

PRE-TOURNAMENT INTERVIEW
September 19, 2019



DAVIS LOVE III

CHRIS RICHARDS: Good morning, everyone. I'm happy to be joined by Davis Love III, making his debut at the Sanford International.

Davis, welcome. What brought you to South Dakota? How did this tournament fit in your schedule?

DAVIS LOVE III: Well, Andy North, I guess, and Steve Stricker talking to me about it over the last couple years, how excited they were to be bringing golf to South Dakota. It didn't work out last year, but I'm excited to be here this year. Some of you may have seen, I played a few Champions Tour events recently, played three in a row and had a couple weeks off, and now I'm going to play this week and next week. I'm trying to get my game back in shape after a surgery this summer.

CHRIS RICHARDS: How is your game right now?

DAVIS LOVE III: According to the statistics, it's not very good. At home and on the range, it seems pretty good. On the golf course, it has not been great.

I seem to, every week I've played the last three weeks, I've gotten a little bit worse every day. I don't know if that's physical or mental or both, but I just need to play some, I just need to get out and play some tournaments. I missed basically three months of not even getting to play at home much less play tournament golf.

So I'm excited to be back playing and I'm just still feeling like I'm knocking the rust off. I've got to get it from the driving range to the scorecard.

CHRIS RICHARDS: You mentioned you played three in a row and then you were able -- the Tour was off for a week. Were you able to go home, reflect on how those three weeks went and work on things as you prepare for this next two-week stretch?

DAVIS LOVE III: Yeah, I got home in time to narrowly miss a hurricane and luckily get through that. Got a lot going on at home and around the country in our golf design, and our RSM Classic's coming up, got three granddaughters at home. So getting home is actually probably more work than being on the road, but I did get some practice in, got to play some, got back in the gym a little bit.

So I'm feeling better, it's just at 55 bouncing back from surgery versus 45 is a lot different. I've been through a lot the last 10 years, but it seems like it just takes a little bit longer every time to bounce back. I had a pretty big foot surgery and doctor checkup this past week and

he's moving me on to the next step. I actually rode a little bit in Seattle, which I think helped a little bit take some pressure off. So hopefully it just continues to get better and the game gets better, and it was nice to be home.

CHRIS RICHARDS: I'll open it up to questions.

Q. Davis, last year obviously was the first year here. What have you heard from some of the other guys in terms of their feelings about how it was to play here?

DAVIS LOVE III: Well, as we all knew, it was going to be great hospitality, a great club, and an older, traditional golf course. The guys really like the golf course. The first person I met in the parking lot that rode me up here, a volunteer, said, "I heard the course is in great shape." I said, "Yeah, I've been hearing that for two years." A lot of positives, great crowds and obviously a great champion last year.

I know a little bit about the course just from, you know, trying to get prepared and know what I was in for. I'm going to have to hit a lot of fairways and a lot of good short irons or wedges and that's what I've been working on to get ready. Obviously you have to putt well. Putting's going to be a key. For me, it's a quick learning curve. I had, as I said, a lot of stuff going on at home, couldn't get in until yesterday. So I'm going to have to do a lot of work today and kind of follow Jerry Kelly around a little bit tomorrow and try to pick up some tips. My caddie's been here for a few days, so he and I will have a good day of debriefing today and try to figure out where to go.

Q. You mentioned you narrowly missed a hurricane. Like how close did it come to damaging your house or affecting loved ones, friends? What was the story?

DAVIS LOVE III: Well, the southeast coast got very lucky. Obviously North Carolina didn't, but it was not looking good three or four days out. We've been through two pretty bad ones the last few years, so had a lot of stuff going on at home. We're finishing up a golf course for Sea Island, which two years ago we were finishing up a course for Sea Pines; the grand opening was the day the hurricane hit. So I was more nervous about golf courses than I was my house. It skirted by, we didn't get much out of it thankfully.

Now our focus, our tournament, talk to Tiger Woods, talk to Justin Leonard, a lot of people focusing on helping the Bahamas out because we know living on the coast how close it was for us and how bad it was down there. So once the rain quit, it was back to normal.

We're, as I said, building the RSM Classic. Our operations people are already on site, we've got a couple months to go for our tournament. Worried about that a little bit, too, so hopefully all of them stay offshore the rest of the season.

Q. You mentioned all these things that are kind of distracting you from playing and competing, but like how much less are you practicing and competing than you would like to be at optimal level?

