

PRE-TOURNAMENT INTERVIEW
October 26, 2021

MATTHEW FITZPATRICK



HALEY PETERSON: We would like to welcome Matt Fitzpatrick to the Butterfield Bermuda Championship. Matt, welcome.

MATTHEW FITZPATRICK: Thank you.

HALEY PETERSON: This is going to be your season and tournament debut, so if we could just get some comments about your general first thoughts about coming here to Bermuda and getting the season started.

MATTHEW FITZPATRICK: Yeah, looking forward to it. Not been to Bermuda before. I heard good things before I came. So I've only been here probably half a day or a day, and apart from the weather today, it's a bit windy, but on the whole it looks like it's going to be a good week.

HALEY PETERSON: And with this being the start of your season, what were the thoughts that went into making this your first tournament for the start?

MATTHEW FITZPATRICK: Yeah, I was planning on playing Houston originally, but we sort of looked at it statistically, that didn't suit my game as much as here, so we decided to do a swap. As well as I'll be playing DP World in Dubai, which is like three or four weeks, so I didn't really want to go from Houston to Dubai with a 10-hour time change and 16-, 17-hour flight. We felt that this suited the travel plans better as well, gives me more time to prep.

HALEY PETERSON: And congratulations on capturing your 7th international win at the Andalucia Masters.

MATTHEW FITZPATRICK: Thank you.

Q. Your game obviously trending in the right direction as you're entering this week. Just kind of recap that win last week.

MATTHEW FITZPATRICK: Yeah, definitely. I felt like I played really well obviously at Valderrama and I played really well at the Ryder Cup as well. Obviously nothing to show for it unfortunately, but like you say, I felt like my game is trending in the right direction. I was happy with where I was at. To play my first week back and win kind of proved that to myself and gave me some confidence going into the end of the year. So I'm looking to playing this week and just competing again even though it's only been a week. (Inaudible) last week, not quite as much practice, a little bit more time off, so that was nice. Looking forward to getting going again this week.

Q. Matt, yeah, you just kind of touched on it, but I was just wondering about the kind of emotional leap from what is like a really charged emotional week at the Ryder Cup and then bouncing back with a victory. Just what that balance was like and how good and validating that may have felt.

MATTHEW FITZPATRICK: Yeah, for me, that was a huge thing. I've not really spoke to many people after it, but Ryder Cup was difficult from an individual standpoint because I felt like the games I played, I played very, very well and (inaudible) a point, so it was a very tough one to take.

Yeah, a lot really for how well I felt I played, to come away with nothing (inaudible). Kind of took a few days off afterwards, didn't really do anything on the golf front. Then just sort of got my head down, put in a lot of work leading into Spain as well as the form I showed at Ryder Cup, that kind of continued and I had that confidence from that to go out and play well in Spain, particularly around Valderrama where a lot of patience was needed and you've got to plot your way around. It just kind of worked perfectly for me to be the first course back and playing as well as I was. It worked out great in the end.

Q. Is that a particular frustration of the Ryder Cup and of match play, that you can play well and come away with nothing to show for it?

MATTHEW FITZPATRICK: Yeah, I guess so, I guess so. I mean, at the end of the day people see what they see from the outside. They see the results and that's all that matters. It's black and white at the end of the day, so that's golf.

For me personally, my team and the people around me, we all agreed and saw I was playing well and it was a case of similar things happening back in 2016 when I had a poor Ryder Cup and sort of, you know, looking at trying to look at the positives. I played well, just played against one of the best players in the world, took him to 18 and just got to take it into the final year-end tournaments. So far, I'm 1-1, hopefully can keep going. 2-2 would be nice and keep going from here.

Q. Welcome to Bermuda. You say you wanted this tournament to fit into your kind of schedule and all, but looking at the golf course, the fresh look at the golf course, how do you think it's going to play with all the valleys we have? You're playing uphill, you're playing downhill, how does that suit your game?

MATTHEW FITZPATRICK: Yeah, it's tough. The elevation is a lot around this golf course. Me and my caddie definitely noticed it this morning walking up and down the hills, it was tiring. I think it's one that you've got to -- certainly the second shots that are up the hill that are pretty blind, you've really got to know where you're hitting it. You've got to pick good targets and got to be very disciplined, you can't get too aggressive.

