

Chubb Classic presented by SERVPRO

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Naples, Florida, USA

Tiburón Golf Club

Padraig Harrington

Press Conference

THE MODERATOR: All right, Padraig, thank you for joining us here at the Chubb Classic. You are making your 2024 PGA Tour Champions debut. How does it feel to be here this week?

PADRAIG HARRINGTON: Yeah, it's always nice to get back out. Not 100% sure about my game at the moment. I've had pneumonia during the winter, so I'm struggling a little bit still with the recovery and the energy. It's nice to be in the sunshine.

Yeah, kind of a mixed bag. I'm really not sure. I'm delighted to play the tournament with no (indiscernible) kind of helps.

I suppose that's one of the nice thing about the Champions Tour. If you're playing a regular event I would be feeling under a lot of pressure and stress. I know I'm here for three days, and hopefully I can work my way into some nice form during those three days.

Q. When you've done this as long as you have and you're starting a new season, where do you find the fire?

PADRAIG HARRINGTON: Yeah, well, you know, I think most players of my year lasted about 15 years before they burned out. Might have played for about 20, but last five years, and certainly I would've hit a wall. You know, around 216, that would've been about 20 years, and I certainly was burned out.

I think the Champions Tour has really helped me. When you come back out here you are competing to win. You're up there in contention. The idea the winning piques your interest and you're into it.

I think if I was out there struggling to make putts I think I would quickly lose interest. The Champions Tour really does do the job its meant to do. It gives you a second lease on life.



And during the winter, as I said, I had pneumonia and I've been struggling. I still worked on my technique and swing, and you're coming back out with a few things you've changed and a lot of hope. You're always coming back out thinking you found the secret.

I remember watching an interview with Arnold Palmer, Champions Tour event. I would say he was close to 70 at the time. Came in and shot a low one, had beaten his age. He was like absolutely blushing with excitement in the interview saying he had found the secret.

Anybody that plays the game long enough, we all dream of finding the secret. We take the reality that we know that ain't ever happening. You always think, maybe I'll wake up tomorrow and I have that one key thought that I believe in and trust and it'll never go wrong.

Q. Do you still plan to attend some European Tour events as well?

PADRAIG HARRINGTON: Yeah, I played two in the Middle East. I thought I was ready but I wasn't. The pneumonia was worse than I thought. Again, I've come out here and I started Monday here feeling pretty good and gone downhill every day energy-wise.

So, yeah, the energy just isn't there. I played two in the Middle East, here for one, and then play two on the PGA TOUR, and probably another Champions Tour, another couple of PGA TOUR events.

So my Champions Tour really doesn't start going until for me it's really starting in May. You know, I like those Champions Tour events into the summer, majors and that. I see the Champions Tour much more of that. Sort of early season I still have to hold down competing with the old guys and then want to try and get my game in that sort of shape, and maybe when it gets to middle or later of the season reality kicks in and I come back to the Champions Tour.

Q. Your regular tour starts here. Playing Palm Beach?



PADRAIG HARRINGTON: Play next week in Mexico and then play West Palm Beach, Houston, and then hopefully one more. I'm waiting on an invite.

Q. Steve Stricker and Steve Alker set a nice standard out here the past year or so, and they come from totally different stories. One guy who really worked his way to get out here, Alker, and Stricker you expect to see him, like yourself. Do you like the variety of stories you get out here?

PADRAIG HARRINGTON: Yeah, Steve Alker is no doubt an outlier. Most people when they come to the Champions Tour they go back to who they were in the main tour. Pretty much everybody can't get away from who they are. They just end up being that same personality.

I've said this to a few people. They even become an exaggerated version of the personality they were on the PGA TOUR. But Steve obviously was a very good player -- was a good player when he played in the main tour, but didn't have the firepower.

He is probably physically the same exact player he was 20 years ago. Yeah, he's done incredibly well. We get that story every couple of years, don't we? And the great thing for Steve is he hasn't done it one year, he's now into his third year. That's very impressive that he kept going with it.

He's in the same shape at 32 as he is now at 52, 53 maybe. That really helps. He's definitely found a comfort zone out here and is very comfortable in the environment.

You know, he's a tough man to beat. There is probably six or seven guys who are up at the top, and then maybe another 12 guys that really have a good week that can get into that bunch as well.

There is a nice bit of competition, but it's nowhere near as deep as it would be on the PGA TOUR. You're not getting -- on the PGA TOUR certainly the hunger trying to win the tournament is much deeper than it was back in my day.

Out here we're kind of back to old school. You get down a bit further, you know, it's not as many opportunities. You know, it's been pretty consistent at the top, the wins are the same half a dozen guys.

Q. Just a fun one to close us out. In your lifetime, how many holes-in-one do you you have?

PADRAIG HARRINGTON: 11.

Q. 11?

PADRAIG HARRINGTON: Only ever received a handshake.

Q. Yeah? That's all you ever got?

PADRAIG HARRINGTON: I remember I had a hole-in-one in one of Europe's biggest events on the 15th hole. I hit over a car. They were the main sponsor. And beyond that, this is like back in the '90s. I'm quite excited. I go in afterwards, you know, is there a car for a hole-in-one. I actually hit over the car.

And to be told that the title sponsor said they don't go in for that sort of crass commercialism. The following year on the same hole, a player from that country's -- the car company's country -- had a hole-in-one and he got a car. So it went from crass commercialism when it was their own nationality, but not the year I won.

It's kind of fun to home-in-one in competition. I would be aware of it, like especially I would be aware of it sometimes if you're out of the tournament. Coming down the stretch and the car will be there and you're taking it on. You never play safe.

So it's a nice -- I think it's a bit of excitement. You're always happy if you hear a player wins a car or a big prize.

I know in my case there was an Irish lad, Peter Lawrie, played on the TOUR, and pretty much his last week he was going to give up on the Asian Tour. He right at the end. He won a car. It was a substantial 100,000 plus and gave him a couple more years, and ended up playing 12 more years on the TOUR.

It can be a big deal. I will say I did have a hole-in-one in my last-ever event as an amateur, which was the all Ireland handicap competition, and we won by half a shot. I had a hole-in-one that day. It was probably the biggest tournament and the most pressure I was ever under in my whole entire life. Had finished third, second. This year was my last year. We finished first. It was the best thing.

Q. Have you given a lot of thought toward Pinehurst? What do you want to say, message?

PADRAIG HARRINGTON: I'm starting to get into it. Yeah, I'm starting to think about what I want to say. Yeah, getting in my head where I'm going to go with it, what sort of angle. I think you're probably hitting the nail on the head. It's probably a nice -- just some nice stories and celebrating, just be very thankful for that, what golf has given to me over the years.

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