

Sony Open in Hawaii

Tuesday, January 10, 2023

Honolulu, Hawaii, USA

Waialae Country Club

Brent Grant

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: We are joined by Brent Grant here at Sony Open in Hawaii. Thanks for joining us. This is your fourth appearances at this event.

Can you just open with your thoughts on being back here this week?

BRENT GRANT: Obviously it's a good thing and I'm very thankful to just be here. Back home is always a good thing. But I don't think there is a better place to start the season. I think pretty much everybody feels that way. Even though it's obviously a little bit more expensive than the normal event, further than the normal event, it doesn't get any better than looking at the Pacific Ocean and being right there as you're hitting balls, and all the people are so happy to have us here and we're so happy to be here.

Yeah, just thankful. Really looking forward to the opportunity.

THE MODERATOR: You mentioned it was the start of your 2023 calendar year here in week. This is your eighth start of the 2022-23 season. Lasts time we saw you was at RSM Classic in November. How do you feel about your game entering this week?

BRENT GRANT: We worked really, really hard, although it seemed like it was about a couple weeks off-season and I think it was about month and a half. But we rested a little bit and got the body exactly where it needs to be, and then really turned it on the last couple weeks.

And the game, while it's not easy, it feels effortless, and so we're going to go out here and definitely try to get it done.

THE MODERATOR: Questions.

Q. What were the other four? Were they all exemptions or some qualifying?

BRENT GRANT: So last year I got pulled off the Monday qualifier. Paul Ogawa came and got me and they gave me a sponsor invite last minute. Obviously with what was

going on overseas and around here with COVID the field actually dropped lower than anybody really expected.

Q. (Indiscernible.)

BRENT GRANT: Yeah, and then, yeah, I got pulled off the course I think on the 5th hole and got a surprise.

The one before that was a Monday qualifier, and then the Governor's Cup exemption was my first one in 2017.

Q. What's it like to play a home game like this and where do you stay? What is the extent of your presence here still, or are you just based in Florida?

BRENT GRANT: So I live in Arizona. I moved out of the Islands in early, mid-2018. I've been coming back once a year since then for this event.

Yeah, so we call it Hunai (phonetic) family, so it's not blood related, but it's family, family that I've been very, very fortunate it be a part of. Obviously I graduated high school here, so I've got plenty of friends and family that are still here.

Yeah, I'm actually staying at the Kahala for the first time ever, which is the not the worst thing in the world. I had never even stepped foot in the hotel before Sunday night. It's a special treat, and, again, very thankful.

Q. How far away drive is your high school from here? And when you were going to high school, how do you view the Kahala? Did you view that as that's the type of place where rock stars are?

BRENT GRANT: Absolutely. Even Waialae Country Club when I first started playing golf was the peak of Hawaii golf. You know, obviously having a PGA TOUR event here helps that.

And then, yeah, you can basically just jump on the H1 and go down, get off on the Nimitz Highway exit there, and take a right, head up to Salt Lake and you're right there at Marlo High School. Could be about a 20, 25 minute drive depending on traffic. It could be 45 minutes, an hour, who



knows? Right now about 25 minute drive.

Q. This wasn't your home course?

BRENT GRANT: No, I wasn't. I grew up at the Navy-Marine Golf Course right across from the airport. My dad was in the Navy for 30 years, and I got dropped off at 7:00 the morning and picked up at 7:00 at night.

Q. When was your first time playing here?

BRENT GRANT: First time I played here was I think a little U.S. Open qualifier 2014 or '15. It was -- it's still a very, very exclusive country club.

Q. No member hosted you?

BRENT GRANT: Not before that, no. I didn't know any, so for me, not being in the junior golf scene and not really being a part of the mainstream Hawaii golf thing until many years after high school, I just never came out here.

When I qualified through this Governor's Cup tournament, EJ McNaughton and a bunch of other members decided they wanted to get together and host me a bunch. It was November to January, and that was two of the best months of golf I think I've ever had.

I got to spend every day here and have meals here and learn, not just about golf, but just how to be a grown person. I was starting to become an adult at that time.

Q. After the Sony Open they pretty much kicked you back to the curb?

BRENT GRANT: Yeah. Funny enough, every time I've ever made a phone call here, they've been so welcoming. This week I asked, hey, can I come in Sunday afternoon and hit some putts, even though the course was close, and they said, yeah, no problem.

Everybody here is still the same crew and I'm really thankful to have it as home away from home. It's kind of cool.

Q. You talked about the fact that before you had to be the top 125 to keep your card. That's going to change. How difficult is that from your standpoint?

