

U.S. Senior Open

Press Conference

Wednesday June 27, 2018

Davis Love III



THE MODERATOR: Welcome again to the 39th US Senior Open here at Colorado Springs. We're now pleased to have the 1997 PGA champion and two-time Ryder Cup captain Davis Love III join us here, playing in his first U.S. Senior Open.

Folks in Colorado are excited you've come to the Broadmoor for your first Senior Open. Do you share that same excitement? And tell us why.

DAVIS LOVE III: Very excited, obviously, to play in a major championship and be back in Colorado and I've had some good luck just up the road at Castle Pines. I like playing at altitude.

A lot of fun. Obviously all of us are hitting it farther. So that's fun. And I've heard so much about the golf course over the years. The Anschutz group owns Sea Island and I've done a lot of work with them over the last four, five years and gotten to know them, and obviously with our event, at Sea Island, they're big supporters of that.

I've heard great things -- and from the Sea Island members that have been coming out here the last four, five years, I brought four or five of them with me this trip.

So, yeah, I've been hearing so much about it. I'm excited. It's one of those places when we started playing at the Greenbrier, I can't believe I've never been here before. It's such a fabulous resort. So many things to do.

My only complaint is that I can't do everything. I'm playing golf all day. I can't do all the activities and get to all the restaurants. But fabulous place and the golf course is great and in great shape.

THE MODERATOR: Questions?

Q. I was curious about your hip replacement surgery. I don't think you've played consecutive weeks. Anyway, wonder if that's a factor. And of course Jacobsen won in 2004 shortly after hip replacement. So it might be a good omen.

DAVIS LOVE III: I'm picking on Tiger that I beat him, maybe everybody else, first player to win on the regular tour with a spinal fusion. So one record he can't beat me at. I'm ahead of him on that one.

I've talked to a lot of guys about bouncing back from it. I did play some consecutive weeks. I played too much really. I played I think five of seven weeks when they cut me loose. And actually hurt my back a little bit because I was swinging so good.

And today I promised myself I was going to play nine holes. And I played 16. The course was so good. Yesterday I did the same thing. I played nine and the next thing you know we've got one, two, three, and four.

But if I pace myself, you know, I don't hurt anything. The hip is fine. But the, kind of the trauma from the surgery in your leg is what you have to really bounce back from.

And I could feel it a little bit today. I'm hitting the ball -- as I said I like the altitude -- I'm swinging for the fence on a lot of these holes. And I could feel it after I played last week and this week and then obviously preparing -- I was actually in Sun Valley, Idaho, practicing at altitude and seeing how far the ball was going. I've had a good two, three weeks of getting ready for this. And I can feel the cumulative effects.

That's what you have to figure out. My doctor told me when I started hitting drivers, you're not going to hurt the hip, you'll pull your quad muscle again or your groin muscle again like I did for you.

And like any athlete, you know, you pull your Achilles, you have to slowly work back to it. You can't just jump back in. So I'm seven months. So I'm still feeling out what that process is. But I've done that before. I've had a big foot surgery and a big neck surgery like Peyton Manning had.

So I know my limits. I probably should have played 12 today instead of 16. But like I said, the course is so good, the weather is so good, I stayed out there a lot longer than I planned on.

Q. Was that Wells Fargo?

DAVIS LOVE III: Yeah, Wells Fargo, honestly, my son had gotten an exemption and Charlotte -- I was born in Charlotte and North Carolina has been so good to me.

If it wasn't Charlotte with my son playing I would not

have played that week. And I just was, my back was hurting. And after two or three weeks off it felt really good again.

And my therapists all warned me: You're going to be swinging so free you're going to hurt something else because you're going to be too excited. That's exactly where I've been.

My problem is, like with any sport, anything I do, if you say, you can go to the range, I don't stop. I just go all day.

And I need to be more on a pitch count. But we don't have a coach or a team owner out there pulling you off the field. And I tend to do too much. I'd love to go to the Greenbrier next week, but I'm going to try as hard as I cannot to go and then I'm going to play the next two and take another break.

