

The American Express

Sunday, January 23, 2022

La Quinta, California, USA

PGA WEST Pete Dye Stadium Course

Hudson Swafford

Press Conference

DOUG MILNE: We would like to welcome the winner of first the 2017 and now the 2022 American Express championship, Hudson Swafford, to the interview room here. Congratulations on your second title here at the American Express. I heard you say outside that it was quite the interesting back nine for you. We only need to look at a scorecard to see that, but nonetheless it was good for an 8-under 64 to get the job done. With all that said just some thoughts on the victory.

HUDSON SWAFFORD: Well, first and foremost I want to thank you, my good luck charm. 2017 I saw Doug and Rando when I was flying in and he just looked at me and he goes, You're going to win this week and I go, All right. Ended up winning. Every time Doug's around it seems to be, seem to play well, and so I appreciate you. I might have to hire you away from the TOUR to stay with me.

DOUG MILNE: We're going to compare schedules so I can change flights.

HUDSON SWAFFORD: That's right. That's right.

But, no, it was a great back nine. The 3-putt on 13 didn't really faze me at all. Like, I hit a good shot. I was in between clubs and it ran to the back of the green and kind of misread it, the second putt, and just hit a bad shot on 15.

But other than that it was pretty flawless back nine. I think it was an eagle and five birdies, I believe. So a lot more good than bad. This was definitely a special one, a third win, and about a month ago my father passed away and his birthday was this week, so I know he was following and watching and to get it done, it was awesome. So that's about all I got there.

DOUG MILNE: Fair enough. With the win you do jump inside the top 10 in the FedExCup to number 7 so you're making you're way up there.

HUDSON SWAFFORD: Nice.

DOUG MILNE: Just a couple quick comments about



what's coming up for you and then we'll open it up and take a few questions.

HUDSON SWAFFORD: As of right now I'm playing Torrey Pines next week, and a week off, and then I'll play Phoenix, and then another week off and get ready for the Bermuda grass stretch in Florida, which I grew up on, so I'm looking forward to that. Just want to be as fresh as possible for that stretch of golf.

DOUG MILNE: You're supposed to say, What's my schedule?

HUDSON SWAFFORD: Well, I know where you're going to be. We'll talk after this. (Laughing).

DOUG MILNE: We'll take questions.

Q. Five years ago you birdied the 17th hole on the last day to win too. But given the circumstances, were those three shots on 16 about as good as you can possibly put three shots together?

HUDSON SWAFFORD: Yeah, absolutely. In 2017, I just remember coming to 15, I think I was one back, and just hitting some flawless golf shots from 15, 16, 17 and 18.

And this year I probably hit my worst shot of the day on 15 and led to a very awkward lie in the ryegrass on a down slope to a raised green, and I was kind of up against, I didn't have a very good lie and I caught my chip just a little thin and, man, I hit a really good putt and still didn't have any negative thoughts, was swinging at it great, playing great, but knew I needed to kind of stay focused because I had the next three holes downwind. So I knew they were all birdie holes.

I hit, maybe pulled my drive a little bit on 16, but we don't have to discuss that.

Then had a great number. I had I think 200 pin and a little down breeze and it was just a perfect 7-iron. I knew if I missed it a little bit it was going to come up just short, just where you wanted to be, and if I hit it good and hit it solid, then I was going to have a really good chance at eagle.

It was one of the best 7-irons I've ever hit and I hit it to 8 --



7, 8 feet and made the putt.

Then I hit a great 9-iron on 17. The wind kind of took it a little bit more left than I was anticipating, but left me, I got past the middle ridge in the green and left me an uphill putt and hit a beautiful putt and just went in with great speed.

18, I actually, I hit a great 5-wood off the tee. It was down wind. And I thought I hit a little better 8-iron than that, but it just kind of started out right and I watched Seamus's chip who, he hit a lovely chip, and breaking right and I have it in my book from previous experiences that it's going to break a little right, and I might have pulled it just a smidge and it started breaking left, and I was like, Oh, boy, and I had about an 8 feet and I was like, Well, this wasn't like the last time I won when I had a 1-inch putt to tap it in.

But just knew to keep my head down and hit one last solid putt and did that and it went right in.

Q. You join a fairly stellar list of people who have won this tournament twice, guys like Palmer and Miller and Casper and people like that. Why here?

HUDSON SWAFFORD: I don't know. I've fallen in love with this place. This is kind of my West Coast home, honestly. We base ourselves kind of out of the Hideaway just across the street. We have now, this is our 8th year. I come out here early before Sony, get some work in, get ready. I enjoy the weather here. I enjoy the grass. It's all Bermuda grass. It's what I grew up on. I don't know why here. It just clicks. I see the lines on the greens pretty well here and I got a lot of confidence and a lot of good memories here, so I can pull on that and keep going.

Q. What was your father's name and could you just talk about how he helped you growing up?

HUDSON SWAFFORD: Yeah, absolutely. It was David Swafford. One of the best people I know and he taught me everything I know, how to be a dad, how to be a friend, how to be a champion, and how to play golf.

