

Travelers Championship

Wednesday, June 23, 2021

TPC River Highlands
Cromwell, Connecticut, USA

Austin Eckroat

Press Conference



TRAVELERS
CHAMPIONSHIP

DOUG MILNE: Austin Eckroat, thanks for joining us for a few minutes. We won't take much of your time. Just want to catch up for a few minutes before the start of the 2021 Travelers Championship.

Coming out of PGA TOUR University, just if we could take you back to that whole experience, how special, unique, and obviously beneficial that was for you in your pursuit of a career on the PGA TOUR.

AUSTIN ECKROAT: Yeah, that was pretty exciting. We kind of heard about it my junior year, the opportunities that you would have with it. It's just an honor. Just incredible how they're really trying to incorporate college golf into having a runway into the professional ranks. It's kind of unheard of, but very happy that I was a part of it.

DOUG MILNE: Making your fourth PGA TOUR start here this week. Some comments on being here. Have you had a chance to get out and see the course and just your thoughts on being here this week.

AUSTIN ECKROAT: Yeah, I got to play nine holes yesterday in the rain, but today I went out before the pro-am at 6:10 and played the front nine. It's just an awesome track. That finishing stretch on the back nine is incredible.

I mean, I've watched it on TV multiple times and just didn't do it justice. This place is really incredible. It's got a great feel all around it. I'm just really excited.

I've had an opportunity to play in a few professional events, PGA TOUR events, but this will be the first one as a pro, so it feels a little bit different.

DOUG MILNE: That was going to be my next. You are making your pro debut here. Is it just kind of the technicality of you being a pro or is it just business as usual as you're trying to carry on?

AUSTIN ECKROAT: Yeah, I think over the last two weeks playing the Korn Ferry Tour, playing a few events, I've had

a nice start in the professional golf. Kind of gotten that part over with, and now it's back to golf. It's the same game I've always played. A couple more things on it, but for the most part it's the same game.

DOUG MILNE: I know you had a good week at Mayakoba last year. Take us back through that and kind of what connected as far as the best parts of your game and how you see those kind of carrying over and potentially into this week.

AUSTIN ECKROAT: Yeah, when I think back to Mayakoba it kind of excites me. The fact that I left my putter in the U.S. basically, I mean, I putted horribly. Hit the golf club probably the best I ever had and only lost like six strokes.

Exciting to think that if I would've had a putter that week I really would've had a chance. That's a huge confidence boost coming into this week. It's a great field. I feel like I do have a chance to compete here.

Q. If you could give us a little bit of your background. Obviously OSU standout, part of the victorious Walker Cup team. Take us back to those experiences a little bit, get a resume of sorts as to when you started playing and sort of taking it seriously and so forth.

AUSTIN ECKROAT: Yeah, so I started playing basically as soon as I could walk. My dad was really into the game so I was watching him hit balls when I was in a stroller. As soon as I could swing, I started playing.

Played my first tournament when I was 8, then kind of played in just local stuff for a while. Moved up to the AJGA as a junior player, start traveling nationally, then chose to go to Oklahoma State and played there. We won the national championship in 2019, lost in the semifinals both -- or 2018. Lost in the semifinals in 2019 and '21. If there is a couple highlights that have of amateur golf, cutting it off before professional golf starts, would probably be the Junior Invitational at Sage Valley. That's really where I felt like my golf career kind of -- where I realized I think I'm pretty good. I can do this for quite sometime.

I think that was like the moment where I realized I am



pretty good.

Q. Who are some of the guys that you looked up to out here on TOUR? I know you're buddies with Matthew Wolff. Even before that who were some of the guys you looked up to and emulated out here on tour?

AUSTIN ECKROAT: Growing up I was always a huge Tiger Woods fan. You know, he was kind of going on a tremendous run when I was really, really young. He was the guy when I first started playing.

Rory McIlroy was another guy I looked up to. More recently Jordan Spieth. And then I played a practice round yesterday with Paul Casey, and I think I might be his new biggest fan. He was the nicest guy I ever met in my entire life.

So I think as a guy in the future being role models it'll continue to be those guys I mentioned before, but then also Paul Casey.

Q. What's your advice to other junior golfers who would like to emulate you, model themselves after you, and go on to become a top college player?

AUSTIN ECKROAT: Yeah, I think something I did pretty well as a kid is I played a lot of the sports. I think that's kind of important. You understand competition, you understand all sorts of things.

Yeah, so I played everything growing up. I think that's very important. I think just learning to play the game, not so much become a range rat. I'm not that way at all. I play -- I'll go warmup for the most part until I really feel like I need to work on something, then I will hit range balls.

For the most part I just go play, put the ball in the hole, learn the scores as well as I can. You're not always going to have your best game. Even when you're playing professionally there will be days you're off, and you need to learn to get the ball in the hole when you're off.

I think those are things that are really important. Play as much golf as you can. Don't get so sucked in on the swing. I think that's really important.

Q. I was just curious if you could share that you got the news that you would get into the field this week with the sponsor's exemption?

AUSTIN ECKROAT: Yeah, I think that would have been a couple weeks ago. I got a text actually -- the first was from Rickie Fowler telling me I was playing Rocket Mortgage. I was like, Oh, sweet. That's nice.

About 20 minutes later I got a phone call saying I was playing in the Travelers. It was just one of the things where the summer, I knew I had the Korn Ferry Tour, but you don't really know exactly what starts you're going to get.

It's hard. So it was just -- I mean, I was super excited just to get the opportunity. It's not very frequent that you get to play against the best players in the world. Just super happy about it.

I was probably more happy about it then. I was super pumped.

DOUG MILNE: Okay. That is all we've got for you. Appreciate your time. Have a great week, and look forward to catching up to you again soon.

AUSTIN ECKROAT: Thank you.

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