I think two in a row is going to be probably the perfect thing for me. One week to get going and one week to be full speed. And then go back and take a week off.

I figured out carrying around a 50-pound granddaughter is not good for my hip and big buckets of balls are not good for my hips. If I can stay away those two things I'll be all right.

Q. Everybody who has come up here has mentioned or remembered playing in the International, Fred Funk, Kenny Perry everybody has talked about it. Do you think that when the International went away, it sort of stopped you guys from discovering Colorado golf, because you've all said you've never been here and you're amazed at how pretty and great the courses and things like that. Do you think the International demise kept you from knowing more about Colorado and the Broadmoor?

DAVIS LOVE III: People ask me all the time, have you played this course, have you played that course, have you been here, been there? No, I go where the TOUR goes. When I go home I go fishing.

Everybody says, we never see you at the golf course. I play golf all year long, just not at home.

So, yeah, we miss out. I know coming over here with David Toms. He said his son Carter was going to go to Castle Pines. He said, man, I wish I could go up there and play with him. No joke about the activities. I'd like to go fly fishing and hiking and go to the zoo. But I'm going to be probably too busy playing golf.

So a lot of great places I don't get to go. And obviously this is one of them. We've been, what, 75 miles from

here a bunch and never made it down here.

But I do like playing at the altitude. I think a lot of us that played Castle Pines are kind of licking their chops because we know how to play at this altitude. We don't get to do it much, but I got it figured out.

Q. Now that you've been around the golf course, how does it set up for your game? There's a lot of right-to-left holes out here.

DAVIS LOVE III: It's a lot of right-to-lefts, but the original Donald Ross holes -- I kept saying this looks like Seminole. If I hit a driver and don't try to draw the 3-wood around the corner it actually kind of widens up for me a bit. Depends on the wind, obviously. You just can't hit it in the rough. You're just not going to get it close to the hole out of the rough.

But I'm hitting my driver really well. So holes like 1 and 2 should be 3-wood off of 1 and 2-iron off 2. But if I'm driving it well, it kind of widens out up there. I can get it over some bunkers.

But there are some holes, like 10, 3-wood is like 10 at Augusta, 3-wood is going to go as far as driver. It's going to hit and roll around the corner. Like I hit a 3-wood today, just way down there on 10. Because it hit just right running with the hill.

Or 11, I think it's -- what's parallel to 11? Like 14. 14. Holes like that -- or 9. 3-wood is going to be just as good for me as a driver. But I think it sets up well for me.

I think the long hitters on any course have an advantage. But the ball's not running on a lot of these holes. Especially if the hole's playing uphill, it's soft, and it's hitting and it stops.

Q. You mentioned rough and that was the other thing is it's a half a shot penalty, perhaps? Is it pretty tough?

DAVIS LOVE III: I got some, when I was walking up to them, I'm thinking I can't get this to the green. I had a couple of wedges, 100-yard shots, I couldn't get to the green. I had a couple 6-irons I couldn't get to the green. It's going to be half at least. If you keep driving it in, it's going to -- it's eventually going to wear you down. You're just not going to be able to compete.

But they're generous fairways, I would say. Again, I keep looking at it like I might as well hit a driver up there and take a chance with a wedge or a 9-iron rather than hitting a 3-wood in the rough and having a 7-iron. If I'm feeling good and driving it good, I think I'm just going to hit a lot. I think I'll hit a lot of drivers and 3-woods. I doubt I would ever, except No. 2, I doubt I'd

hit anything less than a 3-wood, unless it firms up.

Q. Do you know if your dad ever competed here at the Broadmoor?

DAVIS LOVE III: I would suspect he did in something. They have the Trans Miss here? I've seen three or four people say they've played with my dad all around Colorado. So I would bet he did at some point. My mom talks about how much she liked it.

They probably at least did Golf Digest schools here or something.

Q. (Inaudible.)

DAVIS LOVE III: He would have been a pro then.

