

PRE-TOURNAMENT PRESS CONFERENCE
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WEBB SIMPSON



JOHN BUSH: We would like to welcome Webb Simpson into the interview room here at the Wells Fargo Championship.

Webb, welcome back to Quail Hollow. I know this is a place and a tournament that you love. If we can get some comments on being here?

WEBB SIMPSON: Yeah, Quail's been home for me for a long time. I think I joined the club in 2011 as a member and that was when we had one kid and now we have five, so a lot of life has happened since we've been members here.

We moved over here on the golf course in 2014, so Quail is not only my workplace, but it's where we do a lot of life. We definitely utilize all the facilities here at Quail.

And it's been great to get to know the Harris family and all Johnny is doing through this club through the Presidents Cup, PGA Championship and Wells Fargo Championship.

Delighted to be here. I don't think many PGA TOUR players can say they've played in a major championship and a regular Tour event at their home golf course. So once again, Keith Wood and the superintendent's staff have made this golf course just about perfect for us this week. It's going to be a tough test, these greens are only a year old, so certainly firm, challenging, and hopefully we don't get too much rain.

But I'm happy to be here, happy to be competing against a great field, and I feel good about my game right now. I haven't played particularly great this year, but I've done a lot of great work these last two weeks off and my game certainly feels better than it has felt in a long time.

Q. As the local, how does 16 play now with the new tee?

WEBB SIMPSON: The new tee on 16 is a bear, I think it's 525 yards.

The question before for me was can I ever carry the bunker and I only could downwind. Now the bunker's not really even in play. It does shift your line of your tee shot a little further left and probably makes that tee shot 10 to 12 yards wider, but I think our tour staff does such a good job of setting golf courses up to play tough but play fair. So I don't know if we'll be on that tee if we have any kind of hurt wind.

You know, it puts more emphasis in the Green Mile being the toughest three-hole stretch of golf. You get to 16 tee with any kind of lead, it's still anyone's golf tournament because those



last three holes are so difficult.

I think it was a good change. I think part of it was guys would kind of aim over the bunker who were long enough from that old tee and be able to carry the bunker, but if they missed it right it flew straight into the Green Mile. So I think it's a good change even though a lot of guys think it was hard before, now it's a lot harder, why'd they do it. I think a lot of it was kind of to keep balls away from a very popular spot over there on 16.

Q. Rory just admitted that he's no longer in consideration for the PGA TOUR policy board and you will remain on the board. It's a bit of a 180. Can you walk us through that process that's happened over the last few weeks?

WEBB SIMPSON: Yeah, it's been an interesting few weeks in the sense of there's a lot of moving parts right now with the PGA TOUR. You guys are well aware of all that's going on in the game of golf.

I think a year and a half into being a board member, there's been so many changes in different facets of the PGA TOUR and in the game of golf.

So I think we're always looking on the board what can we do to make the PGA TOUR better, how can we make the game of golf better, how can we give our members a better place to play and better opportunities.

I think the sentiment was Rory McIlroy, being the global superstar that he is and the strong voice that he has in the game of golf, you know, it would be great to get him involved more. So, you know, what capacity is he going to get involved more? I think three weeks ago we just wanted him more involved, and I think I've seen support from the guys on wanting him more involved and helping. He kind of -- you know, all he has said to me is I just want to help if you guys want me to help. So we're thankful that he wants to help. He has, like I said, an important voice and I think he's already made a positive impact the last week in his role.

So I am remaining in my seat on the board, I intend to carry out my full term of three years, and I think all of us are in agreement that we want to work well together, we want to make the PGA TOUR better and we're in a crucial time. We were in a crucial time before SSG became an investor and we're now at another crucial time trying to figure out what will make the PGA TOUR better not for this year or next year but for 50 years.

Q. Can I follow up on that just to get more nuts and bolts? Was that a conversation that you and (inaudible) --

WEBB SIMPSON: Rory and I have been friends for a long time. I played against him in the Walker Cup in 2007. He and I talk all things golf, wine, parenting. He and I talk on a fairly regular basis.

Rory is, he's always had great ideas of how do we move forward, how do we get the love



and attention from fans back from where we had it maybe two years ago, how do we grow our business, all things related to the PGA TOUR.

So I think those conversations just led to a thought of wanting him to be not necessarily in every conversation but in more conversations. I think the players on the board were very supportive of him being more involved, and in those conversations I think they all see the vital role he plays not only on the PGA TOUR, but he's a DP World Tour member and they're such an important piece in the game of golf and our tour.

So his perspective is tremendous to us. He's a global player, always has been, so I just think his views are important, and the other guys feel the same. We kind of had to figure out, OK, where is his place, how can we -- how can we honor our role as board members and our commitment to the Tour, but also bring in a guy at least to voice his ideas and just see how he can help us. And he's been great, he just wants to help. At the end of the day wanted not to cause any drama or big stories, just at the end of the day just wants to help.

