

RBC Canadian Open

Tuesday, June 6, 2023

Toronto, Ontario, Canada

St. George's Golf & Country Club

Laurence Applebaum

Press Conference

THE MODERATOR: Welcome, everybody, back to the media center. Here with golf Canada CEO Laurence Applebaum. We certainly kicked off our tournament week with Hall of Fame Day today. Laurence, if you want to just start with how the day went today and what you're looking forward to for the week.

LAURENCE APPLEBAUM: Yeah, thanks, Dan. It's nice to see everybody. It's perfect Canadian summer weather, I guess. We had RBC Hall of Fame Day this morning. We inducted two new members into the Canadian Golf Hall of Fame. It was amazing to see Jim Rutledge and his family, along with the family of Robert Stanley Weir who joined us into the Canadian Golf Hall of Fame.

It is one of those special days in this world to be able to see all of our Hall of Fame members who are with us and were able to come and visit. And in particular a special mention of Wilf Homenuik, long-time Oakdale pro, ambassador. And to see a picture of him with Lee Trevino that they showed at the luncheon was really quite special. So a really wonderful start to the day and we're looking forward it a great week ahead.

THE MODERATOR: Open it up to questions.

Q. Just wondering how you feel about the bombshell announcement today of the merger between LIV and the PGA.

LAURENCE APPLEBAUM: Thanks for the question. So, I learned about it earlier today with conversations with the PGA TOUR. I would say it was a year ago that we were running the return of the 2022 RBC Canadian Open to St. George's and we had some news and developments and we had the greatest event in our history.

So we come back into 2023 and again some news that was unexpected and for us we will continue to stay focused on running a great PGA TOUR event, a great national championship and to welcome what we hope will be well north of 125,000 people on-site will be a spectacle to behold.



Q. Are there any risks in getting involved with the Saudis on the PGA TOUR?

LAURENCE APPLEBAUM: Yeah, I really couldn't speak to that. I mean, I think those questions are best reserved for PGA TOUR. I think for us we are, as I said, really looking forward to welcoming the world to Toronto here. It's an amazing platform for golf in Canada, for golf in this country and the development that we're working on.

Q. Are you at all surprised though that this is happening?

LAURENCE APPLEBAUM: I would say I'm learning in realtime along with all of you and I'm looking forward to hearing more, to understanding more and seeing what comes of this. I can say that we've had an amazing partnership, amazing partnership with both the PGA TOUR, with RBC and with Golf Canada. And we'll continue to stay close.

Q. In this age of elevated events and LIV Golf, how important is tournament like the Canadian Open and Open championships in general to the sport?

LAURENCE APPLEBAUM: So I'd probably answer that question with the MacKenzie Hughes story. So MacKenzie got his first reps on the PGA TOUR in 2012 at Hamilton Golf and Country Club. He got a tournament exemption as one of our high-performance Team Canada members. And he said it was that singular moment that elevated his recognition or his knowledge or his ability of where he needed to be with his game.

So we fast forward 11 years and we have 21 Canadians in the field, an Open Championship, full field, with opportunities to fulfill our mission in driving awareness, participation and excellence in golf is a real critical nature of the RBC Canadian Open. So I just spoke with Aaron Cockerill who came in from the DP World Tour. Had a couple of weeks at home in Winnipeg and then made it out here. For us to be able to have these opportunities for Canadians to play is really special.

Q. With a bit of, not an uncertain future, but as far as



this tournament going forward, we don't know necessarily where it will fall on the schedule next year. Last year you had interruption from the first LIV Golf event. What have you learned from last year sort of that you can use going forward to make sure this tournament, wherever it lands, will remain an important part of Canadian golf and the PGA TOUR?

LAURENCE APPLEBAUM: Yeah, I would say that even being very much inside a lot of the development details, every week when I showed up here at Oakdale, the work that Bryan Crawford the tournament director, the entire team, our work with both RBC and PGA TOUR, it amazed me what was being built here. So we're probably 30 percent larger than we were at St. George's. And St. George's was about 30 percent larger than Hamilton.

So we have found a spot on the calendar time-wise that works really well for Canada. In particular I would say in the GTAHA works really well, time, weather, school, holidays, it seems to be a real sweet spot.

I will comment on the designated events in that the fields are amazing and I love having watched some of the incredible tournaments that have preceded us and that will go on later on in the year. But we love what we're doing here and we love what's been built here with the RBC Canadian Open.