Q. We talked about off the tee, we talked about in the fairway, but a lot of talk has been about putting surfaces and what you need to do. What's your practice plan been? Have you been spending more time on putting.

DAVIS LOVE III: We kept looking behind us to see where the group behind us was. We were putting a lot trying to get out of their way. And Scott Verplank talked me into more playing this afternoon or this morning than I planned. And it was good because there was nobody behind us and we could mess around on the greens and look at the greens books and figure out where we -- obviously the caddies have past pin placements from past championships here.

So there's been a lot of that. Trying to get the local knowledge that it all breaks away from this peak or that peak or from the monument.

Keeping the pin between you and the mountain is going to be very smart, putting uphill. But it's tricky. On the non-Ross greens, the bigger, wider ones, you can't just shoot at the middle of the green, because you could leave yourself putting over a slope or down a slope.

You're going to have to put it in the correct section of the green or you're going to do some 3-putting. You have to be patient. You're going to 3-putt. If a guy doesn't three putt he's going to be doing very well. You have to be patient with it. It's a major championship. You're going to have to make some curling five-footers to hang in there.

Q. Wondering, when you mentioned when you're home you're fishing and so forth. At this point in your career, you're one of the oldest players to have won a PGA TOUR event. That was a pretty significant achievement. You're in The Hall of Fame now. What do you get out of golf now or what do you hope to get out of golf at this point in

your career?

DAVIS LOVE III: They asked me in an interview one word that sums up why you're playing. It's I enjoy the competition. I mean, I spent the last ten days basically with Scott Verplank. We've been playing golf since we were 15 together. He was in my wedding. I was in his wedding. We played high school, college-aged golf. He won on TOUR before me, but he was an amateur. We competed against each other forever. And I got to spend ten days with him and Fred and played with Vijay and get to play with David Toms. Haven't played with David Toms in a long time. Get to play with him for two days.

Just getting out there and competing with these guys is fun. It doesn't matter where you are. My son just played a mini TOUR event. And he won. He had a great time. And signed up for another one this week.

We just want to play. It doesn't matter where it is or what it is. But then when you add in a major championship and you add in a great golf course, it just gets you fired up.

Again, that's why I played 16 holes instead of nine today. I'm excited about it. I love it.

And you know me, when I'm at a tournament, I want to win. I want to be ready. And then it makes me play the week before to get ready and makes me practice the week before to get ready for that.

I could have very easily, after all the injuries I've been through -- I remember Greg Norman and Curtis Strange and Raymond Floyd and all those guys going through -- even back to Jerry Pate, going through injuries, going, man, those guys, poor guys, they're just getting beat up as they get in their 40s and early 50s.

Now I know what that feels like. It's hard to keep competing. But I'm not doing it for records or for money. I'm doing it because I love to play and I love to compete.

Q. If I'm correct, you had the neck, the ankle, right and the hip?

DAVIS LOVE III: That's a long time ago. You've got a good memory.

Q. You've had it --

DAVIS LOVE III: I've had two major foot surgeries. I've had four that they said could be career-ending. So I'm very, very blessed. Every doctor and therapist I worked with said, your body will bounce back very well. Even when I had to have my hip replaced they said, this is going to be the easiest one you've ever done. This is going to be no problem.

And honestly, when I was home for a month after Charlotte, I had no issues at all. I could not tell you that I had a body part replaced.

I've got a huge plate in my shoulder from a snowboarding crash a couple of years ago.

Q. I forgot that one.

DAVIS LOVE III: Honestly, if I didn't try to hit 300-yard drives and didn't carry a chainsaw around and work on the farm, I would never know that my hip was replaced. It's incredible.

Talk to me Sunday night, after walking around here four rounds and swinging for the fence a lot, I will feel differently. But so will everybody else in this field, you know?

I saw guys last week that were tired at the end of the week, just three days. It was a pretty hilly course. And I saw guys that, even at Hilton Head, six straight days of golf, you're worn out. It's tiring.

But, again, I've been very blessed that I can keep playing, keep feeling good and half the field is hurting worse than me, I can guarantee you that.