DAVIS LOVE III: This summer I played a lot less than I expected. I played nine regular Tour events. I actually had a few FedEx points, and I was happy with my game before my foot started bothering me and I had to have surgery. So I'm a little disappointed in the season overall because I had some pretty good momentum going after the fall and then the start of the winter.

You know, I haven't been able to play and practice and most of it's physical. Some of it's -- I like to say I haven't been doing a whole lot of fishing, but I've been distracted more with granddaughters and other things that keep me from playing at home as much, but I do get a lot of practice in. I can only hit so many, I can only spend so much time on my feet on the range the last couple months, but it's getting better. I mean, now I feel like leading into the Champions Tour Playoffs and leading into some fall events that I want to play on the regular Tour, I feel like I'm getting stronger and I'm getting some momentum.

Q. Since you're playing both tours, can you maybe describe the difference between the PGA TOUR, where guys are actually grinding to make a living, and the guys here on the Champions Tour? At least from what we've gathered, yes, they want to win, but I think they're enjoying the game and enjoying life a little more?

DAVIS LOVE III: It's a lot less stressful week, for sure. The difference, as my mom pointed out the other day when we were watching, she goes, "I know all the names on the Champions Tour, I don't know who these young kids are on the regular Tour."

I know most of them. My son's 25 and trying to play the Tour and I know most of them, but it's familiar out here, it's fun, it's relaxing. You know what you're going to get when you come out here, you know you're going to get to play Friday, Saturday, Sunday. That's what I really need now is playing some rounds.

But the competition is no different, and I've said this 100 times, I said when I was turning 50, if I putt well enough to win on the Champions Tour, I think I can win on the regular Tour, and I did that. The weeks that I putt well, I'm hitting the ball fairly long, solid enough that a lot of courses on the PGA TOUR, if I putt well enough to beat Bernhard Langer or Scott McCarron, I can still shoot good scores on the regular Tour as well.

My only issues are the quick pace of this. If you don't birdie the first hole and get off to a good start, you feel like you're behind. So I've got to wrap my head around it mentally that it is a short little race and you have to make a lot of birdies, you have to putt well. And these guys, Scott Parel and all these, they just putt so well and they're used to it.

I don't know they have a huge advantage over me, a year of playing this course. They know the greens. I've got to play catchup. So as I get more and more into it, I think I'll get better at it.

Q. How much will you use today's pro-am to kind of get yourself familiar with the

greens as much as you can?

DAVIS LOVE III: Oh, it's going to be a full day. I'm going to go out there before, do some chipping and putting, and then I'm going to use my caddie. He's been following around his friends, caddies and players, watching them, so he'll have some good inside information.

This is our job, we gear up pretty fast. I've won PGA TOUR events that I didn't even get to play a practice round or a pro-am on. So we can do it, it's just a matter of getting the most out of today. And I'm joking, but I'm going to be watching the guys I'm playing with tomorrow, green speed, clubs they hit off the tee. I did it in Calgary and I had already played the tournament one time. I hit the wrong club off several holes standing there watching my competitors hit a different club. Like why did I do that? He hit 3-wood, why didn't I hit 3-wood?

So I just have to learn the golf courses. If I show up at the John Deere Classic or Harbour Town, I don't even have to play a practice round, I know the golf courses that well. Here, I'm a little bit disadvantaged, so today is really, really important. Playing a course we designed on the Golf Channel the last couple days filming stuff helped me get ready to play golf, but it didn't help me for this golf course. So I'm a little behind this week, but as my mom would say, I'm usually late.

Q. Davis, is there an art to getting some benefit, future competitive benefit out of a program or just be with the amateurs and make their day well?

DAVIS LOVE III: Yeah, it depends what you're working on. One guy might be working on his swing so he's trying to get that to the golf course from the driving range.

I'm working on something in my putting so my pre-shot routine and putting -- I have to quit talking to my amateurs and focus on putting.

Now, a lot of holes they're going to be making birdie. My birdie doesn't really count. I need to make my putts count today. I need to learn the greens. As soon as I putt out, I need to putt around the green a little bit and not hold up the guy behind me.

So yeah, every player -- Rocco just wants to have fun and entertain the guys and smoke cigars and have a fun day. I have to get some work done today and entertain my guys. It's a challenge, but yes, I need to pick out lines off the tees, I need to check out some greens, look for tomorrow's pin placements, things like that.

Q. Now, this is the second year of this event obviously, but it's still relatively new on the Tour. When you come to a place that's new and kind of still has that new feel, does that give you kind of a different boost of energy when it's new fans seeing you for the first time and just in a new environment?

