do you guys put too much pressure, you were saying put too much pressure on yourself trying to win at home?

HARRIS ENGLISH: It's more just the familiarity with the golf course and the tournament. I wouldn't say I play Seaside and Plantation every day, but I play it a good bit throughout the year.

Yeah, you want to play better for your friends and family and everybody coming out and you feel like you should play well. But again, there's a lot of good players in this field and they all can play really good golf. Just because I've putted on these greens more than they have or played these golf courses more than they have doesn't mean that I have that much of an advantage over them.

Q. If you were to win here, where would you go to celebrate?

HARRIS ENGLISH: Probably, I don't think Ziggy Mahoney's will be open on Sunday, but that's a pretty good celebration spot.

Q. Harris, what do you like about Sepp Straka's game?

HARRIS ENGLISH: Sepp is really solid. I played with him last week in Houston. We had an all-Dawg pairing once again, Russell Henley, Sepp and I. He's just really solid, a great guy to be with, very confident. He just does everything well, he doesn't have a weakness in his game.

He came to Georgia after I left, so I didn't really see him develop as a player. Just playing with him the last couple years, he's very confident in his game, does everything well, drives it straight, wedges it good, putts it good. So I think he's going to be a really good Ryder Cup pick even -- it's kind of weird being from Austria and growing up in Valdosta, so I think of him as a Georgia guy through and through, but I think Luke Donald would have a great pick in Sepp Straka.

JACK RYAN: Speaking of Georgia.

HARRIS ENGLISH: You have to throw that in there, Jack.

JACK RYAN: Kentucky and Georgia Tech to close out the regular season, LSU in the SEC Championship. Thoughts on how the season's going to wrap up here?

HARRIS ENGLISH: Yeah, it's pretty impressive what we've done this year with how many

guys we lost in the draft, but Kirby Smart's done a great job. And it's fun being a Bulldog fan. Playing on the road is always tough. Kentucky's going to give us our best shot. I don't think Tech will be much of a problem, but LSU's been playing great.

I already booked a hotel room in L.A. for the National Championship. I don't know if that's too soon, but I think we can get out of it if we lose, but I would love to see them play in L.A. and hopefully win a National Championship.

JACK RYAN: Glad to hear it. Thank you very much for your time, Harris.