

**PRE-TOURNAMENT PRESS CONFERENCE**  
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**DAVIS LOVE III**

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**MODERATOR:** We would like to welcome tournament host Davis Love III here to the 16th RSM Classic.

Davis, 16 years. If we can get you to talk a little bit about this event and what it has meant to this area during that time.

**DAVIS LOVE III:** Well, we obviously celebrated 15 last year and now on to our next 15. Very exciting to kick it off yesterday with our first pro-am.

You know, we just go back over the impact, I say \$50 million but our accounting partners, RSM, say \$48 million to charity in our first 15 years is amazing. The Tour sent us some stats recently that we're No. 1 in charity dollars in the fall and No. 2 in our peer group of similar size tournaments on the Tour, which I guess we're the smallest probably, or maybe Bermuda is.

We have great success here, and obviously with our partner RSM and Sea Island and all our friends here supporting us, our foundation and the RSM Classic has done a lot and grown a lot. So we're excited to kick off the 16th year.

**MODERATOR:** And my favorite question every year is what's the state of your game coming into the week?

**DAVIS LOVE III:** Well, we can talk about that for a long time. It's better. Obviously I've had a long couple of years with surgeries and injuries and sitting out. Dru Love one time figured out how far I had walked on the PGA TOUR. Now I would like him to figure out the last 10 years how many tournaments I've missed, how much I've sat out, but I would say five years of the last 10 I have not been able to play.

I haven't passed Mark Brooks on the all-time starts list because I've been out so much.

But I'm feeling better about my game. I've been playing really since early September, back practicing and playing. I played two Champions Tour events last month, kind of gradually feel like I'm getting better every week. But unfortunately the last couple years in the RSM I felt I was getting better and then things happened and I hurt myself again. So I don't want to jinx the weather, I don't want to jinx my game, but things are looking up Thursday, Friday I think.

**Q. I think you're OK on the weather.**

**DAVIS LOVE III:** Yeah, the weather is looking really, really good. You know around here the weather's good when people start talking about the sand gnats. Seventy and calm is when the sand gnats come out, so that's what we're looking at a lot this week is really good weather. So it's nice to have a good forecast. The last four, five days here have just been unbelievable.

**Q. Given the changes that are coming up on the PGA TOUR, reduced field sizes, 100 exempt players instead of 125, do you think that -- what do you think about the long-term future of this event given what's coming? Any concerns at all about this tournament being a part of -- I mean, same way it's been for the first 15 years?**

**DAVIS LOVE III:** Well, we've gone through a lot of changes in the fall obviously. All the fall events have always been wondering what's next. We've been wraparound, we've been end of the year, beginning of the year, trying to drive the purses up, all kinds of things have happened in our 16 years, 17 years of talking about being in the fall.

But I was very excited a few weeks ago when the Tour announced a tournament at Asheville in the fall. That means they're committed to the fall and maybe not going anywhere for a while.

I've spent a little bit of time with Brian Rolapp and I've spent a lot of time with Tour staff. We've been down at TPC Sawgrass a lot working. The energy and the excitement from the staff has been really good. I'm excited about the future. So we have a new commitment from RSM and we're rolling right along.

As Tim Finchem challenged me after a couple years here, we're just trying to get better with our event every year and fill the gap.

I've had a whole bunch of people come up to me and talk about this player or that player playing for their card or playing for the top-60 or moving up the list, so there's a lot of fun things to talk about and play for this week. Everybody that's here, 156 are all excited to play in this tournament and excited about the fall.

**Q. And as a follow-up to that, you said Tim challenged you to get better, to show improvement. Famously, Augusta National never sits on their model, they are always looking for ways to give back. How do you think in year 16 you're better than you were in maybe year four or five?**

**DAVIS LOVE III:** I think we're always better in what we do for the guests, the fans that come out, for our corporate partners. We always do a little bit -- I just walked through the club trailers over there and there's a little coffee bar. I don't know who that's for, but I'm going to go get a coffee.

Little things that we improve. We have RSM, we always brag that they're the best sponsor on the PGA TOUR. We're not saying that just to be nice, they're an incredible partner. We sit

down after the tournament and we debrief and everybody says what went well and things we could do better.

But little things, whether it's food or hospitality or player services or whatever we can do to make the experience for everybody better.

And our team, our office team has grown. We have a few fresh young faces and people are moving up. Our team and our foundation just gets better and better and the tournament just gets a little bit bigger and a little bit better.

We're not going to become THE PLAYERS Championship big in this little town, but we continue to grow and continue to expand and offer -- we're digital tickets this year. There's a whole lot of things that the Tour pushes and RSM pushes us to do and we just keep better and better.

