

U.S. Amateur Four-Ball Championship

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Ben Baxter

Andrew Buchanan

Press Conference

THE MODERATOR: We'll start with Andrew. How does it feel to be a USGA champion?

ANDREW BUCHANAN: Yeah, I mean, I think I said it in the first interview that I was giving, this is kind of a replacement for NAAs, and it turned out to be a much better replacement than we could have imagined. If you offered us an NCAA championship at the beginning of the week or a USGA championship, I think that the USGA is the mecca of golf, and so to be able to win one of their championships is unbelievable.

BEN BAXTER: Yeah, seeing Bryson DeChambeau, Kelly Kraft, Colt Knost, all the SMU guys, yeah, they might have won U.S. Amateurs and Pub Links, but for Andrew and I to share that name on the trophy, that's pretty special.

Q. I think the story of this championship was your play on the back nine. I have you as 14-under total on the back nine in match play. What was it about the back nine that you guys just killed it all week?

BEN BAXTER: I'd say sometimes on the front nine we almost got a little too complacent with our play. We almost got a little bit too comfortable getting down early in the match, but Andrew had some awesome pep talks this week, especially going into hole 9. Yeah, 8 through 18, I guess, we felt really comfortable with our clubs off the tee and our clubs into the green. I'd say it's honestly just keeping a positive attitude and almost kind of getting a -- almost kind of switching your mindset to a fresh start for the back nine.

Q. When you guys go your own way and play your own golf ball, what can each of you pull out of the way you turned around that morning match? What can you pull out of that individually?

ANDREW BUCHANAN: Like our play from this morning?

Q. Yeah, how you flipped the 4-down match.

ANDREW BUCHANAN: Yeah, sure. It's so easy to listen to people tell you that, oh, you're only 4-down, like you're still in this, you have plenty of time, like don't



give up, keep your head in it. I don't know, we tried that for once, and not saying that we wouldn't normally do that, but to be honest, it was kind of surreal to live through it and to be able to experience it, and I think that it's a good lesson on both sides for us that we said going into this afternoon, if we're 4-up or 4-down, that probably doesn't mean much, and so to be able to learn that heading forward, I know there's a very big USGA event that comes down to match play in August, so if we could keep that in mind, hopefully we run into each other there.

BEN BAXTER: Yes.

Q. Speaking of the U.S. Amateur, have you heard from Bryson at all yet?

BEN BAXTER: Yeah, yeah, he's been texting us and I've been honestly a little too tired to call him late at night. But yeah, he talked to us. He honestly just told us keep your pedal down the whole time, no matter if you're 4-up or 5-up, so pretty much basic advice. But coming from him, it means a little bit more since he's had such success in the USGA championships like the U.S. Amateur.

Q. Ben, on 12 you had about an 18-foot putt for birdie. Can you take us through what you looked at that hole and how you read it?

BEN BAXTER: Yeah, Andrew actually had me move my mark one putter length to the left, and when I saw his putt go up the hill, we knew it was going to break right to left, and at the end we thought it was going to straighten halfway and then break left to right, but when I saw his putt go up the hill, it really didn't come back at all, so I pretty much just played mine -- I had this mark, I played it a little bit further out to the right and gave it some pace since he was already in with par, and they were in there pretty close, about eight feet. Yeah, I mean, it was huge. I just tried to put a good roll on it, and it happened to go in. It was awesome.

Q. And then the next hole with the pin way on the left, 30, 35 feet of green to work with on the right side, you went and attacked that pin?

BEN BAXTER: Yeah, I wasn't trying to go at the pin, I'll tell you that. I got pretty lucky. But that's why I try to play smart at least. Andrew and I have been sticking to a system this week called Decade Golf, and it just

really helps. It's just pretty much 5 percent of -- never mind. Never mind. That was off roll. We kind of move the pins around the green and don't really ever look at the actual pin, we try to make a new pin and hit to that.

Q. When you guys watched Bryson go through the season he went through last year, all his accomplishments, what kind of ripple effect did it have on you guys on the team?

