

RBC Canadian Open

Wednesday, June 7, 2023

Toronto, Ontario, Canada

St. George's Golf & Country Club

Corey Connors

Press Conference

THE MODERATOR: We would like to welcome Corey Connors to the interview room here at the RBC Canadian Open. Making your eight start with the Canadian Open. Just some opening thoughts on what it's like to be back as a Canadian.

COREY CONNERS: Yeah, this is a really special event for me and the other Canadians. It's our national championship. Feels like a major to us. Me, particularly, I came here as a kid to watch the PGA TOUR pros play. Being able to play myself, it's really special. An event I always look forward to. This year is no different. So really excited to be here and the fan support and the love I feel out on the golf course is pretty special here. Hopefully, it helps me perform well. I had a good finish last year. Hopefully, I can draw off of that and get myself in the mix again this year.

THE MODERATOR: Fresh off your pro-am. Just get some comments about what the course is like and if you've had any prior background playing this course.

COREY CONNERS: Yeah, I played in the tournament here in 2010. The Ontario Better Ball Championship. Partnered up with my buddy Taylor Pendrith there. Other than that, I was able to play a few times a little over a week ago and check out the course, get a feel for it. But now the conditions of the golf course is fantastic. The rough is really thick. The greens are rolling true. Overall it's in incredible shape. It's going to be a fun test. There's certainly some tricky holes out there and not having a ton of experience but being able to play it a few times prior I think is definitely helpful and I've got a good game plan how I want to attack the course. And, yeah, I'm really excited. It's going to be a fun week and a beautiful golf course.

THE MODERATOR: Already a win this season. How is your game feeling entering the week and what goals do you have for the rest of the season?

COREY CONNERS: My game's feeling good. I've had an inconsistent season I would say. Some great finishes and



some missed cuts. But overall I felt things are always really close, even the weeks I've not made the weekend. But, yeah, I've been working hard on my game. I feel like all parts of my game are as strong as they have ever been really. It was just a matter of going out there and getting the ball in the hole. But, yeah, I do feel good about everything and, yeah, hopefully can play well and get myself near the top of the leaderboard for Sunday.

THE MODERATOR: Perfect. We'll open it up for questions.

Q. Wondering if I'm sure you were shocked yesterday at this time but I'm wondering if you had 24 hours to sort of calm down and think about the events of yesterday and if you can give us some perspective if it has changed or generally.

COREY CONNERS: Yeah, it was definitely shocking news to, you know, caught off guard a little bit. But, to be honest, I haven't digested much of it. This being such a big week at the RBC Canadian Open, my focus is really on that. But what I will say is I do have a lot of faith in the leadership of the PGA TOUR. I know there's a lot of smart people working for us that will make right decisions. Right away some players may not necessarily agree with the decision, but I certainly have faith that it's going to be a positive direction for the PGA TOUR and I have a lot of faith in our leadership.

Q. You've kind of answered this, but I'll just maybe get a bit more detail. The reality is you hadn't really had much with the cancellations and all that, experience playing the Canadian Open as an established pro, right. And then last year's, particularly on Sunday, you went low. Is there any, can you speak to a little bit, are you more familiar with all the attention and does this course have any similarities to last year where you clearly played well at St. George's?

COREY CONNERS: Yeah, first of all I think this course has some similarities to St. George's. There's some undulated fairways and elevated greens and thick rough. My record here at the RBC Canadian Open is not particularly great. Saying that, I did miss a few years when I felt like I was playing well. I'm definitely getting more



comfortable with the added attention. It's not every week that most fans know who I am walking around. So this is a special week for that. But definitely embracing that and more comfortable with the added things that this event brings. But, yeah, just thrilled to be here again and it's going to be fun.

Q. Huron-Perth is one of the counties affected by the forest fires and under the air pollution advisory. Is everyone good back at home at Listowel and how does this sort of smoky conditions here affect you as an athlete?

COREY CONNERS: Yeah, it's, as far as I know I think everybody's in good shape back home. It's not something that you want to deal with. It's a pretty scary situation. But yeah, as far as here, it's not really affecting my outlook of the week. I haven't really been bothered too much by it thus far. But it is a serious problem and I'm hoping for a resolution. That they get it figured out and it doesn't get any worse.

Q. Obviously there's nearly a 70-year drought here in terms of Canadians winning the national championship. What would it mean to you personally to be the one to end that drought?

COREY CONNERS: Yeah, it would really be a dream come true. Growing up as a junior golfer in Listowel, Ontario, I dreamt of winning the Canadian Open. It's certainly not easy to do. But I'm excited to be teeing it up and feeling good about my game. It would certainly mean a lot to me personally. But I think playing for golf fans all across Canada, I know that it would be pretty sweet for them as well.

Q. Going back to the issue of the smoke. Some of the other golfers have told us they actually do notice the smoke. Have you noticed it out there at all?

COREY CONNERS: I really haven't, to be honest. A little bit yesterday afternoon. But typically I'm -- I don't know if my sunglasses help not notice that. Typically I wear sunglasses when I'm playing. Today if you were to ask me if I noticed it, no, not at all.

Q. This is the second year in a row that some blockbuster news breaks at the RBC Canadian Open. Sort of how unfair do you think that is and is it something that you kind of hope that the TOUR would keep in mind when they're redoing this, any schedule for next season?