I think in terms of the elevation, you've got to be in control of your ball flight and know your

numbers and distances, where to hit and where not to. I think there's a lot of mental stuff involved and you've really got to think your way around. I think for me, I enjoy that part of the game, it's a challenge. And you've got to be on it for 72 holes, so I'm looking forward to that.

Q. Given what's in front of you over the next few days, what do you think is the score you're going to need on this course to get you to the weekend?

MATTHEW FITZPATRICK: I mean, I couldn't tell you what the cut score was. I've been looking at the previous winners' scores. I think the average winning score is about 16 under par, so four rounds of 4 under a day and you never know where you end up. When I've been looking at that before, I saw that was kind of the number you're looking at to compete.

Q. And did it relate to that when you saw the course itself?

MATTHEW FITZPATRICK: Yes, yes. I mean, I can see it, I can see it. There's a lot of tough holes and at the same time there's a lot of scorable holes. Some of the par 5s aren't too long and depending on the wind, they're even shorter, and some short par 4s, too. There's going to be a lot of wedges in hand and if you can stick them close, then you'll be in good shape.

Q. So I would like to talk about the turnout. What turnout are you expecting with COVID restrictions in place?

MATTHEW FITZPATRICK: That's a great question and honestly, I have no idea, I have no idea. First time to Bermuda playing a tournament, so I wouldn't really know. Yeah, I wouldn't really know how many people have been before or how busy it's been. Yeah, sorry, I can't really help you on that one.

Q. Okay. What can the audience expect?

MATTHEW FITZPATRICK: I think they'll see some good golf. Yeah, they'll see some very good golf. I think I would imagine that the atmosphere will be pretty good amongst the crowd if there is a crowd. I don't know what the restrictions are, like you mentioned. I think it will be a good week. Hopefully the weather will be good and people can enjoy themselves as well.

I know the players like it here, so it's kind of another reason that I was looking to come, because I've heard good feedback from people. I'm sure it will be a good week.

Q. Matt, you'll be playing in a pro-am tomorrow and paradoxically, as a pro you play with a lot of amateurs, I mean hundreds every year. These aren't the kind of amateurs that win the U.S. Amateur, you know? What questions do you get asked most out there by these amateurs when they're looking for a tip? What do you see? What goes on there when you play with amateurs?

MATTHEW FITZPATRICK: I think a lot of the time they'll hit one right or hit one left and that

will be the first question, like why did I do that? You know, I'm not really sort of looking at their swing down the line at the perfect angle where you need to sort of help them out, so I don't really have an answer, so I have to watch a couple of the swings before I can give them anything.

Normally, it's kind of like a "why did that happen." It's never really "what do I need to do to get better." They want instant fixes and thinking that the one tip that I might give them is going to turn them around.

Q. With a game it's very hard to improve at, what do you tell people if they're generally looking to improve their game? If you had a big billboard and could put up some advice in a short space on that billboard, what do you tell some of these amateurs that you play with?

MATTHEW FITZPATRICK: Practicing inside eight foot. Yeah, practicing inside eight foot. Even the best players in the world, from eight foot they only hole it 50 percent of the time, so it's literally a toss of the coin. Only the best players in the world are going to hole it from eight feet. I think that would be my biggest advice because I think holing more putts inside eight feet, you're going to save a lot of shots. Yeah, that would be on my billboard, yeah.

Q. Welcome to Bermuda, Mr. Fitzpatrick. We're happy to have you. We couldn't help but notice that you're from Sheffield, near where the famous Notts Golf Club, Hollinwell is located, but we're told that you grew up playing the famed Harry Colt masterpiece, Hallamshire Golf Club. How did that great golf course help shape your game as a young person into the golfer before us today?

MATTHEW FITZPATRICK: Yeah, the big thing about my home course, Hallamshire, is very windy. It was very tight off the tee, so there's lots of rough and trees and you had to keep it in the fairway, which made it difficult. So growing up, those were the big things that you had to do. And then the greens are quite small, too, so you have to have a good short game because it's not easy to hit them.

Yeah, there's obviously a large mix of things, but the big thing I say when I talk about Hallamshire is it's always windy and the greens are really small. So it's difficult to hit them, so you've got to have a really good short game. I would say those two things are the things that help me the most I think playing at Hallamshire.

Q. My next question to you today is, are you aware that your UK fans call you the baby-faced assassin because of your style of play and boyish looks?

MATTHEW FITZPATRICK: Yes, I've been told that a few times before. It's pretty amusing to me. It's a good thing to be known as baby faced, I know that. The assassin thing, strictly golf, of course.