ANDREW BUCHANAN: Well, it's nice to play with him every day, be around his work ethic and see what he goes through. But yeah, I mean, he's off to an unbelievable -- I shouldn't say it's unbelievable. It's pretty believable given his talent and work ethic. But we were joking that, well, Bryson lost in the round of 16 last year, I think, in the Four-Ball, so if we won, then that means a year from now we should be well above him. No, I'm just kidding.

Q. Make sure you tell him that.

ANDREW BUCHANAN: That will be the first thing I do, yeah.

BEN BAXTER: That's about the only thing we have on him.

Q. Earlier in the week during some of the match play you talked about just chipping and putting around here because you weren't always hitting it well. How did you even arrive at that mindset when you got here that chipping and putting was going to be the key to what you did all week?

ANDREW BUCHANAN: I think Ben and I, when we play each other at practice in a game called 21, just a very basic chipping game, we always view playing each other as kind of the championship, and so we love practicing our chipping. We think it's fun instead of -- I know I hit a couple terrible shots into the greens, and they were in tough spots that we've practiced those sorts of shots, so we knew that playing back-to-back 36 holes walking in competition is so grinding and grueling that you're not going to hit it well. Like if you hit it well, great, but odds are you're going to hit some pretty terrible shots, and we did. Yeah, we just chipped and putted our way around. It was pretty fun to watch.

Q. Specifically talk about the chip-in at 6. You had a good amount of green to work with. You just had the line well and you went aggressive on purpose?

BEN BAXTER: Yeah, I mean, Duane was telling me to hit it like way up there on the left, but for some reason I just saw exactly where I needed to put it, and I was just trying to get it as high and soft as I could. But yeah, I mean, that was sweet. That was a huge momentum boost for our team, especially we kind of came out a little bit sluggish and kind of lacking energy, but yeah, that chip-in was sweet.

Q. Did anyone -- did you talk to anyone that's a Winged Foot member or talk to anyone about the course, because watching you play, you both seemed to have a good feel not to hit around the greens right at the flag, to play to the back of the green and use the back slope to bring the ball down. How did you arrive at knowing about that?

ANDREW BUCHANAN: Mr. Mara, coming into the week, he was awesome just letting us know, and more so than anything he was super welcoming, sending us a weekly email basically, like, hey, I just played Winged Foot West or I just played Winged Foot East, the course is looking awesome, just giving us little tidbits like it's firm and fast, and then as soon as we played both of our practice rounds and he had been around us a little bit, he would -- we picked his brain on a decent number of holes. Like I know 17 was a big hole for us this week. I think we closed out two of our matches on that hole, and he said -- he goes, I had no idea what to do on that. Our system made it so basically hitting into that green there wasn't enough room, so we were saying, okay, well, where's our best leave, and he talked us through -- I know he's a great golfer himself. He talked us through a lot of different leaves and where to put it, told me if you feel good on draw holes 7, 8 and 9, just hit 3-wood, and we were down this morning walking onto 7 tee, and I said to Ben, do you think it's a driver, I've hit driver nice, and he goes, no, 3-wood. So just sticking with what Mr. Mara gave us heading into the week I would say was definitely a big part of it.

Q. And did you pick up enough information from him, too, that you used?

ANDREW BUCHANAN: Yeah, he's a really good golfer, but I mean, yeah, him and Duane together, it was really nice of him to set us up with Duane. He really helped. There was a few times this week where I just had the complete wrong read, and he'd say, trust it, baby, come on, smooth it out there, baby. In his Jamaican accent that was pretty funny. Picture, picture, visualize, Mon. But yeah, Duane was a huge help as well as Mr. Mara. They were a big part of our success this week.

BEN BAXTER: Yeah, caddie on and off the course.

Q. Does Duane caddie for Mr. Mara, or how are they connected?

ANDREW BUCHANAN: No, he just knew him through the caddie program.

BEN BAXTER: Duane caddies on the weekends only.