Q. On this topic, I'm not trying to stir anything up or anything, but John Daly tried to get permission to use a cart this week, has an arthritic knee situation that's, I guess flared up. Can you ever foresee -- first, I wonder how you felt about that, the cart thing. And if you could ever foresee yourself asking for a cart.

DAVIS LOVE III: It's hard in an event like this or a few others on the over-50 tournaments, because we do have a rule on the TOUR that you can use them.

So a guy who is used to being able to use it and all of a sudden can't, especially on a hilly course, I understand that. I'm kind of in the Fred Couples category. It's worse for me to ride, bouncing around in the cart. It jostles me around.

And even working on golf courses, they get me out in a Polaris or something and you ride around, I'm better walking than I am riding.

Now, I saw Scott going uphill a lot. I'd kind of -- maybe I'll ride up the hill with him in the fairway. But just having to get in and out and deal with it. At home it's nice to play in two and a half hours and zip around the golf course.

But I'd prefer to walk it if I could. After one of my foot surgeries, they sent me back to play and they said, you

can play, but play a Champions Tour event, so you can ride, because we don't want you walking. And I walked all five days. I'm just not going to do it.

It feels better to walk. It keeps me loose. But, yes, at some point to keep playing, to stay out there, I could see me riding. If you say you can come back and play the Senior Open at the Broadmoor in 10 years when I'm 64, I'll probably want to ride. (Laughter).

Q. Which hip and what did it do to your golf swing when you came back?

DAVIS LOVE III: Left, and it vastly improved my golf swing, because I couldn't move. I had the labrum tear resurfacing surgery to try to avoid the total hip. And I couldn't walk. I couldn't turn. I remember working with Jack Lumpkin, he said, you've got to turn those hips through faster. They won't do it. And I'd do it enough to make him happy in a practice session. I'd go home and I couldn't practice the next day.

It was just grinding all the time. I remember Peter Jacobsen and a lot of guys, the same thing. So it fixed my swing. I've been a little erratic since, because just getting used to it. Used to being free again and used to -- I hit two or three bad drives in the rough today and I topped a 3-wood. So I'm erratic. I hit 6-iron into 9 yesterday and I topped one in the ditch today. Or, no, sorry, No. 3 I hit 6-iron in. And I hit a 3-wood on 9. I almost fell down, you know?

So I'm learning -- somebody said you'll lose a little bit of touch with that side of your body. And maybe I have. I don't sense that. But certainly my -- I hit some wedges bad every once in a while. I think that could be eyesight. USGA gave me reading glasses. Maybe it's my eyes. I can't see the ground.

But I'm freer, looser, picking up clubhead speed every week it seems like. Cracking 170 every once in a while now in ball speed. But it's erratic.

But anyway, it's gotten better, for sure. I mean, I talked to a couple of friends of mine this week about their hips, and I highly recommend it. It feels 100 percent better.

Q. How much time is added to your day now based on the fact that you've got to get your body ready to start swinging?

DAVIS LOVE III: 18-year-old kid in a Q and A thing asked me, what would you tell an 18-year-old kid starting off in golf? Work out more. The stuff in the gym. What I see, the Justin Thomases and Bruce Koepkas and Dustin Johnsons, all those guys doing -- I just didn't do that when I was 18 years old. And it catches up with you.

But, no, it's not that much more. It's what I should do, what I've been doing the last, probably, 10 or 15 years. One year when I won after coming back from that big ankle surgery, the trainers in the fitness truck said Davis isn't the hardest worker, he doesn't lift the most weights, but he's here every day. I have to go in and ride the bike. Today I was knocking on the door at 6:15 -- they weren't open yet -- in our fitness truck. But I have to ride the bike. I have to stretch. I have to do, this afternoon or tonight, I have to go back and do it again.

But I promise you I'm doing half of what Brooks Koepka is doing or what Tiger Woods is doing. So I'm still not very good at it. But I have to keep up, stay loose.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you.