Q. Matt, you mentioned the data earlier. What's the data saying about this week's

course? What makes it a good fit for you, either stuff you noticed or your team has told you about?

MATTHEW FITZPATRICK: Yeah, the big thing for me is how windy it gets, so you've got to be able to control your ball and for me, growing up in the U.K., I've played in plenty of wind. Playing the European Tour as well is the same. That's been -- that's probably the No. 1 thing here from what I've been told is, you know, your wind skills. Effectively, how well you control your golf ball is a big factor in people playing well here as well as driving it straight and hitting your irons well as well. Most places will have approach play as kind of No. 1 most important thing, but on top of that you're looking at driving accuracy and wind here. Those were things that stood out for me more so than Houston, for example.

Q. You've won now seven times on the Euro Tour, still looking for that first one on the PGA TOUR. What do you think has held you back from getting a win on the PGA TOUR?

MATTHEW FITZPATRICK: This year I just didn't hit my irons very well, that's all really. I would say on the whole, the chances I've had to win, I've not really lost, I've just been beaten. A couple years ago Molinari ends up shooting 64 or whatever silly score it was at Bay Hill to pit me by one. And Riviera, same deal; I played well over the weekend but Max came through, shot a great Sunday round this year.

You know, it's a mix of things. It's not hitting it close enough when I need to and not making -- yeah, just hitting some average shots at the wrong time really. I think for me it's just about trying to have consistency throughout the whole four aspects of my game. This year it's been driving and putting, but my approach play's been off, so hopefully get that to a better level and keep going with that and it will lead to a first win over here.

Q. And going back to what Dylan was asking you about about the Ryder Cup, how much is it going to burn for the next two years that, A, Europe doesn't have the Cup anymore, but that you still don't have that first point, and how much of a frustration is it that you haven't had a chance to play four-ball yet?

MATTHEW FITZPATRICK: Yeah, I mean, obviously it's disappointing not to have a point. Yeah, not really much more to add on that, it's disappointing.

This time -- you know, the first time, I'll be honest, I never felt like I got a fair crack at getting a point. I never really kind of got used to it the whole week. This time I would say early I got a good chance and played well, just someone played better. It is what it is.

But in terms of the four-ball situation, you know, Paddy couldn't have been a better captain in my opinion. I thought he was phenomenal and it was an incredible experience the whole week as a team and to be part of that with all the boys was amazing.

Yeah, of course it's disappointing not to get a four-ball, but I fully respect Paddy's decision at

the time. He's the captain, he makes the decisions and he does what's best for the team, and that's the most important thing at the end of the day is the team, it's not a set of individuals, should I say. We're very much, you know, a team and I think most people see that. It was Paddy's choice and it's fine with me.

Q. How good a team do you think you'd make with your brother?

MATTHEW FITZPATRICK: Very good.

Q. Is that a dream for you guys?

MATTHEW FITZPATRICK: Yeah. I mean, I would love that, yeah. It doesn't -- I mean, I've never really -- I'm good friends with Edoardo Molinari. I've never really spoke to him properly about it, but I'm sure it's one of his best moments in his career I would imagine, and I'm sure it would be one of mine if we were lucky enough to play together. To be on the same team would be very, very special.

Q. Do you think you can be a baby-faced assassin this week?

MATTHEW FITZPATRICK: Hopefully, yeah. Like I said, I'm 1-1 post Ryder Cup, so just going to try to keep it rolling.

Q. Just want to reflect back on the Ryder Cup. You were saying about the disappointment and the hardships of not getting that point, does that give you the extra motivation going to Andalucia (indiscernible). Psychologically, does that extra burden sort of prove a point to show that form's there?

MATTHEW FITZPATRICK: Yeah, absolutely. I mean, the way I looked at that week when I was there was of course I want to play well. I felt like I played well at Ryder Cup, my game was kind of trending in a nice direction, but at the same time the one big thing I took away from that week was I really, I just really enjoyed it. I was very -- I felt very calm the whole week. I never had any expectations. I didn't lose my head ever, I was very patient.

I think a lot of it has to do with the way the golf course is. You can't lose your head, you've got to be on it for 72 holes straight, you literally have to be thinking. But yeah, it taught me a lot about myself and that mentality really is that I just went out there to enjoy it and have patience and tried to go round and do the right things and it paid off.

