

Sanderson Farms Championship

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Jackson, Mississippi, USA

Country Club of Jackson

Peter Malnati

Press Conference

THE MODERATOR: We would like to welcome Peter Malnati to the virtual interview room here at the Sanderson Farms Championship, the 2015 champion. Welcome back.

PETER MALNATI: Hey, it's great to be here, thank you.

THE MODERATOR: Obviously a place where you have found a lot of success, your first PGA TOUR win and last year with a runner-up finish. Just walking around any specific memories that were kind of coming and flooding to your brain?

PETER MALNATI: Well, when I played here for the very first time in 2015 I actually ended up just kind of by random, friend of a friend connection, I stayed with a family on the course and they have become my family too to my wife and I, now our little boy. So we got here late last night and got to settle in and see them again. So it's just feels like we're among family when we are here.

I played the golf course this morning and that's a really similar feeling of just comfort like a place that I obviously had success and a place where I've done really well and it's just a super fun golf course anyway, but to be out there certainly is special to me.

THE MODERATOR: What specifics about this golf course fits your game? Are there any certain holes that are kind of your favorite?

PETER MALNATI: Yeah, I don't know, like it is obviously this is like a comfort zone for me in terms of the type of grass, I grew up in east Tennessee and we have similar Bermuda fairways, Bermuda rough. The greens here are actually the -- I would say we are lucky on TOUR, we play some of the best golf courses in the most pristine condition all the time, but the greens here are the best greens in the whole world, they're just impeccable. They are flawless and they roll, they're really fast and I think that's something that has always benefited me. I'm a really good putter, I feel like, and if I get some putts going in early on these



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greens I just feel really confident and it's just a really comfortable feeling to be on these greens.

THE MODERATOR: Your second start to the year, coming off a top-25 last week at Napa. How is your game feeling?

PETER MALNATI: Yeah, it's feeling pretty good actually. It's funny, there's not really much time to sort of reset between the end of one season and the start of another. We get our off-season more around the Thanksgiving and Christmas holidays as you know. So I came off several months of sort of disappointing play at the end of last season and then over the short break that I did get just kind of had a little reset and went out and played a really solid tournament last week and I feel like I'm able to hopefully carry that into this year. My game feels actually really, really good, the best it's felt in months, so that's really exciting.

THE MODERATOR: You mentioned it, but coming off one of your best finishes from the FedExCup standings at number 86. Can you speak to the significance of starting off early and strong kind of like you did last season with some back-to-back top-5 finishes.

PETER MALNATI: Yeah, no, so when you do that, like I did last year, it does two things for you. Obviously it frees you up a little bit so you don't feel like, as the season goes on, you don't kind of feel the pressure mounting to -- I've always played, I'm fortunate to say, this is my eighth year on the PGA TOUR, but every year that I played I pretty much start the year with my baseline goal of being, well, let's make sure I get to play on the PGA TOUR next year. And then obviously I have loftier goals on top of that.

So when you have a couple of top finishes like I did last year to start the year really early then it checks off that goal and allows you to kind of focus on bigger things and have a bit of like just security in that.

But the other thing it does which is exciting is it opens up the events to which you have access. So last year I got to play in the PGA Championship, which was really cool. I got to play in both of the -- well there's more than two -- but I got to play in the invitational events that are hosted by the

late Mr. Palmer and Mr. Nicklaus. And so getting off to that kind of good start opens the door to all those events as well, which is just, that's something that as a TOUR player I dreamed of just being on the PGA TOUR, but you also dream of getting to play in those kind of events where, you think of the legacy of Mr. Palmer, and then obviously still getting to shake Mr. Nicklaus's hand at the Memorial every year. So something like that is really cool.

So that's obviously to get off to a good start like that again last year was like a dream start to a season, but this year I really feel capable of stringing together some finishes like that again so that will certainly be what I'm after.

THE MODERATOR: Recently named an ambassador for Play Yellow. Can you talk about your and your wife Alicia's involvement with the Children's of Mississippi and Children's Miracle Networks Hospital?

PETER MALNATI: Yeah, absolutely. Gosh, it's so cool, it all goes back actually for me to just before I technically earned my first PGA TOUR card back in 2013 I was playing the Nationwide's Children's Hospital Championship in Columbus, Ohio. And on, I don't know if it was Tuesday or Wednesday of that week, but I got sort of thrown into, Can you do a junior clinic with some patient ambassadors from the children's hospital? And I'm like Absolutely, that would be fun. So I'm out there and when I do a junior clinic I only have two goals -- I was talking about this with Robert Streb thing morning -- goal No. 1, no one hits each other with a golf club or golf ball. And goal No. 2 they have a little bit of fun. Like if I can teach them anything that's a huge bonus but my two goals are no one gets hurts and everyone has fun.

