

Hilton Grand Vacations Tournament of Champions

Thursday, January 30, 2025

Orlando, Florida, USA

Lake Nona Golf & Country Club

Joe Pavelski

Quick Quotes

Q. All right, here with Joe Pavelski here at the Hilton Grand Vacations Tournament of Champions. This is your rookie day.

JOE PAVELSKI: Yep.

Q. First time you played in this tournament. Just talk about that moment teeing off for the first time with your group. What was going through your mind?

JOE PAVELSKI: Yeah, so excited to be here. Obviously just retired from the NFL and last year at this point you're laying in a hotel room or at home watching this tournament and hoping to be able to get an invite here one day and play in it.

So I was really excited to get that invite and be out here. You step up the first tee, first class event, it was awesome. The setup leading up to it, seeing the ladies practice, grinding on the range a little bit, how solid they are, how good of players they are, it was -- I was really looking forward to playing with them.

Played with Angel Yin this morning. She was amazing. Like she has a new fan, that's for sure.

Q. What part of Angel's game were you admiring the most?

JOE PAVELSKI: You know what, I think I probably have to say the vibe right away on the putting green. Came over and introduced herself, her caddie, her fans, friends that were with us. Right away it was a great conversation and vibe that was put off.

Coming into the tournament you never know how it's going to go your first time, especially a little bit of winter golf, living in Wisconsin. You know, maybe not quite as many reps as you would like.

To get out there and have that kind of just ease to it right

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away, it was great. We all had three right down the middle of the fairway and went on our way. Just a lot of fun. I mean, steady. Saw she had an iron in the fairway was going right at the flagstick in a good spot. Just so steady and solid all day.

Q. You had a handful of holes where you had a couple good ups and downs in the round. Can you talk about what might stick out about your game today?

JOE PAVELSKI: Yeah, you talk about the first hole. You hit a good tee shot, have a good yardage in there, and I think we just missed the wind a little bit in the yardage and come up short on 1; 2 you kind of try to get it down there on the par-5 and block yourself out with some trees after not-so-great shot.

Hit a couple chip shots. Hit them up there to a foot, two feet, tap-in. Kind of puts yourself at ease. I am glad they we're five- six-footers right away.

Then on 3 you find yourself in the fairway, pick a good number, hit a good one to about ten, twelve feet under the flag and rolled that one in. Just got rolling from there. Hit it very solid. There was probably three- to five-hole stretch where the irons weren't quite there and you're kind of trying to slow it back down, find the tempo.

So it was good to kind of find it after that and finish a little bit stronger.

Q. You mentioned the vibes just a second ago. This is a pretty unique tournament. Besides the golf, what are you looking forward though this weekend?

JOE PAVELSKI: Just being around everybody. We had a first good night with Chicago playing. Excited for the next few shows that are going to be here. Be around everyone that's here and the energy that a tournament like this puts off.

Yeah, I think as a player, someone that loves golf the way I do, it's fun to be able to be in this atmosphere, compete on the course, and then just have a great time after meeting everyone.



Just really enjoying it.

Q. How much did you play golf when you were playing? How good were you and how much have you improved since you retired?

JOE PAVELSKI: I think number one, hockey in the offseason with golf, going back to Wisconsin, the seasons line up. After the season you get back, take a little bit of a break, get on the course, start swinging it. You know, you would be able to train and then go to the course.

Offseason the game would get all right; during the season take a little dip and you get out there when you can, when the schedule allowed you to.

It was always something. It was a nice release as far as getting outside the rink. Usually just a beautiful course and being able to play was important.

But right now, home base is in Wisconsin and it's been cold, there has been snow, there is ice on the lake.

Get a few reps in the sim and get out here. Got out here on Monday and try to get as many reps and feels as you could. Really happy with the way I hit the ball today and went from there.

Q. There is some confusion on the scoreboard. Looks like you might be the leader. How does one that do that coming here for the first time?

JOE PAVELSKI: Oh, man. If that's the case, great. I realize it's a four-day event, so try to slow it down and hit a few good drives. To be honest, drove the ball really well today. There was a couple par-3 tee shots you would like back. The driver was really solid today and just kind of put yourself in some good spots with decent numbers going in.

Few putts went in and few you might want to have back. That's part of getting back into the rhythm.

Q. Joe, how many years have you been playing golf? When you do play, are there any other hockey players you normally play with?

JOE PAVELSKI: Yeah, probably started when I was nine, ten years old. Dad just got us into some lessons. He didn't really play but wanted to give us the opportunity. Just fell in love with the game. Played all summer long at the country club. First job was in the bag room. Free membership, all these things. Played high school golf.

Then as you play hockey you get the summers and you get

to play enough to get your game at a good spot and keep it there.

What was the second part of the question?

Q. Who would be your foursome.

JOE PAVELSKI: The A group. Adam Burke, Tom Gilbert, Luke Stauffacher, guys we -- played college hockey with two of them and played against the other one. Actually Luke Stauffacher, we coach with now, the boys team. Back in Madison we have a good group of guys. Nick Schmaltz is with Utah now. We play with him.

So we got a good group. Competitive. It's fun. A lot of banter. A little bit of money gets exchanged and have a good time.

Q. So you're admitting there is some gambling involved?

JOE PAVELSKI: Oh, yeah. 100%. Like to think I win; everybody has their own opinion.

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