

RBC Canadian Open

Press Conference

Wednesday, June 5, 2019

Corey Connors



JACK RYAN: We welcome Corey Connors to the RBC Canadian Open.

Corey, just talk about how excited you are to be here in Hamilton this week.

COREY CONNERS: Yeah, I'm really excited. It's been highlighted on my calendar all year. It's an awesome event. Feel a lot of Canadian support. I'm really, really excited. This golf course is amazing. I had the chance to play it a few weeks ago and map out the course a bit. Get my plan in place. Yeah, really great venue. Very excited to be here and looking forward to a really fun week.

JACK RYAN: Like you said with the Canadian fans and support, Canadians do love their golf. Why do you think that is? The support up here is unbelievable.

COREY CONNERS: It's a great game. Lots of Canadians like to be active. It's a good way to get out doors and enjoy the nice summer weather we get in Canada. I think people spend a lot of time indoors in the wintertime and yeah, it's just great to get outside in the summer, and a lot of people play, which is great to see.

The support that they have, there's getting to be more Canadians on Tour and that's helping excite the golf fans and giving people more to cheer about and talk about. We've had a lot of success this year. I think there's a lot more to come and Canadian fans know that and it's great to be a part of.

Q. How many people will be left in Listowel this week?

COREY CONNERS: Not a lot. A lot of members will be making the trip, a lot of family members who all live in the Listowel area will be coming to watch. It's reasonably close by. It's exciting for them to come and watch me and I'm looking forward to that. I'm looking forward to playing well and putting on a show for the friends and family.

Q. Have you noticed a difference in your notoriety since winning on the Tour this year this week? Have you noticed more and more fans asking you for autographs and selfies?

COREY CONNERS: Definitely. But it's awesome. It feels great. I think a lot of the Canadian golf fans know

who I am now, as opposed to years in the past, but a pretty awesome feeling. It's been really cool. I enjoy interacting with the fans and yeah, it feels great. I think my wife noticed the giant golf bag I had sitting outside the clubhouse and she was pumped up about that. She said, I guess we made it big time.

It feels awesome and definitely love the support I'm getting this week.

Q. Can you talk about the rough and dealing with that this week? Will that be a major factor to what this golf course has?

COREY CONNERS: Yeah, I think so. Really thick rough. It's going to be tough. Going to put a real premium on getting the ball in the fairway, and hitting a lot of greens. A lot of the greens have some slope. You get in the rough around the greens, it's going to be tough to get the ball close. It's a little unpredictable how the ball may react, but I like the type of grass that they have here, what I group playing on. So I feel more comfortable with that. But yeah, the rough's definitely going to be a challenge, and I think the last few -- couple of the last few events I played in the PGA at Bethpage, the rough was really penalizing. Same last week at the Memorial. The rough was really long. So yeah, getting more comfortable with that challenge and I think it's going to be similar to those few weeks where it's important to get it in the fairway.

Q. You mentioned that you had a practice round a few weeks ago here. We were speaking earlier with Dustin Johnson, Brooks Koepka, Rory McIlroy, and none of them have had a chance to play the back nine yet. How big of an advantage is that for you and other Canadians that are familiar with this course?

COREY CONNERS: Yeah, I think it's a huge advantage. There's an added comfort level, just knowing the course and knowing what to expect. I think for the most part, it's pretty straightforward, and guys are used to going to new places and figuring it out pretty quickly. The goal's the same every week, trying to get the ball in the hole as fast as you can.

I think it definitely helps. I'm really happy that I got the chance to play a few weeks ago. Like I said, kind of get a plan together and be familiar with the terrain, know what to expect and just definitely an added

comfort level for the Canadians and excited about that.

Q. Could you talk about the state of your game right now, and anything you've been working on heading into this week?

COREY CONNERS: Yeah, I played pretty solid since the victory a few months ago. I wouldn't say I've been able to put everything together as well as I would like, but everything feels solid. Made an adjustment with my putting, trying to get back to where I was when I won, and at Augusta, where I felt like I rolled the ball really well. Made that adjustment last week, and feeling a lot more comfortable with that.

I'd say my putter has held me back a little bit, but that's the part of the game I feel the best about right now. I feel I'm seeing the lines well and everything is matching up nicely and I'm putting a good roll on it. It will be important. My ball-striking still feels great. Kind of spent some time on the range this morning, trying to groove it a little bit.

Yeah, feel really comfortable with everything. Just going to try and stick to the game plan. Try to hit as many fairways and greens as possible and roll it well.

Q. This course is fairly tight off the tee. Maybe some tricky tee shots. It's also the slopy greens. Where do you think someone with experience here would have more of an advantage? Is it the greens and how difficult they are?

COREY CONNERS: I think it's the greens, yeah. There's a few greens where you've got to hit it in the right section or you're going to be faced with a very difficult two-putt or difficult birdie putt.