**Q. Building on what you said with RSM, a lot of tournaments have turnover, they'll find a new sponsor. But what's been the secret to keeping RSM all these years?**

**DAVIS LOVE III:** Well, the reason that they came here in the first place, when Zach Johnson introduced us to the RSM leadership team and said, hey, these guys might be a potential sponsor for the tournament here, they realized the opportunity to come to Sea Island Resort, they realized working with our foundation they could make an impact.

Yeah, there's a lot of turnover in sponsors, but we became partners and we became friends. I was just in the cottage on the range last night with leadership of RSM. It wasn't -- Zach Johnson was there and Chesson Hadley and JT Poston. It wasn't an outing that we were doing with RSM last night, it was hanging out with our friends and enjoying the tournament and enjoying the camaraderie. We've truly become partners and friends with them.

One time when the Tour was talking about replacing sponsors, I said we don't want a different sponsor, we want to keep this sponsor happy forever. That's always been our goal and always been RSM's goal. They love coming to Sea Island, it's become part of their culture. It's all about relationships, and I've seen that on Tour. The ones that last a long time as you build into the relationship early on and continue to push each other to get better.

**Q. One of the principal reasons for the changes that are coming next year was supposedly pace of play. How has pace of play changed during the time you've been out here?**

**DAVIS LOVE III:** I was on the board of the Tour five times and a lot of meetings, pace of play has always been a question. Some of the great, I think it was Wade Cagle maybe, one of our great older rules officials said we have nowhere to go when we make the turn on Thursday, Friday. We're not going to speed up, we're going to save 15 minutes.

So one of the great things about smaller fields, which we've been talking about for years and

years and years, is you have a place to go when you make the turn on Thursday, Friday if you're playing less players.

We play a big field here but we split them into two golf courses so our pro-am and our tournament rounds are fast here. This is the model. That's why 80 or 90 or 100 at the Masters works really well because there's not a whole lot of guys on the golf course.

I think pace of play with a few players is an issue. It's not an issue with a lot of players. It gets a lot of publicity because -- there's not much to complain about on the PGA TOUR, so when guys do complain, it gets a lot of attention.

It's never going to go away, there's going to be fast players and slow players. Until they get field size right, there really is nowhere to go. Sunday twosomes off one tee is always nice.

**Q. Do you think this will be the solution, the reductions that are going to happen?**

**DAVIS LOVE III:** I promise you, 10 years from now somebody will complain about slow play. It might be Wednesday, it might be Friday, but -- I'm one of them. We're spoiled Tour players, we're always going to find something that we want better.

Some of my friends here complain about the parking all the time here. They're not doing it mean, they just can't find a parking spot.

There is no perfect solution. They're all sitting in the card room in the old locker room over here, we could walk in there, what's the solution. They'll say we just need to spread out the tee times and have a place to go when we make the turn.

There is -- and we've said it for 30 or 40 years I've been out here, the players have to respect their other players and pick up the pace. I think there's very few guys that don't try. You know, it's hard to tell a guy "you're slow" in the group, but if you're respecting the rules and respecting your other players, you'll play a little quicker and make it fun for everybody.

**Q. Luke Clanton contended here. We've seen a lot of young players kind of burst out on the scene and then maybe go through growing pains. Tom Kim, other guys are kind of going through it right now. I'm just wondering what you remember back when you started playing and also just observing a lot of young players, like they come out with a lot of success and a lot of times they experience a lull before jumping back up and just kind of that process of learning and growing, what you see.**

**DAVIS LOVE III:** Yeah, there's always a lot of ups and downs in a career. I've had my ups and downs, good years, bad years when I was starting off.

It's so competitive out here. You come out fresh and young and excited and you have some quick success, and then that breeds a lot of other pressures. Success is sometimes hard to take. It takes a lot of your time. You look at a guy that just wins and all of a sudden all these

opportunities happen.

I was lucky to have guys like Vinny Giles around me that kept me grounded and focused and working on your golf game and everything else will take care of itself.

The demands on your time and demands on your life when you become successful make it even harder to compete.

We've been lucky here, we get a lot of exciting stories, first-time winners and guys like Maverick that they hit it -- they finally get over the hump and then take off. Aberg, guys like that, we've had a lot of first-timers.

Again, I think these golf courses now suit that, too. Somebody comes in hot, we've had all kinds of different style of players win here. I think the young guys here that are playing well, they stand out.

**Q. Davis, you mentioned the new numbers this year, 100 versus 125 and all the other numbers that factor into it. I know it's just a number, but are you sensing a little bit more sense of urgency from players because you don't have that flexibility anymore? If you're not inside the top 100, you're probably going to struggle to get starts?**

**DAVIS LOVE III:** There's always been the area where you're not sure if you're going to get in, whether it's 125 or 150, all the numbers. I've felt like for a long, long time that a smaller number of cards, 125 -- 150, 125, 100, 75, some smaller number was the way to go. But we're always going to have that access problem.