BRENT GRANT: Well, I mean, obviously when you talk about just the number being less is an obvious statistic. But I would say the number one thing is the optics of it make it seem a little bit more difficult from rookie standpoint, because you're really starting at what I would consider the C tour.

There are a few guys that obviously will play really, really well. I plan on being one of them and getting into the elevated events this year and certainly being inside the Top 70.

But my first reaction to it was that it seemed that the top guys really wanted to make sure that they stayed there. The decision to make that top 70 thing was -- I don't think it was passed through everybody, but I could be wrong.

Again, it's definitely more -- it's the hardest thing to do now than it ever has been to keep your card. For those Top 70 guys to be guaranteed into the elevated events next year, when outside -- I mean, you could miss it by one spot and you would be outside looking in.

So it makes it more difficult. Obviously this tour is all about making your bones and paying dues, and I'm perfectly willing to be on the C tour for a year if that means I'm in the elevated events next year without a care.

Q. If you look across the landscape of tours, you see a lot of -- you mentioned AJGA, but then you start looking at Texas, Arizona, Wake Forest. You came through junior college out of high school, is that correct?

BRENT GRANT: Yeah. I didn't play golf in college until -- which would be considered my sophomore year. Played at Oregon State for two events total and then went to BYU Hawaii on the North Shore. I knew the coach really well and they offered me a scholarship to play, and I think I played 13 events, one of which being the national championship.

But I think that was all the college golf I ever played.

Q. Why didn't you play your freshman year?

BRENT GRANT: My grades were terrible coming out high school and the community college I went to didn't have a golf team and UH wasn't hiring, so...

Q. How do you get into Oregon State?

BRENT GRANT: So I think I sent a mass email out when I was a senior in high school, and they happened to be the ones that were interested in coming out. I walked on there, and it wasn't anything special. I kind of had a massive chip on my shoulder and didn't treat myself and other people the way I needed to. I also hated the weather, but that's obvious coming from here.

Q. Where did the chip come from?



BRENT GRANT: I've always been the underdog. It's not something that -- I didn't grow up playing golf. I started when I was 12 or 13 and I kind of always felt like I was catching up. It's not that I'm talking down to myself, or maybe back then, but I'm thankful for it and it's made me who I am, and I don't plan on losing it.

Q. When did you first figure out that you're better than you maybe thought? Was there ever a moment, a tournament?

BRENT GRANT: Six months ago.

Q. Six months ago?

BRENT GRANT: Maybe a little bit more than six months. I won the Simmons Bank Open.

Q. Nashville?

BRENT GRANT: Yeah, which was voted I think the tournament of the year, which was really cool, on really tough golf course against some really good competition. That's when I proved to myself that I could really get it done.

To me, you can think you're good enough or think you're better than you are or something in that phrase, but it doesn't really matter until you get it done when it counts.

Q. Was that your first pro win?

BRENT GRANT: That was my first tour win. I actually won on every level I played on. That was the first time I won on the Korn Ferry Tour.

Q. Pardon me, but when you left BYU Hawaii, what tours were you at before you got to the Korn Ferry Tour?

BRENT GRANT: So I turned pro when I -- so I played in 2017 year as an amateur. Two months later turned pro on my 21st birthday, and then I just played on like mini tours, Golden State Tour, and then I got conditional status in December of 2018; played Canadian Tour for a few tournaments in 2019, and then finally made it through Q-School Korn Ferry Tour late 2019 into 2020. That was my first year.

Q. You got to Korn Ferry Tour, made it through the Korn Ferry Tour at the end of '19, COVID comes in and locks everything down for two years. Were you able to benefit or did that hurt you at all?

BRENT GRANT: No, no. Yeah, so I had full status. I think was 30th on the points list before COVID came, so I was playing really well. You know, I ended up going into COVID in those four, five months, whatever it was, April to June, and ended up being a few months of me hitting the gym as hard as I possibly could and going that way.

I didn't have the greatest of the late 20s, but when you grind as hard as you do on the Korn Ferry Tour, it's only a matter of time, as long as you're putting in the right effort.

I was fortunate enough to get it done. Didn't get it done the way I thought was going to get it done, that's for sure.

Q. How did ^ you think you were going to get it done?

BRENT GRANT: The plan was to win three times. So I -- to be perfectly frank, I never thought anybody out there was necessarily better than me. I knew that I was going to be the only person preventing me from doing it, and ended up being that way. I won in Nashville and all I could think about was how am I going to plan for fall season on the PGA TOUR. Get done with Omaha and I got it grind my butt off to get on the PGA Symetra Tour.

I think was 12th after Nashville and I totally took it for granted and was my own worst enemy. Still am. We're a little bit better now.