One that comes to mind, No. 7, kind of got three different sections. You've got to hit it in the right section or you're playing some defense. Yeah, I think a few of the greens, No. 15 can have some tricky pin positions. Yeah, some of the par 3s are really good.

I think being comfortable on the par 3s, kind of got some good targets picked out. Know where you want to land the ball. Some length on some of them, so I think that's another advantage.

But definitely on the greens, I think everyone has yardage books that are pretty good, and everyone does their homework. The caddies know their way around pretty well. So I think the biggest thing will be the greens, but then some of the par 3s, as well.

Q. You touched on the number of Canadians now playing on the TOUR, and of course with the success that you've had, do you feel the obligation or have you embraced the idea of being a role

model for young Canadian golfers?

COREY CONNERS: Yeah, I've really embraced the opportunity to be a role model. I think when I was a youngster, I looked up to the Canadians on Tour, Mike Weir, particularly. It feels cool to be in that position where a lot of young kids look up to me.

Definitely back home in list well, Ontario, they have a thriving junior program. Brandon Parsons, the director of golf started it, and there's so many kids now getting into the game and having fun on the golf course. When I was a youngster growing up there, there wasn't as many definitely. So it's cool to see, and I don't really feel like I'm that special, but it's nice that people look up to me and feel like I have a good work ethic and good attitude. That's important for a good role model.

Q. You spent some time on the Mackenzie Tour. What did you learn on that tour that's allowed you to reach the level where you're at now?

COREY CONNERS: Yeah, the Mackenzie Tour is a great spot to start a professional career. Was fortunate to play on the Tour, but not play on it for too long. The goal is to get off and move to the next level.

But they are professionally run tournaments, great golf courses. They do a great job with the logistics and setup. It feels like a TOUR event, little bit smaller scale.

I learned there having success there early in my career, that that success can translate to the next levels. It really prepares you well. There's not a lot different that you have to do on that tour than you have to do here. I think there's so many good players on the Mackenzie Tour now. They would be competitive on the PGA TOUR, a lot of them, really. There's a fine line, but it taught me a lot of great things, built my confidence knowing that I was ready for the next level, and yeah, definitely a good place to start.

When young pros ask me what my path was, and kind of explained I started on the Mackenzie Tour and it's a great spot to refine your game, test your game; there's so many good players, and if you can have success there, that translates to success at the Web Tour level which translates to success here.

It's a great path and something that I feel really fortunate to have been able to do.

Q. When you missed the cut at Punta Cana, which allowed you to Monday qualify which got you to the playoff and you win the tournament; when you backtrack, was there something that happened at Punta Cana, was there a particular shot or bad break or something that happened for you to miss

the cut, and do you ever think about the razor's edge that could be the difference between players out here breaking through and maybe preventing them from ever winning?

COREY CONNERS: Yeah, I think I learned a lot in Punta Cana. The strategy that I had, I was a little bit too conservative. I hit a lot of really solid shots, but I wasn't hitting them close to the hole. I was picking conservative targets, and after that week, I'm like, I hit the ball awesome. I hit my spot more times than not. I need to be a little bit more aggressive. I need to change my game plan a little bit. Sort of attack some more flags. I was hitting it really solid.

My putter held me back a lot, and similar to the last week, kind of made the same adjustment. I have a tendency to fall into a bad habit with my putting, and kind of reminded me there, what I need to do to roll it better.

Going into the Monday qualifier, I knew I was hitting it well. Just tried to be more aggressive. Shoot at more pins. Had a few tap-in birdies, which helped a lot. Then hit a really nice shot on the playoff hole to get into the tournament, which set up my birdie.

So definitely a blessing in disguise I guess. I was disappointed to miss the cut, but the things I learned were valuable the next week and will continue to be valuable the next few weeks. Just remind myself, when I'm hitting it good, it's okay to be aggressive and shoot for the pins. You don't have to play for pars. You have to try and make some birdies.

Did that as wells in San Antonio. My game plan, be really aggressive. Hitting it well and try to hit it close to the hole and not safe.

Q. You've had a busy season, really few weeks since that win in San Antonio. Is this your first time being back in Canada?

COREY CONNERS: I was able to come back for a few days just before the PGA Championship. That was my first came back in Canada. I didn't get to spend any time at home in Listowel. Spent some time here and was in Toronto, only for a few days.

But yeah, it's awesome to be back. That was my first time. Feels good to be back.

Q. Did you do anything to celebrate with family, friends here?

COREY CONNERS: I had a dinner that coincided with Mother's Day. Took my mom and my mother-in-law out for dinner. Just had a nice time with some close family, and was able to see my friends for just a few hours, which was great.

But I think hopefully this fall, maybe get back to Listowel golf course and have a nice celebration with the members. I know they would all be really excited to see me.

Q. How special would it be for them to be out here watching you, and then you win out here?

COREY CONNERS: Yeah, it would be unbelievable. A dream come true for sure. I think it's a realistic goal. It's my goal this week to put myself in contention. I know my game is good enough to get the win. So just going to, yeah, try and do my best and yeah, have fun.