Q. Andy, can you explain to everybody here how it came to be that you stayed at Frank Mara's house for the week?

ANDREW BUCHANAN: Yeah, so the first time that we

were going to play -- I guess Juli Inkster is the one that set us up with them because she commentates for FOX, so she did the four-ball last year at Olympic Club, covered two of my teammates and asked me about them, and she said, oh, you should try and qualify with a partner. She said she was going to commentate this year. I asked Ben if he wanted to be partners, he said yes, and then as soon as we qualified, called Juli, and she's like, oh, I'm not doing that anymore, but maybe I can set you up with somebody to stay with, I'll check into it. She asked Mr. Mara, and he said yes, and his whole family just welcomed us in unbelievably.

BEN BAXTER: Yeah, Andrew took care of it all.

Q. I want to hear about the Giants shirts, and I'm wondering what you do with them once you leave, if they're staying behind or if they're going back to Dallas.

BEN BAXTER: I'm going to be in San Francisco this summer and I will wear them proudly around the course and into the city.

ANDREW BUCHANAN: Yeah, I don't really know how Dallas is going to take them. Obviously I was a Cowboys fan before, but now I definitely have a little bit more following for the Giants. They're such a great family. I'm sure that organization is run so well by the Maras. But yeah, they're really cool shirts, and they're red, white and blue, so I like that with SMU.

Q. Your college program gets back to normalcy next fall. What can this do to kind of bring some momentum to you guys getting started back up?

ANDREW BUCHANAN: Well, with qualifying, I'm sure that all of our teammates will be very intimidated heading -- no, just kidding. (Laughter.)

Yeah, I don't know. I think if anything all of our teammates back home, all the ones returning and the ones just graduating, they kept in touch with us awesome this week. I think that the SMU golf team has gone through a lot the last few years and we're a very close team, and those guys are just as good as us day in and day out, and so I think that it'll mean a lot to the team to be able to see -- I'm not trying to boast us up at all, but just like two of their teammates won a USGA championship and they're just as good as we are, and so that should give everybody on the team a lot of confidence heading forward.

Q. Andrew, the 15th hole, you drove it into that bunker on the right side, and you had a shot like 20 feet below the hole from the bunker. What could you see, and when you got over that what could you see there?

ANDREW BUCHANAN: Yeah, I could see Ben's mark

in there at three feet, which is very freeing because he hadn't missed a putt inside six feet the whole week, so to see him have a putt half that length was nice. I just wanted to contribute, get in there. I really liked bunkers this week. I've been good out of them. Yeah, it was a tough shot. Ben said, just give yourself a look at it because a lot of times I had gotten too cute when Ben was in really good position like he was. So for him to say that was very helpful. He would have made three regardless, but it was nice that I got the credit for it.

Q. How long was that putt?

ANDREW BUCHANAN: About 15 feet.

Q. What did you see in the break of the putt?

ANDREW BUCHANAN: I saw very, very straight. I read it downhill. I read the speed nicely, but I saw it straight, and Duane Cunningham, our caddie, saw about a cup and a half of break. I was so tired I just listened to him and hit it a cup and a half and it was dead center. I have no idea how it came back that far.

Q. You said you started out sluggish. Going back to 4, it was kind of a turning point because Brandon for them hit it over the water, got on the green in two but then three-putted for a par, and they seemed to be in good position to go 2-up, and then you were able to halve that hole and stay 1-down. Did that help you calm down a little bit?

BEN BAXTER: Not really calm down, but I mean, Andrew made such a good point when I was chipping. Obviously I'm a pretty decent chipper so I wanted to give that one a run. He said, hey, dude, 5 is not a bad score here. So I mean, that just kind of like almost changed my viewpoint of the shot. I was actually just trying to kind of snuggle it up there and at least not give them the hole. Yeah, that was pretty big for us, I guess.

Q. This is a team event, and so there's only one trophy, so who gets it the first part of the year? Have we talked about that yet?

ANDREW BUCHANAN: I just found out five minutes ago.

BEN BAXTER: Yeah, I'm pumped that we get to take it.

ANDREW BUCHANAN: Yeah, Ben played the first 12 out of 14 holes the best, and so I think that the first 12/14 of the time period it would be to him.