He said that yesterday. We had a great lunch just talking about how this can all work for the good of the Tour. I think we're all on the same page with that.

Q. Webb, Rory suggested to us just a little while ago that one of the problems he sees is that both sides are -- in terms of trying to make a deal with PIF, both sides need to sort of understand that they might not like everything that comes out of it but in the end there would be peace. Do you see like what those roadblocks are for the PGA TOUR's side? Like what do you think is holding it up on the Tour's side of things that may be something that you might have to live with?

WEBB SIMPSON: Roadblocks meaning what?

Q. I'm sorry, just to getting a deal done.

WEBB SIMPSON: Oh, to getting a deal done.

I think you've got -- the PGA TOUR has traditionally been the biggest tour and still is in the game of golf, and the best tour. It's where the best players play. Now we have a disrupter in the sense there's a new tour and some of the PGA TOUR players and the world's greatest players have gone to play that tour.

I think it's now trying to figure out how do both of these entities work moving forward. If the game of golf has suffered a little, if fans have voiced their opinion of being a little less disinterested [sic] than they were, how do we honor the fans, how do we get their interest back, do we honor our media partners or our title sponsors.

I think there's always roadblocks in a deal of this magnitude but I know that the transaction committee, all the guys at SSG, the PGA TOUR, they're all working night and day to try to work through some of these roadblocks.



And I think it's natural in any deal when you have two parties trying to come together, there's going to be some things that one side wants that the other doesn't and vice versa.

So maybe our outlook on the future of golf might be a little different than theirs, but look, that's why we have a great team of people, like I said, from SSG, from our tour, from the PGA TOUR in Ponte Vedre, just all work together. There's some smart people a lot smarter than me who are going to figure out those roadblocks and hopefully we get back to producing great golf tournaments at great venues and that's what I'm hopeful for.

Q. Webb, Rory said that he thought there were people on the board that were maybe uncomfortable with him coming back on. Did you get that sense?

WEBB SIMPSON: No. I think what we had to work through was, you know, where could he -- where could his role best be utilized. There's a lot of different roles right now that different players are playing on different committees or us on the policy board or the enterprises board.

So they really were looking at it kind of holistically like yes, we want Rory to help, we know he can help and we know he's going to help. Let's all figure out a place where we feel good with saying, can you help us here, and if he feels good, then great, it's a win for all of us.

Q. Webb, there have been some criticisms with the sponsor exemptions that have been given out to players that are on the policy board. I'm just curious your reaction to that, if you saw any of that or what your response would be to that.

WEBB SIMPSON: Well, I'm not a very active social media user, so y'all probably see a lot more criticisms than I do.

Look, it's a different day and age now than it was. I know these sponsor exemptions are probably the most coveted sponsor exemptions in the history of the Tour, but we're not going to make everyone happy. As we're looking at what criteria should these sponsor exemptions be, yadda yadda, we're trying to balance making sponsors happy, giving them the opportunity to invite -- you know, these tournament directors, who do they want to bring to their tournament, to their community, who do they think will add value to their tournament. These tournament directors are working round the clock for a year trying to make their tournament the best. We want to give them the opportunity to say hey, you have a few spots, four spots in these Signature Events to be able to invite who you want to invite.

I know that I've gotten, this is my fourth sponsor exemption, and Adam Scott's received his fair share. There was controversy and guys were trying to link us being on the board, but it has nothing to do with me being on the board.

I've known these tournament directors, and they'll tell you themselves, since my rookie year in 2009. I have great affection for those tournaments and those sponsors and I think it's way



more than just currently who's getting in. How long have they been out here, they've won major championships, they've been around the game for a long time, and these tournament directors, Gary Sobba is a friend of mine and he gets to pick along with Wells Fargo who do they think would be great for their tournament.

So I certainly think the criticisms, I knew they were going to come depending on who got them, but I'm very comfortable knowing that we've given the sponsors the opportunity to pick, and the tournament directors. I want -- I want to move on from it and realize that the Wells Fargo Championship is an amazing tournament. I'm excited to be here, it's my home and I get to do cool things this week. I got to go to the Trojans Levine Center last week, played bingo with some kids in the hospital through this exemption. I get to hang out with some kids today on the range for The First Tee of Charlotte.

There's things that I'm way more interested in and that get me excited than kind of worrying about what a certain person thinks about who should get sponsor exemptions.

Q. Webb, in my experience with contracts both personally and observing over the years that when one side's unhappy (inaudible) and neither side's got 100 percent what they want, it's probably a pretty good deal (inaudible) especially from the beginning, it looked like both sides really had their heels dug in the ground. Do you sense as time goes on that there's more of a willingness to compromise?