Q. What was the clincher? You were telling me about Boise, Columbus, Indiana. What was your position going into Indiana?

BRENT GRANT: So I needed T11 or something like that, or better. I ended up being 11th alone with that putt. Ended up I didn't need it the way to end the up breaking down.

Q. At that moment you needed it.

BRENT GRANT: I felt like -- yeah, I said to my coaches walking just outside the ropes, I said I think I got to make this one. Well, you guys saw. Pretty crazy.

Q. Ever lost it like that on the golf course?

BRENT GRANT: Absolutely. Yeah, I made like an 80-footer in Nashville about tore my shoulder off.

Q. When you got here through the Governor's Cup your first time playing in a PGA TOUR event, was there anyone there that week that gave you in any intimidation or wow factor?

BRENT GRANT: You, I mean, I went around asking for



autographs from everybody. The coolest thing to me, two interactions, two different people, Vijay Singh, which was really awesome. We were on the side of the range together because I like to go on the edges the same way he does, and I just don't like to be in the middle. That's my thing.

And so we were hitting balls together for hours and hours and hours and then we saw each other on the golf course, and he came up to my mom after the first round. I think I shot 67 or 68, and he asked my mom how I was doing. Nobody needs to do that, but he took the time to do that. We've seen each other a few times since and he's been great.

And then the other one was Jason Dufner in the locker room. He's one of my favorite people out here. I asked him for an autograph and he said, only if I can get yours. That was kind of cool.

Q. Give it to him?

BRENT GRANT: No. (Laughter.)

Q. You sound similar it Jason Dufner.

BRENT GRANT: Yeah, I think he's a little bit more dry and less emotional I think. But, I mean, his sense of humor is hilarious if you can get it. He comes off as he's very quiet, and when you get to talk to him you realize just how dry his sense of humor is. Some people can take that a certain way. I love it.

Q. You talk much golf with him?

BRENT GRANT: No, I haven't played with him.

Q. No, talked about golf with him.

BRENT GRANT: No. When we first got to Napa we sat down and had breakfast. You know, like he's at a point where I think he's working as hard as he can on making himself as good as you possibly can kind of before all the stuff that went down with the major and life happens and stuff like that.

Everybody can sort of relate in some way or another. Yeah, I just kind of talked to him how to be a tour player and how to get around, that kind of stuff, operationally.

Q. Doing better in here than he ever did, by the way. But we love him anyway. You played enough on this tour. How different is this tour to the other tours?

BRENT GRANT: Like the Korn Ferry Tour?

Q. Yeah.

BRENT GRANT: This out here on the PGA TOUR I believe is what I would consider plug and play. So when you show up you know for a fact that A equals B. When you hit the fairways, you know when you work on what you -- because the conditions are what they are and everybody takes care of us out here with the physios and all the other stuff and the food, just each detail is taken care of to the max.

On the Korn Ferry Tour just with funding alone, it just doesn't work that way. It's certainly not on the Canadian Tour. I never played Latin. Didn't go to China. All I can tell that you is no matter what happens, when you're on the PGA TOUR you can work on your game and become the best player you can possibly be.

Q. Let's take the Canadian Tour, Korn Ferry Tour, when you needed a piece of equipment or physio, are they available?

BRENT GRANT: The equipment guys are usually pretty good. I mean, I've obviously got a great team at Srixon and have for a few years. Physios weren't always there. Sat down and Alex a bunch and Brad and few of the tournament operators and really talked through what we could do.

Utah is probably the first event that comes to mind that they leaped at the opportunity to have multiple physios on site, which was really great, because obviously that week is right in the middle of summer and we're all coming off like a 10- or 11-tournament stretch.

Yeah, some of the times they're there and sometimes not. At least when I played. I think it's getting better now. Yeah, definitely thankful for here for sure.

Q. Did you get the 500k to start the year?

BRENT GRANT: Yeah.

Q. How does that work?

BRENT GRANT: Yeah, so I believe -- this could be completely wrong, but I was told that all the rookies had to take it, and anybody that didn't play the year before -- so for example Michael Gligic played the year before on the PGA TOUR and got back on the PGA TOUR. He could defer it; I could not. I don't know why that is. I'm assuming for tax purposes or whatever.

Q. So you don't get paid until you surpass 500?



BRENT GRANT: That's correct.

Q. Do you like that?

BRENT GRANT: To be perfectly honest with you, it definitely feels like a lone that I'm paying back. I'm sure there is an economical phrase I can use that I'm probably missing.

What you guys will find is that I can tell you exactly what I'm thinking and when it comes to the 500k. It seemed to me that while it is an amazing thing and I wouldn't be here without it, because I couldn't afford to come here without it, it seemed to me that what I would be asking for if they didn't want me to pay it back would be virtually impossible.