DAVIS LOVE III: Yeah, new excitement. I saw that driving up, everything's new to me. The

town's excited. I heard that last year that the fans, the sponsors, everybody was excited about it, so you feel that energy.

And genuinely, on the Champions Tour, the volunteers and the fans are even more -- it's a smaller town and it's a bigger event. In Atlanta, the TOUR Championship, they have the Falcons, they have the Braves, they have a lot going on. In Calgary or in Sioux Falls, this is a big event and the people get excited about it. This is not just another weekend, it's a big weekend. Same thing in our hometown. Our PGA TOUR event is one of the biggest things that happens in our town, so the volunteers and the fans and the sponsors really get excited about it and the players appreciate that and feed off of it.

Q. Talk about this being an older course. Do you prefer playing older courses or do you have a preference?

DAVIS LOVE III: Yeah, my style of architecture in our business is copying the old greats, whether it's Ross or Raynor, C.B Macdonald, we love traditional. I know that this is an early '20s course, Graham Marsh came in and worked on it. For me, I'm more interested in what did Graham Marsh do -- I know there's flood issues and things; what did he do to change it? Which holes are still original? Lee Janzen's going to be my source for that because he's probably got it all figured out.

But I like old school, I like traditional, so this is going to be my kind of place. I'll soak it in and try to learn something that I can use. I just sat there at breakfast looking down 10, that's very, very classic. It's a neat looking hole, so I'm excited to see it.

Q. So do you actually end up incorporating things that you see here in future courses?

DAVIS LOVE III: Oh, yeah, I steal off everybody, whether it's Fazio or Nicklaus or Rees Jones, they've all been great to me; Pete Dye in my learning to build golf courses. And then if you turn me loose, I'm going to be more on the Ross, you know, Seth Raynor style. It doesn't always fit. You go out in the desert, a Seth Raynor style course doesn't fit. You need to find somebody, a classic desert style courses or mountain style courses.

But I like traditional, I like old. I think there's a reason why we like Winged Foot and Seminole and Chicago Golf Course and Shinnecock. There's a reason why people clamor to play those places, a reason why the U.S. Open, PGA Championship go to places like that. So I tend to not copy isn't the right word, I tend to honor the classic architects when I'm building.

Q. You had a chance to meet and play a lot of golf with Michael Jordan in college and naturally play a lot of golf with Tiger Woods. How could you compare and describe the experiences just playing practice rounds or fun gambling rounds with those two guys?

DAVIS LOVE III: Well, you don't want to get in gambling matches with Michael, for sure.

You know, I think they're very similar. They're both incredibly driven to do the little things that make them great. I think people don't really realize the time spent. Michael Jordan learned from Dean Smith that you have to play defense, you have to play every play defense and he made everybody around him play defense and didn't make it all about Michael. He made them pass. It was very simple little things.

I watched Tiger work out, train, prepare. I just passed on to a young golfer going to Q-School the things that Tiger told me to figure out at Medinah or at Hazeltine about the golf course to prepare our players to play. They do the little things day in and day out that people don't want to do that makes them great. And they're both relentless about everything they do, no matter what it is. Golf, fishing, diving, anything to do, working out, they go all in 100 percent to get the best that they can out of themselves. That's why they're in their sports probably the best ever, because they had that commitment that most people don't want to put in.

Q. How fun are they, or how fun is it just hanging out playing with them?

DAVIS LOVE III: I haven't, other than some Ryder Cups, been with them together. They don't invite me on their trips. That's all right. But they are competitive in everything they do and they're both fun to be around.

Michael's been a big part of President Cups and Ryder Cups for us. He's always the big smile and the big jokes and the guy to boost our morale. I'll never forget walking around watching Justin Leonard play. Michael and I were probably the only guys watching him play for a while because he was so far down. He knows how to inspire and motivate and get guys going and make everything fun. He was great over in Paris. I can't remember a Ryder Cup, maybe back early '90s, that he hasn't been to. He's been a big part of hanging out with us around the Tour. It's been fun.

CHRIS RICHARDS: Before I let you go, do you mind if I ask about the button in your hand?

DAVIS LOVE III: This was on my hat when I pulled it out of my locker today. This is from Calgary, from their -- the guy that started the tournament. They gave us these buttons last week. I'm going to save it for a souvenir.

That's what's great about the Champions Tour, every community just gets so much behind these tournaments and raises so much money for charities.

CHRIS RICHARDS: Well, thank you very much, Davis, and good luck this week.

DAVIS LOVE III: Thank you. Hopefully see you again.