The funny thing is, it was the exact same at the start of the year. I felt the same way about things and I played well. And I had the same feeling at DP World at the end of last year and played well. So yeah, I mean, it's time for me to sort of just start enjoying it more. Not -- I always use the phrase "to not care," like to not care about it. Of course I care, but it's a case of, you know, as blunt as it is, there's more to life than, you know, than playing golf. It's just about trying to enjoy it when I do and be patient the whole time.

Q. You said traveling and the way it suits your game. I guess also the incentive of the FedExCup points, the 500 points and an increased purse, that must be quite an incentive for someone like yourself who is quite heavily favored if you look at the odds. That must be a key reason, I suppose.

MATTHEW FITZPATRICK: Yeah, definitely, definitely, I don't think I've ever been a favorite for a tournament before. Yeah, it's always nice, but for me that was also a big draw as well given that it's gone to the standard 500 points for a win. It gives me obviously a great chance to sort get my season up and running and get off to a great start to try and make TOUR Championship next year. That's a goal of mine is to try to do that. So to come here and compete was obviously one of the other reasons as well as suiting my game and the travel.

Q. And also to get that first PGA TOUR win. It's a great opportunity for yourself, as you say, being the favorite in the field. I mean, that's again another huge incentive to sort of tick that one off and then kick on for the season I imagine for yourself.

MATTHEW FITZPATRICK: Definitely, definitely, yeah. If it's not this week, next week, I'd love that. Wherever it is, it will be one that I always remember. Of course I will.

But again, the more pressure I put on myself that I've got to win, I've got to win, I know full well from past experiences it's just not going to help. So the more I can just take it all in stride and enjoy it more. And it's easy when it's going well, it really is easy when it's going well, but when it's not going so well, that's when it's a bit harder. I've just got to keep trying to work at it, which I have been, and trying to enjoy it more.

Q. Thank you and good afternoon, Matt Fitzpatrick. So glad to have you in Bermuda. Have you picked up already that you have a number of fans here in Bermuda? There's a connection, Brian Waites from Notts Hollinwell was very familiar with Bermuda as I with Hollinwell. Have you picked up that you have a few fans here already?

MATTHEW FITZPATRICK: Yeah, I have, yeah. Everyone's incredibly friendly and made me feel very welcome, so it's been great so far.

Q. And also, who were the great influences for you in what I consider that great golfing area out there in Sheffield with your home club and Hollinwell and all the others that are not too far away in Yorkshire and the like?

MATTHEW FITZPATRICK: For me growing up, my dad was obviously a big influence. Both my mum and dad took me everywhere, but my dad helped me with my game, course management and knowledge of how to get around a golf course. Not only that, but I was very lucky that I had Mike Walker and Pete Cowen, both two world-class golf coaches, that live 20 minutes away from where I live, so I would work with them regularly and see them and pick their brains and knowledge. That was definitely a big thing.

Q. Well, the final question is the most important question from my perspective. I

believe Earl would appreciate this from Island Stats. We understand that you are a supporter of the much-feared Sheffield United Football Club, but one of the biggest supporters for you in golf is a tidy little handicap, James Needham, who is a Sheffield Wednesday supporter working for the Government of Bermuda.

Do you like it when you get local hometown support as you travel around the world even if it's a Sheffield Wednesday supporter?

MATTHEW FITZPATRICK: Yeah, I don't think they'll support me this week. It's very nice to have the fans, wherever we are in the world, to have them come out, and particularly to support me individually is, it's always special, it means a lot. I'm very grateful for all the support. I feel like I am very lucky that I've been to a lot of places now and I've managed to have a lot of support at each of these spots. It's always nice to go back to them. I'm looking forward to obviously having some special support this week as well.

HALEY PETERSON: Our Final question before we wrap things up: You were over at the Grand Prix in Austin. Just wanted to get some general thoughts about what that experience was like.

MATTHEW FITZPATRICK: Yeah, it's amazing. I watched the Netflix series, Drive to Survive. That kind of got me back into it. I always kind of liked it, but never really followed it as much, and then watched that and that really got me into it.

Yeah, decided that it was a good chance to go this weekend. Very lucky that my sponsor's Rolex and looks after me incredibly well and got to see the Alpine Garage and a few other bits and pieces. Yeah, it was a special weekend, really enjoyed it.

HALEY PETERSON: Very cool. Well, thank you again for taking the time and joining us this afternoon and we wish you the best of luck this week.

MATTHEW FITZPATRICK: Thank you.