If I say, why do I have to pay this back, I'm not in the position, nor do I have the information to say being, well, this is why I can't pay it back. To me, if I were in their position, it would be like, well, no, you're going to make more than 500k. Were we're giving you this to start, get you off the ground like an investment, and once you've paid it back and you're in the black, you're good.

So business 101, right? Money begets money. So you start with 500k. You pay off the credit card debt and you've got 300k in the bank to start the year, and that's more than most guys need to operate on the PGA TOUR. It's allowed me to be in a position to not have credit card debt.

Q. From the Golden Gate through Canada, did you ever come close to running out of money?

BRENT GRANT: When I played this tournament in 2018 I had \$100 in my bank account when I left the island.

Q. How did you get off the island?

BRENT GRANT: When I left the island.

Q. But you had credit cards?

BRENT GRANT: Actually, at the time I didn't even have a credit card. I didn't get my first credit card until after I could guarantee that I would never be in debt.

Q. Let's back up for a second. You had \$100. How do you go from there?

BRENT GRANT: I get a lone from my grandfather for \$2,500 to pay off debts that I did have: Country club, trainer, coach, whatever. Then I think I played in a tournament or two over the next couple three months to make some money on my own. Met a couple people here

that supported me. And then worked out a business deal. Same kind of deal, investment and whatnot. Yeah, I just think I won an event in September or later that year where it kind of cleaned the slate. I think I had 15 grand and kind of started from there. Paid for Q school whatnot and then got through -- yeah, got through and went from there.

Q. Ever nervous?

BRENT GRANT: On the golf course.

Q. With the spreadsheet, the balance sheet?

BRENT GRANT: Yeah, it's definitely not great having to go off your Chik Fil a app for meals you accrued over a two-year span and not having any many to pay for food.

Yeah, people the only thing I can relate it to is the guys I know in the minor leagues in baseball. Guys that get paid a couple thousand dollars a month for three months of work or whatever it is and they got to go find a job.

I was fortunate enough to have the Golden State and Outlaw Tour and be able to play and make a couple grand here and there.

And then that kind of kept me afloat, and then I had couple people loan me some cash.

Q. Still have a relationship with those people?

BRENT GRANT: Absolutely. Just saw them the other day. They're awesome. Yeah, again, each level I played on I've been fortunate enough to find people to help me out and I still keep in contact with them. Always there to help because they helped me.

Q. Did you have a contingency plan from professional golf?

BRENT GRANT: Yeah, I told myself that if I was still on the Korn Ferry Tour after 27 I would go in the military. So I turned 27 in couple months. We're ahead of schedule.

Q. That's why you celebrated that putt.

BRENT GRANT: Yeah. So I knew that I could make it once I had won on the Korn Ferry Tour. If I had to play another year on the Korn Ferry Tour it wouldn't have been the worst thing in the world. Just means I wasn't ready. We proved we were and are.

Q. Stayed with friends in 2018?

BRENT GRANT: I did. I stayed Mackakilo site, so that's



west side of the island and drove in.

moved to Arizona.

Q. What's the biggest difference in staying with them and Kahala?

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BRENT GRANT: I don't have to answer to anybody when I wake up in the morning. I don't have to -- I mean, I can come down and walk down the street and go to work, and when I wake up in the morning I see the beautiful mountains and then I come out here and go to the gym or have breakfast and watch the sun come up right off the ocean. I'm as relaxed as I think I've ever been playing a PGA TOUR event.

Q. (No microphone.)

BRENT GRANT: There was one Monday qualifier I had like 7:00 tee time in Louisiana. I flew over when I was conditional status and the hotel screwed up with booking or something like that.

Q. How did you do?

BRENT GRANT: Missed it by a mile.

Q. You talked about some playing on the base.

BRENT GRANT: Yeah.

Q. How long did you do that? I guess the other question is how did you get into golf?

BRENT GRANT: So I played baseball for about ten years and threw out my arm. Couldn't play anymore. Every day during the summer my dad would go to work down the street. Navy Marine Golf Course is literally outside the base gate, and he would drop me off and come back me up at night.

Q. I understand that part. I mean, had you ever done it? Picked up a club?

BRENT GRANT: Yeah. He taught me the ropes, and the rest was on me. I have didn't have a coach until after I turned professional.

Q. What did your dad's retire at?

BRENT GRANT: Commander master chief. On the blue ridge.

Q. Where did he go after that?

BRENT GRANT: Retired in Japan and then flew over to Colorado which is where my family is from, and they just