So I'm doing this junior clinic with these patients from Nationwide Children's who have been through just horrifying stories at a really young age. And I was able to connect with the parents of one of the young girls who was there at that clinic and got to know them and their story and hear how the Nationwide Children's Hospital in Columbus, Ohio had really honestly saved their daughter's life. And just the incredible impact that that had on their family.

To know that the golf tournament was supporting that hospital was really cool for me, it was like an eye-opening moment like, Gosh, we really are, we're doing some good. And not just playing golf for entertainment, like we're actually doing some good. So that was my really my first epiphany of that, of the good that the PGA TOUR and our events are doing in the communities where we play.

So when I won the tournament here in Jackson in 2015, I came back in the next year before, the couple weeks before the tournament to do like a media day for the event.

And we got to go visit the hospital, Children's of Mississippi the Batson Children's Hospital here. And my wife had actually, even before this, she had been involved with a couple of patients from the hospital, helping them paint the tee markers that we use here at the tournament. So she had gotten to see patients here and interact with them even before I did.

But since then we went to the hospital, I think for a couple years in a row we went and visited some of the patients and just saw how thankful they are for this tournament, how much this tournament really does give back to this community. And so, gosh, to be a part of something that is really making a meaningful impact through this game of golf that I love, gosh, it just means so much and it gives such depth to what we do out here every week. So when I was approached about being an ambassador for Play Yellow and the Children's Miracle Network Hospitals it was an absolutely no-brainer for me.

THE MODERATOR: You just spoke on what it means to you, do you have any specific goals as an ambassador?

PETER MALNATI: Honestly, this is -- right now I don't have many goals. I obviously want to do the maximum most good that I can do and bring awareness to what Play Yellow is doing for all of the Children's Miracle Network Hospitals not just -- two that now have become close to my heart in addition to -- my hometown is east Tennessee, that's like where I'm from, but Columbus, Ohio is special because the little girl that I mentioned who I connected with her parents like that family, they have become our best friends, we see them at least a couple times a year, we stay with them when we go to Columbus for anything. So Nationwide Children's in Columbus, Ohio is special. This hospital here, the Children's of Mississippi is really special to us.

In terms of specific goals, this is a relationship and a partnership that I really hope to grow over the years, I have no idea even what -- I will say this, I think the sky's the limit, which is a good thing, but I don't have anything specific to say right now.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you. We'll take questions.

Q. Obviously we asked you about your past success here on the course and stuff, but I just wanted to ask you how does it feel to have spectators back around and about at the course and stuff?

PETER MALNATI: Yeah, I mean, that's, when I was a kid, I dreamed of playing on the PGA TOUR and it wasn't, I didn't dream of having that putt on the last hole with absolutely no one around. I dreamed of the roaring crowds



and all that. So it is fun and it's cool the energy that a PGA TOUR event has. And there was certainly some of that that was lacking when we were in that environment where we couldn't have fans and spectators out. So it's cool, it's great to have that energy back.

Q. From the last time we saw you last year, obviously you had the wife and the baby there, but you took a little hiatus from social media for a few months. How is the baby, how is the wife, how is the family doing?

PETER MALNATI: They're doing great. It's amazing. Thank you for asking that. Yeah, my hiatus from social media has continued now for since March of 2019 -- 2020, March of 2020. So I feel happier and healthier for just me personally that way.

But my little man is going to be two next month and it's just amazing how fast it goes and, but he's grown, he's healthy, he's energetic, he wears us out every day, but we smile a lot and he makes us laugh every day and it's just the best. So we're doing really great.

Q. How is it with the family in Jackson that you guys are close with to see -- like he was a baby last year crawling on the floor and now he's almost two, I'm assuming he's walking and everything. How is it for that family?

PETER MALNATI: Yeah, he's going to wear them out too, which is great. But we're going to have so much fun. Yeah, they, we call them, so we call them Auntie Robin and Uncle Derr (phonetic) and they just, they embrace us with such a big, such a warm welcome. And they saw him last night and they shared with us -- like we get to watch him grow up every day and we still can't believe how big he is and how mature he is and how much he's doing. So they hadn't seen him in a year and so for them it was cool to watch them ooh and ahh last night, which was really fun.

THE MODERATOR: As always we appreciate you taking the time to talk with us and good luck this week.

PETER MALNATI: Thank you.

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