He's the one that got me into golf when I was young. He gave me every opportunity to succeed, but never pushed it on me.

But I always kind of wanted to hang out with him, so he would take me to the golf course and we were playing and I would play in his men's game when I was younger. And he was just, he kind of taught me all the basics and gave me every opportunity in life to succeed. I know he's proud.

He hadn't really watched me since I think 2017 Masters. I think it was the last time he came out and followed me

around on the golf course. So I guess QBE was, he passed away the week, or the very beginning of QBE, like, and so that was the first golf tournament he got to see me play, and this is the third. So to get a W while he's pushing me from above, it's so special.

Q. Did he have a long-term illness that he dealt with?

HUDSON SWAFFORD: No. He lived a great healthy life. He really didn't. He was 83. He loved sports, played it all his life and got into golf when, he's from Tennessee, he moved to Florida, and fell in love with it and that's kind of where I fell in love with it.

But, no, he didn't. He had a mild form of Parkinson's kind of form later on in life, about 77, and other than that, he really didn't. He lived a great life. It wasn't the best last six months, but we've got a lot of special memories together.

Q. I wanted to ask you, your memory from the first win here, those are always family celebrations of long waiting?

HUDSON SWAFFORD: Oh, yeah.

Q. Do you remember, do you have memories of your dad and that win?

HUDSON SWAFFORD: Yeah, winning here, obviously getting my first PGA TOUR win, on cloud 9, FaceTime with my family, got to take my dad to Augusta National, played Augusta National with him before my first Masters with Jeff Knox. And it was such a memorable day, just an incredible experience that I'll always cherish. To give back to somebody that provided me and paved the way for what I love to do and what I get to show my son what I get to do and how dad just kind of inspired me, it's truly incredible.

Q. You went through a pretty rough stretch last year.

HUDSON SWAFFORD: Yeah.

Q. 10 missed cuts of 11, I think. How difficult was that and how have you kind of overcome? Because we all know how rough those stretches can be on you mentally as much as physically, so how did you overcome that to get back on track?

HUDSON SWAFFORD: It was tough. I'll be honest. Golf's not easy. I had a great win. I had a good fall last year, and then I kind of was working on my golf swing, just trying to make it a little better and, man, I really struggled. I'm a fader of the golf ball. I've never played with an open club face and my club face was consistently open. I didn't know where the ball was going to go. It was wearing on

me.

It was a tough call, but after the Masters it was just super inconsistent leading up to that. I parted ways with a long-time coach and a really close friend, Scott Hamilton. We'd been together for eight years. Wow, man, it killed me because we were close friends. But it just wasn't -- ball striking is one of my strengths and I just, it was, I wasn't even close.

So John Tillery and I got together. I've known John for years. And we went to work, and he's like, We got to clean up a few things to get you back on track, and, man, starting Congaree, about a month later when I finished second and then through the playoffs I really played great golf. I hit it unbelievably well, even in the fall. I mean, I said out there I was turning top 10s, top 15s into 30ths, putting was a little inconsistent. I worked really hard on that. And I was hitting it beautifully. I was playing great golf.

Getting a little frustrated because I was playing such good golf and not really getting rewarded for what we're doing, and just stuck to the process, never veered away from it and putted unbelievable this week.

I actually changed putters this week to a heel-shafted putter to help it swing a little bit more and rolled it incredibly well.

Q. What's the model?

HUDSON SWAFFORD: It was a Scotty Cameron 7.5, I believe. So it was, oh, man, I rolled it really good this week.

Q. There's a lot of emotions in trying to win a golf tournament and then obviously with your dad just passing, how did that impact you on the back nine? Was it harder to hold the emotions back?

HUDSON SWAFFORD: I definitely thought about him, but in a good way, because he was getting to see me hit good shots in person and it's been a long time. So I had a couple moments where I looked up and knew that he was following and knew that he was there and I could just hear his voice saying, Just be confident in what you're doing, you're playing great, and he goes, Just play to win.

And I had all the confidence in the world and there was just something about bogeying the first hole here for me on Sunday that gets me in my comfort zone. But I just felt like I was going to win today. I didn't know how, I didn't know what I was going to do or how it was going to happen, but I just had a crazy good feeling.

Q. What age did you guys start playing together, start playing golf?

HUDSON SWAFFORD: I was young. He gave me some clubs when I was 2. I liked sports, I liked being outside, so he gave me some little plastic clubs and the first afternoon I kind of broke the heads off the clubs and he's like, We might be on to something. So he ended up getting me some clubs, some little clubs and cutting down little clubs and just letting me whack golf balls around in the yard and started taking me to our golf course and giving me all the pointers that he had and would read about or watch.

And then we just, he kind of molded me and just kind of gave me all of his words of wisdom and taught me up until about 13, 14 and then turned it over to somebody else. But literally gave me every opportunity in the world to succeed and I mean I can never thank him enough.

DOUG MILNE: Well Hudson, congratulations. Real proud of us.

HUDSON SWAFFORD: Yeah, absolutely.

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