WEBB SIMPSON: Yeah, and I wouldn't even say compromise. I would just say there's incentive from both sides to work through a deal and work to get to a better place. I think there's great incentive for us, there's great incentive for them.

And I think our goals might be a little different than their goals, I'm not sure because I'm not on that particular transaction committee who's currently negotiating, but those goals will come out I'm sure and we'll learn more.

But that meeting with Yasir, it was clear like he wants to partner or he wants to, you know, grow the game, he wants to help fans get more excited about the game of golf. Like I said, his ideas might be different than ours, but doesn't mean that we can't continue to work well working on a deal to bring the game of golf to a better place.

Q. I know you said that you feel good about your game coming into this week. How has this year been for you? No top-25s. What do you feel has been your struggles and kind of where are you right now with your game?

WEBB SIMPSON: Well, I think over my career my iron play's probably been the best, most consistent part of my game and that's been probably the worst part of my game. And Titleist has been awesome coming up with solutions for me, trying different stuff, different irons.

This week I've gone back to irons I used most of my career. I put them in play about 10 days ago and I've had great and immediate success with them. Sometimes as a golfer having



played for a long time, you just need to go back to what you're most familiar with, the way the club goes through the ground, the amount of spin I'm putting on the golf ball. I would point to that part of my game for my struggles this year.

But like I said, I'm optimistic what I've seen the last 10 days, and being so familiar with this golf course is obviously a calming factor for me knowing how to play the golf course, how the golf course can change so fast if we get some drier, windier conditions this weekend. So I'm very optimistic about this second half of the year.

Q. Webb, your name on the U.S. Open trophy and the U.S. Open coming back to Pinehurst in a couple of weeks, what does it mean to have your name on that trophy and what are your recollections of playing No. 2 in '14 I believe it was for you, and even going back as a kid in '99 just before we met.

WEBB SIMPSON: Yeah. Well, in '99 I was actually a standard bearer on Saturday for Tom Watson, which was amazing. That was kind of my first -- my first time inside the ropes at any Tour event, but at a major championship.

Playing in 2014 was like a dream come true. I had always played No. 2 growing up in tournaments, North-South, Junior Championship, we had the state championship there in high school, my mom and dad lived there for a number of years. So Pinehurst is near and dear to me.

I'm currently not in the U.S. Open. I'm qualifying in Alpharetta I think it's June 3rd, so that will be something -- it's one of my biggest goals of the year. It would kill me not to be in the U.S. Open this year, but I haven't played well enough, my exemption ran out and I'll be playing 36 holes fighting like crazy to get into it. But it's an amazing venue and having USGA's new golf house there is really special. It's an amazing venue for a U.S. Open.

Q. (No microphone.)

WEBB SIMPSON: Yeah, so I have the trophy in my office right now, and from time to time when I'm feeling down about my game I will go look at it, I'll remind myself that that was a great day in 2012 winning a major championship.

And seeing other names around me, the Tiger Woods, the Rory McIlroys, the greats of the game instills in me that I do have what it takes, and golf's a funny game, sometimes you get a little off but it's in there, I've just got to bring it out.

Q. Backing off of that, I'm sure some guys would use this trip, you're right down the road from Pinehurst, sort of go from here to there. What's been the consensus about getting out to major championships with like a stacked Signature Event, major, Signature Event, how that sort of disrupts the schedule a little bit?

WEBB SIMPSON: Yeah, it's a new thing obviously for the last year and a half having these



Signature Events, but I think some guys' mentality is they want to play certain golf courses before a major, whether it's a hard golf course or whatnot. Some guys just want to play, they want to get four days of competition in.

I think a new factor now with these Signature Events is you have the best players in the world here all together, so it's an amazing championship this week, but I think some guys see it as a two-for-one in the sense that they're playing a great golf course, a great golf tournament, but they're also playing against the best players in the world who they're going to be playing against next week in the PGA Championship.

So whether you call it a warmup or not, this is its own championship in and of itself that I'm sure guys' minds are really focused here but in the anticipation of obviously getting ready for next week, too.

JOHN BUSH: Can't let you go, Webb, without finding out how you did in bingo against the kids.

WEBB SIMPSON: It was actually a "would you rather" game. They do do bingo, which I'll go back to, but would you rather's were pretty awesome. I remember one was would you rather putt with a stick with a marshmallow on the end or with a magic wand? So there's a lot of debate with me and the kids about what's better.

But those kids are what it's all about, and Wells Fargo does a great job with partnering with organizations like Levine Center. Yeah, I'm excited for more opportunities to partner with them.

JOHN BUSH: And your answer on that?

WEBB SIMPSON: The marshmallow on a stick because putting's hard and you get in a bad mood if you miss a putt, you take the marshmallow off, you eat it and you feel better.