We focus on our exemptions. Especially when we were at the start of the season, we focus on our exemptions, giving guys a chance to play because the young guys, there's some years the rookies on Tour were only getting 16 or 17 or 18 starts. That's tough to compete. So we're always looking at that.

Then what we look at as board members was the Korn Ferry, the other opportunities if you're not in the top-100 or 125, making sure those opportunities are still great and there's another way to get back to the Tour.

I think both the players and the board now are focused on making as many tournaments as meaningful as they can be no matter what they are. If you're an elevated, if you're a regular tournament or if you're a fall event or if you're a Korn Ferry event, making them all more important.

Even the Champions Tour, it was great to see Brian Rolapp come spend an afternoon at Jim Furyk's tournament and actually witness it and see what it's all about and say how can we improve this for the older guys, too.

**Q. It's total pure speculation on your part, but do you have any kind of a handle or**

**any kind of thoughts on how much Champions Tour golf Tiger will play?**

**DAVIS LOVE III:** I don't have any idea. I'm pushing for mandatory cart rule on the Champions Tour, so that we have to ride so that everybody including me feels comfortable riding. I feel bad when I ride. I walked 18 holes yesterday. I'm like, I could have -- this Champions Tour, I could have ridden half of this round.

I'm hoping he'll play. Same thing with Zach Johnson, Zach's about to turn 50. I'm hoping these guys come out and play. It is a lot of fun. It's obviously different than playing -- you know, Tiger could play major championships and probably be competitive if he could get healthy. I'm hoping he'll play and I hope I see him in Hawaii in January. That would be a nice start to the year.

**Q. Did you know when you had the last meeting about what the fall tournaments were going to be that there was going to be this new emphasis on the top-100? Because I remember you saying we're in a great place, we like the position of our tournament. This is a tournament that decides whether or not people have their Tour cards for next year, so this is kind of it.**

**DAVIS LOVE III:** Yeah. Well, we've always been in the fall, whether we were early in the fall at one point and then it became wraparound and FedEx points and Masters exemption. We always try to put the positive spin on our event.

So yes, those stories make it fun. Something more than just 156 guys playing to win the RSM Classic. There's a whole bunch of other stories. And the Tour does a great job of saying, look, here's your storylines that are going to happen this week. There's a lot going on. Lee's going to feed you a lot of that stuff.

Yeah, we knew changes were coming, we just didn't know exactly what they were going to be.

**Q. And this is for a friend of mine who's still driving trying to get here. He wondered whether or not you have any funny anecdotes or situations that you've seen Scottie Scheffler in. I'm not saying break your hand on the wine glass or anything that you happen to see.**

**DAVIS LOVE III:** Not much. I've been around him on a few teams obviously.

The Stricker Ryder Cup team at Whistling Straits, I remember sitting with a bunch of guys that were already on the team trying to decide who the picks were going to be and his teammates said, "Oh, no, we've got to have Scottie Scheffler on the team, he's about to break out." If you go back and look from Ryder Cup Whistling Straits, Scottie Scheffler's been pretty good, so the players knew he was coming.

And my biggest memory from Scottie at the Presidents Cup in '22 when he was on the team

was, he was making a lot of birdies but he was frustrated not getting points. We had to pull three captain carts up to the putting green and aim them at a hole so he could practice his putting in the dark on Saturday night to get ready for Sunday.

Scottie is a great player that never gives in. Yeah, the only time he hadn't played well was when he got arrested and then couldn't do the dishes, only times he's slowed down since Whistling Straits.

**Q. Davis, walk us through the course conditions with the warm and dry weather we've had the past few weeks.**

**DAVIS LOVE III:** I've seen it in the greens, even from last week to playing Seaside yesterday, the moisture is like gone out of the greens. We were commenting yesterday, I can't believe they're going to dig these up, they're so pure. Next summer they're going to be rebuilt.

Hopefully the fairways will continue to dry up. Seaside, that's why it's getting a renovation is drainage and older grasses in the fairways. That's always been a challenge on a few holes like a 5 and 10 just always seem to be wet, so we're liking that it's drying up.

I think in 15 years of playing here I've only played it a couple times where the ball would actually really run down the fairway. I don't know if we'll get to that, but I know Dylan Stafford and his crew are doing a great job. The members and my friends that have played recently said it's never been in better condition. So I think the bermudagrass in this time of year, if it cools off and the wind blows and the sun's out, the Seaside greens can get pretty scary.

**MODERATOR:** Davis, as always, we appreciate your time.

**DAVIS LOVE III:** Thank you all for being here. We appreciate it.