Q. Do you have any thoughts or any indication how today's news in this coming merger will affect how this tournament operates? As far as will it continue to be just operated as a full-field PGA TOUR event, do you have any idea how that might work? Have you had any conversations?

LAURENCE APPLEBAUM: No. And candidly it would be a no. This is evolving news from today. We've had outstanding conversations with the TOUR about calendar. We know later on, later on this month, hopefully we'll see the updated 2024 calendar. We've had great conversations, but the developments from today have had no bearing.

Q. Second question about the 120,000 I think you said people coming through here. Is that based on ticket sales? Is that based on projections? Is that -- do you have like an update on actual general admission ticket sales for this week?

LAURENCE APPLEBAUM: So that's based on attendees of the event. So that's an amalgamation of our hospitality guests, our general admission, our attendees. It's the full gamut of it. And we've used a pretty accurate like-to-like for a number of years, at least since I've been around. So

we have had this continual nice evolution. You're right, I paused on the final number because we had a really good week, ticket sales-wise, especially in the last 72 hours. I'm hoping that this great weather and this field and some of the energy behind the Canadians is going to continue to have another really good 72 hours. So hopefully we're going to surpass that comfortably.

Q. You mentioned what you love, what you've built here. I'm just curious, under your leadership, how this tournament has grown?

LAURENCE APPLEBAUM: Well, I think it's nice to be a part of the team. It really has been nice to have been around when so many people have invested in it so deeply. And I of course will start with our partners at RBC. The concert was such a game changer in 2019. For those of you who remember it at Hamilton and seeing what was built in that first night with Florida Georgia Line. It touched a nerve with our fans, our golf fans, maybe our sports fans, maybe music fans, to come together. And I always joke I saw a lot of cowboy hats and Titleist hats sort of crossing paths. And as we developed it -- and we had an amazing group last year with Flo Rida and Maroon 5. This year's going to be another really, really interesting musical combination. I have not been hit up for tickets more ever in my life, so that's kind of exciting. But also when you say music and food and fun and good weather and these Canadians who are lighting it up on the TOUR, all those things coming together. So a huge shout out to our entire staff, volunteers, partners, who have really put this event on their shoulders.

Today we had the Hall of Fame, the RBC Hall of Fame Day out at the Fairway to see the installations of our partners like ScoreBet, they have a full golf hole set up, Hole 0. The Keg, Levelwear is, from the merchandise side, everyone has pitched in to making an exceptional, an exceptional experience. I just got walked through the caddie lounge. And if you have not had a chance to experience this Levelwear caddie lounge, they have elevated that experience for a really meaningful part of the PGA TOUR, which is these amazing men and women who walk inside the ropes with players and have treated them like the awesome athletes that they are. So it's really a whole encompassing team effort.

Q. You talk about key partners often and with reason. Obviously you can't have a golf tournament without a golf course. This is a first-time venue here at Oakdale. Maybe, can you just speak to your thoughts about the golf course and the layout here. And also do you have an update for 2025 and where the tournament may be going in the future?

LAURENCE APPLEBAUM: Yeah, so 1993 I came to Oakdale for the first time. It was right where we're standing right now, which is tennis courts. And I was working for Wilson at the time and I was in the, on the tennis side of the business. Then fast forward a number of years later. Oakdale was a surprise to even the golf insiders in the community. I continue to speak to people who really know golf in this market place, have never been hearings I sat with Lorie Kane and Gale Graham at lunch today and neither of them had played it. And they were both sort of salivating at the opportunity to come back and try it out.

So this 27-hole golf course, a composite built, really exciting. The rough is rough. The rough is going to be a challenge. I think that's the repeated thing that we've heard. But it's also in mint condition. So both Corey Connors, Mackenzie Hughes played practice rounds last week. Both came back with very similar comments. Conditioning is amazing. It surprised both of them. I think most of the PGA TOUR pros, from the feedback I've gotten, is that they're just trying to figure it out right now. So maybe the upside is the pleasant, the upside is the pleasant surprise that Oakdale people are discovering Oakdale Golf and Country Club. And maybe one of the challenges is TOUR players having to learn a new golf course. We're going to be back in 2026, which is also giving us outside the ropes and inside the ropes to learn a little bit. So that's the Oakdale question.

And then with regards to 2025, the evolution of being in Hamilton for 2024 next year is going to be an amazing return.

And then 2025 we've got a couple venues that we're having extensive discussions on. We have not solidified our final location, but we're hoping to do that in the coming months.

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