

Hilton Grand Vacations Tournament of Champions

Sunday, February 2, 2025

Orlando, Florida, USA

Lake Nona Golf & Country Club

Joe Pavelski

Press Conference

THE MODERATOR: Welcome in Hilton Grand Vacations Tournament of Champions celebrity division winner, Joe Pavelski to the media center. First time ever playing in this event. Set the standard high.

JOE PAVELSKI: Yep.

Q. Walk us through the round and some of the thoughts you were having.

JOE PAVELSKI: Oh, man, I guess right from the start kind of drop kicked a 3-wood out there and kind of scraped around the first hole. Didn't feel comfortable early on, that's for sure.

Hit a couple decent shots as we went, but nothing came -- felt easy early on, and then kind of got going a little bit. Started making a few good swings. Saw one go in.

And to be honest, there were a few up and downs throughout the round that just allowed me to gain confidence and see a few putts go.

I mean, it calmed me down definitely for sure. It was an interesting start feel-wise. I had all the feels going. You know you have the lead. You know if you don't stay focused and just put one foot in front of the other it's going to get tight.

So early on it was kind of try to get into a rhythm. Took a little bit longer than I would've liked. Found the rhythm and kept going and was able to have a really solid front nine there and led into the back.

I think I was a little pissed off on 14. Making a bogey there from 85 yards, it was just I've been hitting it good coming off 13 there. Nice birdie on the par-3. Step up on 15 and hit a good drive and make a huge eagle. That calmed everything down.

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calculations, not seeing scoreboards all the time, who is doing what. That kind of put me at ease there a little bit, and then kind of questioned myself coming down the stretch there.

Q. Did you find yourself trying to seek out leaderboards throughout the round?

JOE PAVELSKI: Early on, no, actually. It was very nice. Early on, no. Knew what I was doing, what I had to do. Middle of the round when I found my rhythm there weren't a lot around and I really didn't care because I was playing good, so didn't matter.

It was like we're watching -- everyone is hitting shots down the fairway and it's your turn and you're like, all right, just got to do it again. Hit another one. Don't worry about any kind of result right now. Focus on this shot.

I found myself just plotting along nicely. If I did get into trouble I found a nice up and down and made a couple birdies and pushed it a little bit farther ahead. Kind of gave me confidence just to not really chase anything.

Q. What was the feeling like walking to 18 down the fairway basically knowing that you have won the tournament?

JOE PAVELSKI: Yeah, I mean, if you tell me on hole 1 I'm going to experience that, it was awesome. I had all the feels this morning. Like obviously I played hockey for 18 years professionally. You step up on this first tee with a lead on Sunday, you have all the -- you have more feels than -- I had more feels today than in a playoff game.

Like it was easy to laces the skates up and go play and do your thing. You had a group behind you. Here you're going to be exposed if you don't want to get it done. Like I will be exposed if I don't want to commit to shots and try to do the right thing.

Coming down 18 it was nice. We were doing math, kind of looking. Seemed good. You're hoping you get it right at the end of the day. It was a good feeling that's for sure.

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Q. Where do you keep your trophies from hockey and where will this one go?

JOE PAVELSKI: Don't have enough trophies from hockey. Just a couple when I was younger. Didn't win the big one, which we all wanted. This one is going to go -- we just built a new house we moved into about five months ago.

We have a sim room in there. Being from Madison, Wisconsin right now, home base there, you have the sim, there is ice on the lake, so not a lot of golf.

The sim isn't finished yet so I was hitting balls into an empty screen just to try to get a few reps in before I got here. Got here Monday, played Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday. Was trying not to overdo it but was trying to get every feel I could going into it.

So there will be a spot down in that sim room for this I think.

Q. How long had it been since you played a real round on grass before you came out here?

JOE PAVELSKI: I don't know the dates exactly, but probably five weeks. We went to the Pro Rivals thing they out on with the four sports, and we had that kind of Ryder Cup format.

Leading up to that I hadn't played much for a month or two. Got down there, spent six days of just golfing and was the same thing, getting as many reps as you can and go play some competitive rounds.

Got back and tried to hit a few chips in the sim and roll some putts and try to hold onto the feels. When I did show up on Monday it was -- I was standing on the range over the first few shots the club felt familiar. Didn't always go there, but felt good.

Q. Yeah.

JOE PAVELSKI: I didn't think it would feel this good to be honest because like I just looked up and I'm watching these ladies hit their shots. Played with Angel early on on Thursday. She set the kind of mood. It was just going to be fun, a lot of energy.

Every time I kind of grabbed the club I had confidence, so I was -- it was kind of a calming feeling that way. But overall, this game just -- sometimes you don't like it. It just doesn't make you feel great. Even when you're hitting it good and everyone things you're good, you don't always feel great about it.