COREY CONNERS: Yeah, it's unfortunate timing for the news that we got yesterday. Like you mentioned, last year

there was a lot going on in the golf world during this week. So I definitely feel for RBC. I think it's unfortunate timing for this event and the RBC Canadian Open. It's unfortunate timing for RBC, which is such a great partner of me and a great partner of golf and the PGA TOUR. Having the RBC Canadian Open and RBC Heritage. So definitely feel bad for them a little bit.

But saying that I think there's still going to be a lot of focus on the RBC Canadian Open this week and it's going to be an exciting week.

Q. Going back to yesterday, do you think there's clearly some anger with some of your colleagues, maybe even yourself. Was it more to do with the deal that they know of it so far or how it was delivered?

COREY CONNERS: It's hard to say. I think a lot of the players didn't really get an opportunity to understand and just made some adjustments prematurely. Certainly everyone is entitled to their opinion. At first I was a little caught off guard, but trying to understand the situation, which again I really haven't dove too deep into it. But I do trust the leadership of the PGA TOUR and I think people just don't like being surprised by things. With it being a player-led TOUR, it was off putting for some guys to receive the news the way that we did. But, again, my belief is that we've got some smart people working on our behalf and they're doing the best thing they can for us as PGA TOUR members and for the game of golf.

Q. When you think back to your 2019 win at Valero and then that sort of full circle article moment in April, just a couple months ago. How would you describe your evolution as a person and as a golfer in those four years?

COREY CONNERS: Yeah, it's definitely a lot in between those two wins. But I felt like as a golfer my game continued to get refined and became more consistent. As a person, now a father of a year-and-a-half-year-old daughter and having her there, seeing me win, although she won't remember it, I'll remember her running out to the green for the rest of my life. And that was certainly an aspect of it that was really special. But, yeah, for the time between, I had a lot of good finishes and gave myself a number of chances. Certainly it's not easy to win, but I feel like there's been a lot of positive developments as a person and a golfer between those two wins.

Q. You're often described as sort of level headed and unflappable demeanor. Would you agree with that and if so how do you maintain that?

COREY CONNERS: Yeah, I feel like my personality is



pretty boring and try and be pretty boring out on the golf course. Never really get too high and never really get too low. Just keep putting one foot in front of the other. I feel like that's the way I've always been in everything that I do. It works out in golf for the most part. I would certainly say there's situations out there where I'm uncomfortable, but try and remember good things that have happened or times I've gotten myself out of those situations and draw from that. But, yeah, never too high and never too low.

Q. Going back to the PGA Championship a few weeks ago. Certainly had a Canadian Open feel Sunday on the first tee for you there. The day didn't go as you would have wanted. I'm just wondering what you may have learned out of that whole experience on Sunday that you can take forward to maybe make you better the next time you're in that position?

COREY CONNERS: Yeah, it was obviously a great spot to be in at the PGA Championship and there was a lot of Canadian fans supporting me, which was really special. Just kind of got out of my rhythm a little bit early on in the round. There was a few decisions that I would have liked over. They kind of festered through the round. I wasn't really able to reset and get refocused. Just the rhythm was a little bit off. So if I could do it over again, there was a couple moments out there where I would have took a few more deep breaths and sort of reset my mind and focused on the game plan and just settled down a little bit more.

Q. Building off of that, how does competing in a major championship compare to competing in your National Open here in Canada?

COREY CONNERS: Honestly, for me it's very similar. It's an event that's circled on the calendar from the beginning of the year where I want to be playing my best and be feeling my best this week. Yeah, it's similar to the major championships where you know where they are on the calendar and you try and build your schedule to make sure that you're playing, but not playing too much leading up to them. It's a big deal this event. It always will be. Yeah, to say the RBC Canadian Open is like the fifth major for us Canadians and it's a very special event.

Q. You might have noticed there are a lot of class field trips here today. A lot of students. For someone laying eyes on golf for the first time today, and just thinking, I want to do that. What advice would you have for a pathway for a student who just saw it today and wants to do that?

COREY CONNERS: Yeah, I would say to them, anything's possible if you work at it. I was in their position on a trip with a, took a bus to the RBC Canadian Open with a bunch

of junior golfers from Listowel, Ontario and I'm sure I was out there thinking, wow, I would love to do that one day. If you put your mind to it and have fun along the way, it's possible. I would say, yeah, just go for it.

Q. We just asked Mac about this and he talked about how important it would be for him, the idea of a Presidents Cup team. It's a little more than a year a way. Here in Canada. Mike Weir a captain. You talk about this as a fifth major. What would it mean for you to be a part of one of those teams and just do it in Canada?

COREY CONNERS: Yeah, it would be really, really special. I grew up idolizing Mike. Watching him win the Masters in 2003 was incredible. He's been a great mentor to me over the last few years and I know he's going to be a great captain for the International Team and the Presidents Cup. And it would be a huge honor for me to be a part of that team and it's definitely a big goal of mine. Looking over the next year to try and put myself in a good position to qualify for that team. Getting a taste of Presidents Cup action this past fall, I definitely learned a lot and would like some redemption with my performance there. I think the atmosphere of a Presidents Cup in Canada is going to be unbelievable and I know that the Canadian fans are really going to be cheering us on. So it would definitely be great honor and privilege to be on that team in Canada. With Mike makes it extra special.

THE MODERATOR: All right. Thank you, Corey.

COREY CONNERS: Thanks very much.

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