Q. Had you won a golf tournament before, member guest, anything?

JOE PAVELSKI: I've been to some shootouts I guess. Definitely taken money off my buddies. No problems there. The last major, or not major golf tournament, would be the Channel 7, and it was a Central Wisconsin tournament right out of high school. My dad was on the bag.

That was probably the last biggest one. I haven't won many golf tournaments. Don't get to play in a lot of them. Been close at American Sentry a little bit. Had my good buddy Jason Higgins on the bag today. First time carrying for me this week.

To be honest he kept it loose. Gave more good numbers than bad ones and better reads than not. Really didn't say anything along the way besides, you know, let's just keep moving forward. It was light. It was fun.

Was in a good spot most of the time.

Q. How different is it to try to work the nerves out on the first couple holes in golf as compared to trying to work the nerves out first couple shifts of a Stanley Cup playoff game?

JOE PAVELSKI: If you don't feel good the first shift or two of the playoffs you can just change, sit back on the bench, or try to run into a guy or hopefully your buddy made a nice play over to you. You just think skate, really simple.

First couple holes it's either you have it or you don't. If you don't you know it's going to be a long day. It's like, all right, let's take a deep breath and get back to the fundamentals, try to make some good swings and figure it out, because you're here for the long haul.

It's going to go one of two ways. Very happy with how it went today.

Q. Who all from your teammates that are watching on TV, still playing, have you heard from any of them this week?

JOE PAVELSKI: Yeah, the phone was blowing up. Was looking at it. Bunch of Wisconsin buddies blowing it up earlier. Bunch of Dallas buddies. They have a little golf pool back there and just something else to gamble on. Kind of slid into that group for a little bit.

Then obviously back home, family. My wife Sarah, Nate, my son, they're back home holding the fort down so I can come out here and enjoy myself for a week of golf and do something I love it do, which is competing.

The guys out there, knowing they're coming and knowing they're trying to chase you down and to go play your game and do your thing, it was good. But they mean everything to me back home.

To be honest I've been close at times in Tahoe. I've been wanting to get over the hump. Didn't know if, when it was going to come. I believed it would come. But you don't.

When you finally get it you never now how much it means to you. Being able to compete and winning is at this magnitude means so much. There is a ton of emotions going and obviously Sara and Nate have meant everything to me throughout my career.

Not that I'm a golfer, but today, this week I felt like a golfer. It meant the world to me.

Q. Out of curiosity, too, first hockey champion in this event. Is there a significance to being able to break the tennis-baseball stronghold on it?

JOE PAVELSKI: Yeah, not going to lie, being at the Pro Rivals thing, leaving there we knew we were coming here. The guys were in the room were like, we have to go get a trophy here. They were cheering me. Dan Quinn, like ultimate competitor, he's pressing on me to get something like this done.

JR, he was pushing today. He played great all week. He was pressing today to the point where it felt at times -- and I'm a distance away so I don't fully know what's going on -- felt like if I wasn't going to win he was going to make a run at it.

We wanted one of those trophies for the hockey side of it. Just tremendous. You feel all that from the guys. It's a tightknit group. The culture is hockey is unbelievable. Like some of the best people you'll have meet, and hopefully get a few more of them out here.

This tournament is just unbelievable. And the fans were tremendous. HGV, the production was amazing, playing with the ladies. And the volunteers, first class, everything they do for this event and what they do for us to allow us to be like this is great.

Q. Can I just ask you to tell the story of how you lost your teeth.

JOE PAVELSKI: I think 2019 first game of the playoffs against Vegas Knights. I am standing in front of the net. Brent Burns shoots one. I like being in front of the net. I can't see anything. I'm kind of glancing over and all of a

sudden a puck glanced off a glove, right in the mouth, in the net, goal went, teeth are in the hand now.

Q. Oh, wow.

A LIM KIM: Kind of go get things fixed up and come back.

We're getting very close to having them fixed. I've drug my feet more than anyone on this. I think part of me likes it; part of me is ready for them to be fixed. But we're going to have to sit up here hopefully another time at some point, so I guess they might have to be fixed here soon.

Q. Was that 2019?

JOE PAVELSKI: I think 2019. So we got all the work done. Should be an easy process. Just one that I don't want to take care of right now.

Q. Did you keep playing in the game?

JOE PAVELSKI: I came back in the second, yeah.

Q. Just curious, Brian Goodwin, one of your buddies, lives at Lake Norman and he said he can beat you in golf. Do you have any comments on that?

JOE PAVELSKI: I've heard of Brian. I've played with Brian in Wisconsin and we will not back that statement. I believe he was an honest man so I'm guessing somebody put you up to that because that's not an honest statement whatsoever.

But he's a great human. You guys have a lot of fun together and I know he had my back, especially yesterday when our names were on the sheet in the betting.

Q. Congratulations.

JOE PAVELSKI: Thank you.

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